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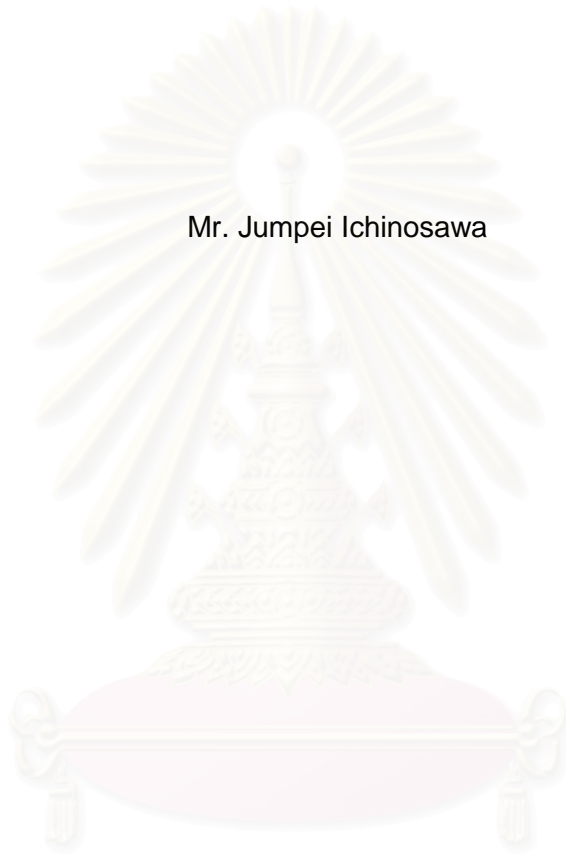
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BANGKOK GO-GO BARS: SOCIAL RELATIONS  
AMONG THAI BAR GIRLS AND THEIR CUSTOMERS

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for the Degree of Master of Arts in Thai Studies

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ผู้วิจัยได้ทำการวิจัยอุตสาหกรรมบาร์อโกโกซึ่งเป็นรูปแบบการค้าประเวณีที่มีนักท่องเที่ยวเป็นเป้าหมายที่มีชื่อเสียงและมีขนาดใหญ่มากที่สุดรูปแบบหนึ่งของประเทศไทย โดยใช้วิธีการศึกษาเชิงลึกเป็นระยะเวลาหนึ่ง ผู้วิจัยมีจุดมุ่งหมายที่จะทำความเข้าใจและขยายความให้เห็นถึงความจริงทางสังคมของผู้หญิงบาร์และลูกค้า โดยเฉพาะความเป็นจริงที่เกี่ยวกับความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างบุคคลของคนสองกลุ่มนี้ จากการเก็บข้อมูลภาคสนามแบบมีส่วนร่วมเป็นระยะเวลาหนึ่งปี ทำให้ได้ข้อมูลบางประการเกี่ยวกับความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างผู้หญิงบาร์และลูกค้าที่เกิดขึ้นในบาร์อโกโก และนำผลการศึกษาที่ได้มาเป็นพื้นฐานข้อมูลเชิงประจักษ์และกรอบความคิดเชิงตรรกะของวิทยานิพนธ์เรื่องนี้

ในกรณีของผู้หญิงบาร์ แรงจูงใจที่มีอิทธิพลที่สุดที่ทำให้เข้าทำงานในอุตสาหกรรมนี้คือความจำเป็นทางการเงิน ปัจจัยสำคัญที่ทำให้พวกเธอตัดสินใจทำงานประเภทนี้มักได้แก่ ความต้องการที่จะได้เงินมาใช้จ่ายเพื่อประโยชน์ส่วนตัว ไม่ใช่เพื่อเอามาช่วยเหลือพ่อแม่ ผู้หญิงบาร์จำนวนมากทำตนเป็นพนักงานที่เชี่ยวชาญและแสดงบทบาทในเชิงบวกในการสร้างความสัมพันธ์กับลูกค้าเพื่อให้ตนเองได้รับประโยชน์มากที่สุด มีน้อยครั้งมากที่ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างผู้หญิงบาร์และลูกค้าจะเป็นความสัมพันธ์เชิงธุรกิจเพียงด้านเดียว ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างผู้หญิงบาร์และลูกค้ามักเริ่มต้นจากการแลกเปลี่ยนเชิงธุรกิจ แต่จะเปลี่ยนเป็นความสัมพันธ์ที่ซับซ้อนภายหลัง ส่วนใหญ่แล้วลักษณะของความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างผู้หญิงบาร์และลูกค้าแต่ละคู่จะถูกกำหนดโดยเงื่อนไขอันเกิดจากภูมิหลังทางเศรษฐกิจและสังคมของทั้งสองฝ่าย

ผลการวิจัยชี้ให้เห็นว่าความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างบุคคลที่สังเกตเห็นได้ในบาร์อโกโกไม่ใช่เรื่องของการแลกเปลี่ยนบริการทางเพศกับเงินตราเท่านั้น ความเป็นจริงทางสังคมของผู้หญิงบาร์และลูกค้ามิได้เป็นแค่ความสัมพันธ์ในรูปแบบของ “การค้าประเวณี” ตามภาพลักษณ์ที่เข้าใจกันทั่วไป แต่เป็นความสัมพันธ์ที่ควรจะมีการศึกษาจากมุมมองที่หลากหลาย

|                 |                                     |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| ภาควิชา.....    | ลายมือชื่อนิสิต.....                |
| สาขาวิชา.....   | ลายมือชื่ออาจารย์ที่ปรึกษา.....     |
| ปีการศึกษา..... | ลายมือชื่ออาจารย์ที่ปรึกษาร่วม..... |

##4180802322: MAJOR THAI STUDIES

KEY WORD: THAILAND / BANGKOK / GO-GO BAR / SOCIAL RELATIONS / BAR GIRLS AND CUSTOMERS / PROSTITUTION

JUMPEI ICHINOSAWA, BANGKOK GO-GO BARS: SOCIAL RELATIONS AMONG THAI BAR GIRLS AND THEIR CUSTOMERS, THESIS ADVISOR: ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AMARA PONGSAPICH Ph.D. 126pp. ISBN: 974-03-0502-4

The researcher conducted an in-depth, long-term research of go-go bar industry, that is, one of the most famous and large segment of Thai tourist-oriented prostitution. The researcher's aim was to understand and illustrate social reality of bar girls and their customers, especially concerning human relations among them. The extensive one-year participatory fieldwork yielded certain findings on bar girl - customer relations in the bar scene and those findings provided the empirical basis and logical framework of this thesis.

In the case of bar girls, the strongest motivation to get into the industry is financial needs. Desire for personal consumption, not for helping parents, is often principal factor of their decision. Many bar girls act as a skillful workingperson and play a positive role in the relationship with their customers in order to maximize their benefit. Hardly is the relationship between bar girl and customer pure economic. Bar girl - customer relationship usually starts as economic interchange but tends to become more complicated. The characteristics of each bar girl - customer relationship are to considerable extent conditioned by sociocultural backgrounds of both bar girl and customer sides.

The research results suggest that human interchange observed in the bar scene is not only of the sex/money matters. Social reality of bar girls and their customers is not as simple as conventional image of 'prostitution' and should be studied in many aspects.

ภาควิชา.....

ลายมือชื่อผู้คิด.....

สาขาวิชา.....

ลายมือชื่ออาจารย์ที่ปรึกษา.....

ปีการศึกษา.....

ลายมือชื่ออาจารย์ที่ปรึกษาร่วม.....

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## CHAPTER 1

### Research objective and questions

#### 1. 1. Significance of studying commercial sex sector in Thailand

Thailand is a very infamous country for 'prostitution' and Thai prostitution has been very controversial from many points of view, such as gender relations, economic inequality or the human rights. Although it is quite doubtful that prostitution is more prominent in Thailand than in the other countries, it should be accepted that prostitution is certainly the phenomenon which cannot be neglected when we think of Thai society and economy. Estimated number of prostitutes in Thailand quite varies from study to study (Table 1-1) but Boonchalaksi and Guest (1994: 32) concludes that "a plausible range of the number of woman involved [in sex work] at this point is 150,000 to 200,000" and "in any year of period it could be expected that between 200,000 and 300,000 women work in sex industry." This is in no way a small figure, considering number of women aged 15 to 29 was around 8.3 million in the 1990 census. In Thailand, similar to the other Southeast Asian countries, "The sex business has assumed the dimensions of an industry and has directly or indirectly contributed in no small measure to employment, national income and economic growth (Lim, 1998: 1)." Pongpaichit, et al. (1998) calculated that prostitution generated 100 billion baht per annum in the period 1993-5. This is equivalent to approximately 2.78% of GNP of Thailand in that period. Even after the miracle economic growth through the decades, "there is no sign that prostitution in Thailand is in decline. Indeed with economic development, increased wealth has raised the demand for sex services (Pongpaichit, et al.,1998: 196)".

**Table 1-1: Estimated number of prostitutes in Thailand**

| <i>Source</i>                                      | <i>Estimated number of prostitutes</i> |
|--|--|
| Public Health Ministry survey (Bangkok Post, 1998) | 63,941 (female 61,135)                 |
| Sittirai and Brown (1991)                          | 150,000 to 200,000                     |
| Police Department (Boonchalaksi and Guest, 1994)   | 150,000 to 200,000                     |
| Goldey (1994)                                      | 700,000                                |
| Muecke (1990)                                      | 50,000 to 1,000,000                    |

In Thailand, commercial sex sector provides a number of women with a means for living and, from macro economic perspective, it plays a role to redistribute incomes;

from rich / urban area to poor/rural area. It may be true that increase of prostitution "is not an accidental by-products of poverty or even of global travel, but a planned strategy of economic development in Asia (Brock and Thistlethwaite, 1996: 114)." At least it can be said that "government policies, such as for the promotion of tourism, migration for employment and also the export of female labour as important sources of foreign exchange earnings, may have indirectly encouraged the growth of prostitution and perhaps even trafficking in women (Lim, 1998: 10)." Moreover, existence of commercial sex sector is strongly supported by Thai male-centered sociocultural environment. For instance, many of Thai wives perceive that "commercial sex patronage by the husband could serve as an alternative to more threatening non-commercial sexual relationships and could be tolerated on these grounds (Saengtienchai, et al., 1999: 88)."

Not only the huge size of commercial sex sector in Thailand but also its above-mentioned characteristics imply that commercial sex sector is needed to be fully analyzed in depth when we try to achieve a deeper understanding of Thai society under rapid economic development. Growing sex industry parallel to the nation's economic growth is certainly one of the essential dimensions of so called 'development' which has been metamorphosing Thai society.

## **1. 2. Against the violation of the human rights of sex workers**

Recently, "proponents of sex workers' rights argue that some adult sex workers make a relatively free decision to go into prostitution and that they should be at liberty to do so and have the right to the type of sexual behaviour they choose (Lim, 1998: 14)." Number of sex workers have started to cry for a recognition as a proper workingperson and an improvement in working conditions. Since the mid 1970s, women's movements for legalizing prostitution has gained force in Western Europe and United States (cf. English Collective of Prostitutes, 1997). The term 'sex work' and 'sex worker' has been advocated by sex workers themselves to be used, instead of the term 'prostitute' which carries hopelessly stigmatized meaning (Delacoste and Alexander ed., 1987).

In reality, many activists are in the state of confusion concerning the usage of the terms expressing sex work.

[...] we concluded that "the sex industry" accurately described the reality of system of exploitation that is structurally organized and international in scope.

On the other hand, some activists do not use the term "sex industry" or "sex work," but prefer "prostitution." "Sex industry" can be heard as too clinical and objective, and the women who engaged in this activity do not use this term to describe what they do. [...] To use the term "sex work," as if selling one's body for sexual use were the equivalent of typing someone's letter or serving someone food, masks too much to be useful much of time. [...] At the same time, some Asian women activists believe that the term "prostitution" continues to perpetuate romanticized and moralistic ideas about it (Brock and Thistlethwaite, 1996: 2).

Apart from such a barren discussion, I would like to use the term 'sex work' to express the acts of providing sexual services on commercial basis. There has been general consensus to define prostitution as the acts of using women's body as object of buying and selling or exchange. O'Neill's explanation of prostitution seems to be more specific and to well determine the concept of sex work which implies various styles of sexual activities:

Prostitution is taken to mean the exchange of money for sex — use value for exchange value (as in all form of work). Sex work is marked by the sale of sexual practices (intercourse, masturbation, S&M (sado-masochism), perhaps just a look at one's breasts) for money (O'Neill, 1997: 10)

Although O'Neill does not make any distinction<sup>1</sup> between sex work and prostitution, I adopt this statement as a definition of only the term 'sex work' in this thesis, rather than that of the term 'prostitution' and let 'prostitution' indicate one's having sexual intercourse in exchange with money (and other variable things). Thus in my definition prostitutes are always a sex worker but the reverse is not always true. It should be noticed that this definition is still ineffective to differentiate sex work from marriage (or love affair) with an economic context. Practically there is no clear-cut distinction between sex work and marriage or love affair of common practice and therefore we must be very careful when we talk about the cases of marriage or love between sex workers and their customers. We cannot persuasively refute call girls when they insist that there is no essential difference between call girls and those women get married with an unfamiliar man for money or social status (Kapur, 1980).

---

<sup>1</sup> Such a distinction is actually a mere operational one rather than substantial but still somewhat helpful as long as this study deals with go-go bar. Given these definitions, girls' routine job as a dancer (or a stripper) is considered as sex work but not prostitution. Many of them can take up prostitution only when they have an opportunity to get a customer. Usually they draw a clear-cut line between these activities.

Despite the truth that prostitution is illegal in many countries including Thailand, any style of sex work in itself does not necessarily violate anyone's rights. Therefore, it can be said that, in principle, an independent adult man and woman who have not been illegally or unwarrantably influenced can determine freely to act as a sex worker (and even to allow other persons to get profits from his or her activities as a sex worker). Considering this viewpoint, the Fourth World Conference on Woman in Beijing in 1995 came to conclude that only forced prostitution (not prostitution in general) was regarded as a problematic issue on the rights of women (United Nations, 1996).

However, the reality is not so simple. It is very rare that sex work is of worker's complete free will especially in countries in Thailand. Current practices of sex work do have a lot of problematic aspects regarding the human rights and/or gender relations. Sex workers (especially female ones) are often looked down and likely to be abused without any reason but being a sex worker (but of course there is no point that sex workers are blamed because of their business, except the point that prostitution is illegal in some countries). Often they are forced to work against their wishes, they are confined, they are insulted, they are put under threats of violence and they are not properly paid. With such ill-treatment, the rights of sex workers are clearly violated. What to be sold is sex workers' sexual service but not themselves (not their body nor their personality). Typical brothels in Asian countries are just like an exhibition hall of unfair treatment of women or male-female inequalities. Those who are involved in the study of prostitution must not make light of this fact.

Legal status of sex workers or prostitutes is often one of the obstacles against the efforts to empower them. Since the enforcement of the Anti-Prostitution Act in 1960, prostitution has been illegal in Thailand. The Act prohibited various prostitution related activities, such as:

[...] owning or managing a bawdy-house, loitering or soliciting in public places for the purpose of prostitution, being found in a brothel, engaging in prostitution in a brothel, and procuring another person for the purpose of prostitution. The Act also prescribes penalties for owners, managers or keepers of entertainment parlours who allow their premises to be used for prostitution (Rayanakorn, 1995: 20).

Although this Act has never been properly applied up to its revision in 1996 (and even after that), as long as activities concerning prostitution was made clearly illegal in this way, it is easily guessed that each prostitutes who work in sex

establishments (where owners are connected with the police, an army, a politician, etc. so as to evade the law) seldom claimed their right as a laborer. Moreover, as long as prostitution is an illegal act, no support or protection from government is expected. Indeed the new Act enforced in 1996 has been improved in consideration of a prostitute's human rights and become closer to the so-called regulatory system (cf. Cunha, 1992) but the legal position in which the prostitutes are placed has not changed fundamentally.

In reality, abolition and prohibition of prostitution is actually impossible at least in the near future. Given the current situation where illegality is weakening prostitutes' position, revision of the Act should be for the chief aim of regulation rather than punishment and abolition. For instance, Davis and Shaffer (1994) concluded their study on prostitution in Canada that the government's effort to prohibit and abolish prostitution worsens the situation, by making it invisible. On the other hand, there is an opinion that those who cannot abolish prostitution are not likely to be able to regulate it (Sanghera, 1997). It is indeed very difficult to find what policy is need to be developed so as to protect sex workers' human right but proper understanding of current situation of sex sector and sex workers will contribute to improving the present clearly problematic conditions.

### **1. 3. Necessity of eliminating biases against sex work and sex workers**

There would be no objection against the opinion that thorough understanding of commercial sex sector and those people involved in is necessary for struggling against violation of the rights of sex workers. Indeed there have been so many studies on the issue but many of them are biased to some extent and the studies of that kinds are often hampered in revealing what is really going on. Biased viewpoints do not bring reasonable arguments. If we are to deal with a subject related to sex work or sex workers, we should always mind our attitude and take good care to keep a neutral position toward the issue.

Unfortunately, it may be difficult to be free from a negative, or of other kinds of bias in the study of sex work. There can be found many biased academic works taking sex work as a research subject. Odzer (1990) insists that many accounts concerning sex trade, especially women's sex work show some kinds of bias against sex workers and their activity. Studies on Thai prostitution are also not an exception. Such biases can be classified as:

[...] three main categories of bias: a moral bias, an andocentric or male bias, and a middle class bias. The moral bias is that which adds a mystical, negative dimension to prostitution, fabricated by such terms as "bad", "wrong", "sinful", and "ruined" which are left unqualified. The male bias underestimates or ignores the woman's capabilities and is especially prevalent within the discussion of the pimp-prostitution relationship. The middle class bias can best be discerned in the economic analysis. It presumes the norm is an environment where everybody has access to a comfortable, self-satisfying, prideful existence (Odzer, 1990: 2).

It is quite doubtful if there could be any study on the subject without such biases, when we find that her report on Patpong sex workers is also not really free from some bias. Her explanation sometimes seems too artificial probably for keeping her logic that prostitution is "a valid occupation with its own aspirations, motivations, and rewards" and "an occupation chosen or resulting from rational decisions" and "an occupation comparable to other available occupations (Odzer, 1990: 1)." It is crucial to eliminate biases against the subject of investigation in any kind of social research but unfortunately that seems what the studies of sex work have been likely to lack.

According to Scambler and Scambler (1997), theoretical perspectives regarding sex work (prostitution) can be classified into following six categories. Some attempt to explain this phenomenon economically, some do it sociologically, psychologically and so on. It is true that "While none of these six categories of theories is entirely convincing, and some in particular have lent themselves to ideological exploitation, each has something to offer (Scambler and Scambler, 1997: xiii)" but at the same time this list reveals one problematic aspect of existing studies of sex work or sex workers.

1. Sociobiological: these theories, sometimes characterized as Social Darwinist, start from the proposition that social difference, as found in sex roles for example, can be explained in terms of biological difference. Thus female prostitution or sex work is typically interpreted as a social imperative to accommodate the overpowering male sex drive.
2. Psycho- or socio-pathological: these theories seek the rationale for female sex work in some deep underlying pathology, be it in the (abnormal) psyches of women electing or willing to go on 'the game', or in the (abnormal) social milieus in which they were raised or interact.
3. Functional: these theories often betray biological origins, but they also insist that all social institutions through which sexual contact between men and women occurs are functional in some respect. Some maintain, for example, that female sex work is

functional for marriage since it provides an outlet for excess - or deviant forms of - male sexual energy.

4. Conflictual: these theories emphasize female sex work's genesis in general social conflict of one type of another. According to some, for example, female sex work, is but a specific expression of the universal prostitution of the wage-labourer in capitalist societies. Women may be forced into sex work out of economic necessity, and 'forced labour' of this kind is the basis of social alienation.
5. Feminist: these theories typically draw on the concept of 'patriarchy'. In some, men's domination over women is seen as deriving from their control over female sexuality, manifest in social institutions like the family, heterosexuality and the female sex industry. Male control over female sexuality is underwritten by a patriarchal ideology which defines women as sexual objects, deprives them of their own sexuality and permits their violation by men.
6. Discourse analytic: these theories assert that the reading and practice of sexuality that underlie social institutions like the female sex industry are not the conspiratorial product of powerful (male) agents; rather they are constituted in pre-eminent 'sexual discourses', which have their own histories and conditions of existence and are the truly appropriate objects of study (Scambler and Scambler, 1997: xii-xiii).

It is clearly seen that research objective of the studies with these approaches is often to seek for the cause of sex work rather than to understand it. Considering such nature of studying sex work, we should agree with Odzer anyhow when she says that "prostitution has never really been an anthropological subject (Odzer, 1990: 1)." What anthropologists pursue is simply to understand or interpret, eliminating unnecessary prejudice, bias or stereotyping, the meaning of the way of thinking and acting of the others. It is true that, apart from a few exceptions, we do not often find works on Thai prostitution attempting to simply grasp how it is like rather than to pursue the mechanism that causes it.

Of course the researchers' intention to cope with the problems by which sex workers are confronted is no doubt respectable. However we should not miss the truth that they tend to regard sex work itself as a sort of social problem to be solved, reduced, or exterminated. Under such a viewpoint, it is easy to make a mistake to confound problems simultaneously found with a certain phenomenon, say, sex work, and the sex work itself. Such confusion may prevent the researcher from obtaining reasonable results. There should be more effort to simply understand sex workers with no unnecessary ethical bias; their way of thinking, work environment and economic and social reality.



#### 1. 4. Ethnographic study of commercial sex sector

There have been two popular academic approaches to deal with sex work (sex workers or sex industry) in Thailand. One is the approach that expounds the cause of prosperity of sex sector by macro socioeconomic environment such as poverty, unequal opportunity in education and occupation, and women's inferior social status. Phongpaichit (1990) says that she believes that poverty and employment opportunity are the keys to understand the structure of sex industry. Similarly, Truong (1990, 1) analyze sex industry in Southeast Asia (particularly Thailand) "from the following perspectives: (1) the international political economy of tourism as part of larger sector of services, in particular leisure services; and (2) the place of female labour in the process of industrialization through tourism." These statements well summarize the standpoint of those who try to understand sex work in macro socioeconomic context in Thailand (and international settings when they talk about tourism). The other is to focus on the life history of sex workers and in many cases emphasize not only socioeconomic but also psychological factors to explain the reason that each individual to become a sex worker. Narumol's report of her participatory research in Bangkok massage parlor is one of the good examples of study taking this approach (Narumol, 1989). Each of these two approaches has many variations in its research style and can be subdivided, for example, into the above mentioned six categories of theoretical perspective.

Although both of these approaches may generate a good explanation of the reason why sex sector is so flourish in Thailand, they do not always really bring a deeper understanding of what is actually going on in the sex sector. For instance, studying 'prostitution' to understand high-end parts of commercial sex sector may generate only insufficient results since workers' primary activities are often not limited to 'prostitution'. Sex work does never separately occur from other elements that constitute the social setting where the sex worker is placed. Close-up and contexts oriented observation and analysis of social settings where sex workers are placed are, therefore, often not omissible process to understand commercial sex sector. In this sense, commercial sex sector in Thailand (especially tourist oriented segments) is quite photogenic especially in the visual field of those ethnographers always carrying macro lenses in their eyes. Not only drawing a bird's eye picture of macro socioeconomic structure but also taking a clear shot of micro constituent, which is called ethnographic

approach, can be a very effective strategy for those who are grappling with this phenomenon.

### **1. 5. Research objective and questions**

Since Thai sex industry has many subdivided sectors those are quite different from each other in its nature, I focused on only a part of them to make the analysis more precise in my study of Thai commercial sex sector. Mainly because of several factors concerning research feasibility (explained in Chapter 2), the field research was conducted in Bangkok's go-go bar, world-famous sexual entertainment for tourists. Considering Cohen's comment that anthropological or sociological study of tourist oriented sex industry in Thailand has been very rare (Cohen, 1996a; 1996b), the study of the go-go bar sector seems worth conducting.

Holding the standpoints introduced in Section 1.3 and 1.4, I was to focus on the cultural, social and economic realities of people related to sex work rather than its position in macro level socioeconomic system. What to be primarily pursued here is to understand and explain the way of thinking of those who are related to go-go bars about themselves, their business, behaviors, and personal relationships, which is reflected in their social intercourse. An interpretive approach that seeks for the underlying meaning of observed social phenomena seems effective in the study of that kind. The research object is, therefore, to understand those who are related to go-go bars and their social realities, especially their social relations. In reality, the aims of this study are fairly limited because of the resource and time constraints explained in Chapter 2. The target population is not only the workers in go-go bars but also their customers. Since we wish to eliminate any prejudice or bias from the research process, we do not make any qualitative assumption regarding target population. The nature of the research is fundamentally same as that of "grounded theory study (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990)" through which we seek for the theory<sup>2</sup> to explain the phenomena confronted in the research process. What is to be achieved in the research is not verification of a ground theory but reasonable explanation of what is observed, which may lead to a discovery or a generation of a grounded theory.

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<sup>2</sup> In my opinion, 'theory' in anthropology is rather logical framework that makes it possible to effectively explain researcher's personal, and often non-systematized, understanding in a unique situation to the others than extrapolating generalization of the findings.

Thus, the primary research questions are to qualify the thinking and acting of people involved in sex business at Bangkok go-go bars and not to test hypotheses. To put them concretely, research questions are:

1. How they think about their status, activities and circumstances (as a sex worker or customer) and relationship between themselves (sex worker and customer) in the given cultural, social and economic context?
2. How they act (as a sex worker or customer) based on their conceptual perception of themselves and how the actual interaction processes (not only as economic but also as social or psychological activities) between them are developed?
3. How all those things can be explained in logical frameworks of social science, which are comprehensible to the others?

The research questions like these may seem too broad and lack focus. But in a qualitative research, "The research question in a grounded theory study is a statement that identifies the phenomenon to be studied (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 38)."

## CHAPTER 2

### Research methodology and design

#### 2. 1. Anthropological approach to social phenomena

##### 2. 1. 1. Understanding the others' experience

What I was trying to do through the research was to understand the social reality of those people involved with Bangkok's go-go bars, especially, their social relationship as a sex worker and a customer. This was more like translating, for example, what making a living out of customers meant to bar girls, than simply finding general law or causality dominating their behavior. That was why I took an anthropological approach which more or less intended as a translation of culture before any other things (cf., Leach, 1973; 1982). However, such efforts are often very difficult to bear fruit and can even bring some metaphysical problems. What is to understand and/or translate the other's experience?

Leach (1973) insists that what those who study another culture should aim to understand and translate the poetic meaning of the matters in that culture. In other words, as Geertz (1983b: 70) says, "understanding the form and pressure of [...] native's inner life is more like grasping a proverb, catching an allusion, seeing a joke – or as I suggested, reading a poem — than it is achieving communion". Understanding such poetic meaning of the matters in different society might be possible, by being naturalized as a member of that society, but translating it is not really. Outsiders cannot obtain native's point of view in its real sense. We will never appreciate, for instance, the art of tattoo or Northeast-flavored pop music as bar girls do but, instead, anthropologists try to offer an explanation of them in the form understandable to anyone else.

An anthropologist struggles to achieve such an explanation or translation of cultural phenomena in different society through being involved in a dialectic relationship between details and the whole. On the one hand, he obtains detailed but chaotic knowledge on diversified cultural products in the objective society through actually participating, that is, having a real and deep experience there. On the other hand, he wishes to be able to generalize the knowledge with that he has become equipped so

that he can explain it, in adequate language and concept, to the people having different cultural background. As Geertz describes, "Hopping back and forth between the whole conceived through the parts that actualize it and the parts conceived through the whole that motivates them, we seek to turn them, by a sort of intellectual perpetual motion, into explications of one another (1983b: 69)".

When we take the approach that is "not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning (Geertz, 1973: 5)", we do not treat the case we have observed as a model of the world to which the case belongs. It then naturally follows that no causal explanation or "law-and-causes social physics (Geertz, 1983a: 3)" of any cultural phenomenon, such as a flood of commercial sex in Thailand, is attempted. What we want here is "not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description possible, not to generalize across cases but to generalize within them (Geertz, 1973: 26)". Such meaning for which we search must be observed virtually within every exposed components of social field where people communicate with each other. According to Leach (1976: 10), not only verbal but also "all the various non-verbal dimensions of culture, such as styles in clothing, village lay-out, architecture, furniture, food, cooking, music, physical gestures, postural attitudes and so on are organized in patterned sets so as to incorporate coded information in a manner analogous to the sounds and words and sentences of a natural language." What we intend to do is to try to observe the field where various cultural phenomena occur as expressive actions and interpret their meanings. In this sense, each cultural phenomenon manifests itself as an expressive action, it may be a case we observe, is equivalent to a piece of text written down according to certain codes of the system.

However, it should be noticed that the tendency toward search of meaning mentioned above does not always ensure a satisfying explanation of what happens in reality. Marcus and Fisher (1986: 47) point out: "Today, in writing ethnography, there is less attention paid to social activity, and more to the categories, metaphors, and rhetorics embodied in the accounts that informants give of their cultures to ethnographers." However, such a strategic shift invites the "objection to interpretive ethnography is that "cold," "hard" issues of power, interests, economics, and historical change are elided in favor of simply portraying the native point of view as richly as possible (Marcus and Fischer, 1986: 77)." When the social problem like sex work is studied, we had better take a more aggressive stance toward the issues on social dynamics. Taking all these factors into account is indeed hard but at least some of them are undoubtedly worth analyzing. Especially if it could offer a cue to solve or even to take measures to cope with the problem.

In reality, therefore, we should not assume that what to be observed has fixed or changeless form, as a written text does. In fact, the most distinguishing characteristics of interpretive study derive from this point. The first characteristic is that what we interpret is "the flow of social discourse (Geertz, 1973: 20)" rather than the archive waiting for us for a number of years with no fear of disappearance or even transformation. We then, secondly, try "to rescue the "said" of such discourse from its perishing occasions and fix it in perusable terms (Geertz, 1973: 20)." Such a live discourse (it may be conversation, physical gestures or any style of communication) with which we meet in the field will be highly context-oriented. If somebody tries to analyze any piece of social discourse separated from the context where it has been generated, what to be found will be a mere vestige of the meaning actually conveyed. Indeed it may be still significant to those who are interested in some special dimensions, such as changeless 'structure', of the material, which are still within his grasp. Nevertheless, understanding of that sort is somewhat different from that is attempted in this research, that is, understanding toward a good translation of what happened in the other socio-cultural settings. A good translation of one phrase requires a proper understanding of the entire sentence (and perhaps paragraph, otherwise even chapter, article or book) where the phrase is embedded. In the same way, a minute and exact explanation of any cultural phenomena cannot be achieved without closely examining so many directly or indirectly related matters, namely, context. Interpretive description should, thirdly, be "microscopic (Geertz, 1973: 21)" in this sense.

Translating the meaning of other's experience is more difficult than simply understanding it. But there are still many people who wish to be a good translator (even though his translation will never be perfect) and I am certainly one of them. What I care for is "to grasp concepts that, for another people, are experience-near, and to do so well enough to place them in illuminating connection with experience-distant concepts theorists have fashioned to capture the general features of social life (Geertz, 1983b)". Participatory approach is indeed suitable for accessing experience-near world of the others but if we want to make it a feasible strategy for grasping experience-near concept of the others, we should not forget to equip it with precedingly explained characteristics of interpretive study. Thus, this research is not only to be anthropological one using participant observation but also, more specifically, interpretive one which makes 'thick description' possible.

## 2. 1. 2. Interpretive study and 'structuralist' approach

Despite its strong influence on many social scientists, Geertz's interpretive anthropology does not provide a clear operational definition of 'interpretation' and there is no firm agreement among social scientists about what is 'interpretation' of cultural phenomena (Koizumi, 1998). This is the reason why interpretive anthropology has failed to be equipped with organized methodology. The only thing which seems clear is that one's effort of interpreting observed cultural phenomena "begins with a set of (presumptive) signifiers and attempts to place them within an intelligible frame (Geertz, 1973: 27)" to himself. But what is such a frame to be? How can one achieve such a frame? Geertz does not answer to these questions and, more importantly, looking for a definite answer for such questions seems to get nowhere — just as when you read literary writings, there is no detailed manual of interpreting what to be observed in different cultural settings. But still there is a marginal survival skill for those who are required to interpret complex cultural phenomena. That is, in my opinion, the 'structuralist' approach in broad sense.

Geertz strongly criticized Levi-Strauss and seems to want to keep so-called structuralism at something of a distance. He throws doubt on Levi-Strauss's achievements.

That Levi-Strauss should have been able to transmute the romantic passion of *Tristes Tropiques* into the hypermodern intellectualism of *La Pensée Sauvage* is surely a startling achievement. But there remain the questions one cannot help but ask. Is this transmutation science or alchemy? Is the "very simple transformation" which produced a general theory out of a personal disappointment real or a sleight of hand? Is it a genuine demolition of the walls which seem to separate mind from mind by showing that the walls are surface structures only, or is it an elaborately disguised evasion necessitated by a failure to breach them when they were directly encountered? Is Levi-Strauss writing, as he seems to be claiming in the confident pages of *La Pensée Sauvage*, a prolegomenon to all future anthropology? Or is he, like some uprooted neolithic intelligence cast away on a reservation, shuffling the debris of old traditions in a vain attempt to revivify a primitive faith whose moral beauty is still apparent but from which both relevance and credibility have long since departed? (Geertz, 1973b: 359)

However, despite of Geertz's repulsion, the interpretive study of culture highly relies on structuralist approach in its nature. Levi-Strauss himself defines 'structure' as 'elements and the whole consists of those elements' (Levi-Strauss, 1979). Accepting that reducing objects to above-defined 'structure' for analysis is the 'structuralism', such

an attitude of structuralists, with which they try to find and describe invariable relationships among observed phenomena, shows that, as Levi-Strauss (1979) admits, so called structuralism is merely one means to approach and deal with a problem. It is true that such a structuralist attitude<sup>3</sup> is no more than the most fundamental prerequisite for the scientific approach (Takada, 1997; Ikeda, 1990) but it is rather process of interpretation where chaotic phenomenon is segmented and coded so as to be analyzed within comprehensible framework for observer than pursue of causality or universal abstract regularities concerning human culture<sup>4</sup>, from which Geertz resolutely keeps away.

Since the process of interpretation itself is not particular about its object or method, it can be based on, as Levi-Strauss insists, invariable logic among all human being with different cultural backgrounds or, as Geertz claims, the system of meaning commonly holding in a limited and particular social or cultural setting. Interpretive or hermeneutic study can, therefore, take structuralistic tactics in broad sense. Otherwise, Geertz's style of "clinical inference (1973a: 26)" may bring some risks of covering objective with something like well-constructed fantasy (cf. Walters, 1980) in the similar way where Levi-Strauss's radical generalization or excessive dependence on inner logical consistency sometimes makes his argument not to fit the ethnographic data (Leach, 1961; 1989). To avoid falling these traps, I endeavored in my research to make a logical generalization of what is observed with a structuralist attitude by relying exclusively on the reliable data collected through my own fieldwork as long as circumstances permit.

### **2. 1. 3. Participant observation**

The concept of participant observation in broad sense is not necessarily involved with a strict methodological definition. It is simply an attempt to obtain the other's perspective by sharing the experience in the same social field rather than a strictly regulated data collection method. McCall and Simmons clearly pointed out such a nature of participant observation.

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<sup>3</sup> In this sense, Turner's symbolic anthropology or Douglas's study of taboo can be regarded to be interpretive/structuralistic.

<sup>4</sup> Leach (1982) takes a view that such a law of human culture does not exist.



[...] it is probably misleading to regard participant observation as a single method. Rather, in common parlance, it refers to a characteristic blend or combination of methods and techniques that is employed in studying certain types of subject matter [...]. This characteristic blend of techniques, as exemplified by the work of the lone anthropologist living amongst an isolated people, involves some amount of genuinely social interaction in the field with the subjects of the study, some direct observation of relevant events, some formal and a great deal of informal interviewing, some systematic counting, some collection of documents and artifacts, and open-endedness in the direction the study takes (McCall and Simmons, ed., 1969: 1).

Furthermore, the concept of participant observation does not mean only looking at what people are doing. It is often not such passive at all. As Lofland and Lofland (1995: 19) say, "Classic participant observation, then, always involves the interweaving of looking and listening, of watching and asking, and some of that listening and asking may approach or be identical to intensive interviewing."

Because of such a flexible nature, participant observation is generally preferred for the purpose to "collect the richest data. Rich data mean, ideally, a wide and diverse range of information collected over a relatively prolonged period of time (Lofland and Lofland, 1995: 16)." The data collected through participant observation study is generally not always very sophisticated but open to deep or multiple interpretations. This makes it possible to analyze complicated social reality of those studied, such as symbolic meaning of their behavior, and to grasp dynamics of their social intercourse in detail.

However, validity of the explanation generated through participant observation study has always been the issue in two perspectives; "Can the observation of the participant observer be generalized to other populations (external validity)? Do the observations represent real differences, or are they artifacts of the observational process (internal validity)? (Denzin, 1978: 196)." Indeed interpretive study does not care for repeatability of observation, but at least the most elementary issue of objectivity must be addressed through out the research process, namely, "If another observer had been at the particular event, and if he used the same technique, would he have obtained the same results? (Pelto, 1970: 40)."

With regards to external validity, "The argument typically proceeds to state that at the sense of the scientific generalization lies a statistically representative sample of a large number of units from the population to which inferences are to be made (Denzin, 1978: 196)." Actually those taking an interpretive approach, that intend to "not to

generalize across cases but to generalize within them (Geertz, 1973: 26)," tend to keep out of statistical issues of that kind. If the only analysis required is to interpret the meanings of what to be seen, such attitude is still acceptable. However, it is not often the case. In reality, for making the research valuable, we usually need to make some comment on these people (forming a certain society or community) who we did not directly observe. As long as the findings are generalized beyond the observed cases, the problem of external validity cannot be avoided.

Lofland and Lofland (1995: 17) insist that "if one is to collect the rich data, the traditions beckons one to "come close." So-called objectivity and distance vis-à-vis the field setting will usually result in a failure to collect any data that are worth analyzing." But this does not necessarily mean that the successful participation process guarantees the collected data to accurately represent the real social situation. Far from that, what Miller (1969) calls "over-rapport" can sometimes reduce trustworthiness of the data. A certain degree of 'objectivity and distance' vis-à-vis not the field but the observation result are unquestionably necessary. Participant observation method is not fully robust to some effects peculiar to itself, which can influence the internal validity of the observation. McCall writes:

[...] the principal concerns regarding the observational data of the participant observer can be summarized under three headings: (1) reactive effects of the observer's presence or behavior on the phenomenon under observation, with the result that observer does not have the opportunity to observe the very thing that he may have hoped to observe and that he may in fact believe he is observing; (2) distorting effects of selective perception and interpretation on the observer's part; and (3) limitations on the observer's ability to witness all the relevant aspects of the phenomenon in question (McCall, 1969: 128).

More specifically, Denzin (1978: 197) lists up "seven intrinsic factors: (1) historical factors, (2) subject maturation, (3) subject bias, (4) subject mortality, (5) reactive effects of the observer, (6) changes in the observer, and (7) peculiar aspects of the situations" of participant observation, which are "the biasing and distorting". Participatory approach can be never free from the undesirable effects exhibited in foregoing examples because all these are negatives of its unique nature that we find very valuable.

Considering these factors that may spoil the empirical research based on participant observation, we have no choice but to agree with Denzin when he says that "no single method will ever meet the requirements of interaction theory (1978: 28)."

"Triangulation (Webb, et al., 1966; Denzin, 1978)" or "multimethod (Brewer and Hunter, 1989)" approach is one of the effective ways to remedy the weakness of the selected research method. The strategy is simple, that is, "Our individual method may be flawed, but fortunately the flaws in each are not identical. A diversity of imperfection allows us to combine methods not only to gain their individual strengths but also to compensate for their particular faults and limitations (Brewer and Hunter, 1989: 17)." If we can reinforce such a flawed method, say, participant observation with this multimethod or triangulation strategy, the research result will be much more reliable. Moreover, the supplementary method may help the observer to find some important features of those studied, which have been lost on him with the primary method. It is quite expectable that statistical data mining lets the researcher to recognize hidden, weak or unexpected relationships between particular variables. This empirical research in the field of anthropology is usually qualitative one and participant observation is taken as a primary research method. But, as explained above, it seems that introduction of multimethod/trianguration strategy to certain extent may dramatically increase the reliability of research results. Unfortunately, the triangulation or multimethod approach was not actually practiced in this research because of resource limitations. However, it must be considered for future research.

## **2. 2. Research design**

### **2. 2. 1. Overall strategy**

The nature of this research is most cost-effectively summarized in the following two key concepts: qualitative research and participatory approach. Although the nature of qualitative study makes research design flexible rather than tightly pre-determined, I set up certain principles under that the research would be organized. The primary data used in this study was fundamentally obtained through participatory field research. The principal data collection method was direct observation and informal interview.

The research would be an interpretative one and we rely on rather qualitative data than quantitative. In other words, not number of the cases observed but depth of its observation was more valued throughout the process of data collection<sup>5</sup>. Such a

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<sup>5</sup> Because of the nature of participatory approach, the sample developed would be relatively small and perhaps have a serious systematic error. Although not applied to this study, the survey based on semi-structured interview could be used as a supplementary method to

deep-observation could be well obtained through rather flexible and time-consuming method than so called one-shot survey. Participatory approach, which consists of direct observation for a long time period and a large number of informal interview, was quite appropriate for gathering deep and detailed qualitative information. A survey based on questionnaire or formal interview was not as much effective as those in usual research settings (or even obstructive) and therefore avoided for our purpose because of the nature of informants' activities. It was easily predicted that informants would hide the fact or tell a lie in such kinds of research occasions. Establishing a long-term relationship with informants and flexible approach to them, that is, attitude of utilizing any methods and opportunities rather than sticking to typical style of questionnaire and interview were required to obtain reliable and precise information.

Of course, certain amount of secondary data was explored to avoid lacking depth of analysis and explanation. Therefore, the data collection methods used throughout this research can be simply summarized as follows:

- Field research (of participatory approach)
  - Direct observation (participant observation)
  - Informal interview (both very informal and rather structured ones)
- Use of secondary data (mainly past research results and other related literature, magazine and newspaper articles)

Detailed information concerning the primary data collection procedure in this research is exhibited in the following sections.

### **2. 2. 2. Target population; sampling frame; place/location**

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inspect the validity of some of the findings through the qualitative research. Appropriate statistical data mining procedures could help the researcher to increase the accuracy of the study (and bring additional findings which are difficult to obtain only by looking at small number of cases, if intensively conducted). In addition, such a many-faced attack on the problem can help the researcher to consider to what extent the result of the study can be generalized. In other words, it seemed that "multimethod" approach (Brewer and Hunter, 1989) was very effective for exploring the obscure phenomenon like sex work. In future study, use of "multimethod" approach should be taken into consideration so as to improve the reliability of research results.

First of all, I wanted to conduct a research on tourist oriented sex sector because: (1) That has not been often studied from anthropological or sociological perspective. (2) Tourist-oriented commercial sex is the characteristic which makes Thai sex sector (and some other 'developing' countries, such as Philippines) unique while in 'developed' countries and many other 'developing' countries like India or Bangladesh sex work is mainly provided for domestic consumers. However, tourist oriented sex sector contains several segments that are considerably different from each other in its orientation (cf. Cohen, 1996a; 1996b). This would make it difficult for the researcher with limited resources to explore the whole tourist oriented sex sector in Thailand. Therefore, the researcher attempting in-depth study of Thai sex sector had no option but to limit his research perspective within only one of those segments. Bangkok's go-go bar was finally chosen as the segment to be studied.

In this research, I focused my effort of primary data collection on "go-go bars" segment, where most sex workers were financially motivated and most customers<sup>6</sup> were foreigner. The reason why I chose go-go bar segment was its relatively high feasibility of contact with sex workers. Although many of massage-parlor-girls, karaoke-club-girls, call girls, escort girls and girls in coffee shop, disco or pub were also supposed to be similar in their motivation and considerable portion of their customers were from foreign countries, I excluded them from the research perspective. As Cohen points out (1996b), working condition of women working at go-go bar (and those women find their customer at coffee shops or discos) is substantially different from that of masseuses, call girls or karaoke-club-girls because they can take all of the money which customers hand to them in exchange with having a sexual intercourse while in the case of masseuses and so forth the considerable portion of money goes to the owners. In addition, only go-go girls (and coffee shop / disco girls) can choose their customer on their own. Finally, bar girls are different from those girls exclusively in coffee shops or discos in the point that they are employed by the bar and therefore restricted during working hours.

In Bangkok, go-go bars catering to foreigners are gathered in limited areas (See Chapter 3 for detailed information), namely, Patpong road Silom/Sriwong area (Patopng Road) and Sukhumvit area (Nana Entertainment Plaza, Soi Cowboy and

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<sup>6</sup> Throughout this paper, I use the term 'customer' to represent those men visit go-go bar. In conversation with foreigners, bar girls normally refer to the men visiting go-go bar using the English word 'customer,' regardless of whether or not participating in prostitution. The word *khaek* is used in usual Thai conversations.

Clinton Plaza). Each of them has some workers and customers in common. The customers often go on pub-crawls within these areas and the workers having disappeared in one area are sometimes found in the other area. But certain degree of independence and unique characteristics seem to be kept nevertheless, maybe because of geographic distance between each other. This is mainly because go-go bars located in Sukhumvit area mainly target those foreigners staying in Thailand for a longer period (including residents) while go-go bars at Patpong focus on short-stay tourists (many of them are package tourists). I decided to focus on go-go bars in Sukhumvit area where there are more number of bars than Silom/Sriwong area (although less recognized). Actually a few go-go bars were found in Suthisan area but they were completely excluded from this research since Suthisan was a red-light district exclusively for Thais. Although the chief concern was bar dancers, waitresses at go-go bars and girls working at 'beer bars' in those areas were included in the study since it was virtually impossible to clearly differentiate those people from bar dancers. Actually, many of bar dancers do not hold their job for more than a few months and often change their status among those three options.

The target population of the research, therefore, was all women working at go-go bars at Nana Plaza, Soi Cowboy and Clinton Plaza (and Patpong, additionally) and their customers. However, I focused on Japanese customers (the second largest customer ethnic group) because they are easy to access for me as a man from the same country. Taking up Japanese customers seems somewhat meaningful, considering that there has been only a few studies exclusively dealing with them. Since no complete list of the population was accessible, those areas themselves were regarded as a sampling frame and most of the research was concentrated on those places. Such framing seemed fairly reasonable for the study of go-go bars since virtually all of them in Bangkok are located in one of those places.

### **2. 2. 3. Time schedule**

The fieldwork process extended 15 months: from September 1999 to November 2000. In reality, I had to interrupt my fieldwork for three months (from March to May 2000) and accordingly the data collection process took approximately 12 months in real terms. Since it was usually considered that exhaustive monograph of one society required a relatively long period of fieldwork to be successfully completed, 12 months (or even 15 months if there had been no interruption) did not really seem long enough to obtain enough information about research field in every respect although another 6

months were used for research preparation. I appreciated this time constraint and therefore the aims of this study were limited as presented in Chapter 1.

#### **2. 2. 4. Preparatory research**

Before starting a full participation, preparatory research was conducted to establish a clear guideline of data collection and analysis. Since the research was merely an auxiliary measure and flexibility was indispensable, data collection method and time period was not necessarily specified. However, sporadic visiting to the target place and observing and talking with people there would make it possible to gain an insight into the field and target population. Literature review also provided a basic knowledge on the related issues.

#### **2. 2. 5. Unit of analysis**

Since the activities of sex workers and their customers are done on an individual basis, individual respondent/informant was taken as a unit of analysis. However, the principal aim of this study is not to analyze particular individuals (and their relationships). The insights obtained through the analyses of individual-specific cases are presented in somewhat abstract forms.

#### **2. 2. 6. Data collection method**

Participatory methods, namely, direct observation and informal interview, were the means of data gathering. Intensive and long-term fieldwork was. Practically, the only way of contacting the people in the target field was to visit there as a customer. I needed to visit the target field regularly to have a long-term relationship with people there. It was desirable to establish rapport with several sex workers and their customers and to keep a contact on an individual basis.

Because 'prostitution' was illegal in Thailand, it could be easily guessed that people engaged in it would not readily let outsiders know the truth about their business. In addition, since sex work was one of the occupations which were most likely to be beneath contempt (although it was not really justified), the women there might not be pleased to be asked about their activities. Therefore, in the field, researcher was

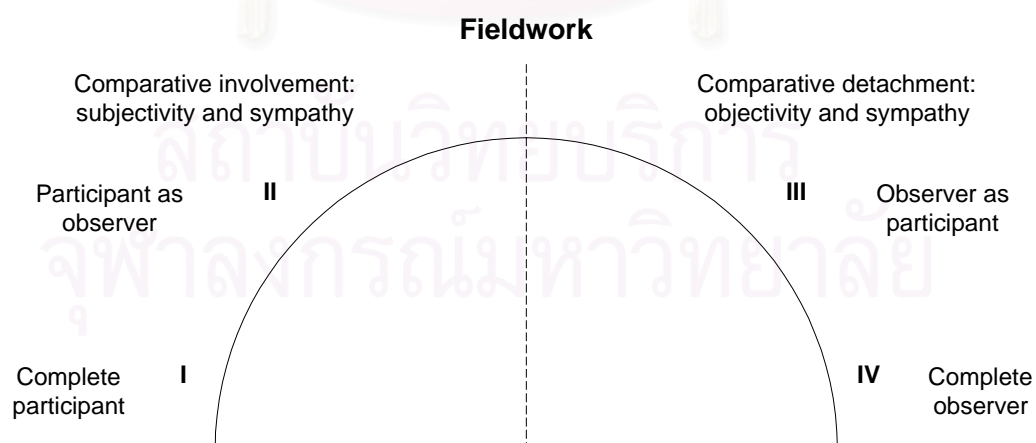
required to act as a perfect participant so that nobody would know he was conducting a research on sex workers. Taylor and Bogdan suggest participant observers to have an acceptable role to play in the field. It would help the researcher not only to successfully make a direct observation but also to avoid problems deriving from being discord with the other people there.

There are sometimes advantages to being placed in a familiar role in a setting. Access is more easily obtained; the observer has something to do; people are not as self-conscious in the researcher's presence; and some data are more accessible [...] (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998: 47).

In this research, the possible role played was to feign something like an easygoing but not-so-wealthy guest, so as to avoid not only to be suspected but also to be expected too much as a potential buyer of sexual services.

Accordingly, given Junker's classification of fieldworker (Figure 2-1), my position in the research field is considered as a 'complete participant.' I think I did everything similar to what other customers were doing, except paying women for having sexual intercourse and giving them expensive presents. I certainly hold a particular perspective in common with many Japanese customers there as a potential customer of bar girls. However, I tried not to generalize my own experience throughout this study.

**Figure 2-1: Theoretical roles for fieldwork**



Source: Junker, 1960: 36



Taking such a position in the research field brought some obstacles for data collection. Without confessing to be a researcher, it was quite difficult to give direct, detailed and effective questions to informants. The only way to compensate this disadvantage was to make observation longer and deeper as much as possible. Moreover, asking a question as a customer at go-go bars could prevent bar girls from replying honestly or frankly. Jones (1983) points out that social science research conducted in Southeast Asian countries is likely to suffer from 'courtesy bias.' When a researcher interviews informants, they may give a fatally biased answer as courtesy that dictates "No one may disagree openly with a person of higher status" or "If possible, what is said should be please and complement (Jones, 1983: 254)." It was easily predicted that bar girls were willing to tell a lie to please her customer or 'wallet.' Paying too much for bar girls or treating them with freehand might harm reliability of the information to be provided. The researcher must be meticulously careful when he relies on his money to establish rapport with his informants.

### **2. 2. 7. Sample design**

The sample drawn from people found in go-go bars and beer bars in Sukhumvit area, namely, Nana Plaza, Soi Cowboy and Clinton Plaza, as explained above provided database for this study. The data collected in Silom/Sriwong area (Patpong) was treated as a supplementary one. Eligible respondents/informants were those who involved in commercial sex activities in those areas, that is, female sex workers and their Japanese male customers. Although some *farang* male customers were additionally interviewed, they were not included in the main target population of this research.

The sample consisted of a relatively small number of cases (the actual number highly subjects to chance factor) and was selected on a non-probability basis from those areas. Considering nature of participant observation method, I did not see much possibility of probability sampling. Non-probability based convenience sampling (could be a so-called 'snowball sampling') was taken instead, which was the most practical method in the research environment (However, Biernacki and Waldorf (1982) suggests that trustworthy statistical inference on target population can be made using the data collected with a carefully conducted snowball sampling). Although I tried to eliminate biases concerning demographic characteristics of the informants (e.g., age and workplace), from whom I could draw the detailed information was highly dependent on the chance. Any information on each case was recorded and accumulated throughout

a certain period of time. The information from the sample was mainly used to describe, interpret and understand the target population or phenomena.

Because participant observation was conducted as a main technique of data gathering, the effect of sample size on achieving accurate results could not be clearly known. In the last result, my database contained 61 bar girls and 23 male customers. Although the informants with whom I could keep a long-term rapport were only a part of them, I repeatedly had in-depth conversations with more than 20 bar girls and around 10 Japanese customers. Although the idea of multimethod research and methodological triangulation suggests that exploring two different samples rather than only one sample was expected to increase accuracy of the study, the multi-sampling approach could not be taken in this research because of the certain resource limitations.



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## CHAPTER 3

### The bar scene

#### 3. 1. Go-go bar segment's position in the sex sector in Thailand

The rise of communism in Indochina after the Second World War resulted to the rapid growth of American military aid to Thailand. Especially during the war in Vietnam, Thailand was given a role as an entertainment center for G.I. as well as a supply base. Many R&R style bars catering to American soldiers were established in Bangkok and around the bases of the U.S. army located especially in East and Northeast Thailand. Internationally famous go-go<sup>7</sup> bars, noisy and gaily lighted bars with naked or near-naked dancers available as a lover for the night, were the legacy of this time. By the early 1980s, many go-go bars opened along by Patpong Road and formed the most famous go-go bar area in Bangkok (Dawson, 1988). Soi Cowboy and Nana Entertainment Plaza in Bangkok came up on the heels of Patpong and many beach resorts, such as Pattaya and Phuket, also became armed with go-go bars. Nowadays, go-go bar is certainly one of the most well known styles of Thai sex business.

The sex sector in Thailand is extremely diversified. It is true that "the segmentation of the commercial sex sector in Thailand clearly makes it difficult to generalize about prostitution in Thailand (Boonchalaksi and Guest, 1994: 50)". Although the go-go bar segment is the most visible prostitution venue, actually it accounts for only a small portion of the Thai sex sector as a whole.

Boonchalaksi and Guest (1994: 40) report that main "places where prostitution is currently practiced in Thailand", that is:

- Traditional brothels
- Hotels and motels
- Tea-rooms
- Massage parlors

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<sup>7</sup> It is said that the term 'go-go' comes from the French term 'a go go' which means 'plenty of.' The other exposition of the origin of the term is that it refers to the style of the dance that bar girls show to customers, that is, the go-go dance.

- Call girls and escort-girls services
- Bars, night clubs, go-go bars, cocktail-lounges, restaurants
- Public places (street walkers)
- Other places such as golf clubs, discos, pubs etc.

The segment of the sex industry catering to foreigners (Westerners, Japanese and tourists from South Korea and NIEs) is actually very small compared with that catering to Thais. Traditional brothels are found virtually everywhere in Thailand and customers are exclusively Thai. Hotels and motels, and tea rooms also mainly target Thais rather than foreigners. Main target of massage parlors, and call girls and escort-girls services are indeed Thais but establishments in these segments do have a certain portion of foreign customers. Other remaining three segments are very diversified but, generally speaking, these establishments operated in central Bangkok usually accept foreign customers to greater or lesser extent.

Session price really varies by business style and target customer segment. Those establishments targeting lower socio-economic class Thais may charge some 100-500 baht per session. On the other hand, tourists from the Western countries or upper class Thais are willing to pay several thousands baht per session. Table 3-1 exhibits the estimated per-session price of various types of venue.

The sex scene in Bangkok catering to foreigners can roughly be divided into six main types of venue: go-go bars, massage parlors, beer bars, karaoke bars, call girls and freelancer hangouts. Go-go bars and beer bars are exclusively targeting foreigners (especially Westerners). The other business styles or venues can be for both foreigners and Thais. The dominant ethnicity of the target market of each business style largely depends on the establishment's location and intended price. The estimated numbers<sup>8</sup> of sex workers in various venues are presented on Table 3-1.

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<sup>8</sup> The estimated numbers of sex worker (grossed) presented here seem too conservative (See Section 1.1).

**Table 3-1: Estimate of numbers of sex workers and session income, 1996**

| Type of place                  | No. of places |              | No. of workers |             | Price per session (baht) |             |          | Sessions / day (times) | Income / month (baht) |
|--------------------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|-------------|--------------------------|-------------|----------|------------------------|-----------------------|
|                                | Survey        | Survey       | Gross.         | Low         | High                     | Aveg.       |          |                        |                       |
| Brothel                        | 831           | 6084         | 18470          | 100         | 500                      | 300         | 3        | 22500                  |                       |
| Sauna                          | 5             | 20           | 61             | 1000        | 1500                     | 1250        | 1.5      | 46875                  |                       |
| Massage parlor                 | 131           | 7871         | 23895          | 500         | 1800                     | 1150        | 1.5      | 43125                  |                       |
| Traditional massage            | 587           | 6221         | 18886          | 500         | 1500                     | 1000        | 1.5      | 37500                  |                       |
| Garden restaurant              | 2577          | 13732        | 41688          | 500         | 2000                     | 1250        | 1.5      | 46875                  |                       |
| Hotel                          | 200           | 1543         | 4684           | 200         | 500                      | 350         | 3        | 26250                  |                       |
| Barber                         | 55            | 127          | 386            | 500         | 1000                     | 750         | 1.5      | 28125                  |                       |
| Tea-house                      | 41            | 1063         | 3227           | 100         | 500                      | 300         | 3        | 22500                  |                       |
| Bungalow                       | 27            | 111          | 337            | 500         | 1000                     | 750         | 1        | 18750                  |                       |
| Cafe                           | 515           | 7058         | 21417          | 500         | 2000                     | 1250        | 0.75     | 31250                  |                       |
| Membership club                | 200           | 0            | 5000           | 2000        | 6000                     | 4000        | 0.75     | 75000                  |                       |
| Cocktail lounge                | 78            | 1122         | 3406           | 1200        | 4000                     | 2600        | 1        | 48750                  |                       |
| Karaoke                        | 916           | 6479         | 19669          | 1200        | 4000                     | 2600        | 1        | 65000                  |                       |
| Pub                            | 112           | 939          | 2851           | 800         | 2500                     | 1650        | 1        | 41250                  |                       |
| Beer bar                       | 618           | 4843         | 14702          | 100         | 2500                     | 1750        | 1        | 43750                  |                       |
| Gay bar                        | 61            | 30           | 91             | 800         | 1500                     | 1150        | 1        | 28750                  |                       |
| <b>A go-go bar<sup>9</sup></b> | <b>177</b>    | <b>3461</b>  | <b>10507</b>   | <b>1000</b> | <b>3000</b>              | <b>2000</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>50000</b>           |                       |
| Ramwong bar                    | 9             | 300          | 911            | 500         | 1000                     | 750         | 1        | 18750                  |                       |
| Night-club                     | 104           | 1843         | 5595           | 1000        | 3000                     | 2000        | 1        | 50000                  |                       |
| Coffee shops                   | 58            | 268          | 814            | 800         | 1500                     | 1150        | 1        | 28750                  |                       |
| Discotheque                    | 44            | 238          | 723            | 1000        | 2000                     | 1500        | 1        | 37500                  |                       |
| Beauty parlor                  | 31            | 44           | 134            | 500         | 1500                     | 1000        | 1        | 25000                  |                       |
| Phone call                     | 45            | 322          | 978            | 800         | 1500                     | 1150        | 1        | 28750                  |                       |
| Streetwalker                   | 20            | 220          | 668            | 200         | 1000                     | 600         | 2        | 30000                  |                       |
| Other places                   | 65            | 294          | 893            | 1000        | 2000                     | 1500        | 1        | 37500                  |                       |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>7327</b>   | <b>64233</b> | <b>200000</b>  |             |                          |             |          |                        |                       |

Source: Phongpaichit, et al., 1998: 202

Pongpaichit, et al. (1998: 208-209) divide sex workers into “four categories depending on the underlying motives which propel them to enter the market and the conditions under which they operate.”

<sup>9</sup> My own fieldwork suggests that, at least regarding Sukhumvit area, not many bar dancers can have a customer every working day. The majority of bar girls (who are neither really young nor attractive) can have 10 customers/sessions per month or less. Accordingly, average income of 50,000 baht seems overestimated (See Section 4.1). Estimated monthly incomes presented in the table generally seem much higher than the real average monthly incomes.

1. "The first group includes those who are under some form of restraint. They may be sold into the trade by their parents, or trapped by agents, or simply locked up in a brothel".
2. "The second group is those under heavy economic compulsion to work to support dependants".
3. "The third group includes women who are young, attractive, and entrepreneurial and who have entered the trade of their own free will because of the financial incentive".
4. "The fourth group consists of the part-timers, the semi-professionals, who are may be students or have regular jobs as sales girls or factory workers".

Virtually all women who are classified into category 2-4 are financially motivated. In reality, it is very difficult to make clear distinction between those categories. Such financially motivated sex workers should be equally taken into account in the study on the tourist oriented sex sector (including go-go bar) in current Thai society.

### **3. 2. Location**

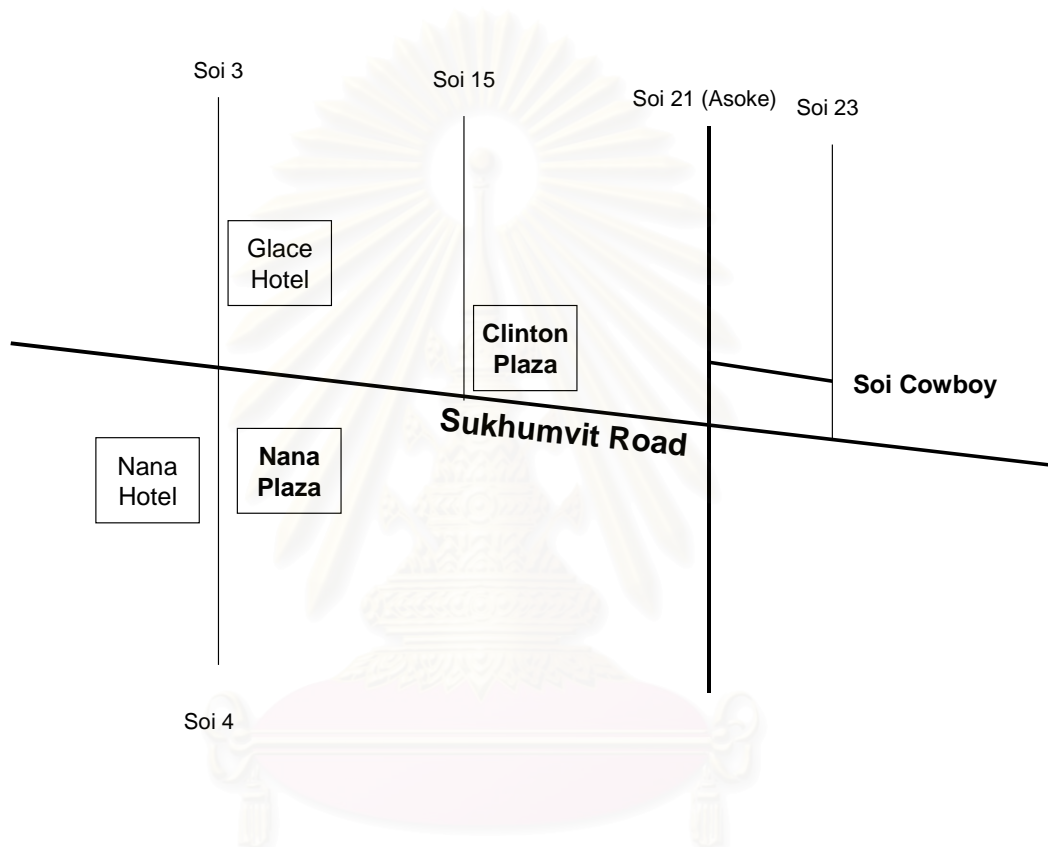
In Bangkok, there are several places where go-go bars are concentrated. Five major go-go bar areas in Bangkok are Patpong, Nana Plaza, Soi Cowboy, Clinton Plaza and Suthisan Road. Go-go bars at Suthisan Road cater exclusively to Thais and therefore were eliminated from the scope of this study.

Patpong is located right beside the business center of the city. Patpong refers to the short (some 200 meters) street connecting Silom and Sriwong Road, both form the heart of Bangkok's primary commercial district. Silom/Sriwong area attracts a lot of tourist these days. Especially in the night time, the area is full of tourists (not only men but also women, couples and children) partly because of a busy night market at Patpong 1 Road and some part of Silom Road. Patpong is the oldest go-go bar area in Bangkok and has international reputation. In Silom/Sriwong area, not only go-go bars but also virtually every style of sexual establishment is available.

The other three go-go bar areas are dotted along Sukhumvit Road (Figure 3-1) which forms a newer downtown than Silom/Sriwong area. Nana Plaza (formally named Nana Entertainment Plaza) is a go-go bar area which has become very popular in the last few years. Nana Plaza is located on Sukumvit Soi 4 and forms a sex shopping center in a three-story, horseshoe building. There are more than 40 bars in Nana Plaza, most of which are go-go bars. The street floor has open beer bars as well. Soi Cowboy is the 100-meter long street located between Sukhumvit Soi 21 (Asoke) and 23. Small

go-go bars and beer bars line both sides of the street. Clinton Plaza (formally named Clinton Entertainment Plaza) is a recently developed (during the year 2000) entertainment complex with several go-go bars, beer bars and counter bars. Clinton Plaza is located between Soi 15 and 17.

**Figure 3-1: Map of Sukhumvit area**



The area from the start point of Sukhumvit Road (where several beer bars are concentrated) to Soi Cowboy (between Soi 21 and 23) can be actually considered as a large sex-oriented ecology where Thai sex workers and foreign customers wander about. My effort of fieldwork was focused on this area. There are some more unforgettable establishments for sex trade. Opposite of Nana Plaza, Angel Disco (commonly referred as Nana Disco) in Nana Hotel is the place where freelancers and the girls from Nana Plaza, who has not had a customer or those who want another chance, gather to look for customer or 'boyfriend' for the night. Similarly, Rainbow 2000 Disco (owned by Rainbow Group) in the same *soi* is swamped with girls from Nana Plaza, especially after 2:30 am (after the bars closed). There is another late night freelance venue, that is, a world-infamous Thermae coffee shop located just near Clinton Plaza. Similarly at Nana Disco, not only freelancers but also bar girls who could not get customer visit there to see foreign male nighthawks. Thermae coffee shop is

open until 6 or 7 am. It is the last resort for those men-hunters and foreign men. Toward daybreak, those who still has not given up to have a partner of casual sex show up to get the last chance.

### 3. 3. Number of the bars and bar girls

There are more than some 25 go-go bars in Patpong area. The bars located on the first floor tend to be large; each bar probably has 50 to 100 bar girls. Many of larger bars are operated by the Kings Group (Thai-owned). The bars owned by Kings Group are well-operated and provide highly standardized services and therefore there are many tourists, regardless of sex or age, who visit some of them to take a look.

There are 28 go-go bars at Nana Plaza and most of them are owned by one of the three major groups. Crown Group and Hollywood Group are *farang*-owned while the owner of Rainbow Group is Thai. The owner of those independent bars could be either *farang* or Thai. Soi Cowboy does not have obvious oligopolists. There are go-go bars or beer bar in Soi Cowboy but only three of them are owned by Tilac group, two are owned by Long Gun Group. There are only five go-go bars at Clinton Plaza but some of them are capitalized by the major groups in Nana Plaza. The number of the girls per establishment really depends on bar, and varies from time to time. The bar girls in Sukhumvit area can freely skip from one bar to another and are not unionized. In addition, the girls serve for a group-owned bar are shuffled among several different bars so that the bars always introduce some 'new faces.' These conditions make it very difficult to estimate the total number of bar girls working in Sukhumvit area while I guess there are at least 2,500 bar girls (those who serve at go-go bars or beer bars) in this area. Detailed demographic information of Nana Plaza, Soi Cowboy and Clinton Plaza is provided in Appendix.

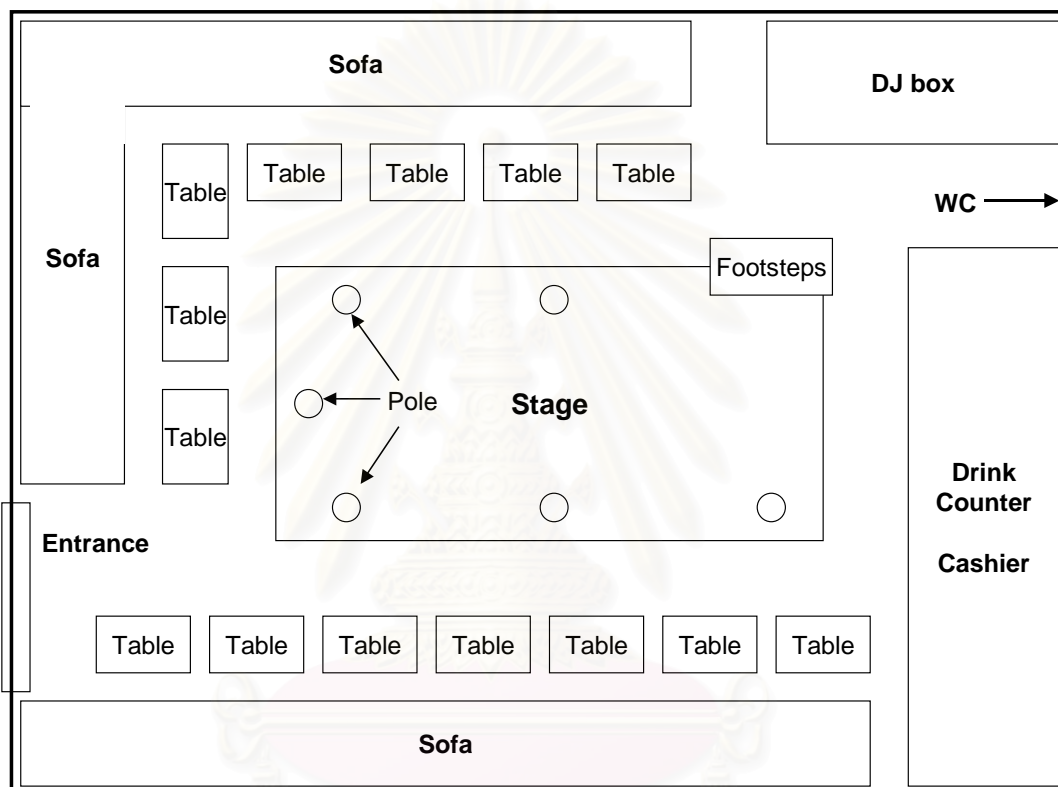
### 3. 4. Business style and system

Go-go bars in Bangkok basically offer alcoholic beverages, such as beer or whiskey. Most bars have four walls adorned with large mirrors, loud pop/rock/disco music and disco style lights (mirror balls and dazzling violent colors lights) flushing around. The lightning is basically very dark. What is distinctive is a stage or dancing platform with several silvery metal poles (Figure 3-2), on which bikinied or naked women show their body to prospective customers. Typically counter with stools



surrounds the stages. Most bars have some 20 centimeter-raised platform circled the walls, which supports bench-like shabby sofas and small tables. Every bar had a spirit house set on the wall near the ceiling. When dancers get on the stage, most of them quickly do *wai* to it.

**Figure 3-2: Diagram of typical go-go bar**



Go-go bars vary in size from small cramped bars with a narrow stage allowing only 2-3 girls on it to large disco-like bars with several dance stages, on which dozens of girls display their contour at the same time. Women dancing on the stage are basically undressed. They are typically bikiniied or topless while some bars at Nana Plaza have totally naked dancers. Dancers usually formed several operational groups and get on the stage by rotation at intervals for around 4 or 5 songs. Therefore, half or one third of the working staff are always on stage.

Beside dancers, there are several kinds of women given different roles. The majority are dancers, who go on the elevated dancing platform or, when they do not, attend customers. Waitresses take orders of, serve drinks to and bring a bill to customers. Different from dancers, waitresses are in uniform which often look like

school cloths. Outside of the bar, there are several women trying to entice customers inside, with broken English barking out “Hello welcome,” “Welcome mister” etcetera. In general, not only dancers but also waitresses and barkers are available for extra services. Theoretically all women in the bar engage in prostitution in varying degrees. Usually go-go bars in Sukhumvit area do not employ many men. Although some exceptional bars have waiters, men’s jobs in usual bars are limited to D.J. and tout.

Some bars offer ‘sexy shows’ which are usually lesbian show or obscene sex show performed by fully naked women. Usually those women participating in shows are less popular dancers who are attracted by an extra allowance of some 20 baht per stage.

One of the most important characteristics of go-go bars is no-cover system. Competition is severe among these bars and has driven them to make free entrance standard. Customers do not have to pay anything when they get in the door. Because of its no-cover system, keeping customers around to order more drinks is crucial to revenue. Their ‘sexy show’ is one of their measures to try to draw in and hold larger crowds. Drinks are in the 80 to 100 baht range (Table 3-3) and payment is made later. Some beer bars even serve food and most bars are willing to bring some food to customers from the food vendors outside. Rip-offs are uncommon in bars in Sukhumvit area.

**Table 3-2: Price of drinks at go-go bar<sup>10</sup>**

| <i>Drinks</i> | <i>Unit</i>  | <i>Price</i> | <i>Drinks</i> | <i>Unit</i>   | <i>Price</i> |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| Draught Beer  | Small bottle | 80           | Cocktails     | Glass         | 100          |
| Other Beers   | Small bottle | 90           | Soft drinks   | Glass         | 75           |
| Whiskies      | Glass        | 90           | Coffee        | Cup           | 45           |
| Brandies      | Glass        | 90           |               |               |              |
| Liquors       | Glass        | 85           | Whiskies      | Small bottle* | 1600         |
| Thai Whiskies | Glass        | 75           | Liquors       | Small bottle* | 1300         |
| Shooters      | Glass        | 75           | Thai Whiskies | Small bottle* | 600          |
| Wine Cooler   | Small bottle | 85           |               |               |              |
| Wines         | Glass        | 75           | Lady drink    | Glass         | 75           |

\* Bottle can be reserved.

Source: The researcher’s filed work

Another device which bar owners thought out to attract customers to order more drinks is ‘lady drink.’ Lady drink is the drinks (usually a small glass of coke, or any other

<sup>10</sup> An example of Crown Group, as of November 2000. The other go-go bars in Sukhumvit area offer similar prices while most drinks are a little (some 10 baht par glass) more in Patpong. Drink prices at beer bars are lower than those at go-go bars by 20-40%.

drinks the girl likes) which the customer buys women in exchange for their company. Bar girls (both dancer or waitress) get a cut of lady drink price. Usually their commission is about 20 to 30 baht per glass. Buying a lady drink is not obligatory (even though some bar girls come to sit together), so those customers who do not want girls' accompany do not spend their money on it.

Bar fine system is the other important source of revenue for bar owners, beside drinks. Anyone wishing to take away an employee will need to pay a bar fine, commonly called 'pay bar.' This is a fee for the privilege of or compensation for removing one income source (in terms of lady drink) of the lineup. Bar fines range from 400 to 500 baht but many bars charge bar fine of some 1,000 baht for waitresses and barkers. The reasons why bar fine for non-dancers is more expensive are: (1) To keep girls to serve customers, and (2) To give dancers more chance to get 'off.' Since dancers are more important for management of the bar, they should be given preferential treatment. The girl can refuse customer's offer of 'pay bar' if she is not in the mood or simply does not like him.

Price of sexual (or any other kind of) service outside the bar fully depends on negotiation between the girl and customer. Usually girls try to charge as much as they can, but current quotations for normal sexual intercourse are 1,000 to 1,500 baht for short time (typically 1-2 hours) and 2,000 to 2,500 baht for all night. Girls can put all portion of the paid money in their pocket. The bar is completely not concern with it. Of course young, attractive girls tend to get more, and wealthy and less knowledgeable tourists tend to pay more. It is possible for those popular girls to get several customers within one night. Again, not only the price but also to go or not to go with the customer fundamentally depends on the girl's will.

Beer bars have basically the same system as go-go bars. The only difference is that beer bar is simply an open bar and the girls served are not naked. Although the price of drink is lower than in go-go bar, bar fine and the price of sexual service tend to be the same. The girls at beer bar serve as both waitresses and hostesses. They take care of the customers.

Usually bars close between 2:00 to 3:00 am. Closing time of the bar varies from bar to bar, but usually most bars close between 2:00 to 3:00 am with occasional exceptions on special days such as Christmas eve and new year eve. The authorities' regulation of opening hours is up to 2:00 am, so when the authorities intermittently tighten the control, all bars close at 2:00 pm. The authorities acquiesce what is going

on in the bar and maintain peace of the whole neighborhood, in return for a bribe of several dozen baht per month from each bar.



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## CHAPTER 4

### The bar girls - customers relationship: Overview

#### 4. 1. Introduction

A relationship between a bar girl and her customer could vary in its depth and characteristics. In general, bar girls are not physically forced to engage in their current job. In many cases they work at a bar mainly because of personal rather than moral reasons, such as desire for consumption. Since bar girls are given free choice (although limited by her economic status) over their working style, usually circumstances allow bar girls to decide and choose the most favorable style of relationship to be established with each of their customers. The relationship between each bar girl and customer is formed at the point of equilibrium of their personal interests. This chapter provides a bird's-eye picture of variety of bar girl - customer relationship at the bar scene.

#### 4. 2. Bar girls as an emancipated sex worker

It has been emphasized in existing studies of Thai prostitution that, throughout the recent history in Thai rural area, women have been required to contribute to their family especially in economic terms. Because of male-centered ideology of Thai popular Buddhism (Kirsch, 1982) or traditional image of 'good mother' as an ideal woman (Keyes, 1984), Thai women have been given domestic and economic role in Thai family system rather than social and political role.

[Women's] ultimate role, culturally defined, is that of a devoted wife. Moreover, when one looks at the lives of Thai villagers, one finds that women are expected to sustain and provide a substantial financial contribution to the family (Satha-Anand, 1999: 199).

Women share a great portion of responsibility for their households and, given serious constraints to obtain cash earnings in their home village, they are often given no choice but out-migration to Bangkok. Indeed, Sirisambhand (1994) reports the number of female in-migration to the Bangkok Metropolitan area is significantly higher

than that of male<sup>11</sup>. But in Bangkok most of them are absorbed into the informal sector and reconciled accepting monotonous and low-paid job. Although the results of the case studies Sirisambhand (1994) conducted show those self-employed female in-migrants tend to earn a relatively high income<sup>12</sup>, while income of a large majority<sup>13</sup> is expected to be significantly lower, considering the legal minimum wage in Bangkok of less than 200 baht. Such actualities of female in-migrants provide firm socio-economic fundamental reason for young in-migrant women to become a sex worker. Indeed, Phongpaichit's study (1982) of Bangkok massage parlor found that respondents commonly thought of themselves as the breadwinner of their family. Boonchalaksi and Guest sum up this schema:

Thai daughters contribute in any way they can to the support of their parents. This expectation, when it occurs in conjunction with an economic structure which provides relatively high rewards for work in the sex industry, can represent a strong motivation for young women to enter prostitution (Boonchalaksi and Guest, 1994: 7)."

Indeed, the survey Whittaker conducted in a Northeast village "suggests that young women are more likely than men to send remittance to their village kin (1999: 52)." Moreover, "Villagers state that the unmarried daughters are far more responsible and reliable in sending money to their families than sons who are said to *kin len* ("eat and play") their wages on alcohol, women, and entertainment (Whittaker, 1999: 52)."

However, based on his fieldwork in the Bangkok *soi*, Cohen (1996b) gives a picture of the bar girls (and those girls who hunt their customers in coffee shops) who do not really devotedly support their parents.

They live seemingly frugally, and indeed spend little on food and other basic necessities. But, once they have money, it passes quickly through their hands on clothing, cosmetics, drink, gambling and, in some cases, drugs. Almost all have family obligations and support their children, parents, or younger siblings from their income — although the actual remittance seem to be smaller than they claim (Cohen, 1996b: 273)

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<sup>11</sup> According to the survey of National Statistics Office cited by Sirisambhand, the number of female in-migrants was 47,008 and male was 30,845 in 1988.

<sup>12</sup> "Their average net monthly income from trade and services are about 6,583 and 7,428 baht respectively (Sirisambhand, 1994: 71)."

<sup>13</sup> According to the above statistics, self-employed or own account workers were only 3.4% of all female in-migrants.

The results of my own fieldwork support Cohen's view. The stereotyped image of ill-starred Thai young girls who enter prostitution so as to financially help their parents is not always the case of the girls working at Bangkok go-go bar. Indeed most of them remit some portion of income to their parents (and/or children) but that is not unique to either sex worker or other female in-migrants with non-sex work. The data from my fieldwork research also suggest that indeed most bar girls send some portion of their income but in the case of go-go sector the amount is not very large. Boonchalaksi and Guest (1994: 92-96) found that workers in one brothel sent average 39% (1,841 baht per month) of their income and workers in a massage parlor sent 22% (6,151 baht per month). Although their survey was not conducted on probability basis and consequently the results cannot be generalized to the whole brothel or massage parlor sector, one general law could be extracted from the data presented — the more income and freedom, the less remittance. The most extreme case would be those part-time student prostitutes who receive much higher amount of money (3,000 to 5,000 baht per session) and free from any restriction as a laborer (Bangkok Post, 1999). Of course, they have no obligation of remittance and spent all amount of income from their part time job. A majority of the bar girls should be placed between masseuses and university student prostitutes, with their income of 1000 to 3000 per session and a work condition where they are to have their customers according to their own decision based on economic consideration and personal preference.

My own fieldwork results suggest that most bar dancers in Sukhumvit area earn monthly income of more than 10,000 baht (although not many girls can get 30,000 baht or more per month). However, it is not rare that a woman getting 10,000+ baht monthly income remits only 1,000 baht or so to their family. Especially in the cases of those young and/or attractive girls who make 20,000 to 50,000 baht or more, the proportion of remittance to their total income would be significantly low. The way of thinking of such girls seems rather that they send some money to parents simply because they can afford it and not that they work at a go-go bar in order to help their parents. In the cases of women who left their children to their parents, the amount of remittance tend to be higher but still remittance is for children rather than parents.

Case: Noi, Oi and Nan

*Noi, Oi and Nan are currently working at Nana Plaza as a bar dancer. They are from the family in the outskirts of Petchabun consisting of their parents and six siblings*

*(two brothers and four sisters). The oldest sister's family and the parents live in the same site (but different house) and she takes care of the parents.*

*Oi, the third sister is 26 years old and has been working as a bar girl for 9 years, since she was 18. She finished only elementary school but got a job at a chicken-meat factory at Petchabun province at the age of 16. After 2 years working there, she quit the job because she simply did not like such a routine job even though she earned around 5,000 baht per month was not too bad. She came up to Bangkok with her boyfriend and now lives with him and their son. Her salary is average 7,000 to 8,000 baht per month and kick back from her customers' drink amounts to some 3,000 to 4,000 baht. This is her fixed income and usually she receive at least 10,000 baht from her customers. The income from prostitution highly depends on chance. If she gets a generous customer, she may make 20,000 baht or more. Her boyfriend is working as a messenger at a Japanese company and his salary is about 8,000 baht per month. Total household income usually amounts, consequently, around 30,000 baht or more. Actually this is a good deal but they run through this every month and the amount of remittance to Oi's parents is 1,000 to 2,000 baht per month. They live in a studio apartment without kitchen and air conditioner, which costs 2,500 per month. But they equip their room with every single piece of electrical appliances and have to bear very high electricity charges and the monthly loan payment for husband's motorbike. In addition, Oi's drink money runs into fairly large figures in my view.*

*Nan is 18 years old and the youngest daughter of the family. She came up to Bangkok just after finishing her study at junior high school. Listening to Oi's complaining about her factory work always, Nan had never thought of getting a job around her hometown. She served as a waitress in several restaurants or discotheques and made net receipt of some 5,000 baht per month. Low wage indisposed her from working as a waitress and she decided to be a bar girl at the age of 18. Having a bar girl sister, she was well aware of what she had to do to make a good money. She has been working at a go-go bar that Oi and the other sister belonged to for a year. At the beginning she dared not 'go with' customer and so her income was limited. Now she is not reluctant to have a customer and her financial condition has been getting better. Her current salary is 3,000 to 4,000 per month since she cannot have 7 'offs' per month and she is often behind the time or even absent when she is not in the mood. Although she does not have a customer regularly, her receipt from prostitution usually amounts nearly 10,000 baht a month. Her net monthly income amounts a little less than 20,000 baht altogether. She lives in a single room costs only 1,500 baht a month. Although her*



*cost of living is not really high, she sends only some 1,000 baht a month to her parents. Since she has no child left to the parents, she does not see the necessity of remittance.*

*Noi, the second oldest sister, has been working at go-go bar for three months. She is married but her husband had the other woman, run away from home, and left Noi and two sons. She could not find a good job in her hometown and decided to come to Bangkok, left her two sons to the parents. Working at go-go bar seemed the easy way out since she had a connection already. Although she serves as a go-go dancer, she has never had a customer. She does not think she will at least in the near future. Since she is not keen on getting a customer, her income is considerably low. Her salary does not reach 3,000 baht, taken penalties off. She makes some 5,000 baht a month but she sends up to 2,000 baht to the parents who take care of her children.*

*Along with them, their two brothers also send some money and the total amount of remittance which the parents receive reaches 7,000 to 8,000 baht a month. Given the oldest sister's family's help, this is fairly enough for the parents and their grand children to make a living. When I asked Oi and Nan if they think the amount of remittance was too small, they answered that even though the remittance of each person was a little, what the parents received in the aggregate was fairly acceptable amount. I have visited their parent's home and, as long as I saw, they are not badly off, keeping a refrigerator, television, stereo, video deck, and karaoke player. Although the waterworks have not been installed, they did not seem to be in such distress.*

What to be observed with this case is that none of the sisters have a way of thinking that it is their duty or obligation to make a lot of money to provide the parents with a new house, car or so. Especially Oi and Nan seem to think that they have a right to spend the money they made, as they like. Only Noi shows a strong drive to make a remittance to her children. When Santasombat (1992: 23) says that "in the northeast, very little pressure is being put on the girls for them to bring home money," it is notable that more than half female sex workers at go-go bars are from the Northeast. Generally speaking, the bar girls' motive to start sex work as a bar girl is mainly to increase their income for rather personal reasons and not moral obligation to the parents<sup>14</sup>. As long as my observation suggests, indeed many bar girls send some portion of their income

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<sup>14</sup> Of course, such a tendency cannot be generalized to Thai sex workers at large. Those sex workers at go-go bar are somewhat special. They can earn significantly more income than those prostitutes working at brothels or other place which entertain ordinary Thai men and more importantly they are not under a yoke of neither debt nor physical power.

to their family in the hometown but most of them do not show such a spirit of self-sacrifice. Although it should not be forgotten that the problems of rural poverty and unequal wage structure<sup>15</sup> condition the young women's choice of occupation, it can be generally said that free<sup>16</sup> choice and control over their body are ensured to bar girls.

### 4. 3. The transactional modes in the bar scene

From the macro-level view point, the activities the bar girls and their customers are understood as exchange or market exchange using Polanyi's term<sup>17</sup>. Women sell their sexual services and customers buy them. The whole bar scene can be considered as a market of female sex work. The market has a price adjustment function although that is very limited and not at all generalized to the whole market. For instance, women often begin to offer discount prices as the bar's closing time is drawing near. Or young and very attractive girls (actually they are scarce) set a higher price on themselves. The price is in a considerable extent determined by supply and demand. On the contrary, the unbalance between demand and supply does not seem to go toward equilibrium, at least one cannot find such a movement of adjustment — "As in most areas of the informal economic sector of Thai society, supply [...] exceeds demand in tourist oriented prostitution: there are many times more girls than potential customers

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<sup>15</sup> Simple labor in service or manufacture sector is actually the only choice for less-educated young women. The monthly wage of a job in service sector hardly reaches 5,000 Baht. Wages in factory can be slightly higher than that of waitress-like job but still not considered as a good payment.

<sup>16</sup> Inside their workplace (bar), bar girls are required to perform in the ways the bar owner expected but certain amount of money is paid for that (See the next section for detail).

<sup>17</sup> Polanyi classified the economic transaction within community into three modes: reciprocity, redistribution and exchange (Polanyi used the term exchange in the narrow sense, which indicated market exchange). Transactional mode is also called the pattern of integration and Polanyi regards it as the pattern of movement of goods within a certain economic system. Therefore, the concept of transactional mode does not aim to typify the attitude of the parties concerned in transaction. Rather, transactional modes are structural pattern of individuals' collective activities within a group. Reciprocity is the symmetrical movement of goods between more than two subgroups in a certain community. Redistribution is the centralized movement, which brings redivision at the same time, of goods within a community. Exchange (market exchange) is the movement of goods between any random points within a community. (Polanyi, 1998: 88-99)

(Cohen, 1996a: 266).” If you visit Nana Plaza, Soi Cowboy or Patpong around 3:00 am, you will find crowds of women who have been unable to get a customer. Some of them simply go home and others may go to the other place, such as Nana disco or Thermae Coffee Shop to find another chance or take their mind off things. What to be noted is, nevertheless, even though there may seem to be no supply and demand adjustment function within the go-go bar sector alone, it is still gradually working in the whole commercial sex sector maybe in the international level.

The relationship between bar girl and the bar or bar owner is also nothing but market exchange<sup>18</sup>. Although a first glance at the wage structure of go-go bar may bring a surface impression that redistribution is the one. The charge for drinks and bar fine are the principal revenue of go-go bars (they have no cover charge). The money customers spend at the bar is collected to the bar owner or *mamasan*<sup>19</sup> and then distributed as salary to bar girls. This may seem to be movement of goods in redistribution where goods are firstly collected to the center (such as a chief or government) and then redistributed. But there is an important difference between Polanyi’s redistribution and wage payment system in go-go bars. Within the system of redistribution, the goods collected to the center are reallocated according to custom, law, or determination of the center (Polanyi, 1998: 95-98). An allotment is, therefore, arbitrarily determined and irrelevant to the preceding amount of contribution (such as the a sum of tax paid) of individual (or unit of recipient). The system of redistribution does not have the principle of equivalence and therefore is not applicable to the case of a bar owner and bar girls.

Bar girls, irrespective of whether being a dancer or waitress, are employed by a bar and they provide labor in exchange with money. In this transaction, the exchange rate of labor and money is usually strictly fixed. For instance, in the case of Royal Group that owns 6 go-go bar and some beer bars at Nana Plaza, the basic pay for dancer is 7,000 or 8,000 baht a month (it depends on whether they work with nothing on) and this is reduced as a dancer fails to serve for the fixed amount of time. They are assumed to work for 28 days a month and if they are absent without the payment of bar fine, a certain amount of money is reduced from the basic pay of 7,000 baht. The

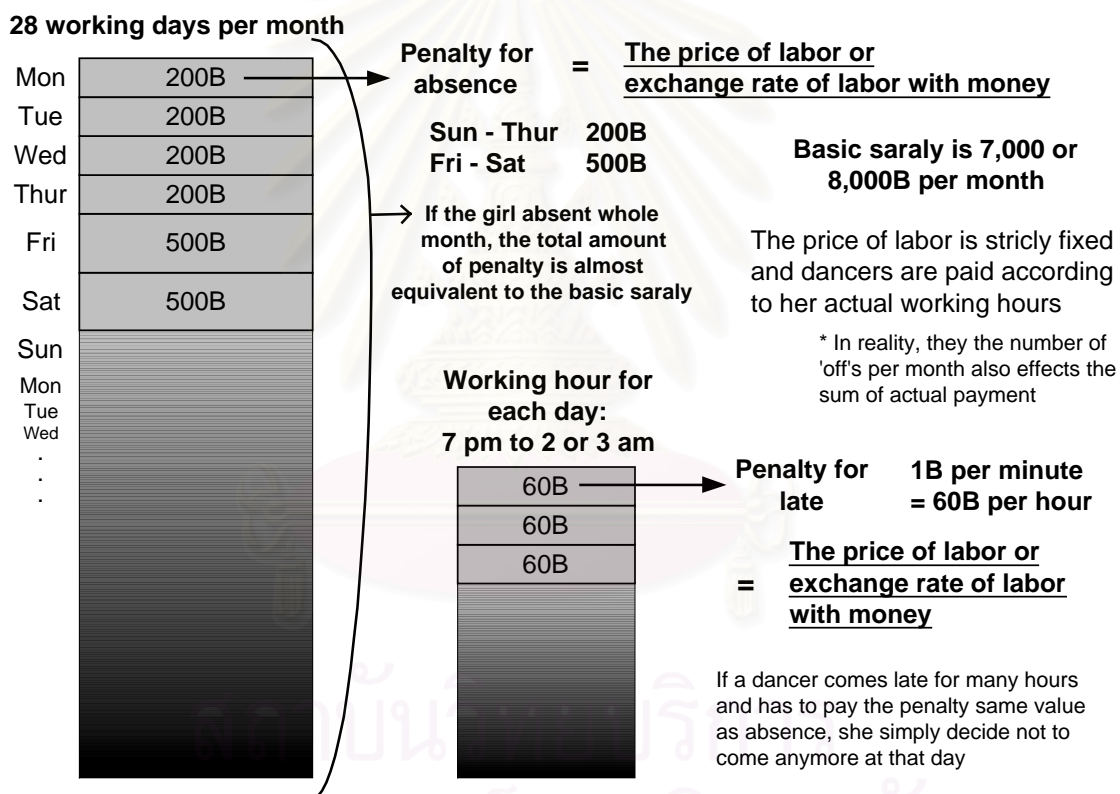
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<sup>18</sup> The allocation of the ‘tip’, which is the small change the customers would not take, to waitress can be considered as redistribution. Throughout the business hours tips are pooled and, when the bar is closed, divided equally to every waitress.

<sup>19</sup> In usual Thai conversations, *Mamasan* refers to an employed manager of a bar with male/female employees to attend customers. The word is adopted from Japanese.

amount of deduction is 200 baht per day. Only in the case of Friday and Saturday, the fine would be 500 baht per day. If a dancer does not work at all, and it is acceptable, her salary would result somewhere around zero. In the other bars, this rate may be more or less favorable to dancer but the exchange rate of labor and money are in all cases clearly fixed (Figure 4-1). Each monthly transaction is completed at a payday and therefore dancers have no moral obligation to the bar. The bar girls can change their workplace as they like. As long as looking at such a working condition of bar girls, the relationship between workers and bars is more likely to be market exchange than the centralized movement of goods and redivision.

**Figure 4-1: Wage and penalty structure of a go-go bar**



Source: The researcher's fieldwork

The monetary transaction between bar girls and their customers are also best understood as market exchange. Inside the bar, not girls but male managers sell girls' sexuality<sup>20</sup> and therefore girls do not make money directly from customers by showing

<sup>20</sup> Basic salary for bar dancer is usually more than 6,000 to 9,000 baht per month and this value is much higher than quotations in the simple service-sector job like waitress, hostess or concierge in the informal sector in Thailand (often only 2,000-4,000 Baht per month). The

their body or provide other sexual services (chip can be given but not compulsory). Transaction between bar girl and customer is practiced outside the bar beyond supervision of bar owner or *mamasan*. The price of bar girl's body or sexual services is determined through direct negotiation with customers and consequently bar girls can make a decision on what to do. They may provide their sexual services at reasonable price or, if only unsatisfactory price is given, simply take another opportunity. When they decide to go with customer, they can determine what kind of service to provide at customer's price. In general, it can be said that bar girls are basically a free provider of their sexual services in the sex market although most bar girls do not keep a strong competitive advantage in the market place and consequently possible alternatives are fairly limited.

#### 4. 4. Cohen's typology of the bar girl and customer relationship

In the bar scene, what bar girls offer is not only sexual intercourse<sup>21</sup>. Once a man steps into a go-go bar, bar girls would show goodwill, have a conversation with him or even let him touch her breasts. However, all these things are carefully priced and customers are expected to pay for them. The relationship between bar girls and customers is fundamentally market exchange.

However, in the micro-level, the market mechanism does not fully explain the state of sex workers and foreign men nor their activities. Two anthropologists who conducted a fieldwork research concerning go-go bar sector emphasize non-economic aspects of the women and customers relationship. Odzer (1990) describes their relationship more like a comprehensive personal relationship than a simple economic transaction. Cohen (1996a; 1996b) defines the relationship between sex workers and farang men as "open-ended prostitution" and emphasize a relationship different from pure trade of sexual service.

I suggest the term "open-ended prostitution" to characterize a kind of relationship between a prostitute and her customer which, though it may start as a specific neutral service,

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premium given to bar girls is the counter value of their sexuality. In this sense bar girls' right to sexual self-determination is limited because it is the bar owner that sets up the price of girls' sexuality.

<sup>21</sup> This is one of the reasons why I use the term 'sex worker' rather than 'prostitute' when refer to bar girls.

rendered more or less indiscriminately to any customer, may be extended into a more protracted, diffused, and personalized liaison, involving both emotional attachment and economic interest (Cohen, 1996b: 274).

Although I strongly oppose the idea that sex workers or the sex workers and customers relationship is substantially different from those in the Western countries or Japan, I cannot help accepting the view that the cases showing the characteristic of what Cohen calls open-ended prostitution, which is not considered a well-known story in the Western countries or Japan, can be often observed in the Bangkok go-go bar scene. Market mechanism is not a unique norm of their decision or behavior in such cases. Therefore as long as the Bangkok bar scene is considered, it can be said that economic interchange is embedded in society as substantivists insist, or, it is more appropriate to say, that social communication is embedded in economy, given market exchange as a principal transactional mode.

As seen in Section 4.1, most bar girls enter a go-go bar sector with self-centered reasons. Therefore, they have less incentive to maximize only pecuniary incomings. How to live *sanuk* and *sabai* is also an important consideration. In other words, since they are usually not required to make a great remittance to their parents, they do not always have to try hard to maximize their income. Relatively high reward of sex work per session or actual working hour gives them a considerable scope for balancing hard work and income. To simplify, what they fundamentally aim at is to maximize profit with minimum labor.

However, not only economic factors but also socio-psychological factors play an important role to determine the mode of the relationship between bar girls and customers in reality. Sexual intercourse between them can be had without payment, or some of them foster long-term social relationship including marriage. The figure of Western-style prostitutes who mechanically manage number of customers without emotions is not always the case.

Cohen (1996a; 1996b) classified the relationship between sex workers and their customers as follows.

1. Mercenary — based on an emotionless “economic exchange”;
2. Staged — also based on “economic exchange”; but accompanied by faked or staged emotions on the part of the woman;

3. Mixed — based on both “economic exchange,” as well as emotional involvement on the part of the woman; and
4. Emotional — based primarily or exclusively on emotional involvement or “love.” (Cohen, 1996b: 278)

The first type, “mercenary” is the pure exchange of sexual services with money (or other valuables). There is a clear agreement between woman and customer that sexual services are provided only in exchange with money of appropriate amount. This is the form closest to the concept of market exchange where sellers and buyers seek for utility maximization. Bargaining and haggling is, therefore, common characteristics of this type of transaction.

The second type, “staged” is “also essentially a form of “economic exchange,” but camouflaged as “social exchange” or even “love” (Cohen, 1996a: 260).” In this case, even though a customer believes the relationship between the two of them is somewhat different from a mere prostitution — it could be ‘love.’ But a girl’s intention may be nothing more than economic exchange and pretends to have emotional attachment to him, for extracting maximum pecuniary gain.

The third type, “mixed” is “a relationship comprising of a variable mixture of “social exchange” and even “love” with “economic exchange.” While it is characteristic of many protracted liaisons, it is also a most unstable one, since it is based on conflicting motivations: economic interest and emotional involvement (Cohen, 1996a: 261).” In my understanding, this type is simply considered to be placed between type 1 and 4.

The last type, “emotional” is a pure social exchange, often based on love. The sex worker does not require pecuniary rewards to continue the relationship. Since her economic interest is minimal or even non-existence, this type of relationship is not regarded as prostitution or sex work.

Cohen’s classification is theoretically based on Blau’s exchange theory (cf. Blau, 1964) that focuses on the emotions (goodwill or trust) of the individuals concerned. Criteria of the classification is mainly emotion or intention of woman’s side. Indeed this classification well describes the characteristics of the relationship Cohen calls “open-ended prostitution” but does not quite successfully present a persuasive model of the bar girls and customers relations. Because:

- While the type 1, 3 and 4 are divided based on the strength of emotional attachment of woman to her customer, the type 2 is differentiated from the others by the criteria whether or not woman shows a 'fake' love. In addition, only this type presumes customer's emotional attachment to the sex worker while other types do not requires any premise on the customer's side. These seem illogical.
- The dyad model where the bar girls and customers relationship is classified into type 1, 3 and 4 does not successfully formalizes the differences between those subcategories. In reality, there is no pure 'economic' or 'emotional' relationship between sex worker and customer. Therefore, given 'mixed' type, the model does not have a logical criterion to draw a distinction between three types. There indeed is a substantial difference between a complete 'economic' or 'emotional' relationship and somewhat 'mixed' type but the use of such a criterion would result in the dilemma where all observed cases are classified as 'mixed' type.

In the next section, I try to reform Cohen's typology and understand the bar girl - customer relationship within more structuralistic framework.

#### **4. 5. Modeling the bar girl versus customer relationship**

The problem of Cohen's classification is its inadequate formalization. The relation between distinctive characteristics or factors that forms classification criteria is not fully considered. Consequently I tried to reform Cohen's classification and develop it to more explanatory and logically consistent model.

Relationship between bar girls and their customers is extremely various and each case observed is not simply classified into subcategories. If one is required to classify one particular case into a subcategory of any classification scheme, he would just find the case seems to have characteristics of several subcategories at the same time. How one can draw a clear line between economic relationship with emotional aspects and emotional relationship with economic aspects? In reality, the relationship between bar girls and customers is always somewhat ambiguous.

Now, what to be aimed is not to sophisticate the taxonomy of such an ambiguous object but to explain it within somewhat comprehensive framework. As I have emphasized, in reality it is impossible to find a substantial difference between real

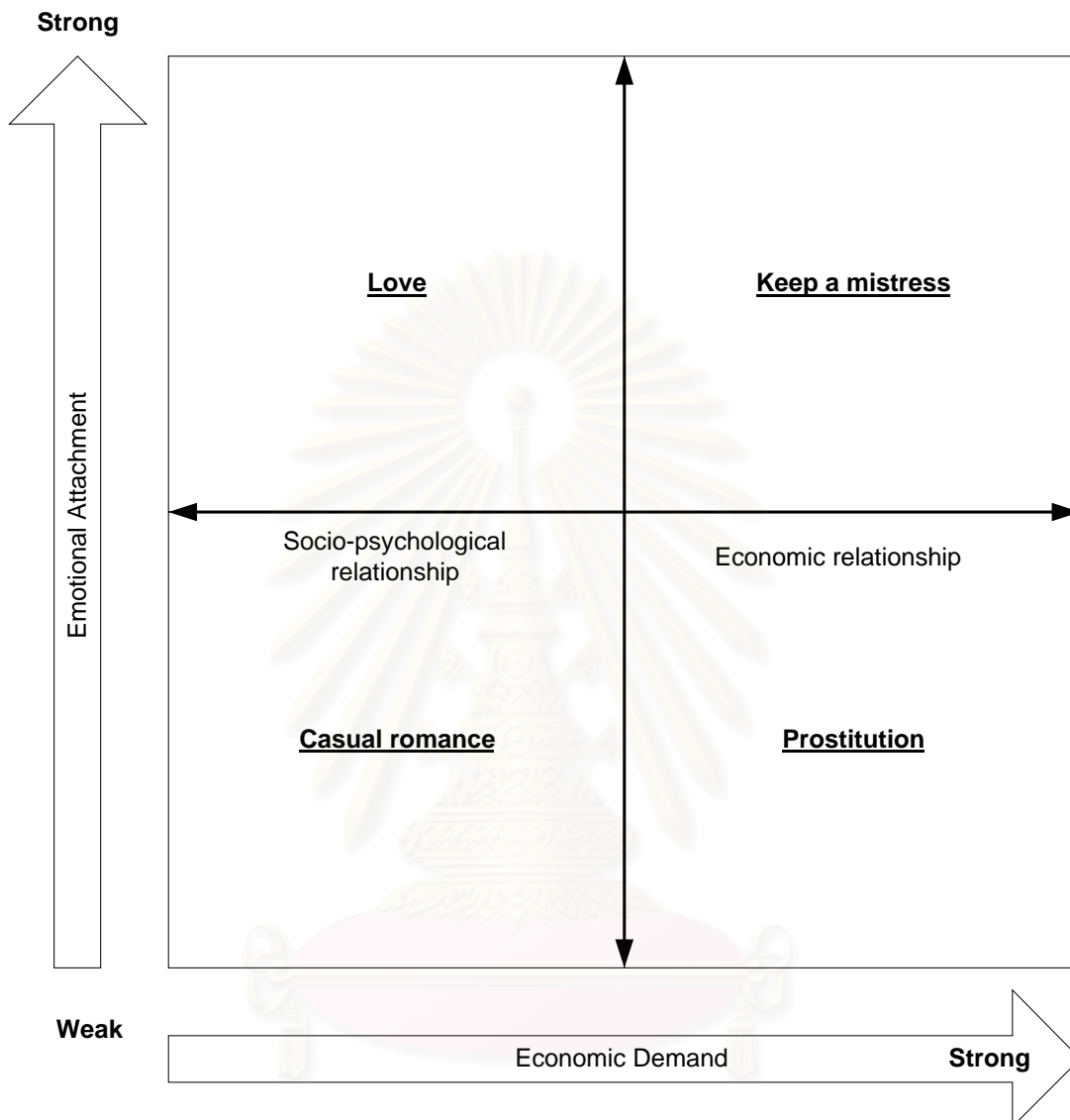


examples of the bar girl - customer relationship. Consequently, I just try to explain that within the logical relations between the limited numbers of indices. To put it concretely, I develop the model in which the bar girl - customer relationship with two particular indices is placed on a certain point on two-dimensional surface. Those indices can, therefore, be regarded as a mimetic axis of coordinates. The simplification and formalization like that gives a cue with which one can deal with some common factors throughout highly complicated and ambiguous variants and relations between those factors. Finding such common or unchanged factors and their relations is the first step of obtaining a deeper understanding on the subject. Indeed, in the model presented later, some characteristics of the bar girl - customer relationship beside the two indices are to be determined and explained according to the imaginary position on which the subject is placed.

The two indices primarily used for charactering each of observed bar girl - customer relationships are strength of economic demand and emotional attachment (of both bar girl and customer). Cross-tabulation-like simple treatment of these factors makes it possible to bring four subcategories which are logically or formally distinctive. However, dealing with those factors as if they have discrete or binary characteristics of existence or absence is misleading. There is no clear distinction among actually observed cases. What we have to remember is every possible operational classification is a mere construct. Therefore, I am not really going to develop taxonomy of bar girl - customer relationship. Rather, I want to imagine one multidimensional space collectively formed of every observable case, where various logical measures for grasping the characteristics of each observed case are given as axes of coordinates. The reality is complex and the number of axes of coordinates a given imagined frame of reference can be infinite but the limitation of our comprehensive faculty does not allow us to tackle with all observable attributes of what we witness. Hence, I developed the following two-dimensional approach only as the first step of explaining intricate realities.

Based on the two indices, namely, economic demand and emotional attachment, an operational classification of bar girl - customer relationship was constructed (Figure 4-2). Here, each observed bar girl - customer relationship can be characterized by the degree of emotional attachment and economic demand of bar girl and customer.

Figure 4-2: The diagram of the relationship between sex workers and their customers



In addition, the strength of emotional attachment of man and woman can be associated with Sahlins's general scheme of economic exchange / reciprocity<sup>22</sup>. He

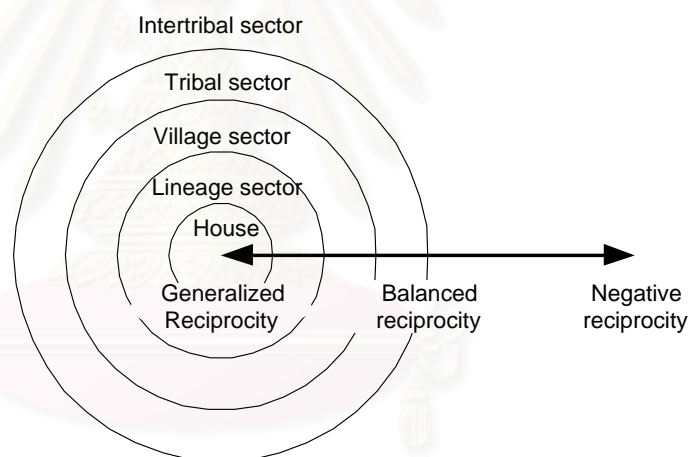
<sup>22</sup> The concept of reciprocity primarily concerns rather smaller size egalitarian societies than modern capitalist societies. However, Sahlins's primary intention to present this classification of 'reciprocity' is to clarify the relationship between the style of exchange and kinship/social distance and therefore his model is not really consistent with Polanyi's modeling of mode of economic transaction (cf. Polanyi, 1998). Sahlins uses the word reciprocity in very wide meaning and actually his concept of reciprocity here contains Polanyi's reciprocity, redistribution and exchange. Therefore I do not treat his model as typology of economic

classified the economic transaction between two independent parties into three categories (Sahlins, 1974), namely:

- Generalized reciprocity, the solidary extreme
- Balanced reciprocity, the midpoint
- Negative reciprocity, the unsociable extreme

Sahlins associates this dyadic spectrum model with kinship distance or the degree of solidarity (Figure 4-3). The stronger the solidarity between the parties concerned, the more the characteristics of economic transaction between them are close to that of pure generalized reciprocity. On the contrary, the weaker the solidarity, the more the economic transaction between them is close to pure negative reciprocity. Balanced reciprocity is just a midpoint of them<sup>23</sup>.

**Figure 4-3: Reciprocity and kinship residential sectors (Sahlins, 1974: 199)**



"Generalized reciprocity" refers to transactions that are purely altruistic, transactions on the line of assistance given aid, if possible and necessary, assistance returned. The ideal type

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transaction. Rather, I use it as a tool to describe some certain aspects/characteristics can be seen with certain modes of economic transaction.

<sup>23</sup> Sahlins's concept of general reciprocity logically includes both market exchange and reciprocity in narrow sense (Ueno, 1979). Of course those are better to be differentiated in minute analysis of economic transaction, Sahlins's rather focuses on the social characteristics of transaction associated with kinship distance, than developing a typology of economic transaction.

is Malinowski's "Pure Gift." Other indicative ethnographic formulas are "sharing", "hospitality", "free gift", "help", and "generosity." (Sahlins, 1974: 193-194)

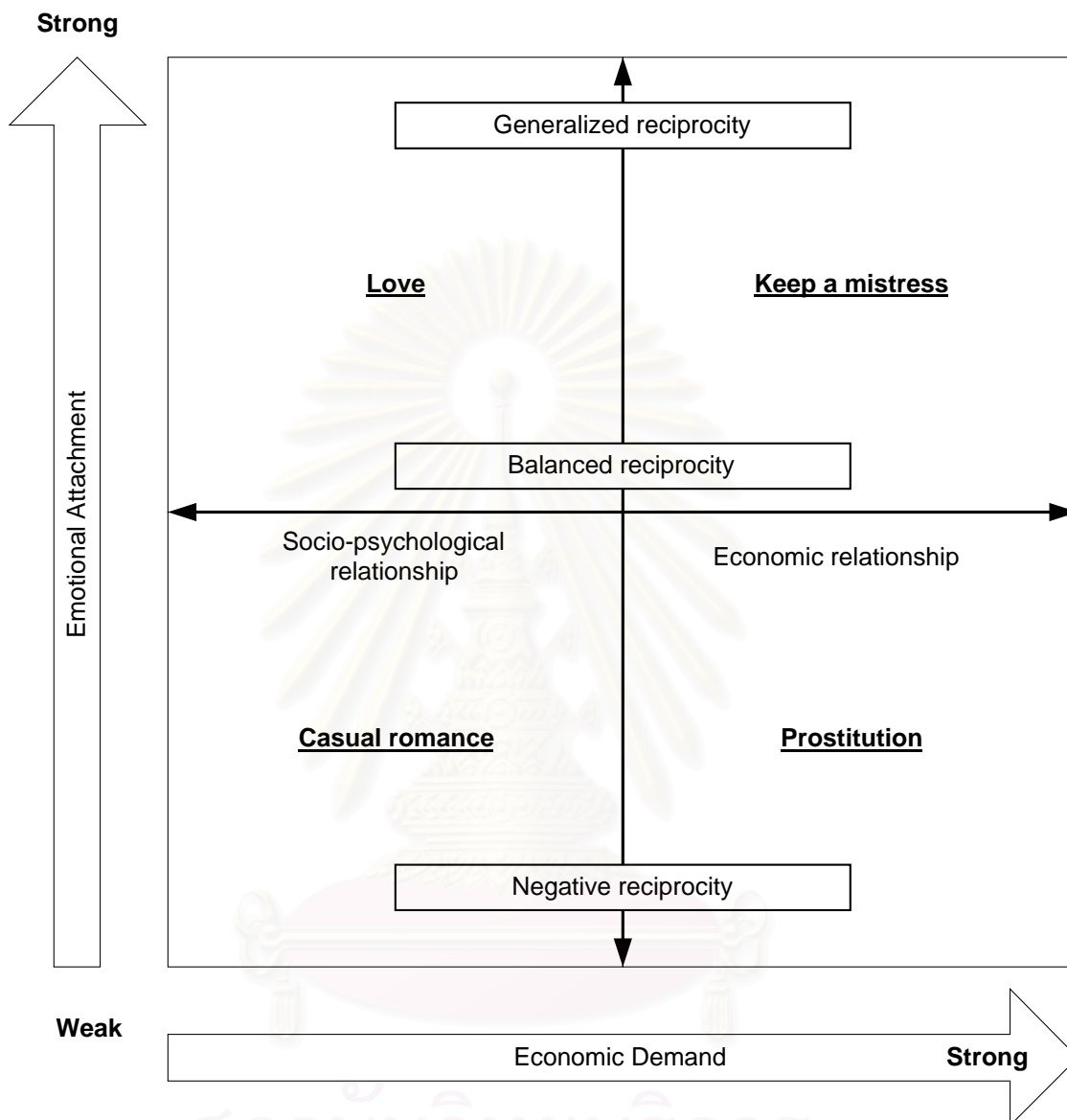
"Negative reciprocity" is the attempt to get something for nothing with impurity, the several forms of appropriation, transactions opened and conducted toward net utilitarian advantage. Indicative ethnographic terms include "haggling", or "barter", "gambling", "chicanery", "theft", and other varieties of seizure (Sahlins, 1974: 195).

"Balanced reciprocity" refers to direct exchange. In precise balance, the reciprocation is the customary equivalent of the thing received and is without delay. Perfectly balanced reciprocity, the simultaneous exchange of the same type of goods to the same amounts, is not only conceivable but ethnographically attested in certain material transactions, friendship compacts, and peace agreements (Sahlins, 1974: 194).

Here, I associate the spectrum of "reciprocity" with emotional attachment of either man or woman to the other rather than kinship distance (Figure 4-4). If a bar girl's emotional attachment to her customer is weak, the relationship wears the characteristics of "negative reciprocity." In such a relationship, bar girl does not hesitate to tell a lie to her customer for extracting maximum financial resources. At the same time, she would try to minimize her labor to provide sexual services and in the extreme cases she may run away at the moment when receiving cash payment in advance. Of course the reverse is also true. A customer having a little or no emotional attachment to a bar girl tends to bargain, haggle or even deceive for minimizing or shift off the payment.

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Figure 4-4: Emotional attachment and characteristics of economic transaction



On the contrary, if emotional attachment is strong, the relationship is more likely to seem “generalized reciprocity.” A bar girl who ‘loves’ or ‘likes’ her customer is apt to be less calculating. She does not really make an effort to encashment the relationship with the customer. The customer’s monetary assistance is hardly given on every-date basis. Given a well-off customer, she does want him to be a meal ticket but his support is considered as a given aid rather than a consideration for her sexual services. Since the primary reason of her carrying on connection with the customer is not a pecuniary benefit, the customer can be a badly-off person with a little ability to support her. In such a case, bar girl’s altruistic attitude to the customer is often observed, that is, she

financially support her customer (or ex-customer / boyfriend) by paying for meals, drinks or even residence.

The spectrum of the economic demand of bar girl and/or customer can be associated with the nature of their relationship; whether it is socio-physiologic or economic. Even though a bar girl 'loves' her customer (or boyfriend), she may have a keen interest in how much money (or any other valuables) she can receive, if she is avaricious of money and/or under the strong pressure to make money. She simply requires more and more money or expensive presents from the man in such a case but the relationship is still based on personal affection.

In the case a bar girl demands a little or nothing from a man in economic or financial sense, pecuniary exchange hardly occurs. The relationship between them is more socio-physiological rather than economic, where monetary issues are not really concerned. Conventional concept of prostitution or sex work is not really applicable to the relationships of this kind because a bar girl does not require any reward for having sexual relations.

What follows are the operational categories developed here. These categories are a mere construct to help us to grasp the characteristics of the bar girl - customer relationship extracted from observed cases.

- Keep a mistress: Strong emotional attachment and strong economic demand.
- Love: Strong emotional attachment and weak economic demand.
- Prostitution: Weak emotional attachment and strong economic demand.
- Casual romance: Weak emotional attachment and weak economic demand.

The following case studies should be helpful to obtain clearer idea on each of these four categories.

Keep a mistress: Strong emotional attachment and strong economic demand

Case: Pom

*Pom works as a dancer at Rainbow 2 Bar at Nana Entertainment Plaza. She is 17 years old and blessed with very attractive Lolita-like appearance. She is very popular among Japanese or other East Asian customers who prefer her childish and Far Eastern looking. She knows the value of her body and so usually she would not*

accept the offer of less than 2,000 baht for a short time, that is a big deal at Nana Plaza. One day Pom met a young Japanese customer named Toshi. He came to Thailand just after finishing his bachelor degree in Japan, as the first step of his round trip around Asian countries. His parents were sort of wealthy and gave him some allowance to travel abroad for a half-year or so. Toshi found sex industry in Bangkok fantastic and exiting and soon he decided to spend all his money in Bangkok rather than traveling to other countries. After several days of bar crawling, he met Pom at Rainbow 2. He liked her pretty face and slender body and lost no time in taking her away from the bar. Since that day, he visited Rainbow 2 every night to 'off'<sup>24</sup> Pom. Since she knew Toshi was smitten with her, she asked him to not only come to 'off' her everyday but also get her clothes, cosmetics, bags and shoes, or stuffed dolls. She came to be afraid that Toshi might have another girl at the other bar. She asked Toshi to stay with her and kept an eye on him all the time. She said she loved him and it seemed true - her attachment to him was amazing. She wanted to be with him all day long. But she still continued to work at Rainbow 2 because she had many friends there and liked the atmosphere of the bar. At the bar, she asked Toshi to buy drinks to all of her friends and buy whatever she found cute, pretty or beautiful. Their relationship did not last long, nevertheless. Toshi's parents became suspicious what he was doing in Bangkok. They refused to send money to him anymore and Toshi had to go back to Japan. Pom made a phone call to Japan many times after his return but Toshi now got a new girlfriend in Japan. Pom is still working at Rainbow 2, known as a Japanese killer.

In this case, the girl has a strong emotional attachment to the man and at the same time shows a strong economic demand. Their relationship is dominated by the emotional involvement to each other. Indeed she tried to lead him to buy many things, that is not as a reward for having sexual relations. Rather, the things the man gave her are considered as a free gift or manifestation of generosity. The girl wanted the man to be her patron; that is why she asked him to visit the bar to 'off' her every night even though they live together. Her request to him to get things to her is very straightforward. Amount of goods flow from man to woman was massive in this case but not considered as sort of payment for sexual services, because of their strong emotional relationship.

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<sup>24</sup> 'Off' means to pay bar fine (400-500 baht) to release a bar girl from the job of the day. The customer may take the girl away from the bar. In the case the customer does not want the bar girl to go with him, she is totally free and allowed to go back home. However, in many cases the girl choose to stay the bar to get the other customer or simply for shooting the breeze.

The traditional patron - client relationship (cf. Hanks, 1962; Rabibhadana, 1996) seems to form the environments where the relationship like this is widely accepted. But the flow of goods or other benefits from the patron to the client is more like reciprocal giving and different from pure gift or sharing under "generalized reciprocity." The benefits which the patron offers to the client is rather a return for the gift, services or respect from the client than expression of generosity or hospitality (Hanks, 1962).

Love: Strong emotional attachment and weak economic demand

Case: Ann

*Ann worked as a cashier at a beer bar in Nana Plaza. She had a 31-year-old Japanese boyfriend named Jun. They had lived together for 3 months already. The first time Ann met Jun, she was a dancer at Lolipop bar. At that time Jun took her away to his room at a guesthouse on Khao San Road<sup>25</sup>. Since then, Jun came to see her frequently. Jun was a poor backpacker and could not afford to pay bar fine every time. Ann found that she began to love him so she agreed with Jun when he asked her to live together. She changed her job to cashier at a beer bar because she thought it was not good thing to work as a dancer once she had got a lover. Her monthly income dropped to less than 10,000 baht. They halved all living expenses such as rent. Ann went to work 4:00 pm everyday, 3 hours earlier than when she was a dancer. Usually Jun showed up at Nana Plaza around 7:00 pm. If he was late without previous warning, Ann suspected that he went to see another girls. Actually he occasionally went to massage parlor with his Japanese friends but Ann did not know that. Jun stayed at the counter of the bar where Ann was working until she finished her work at 3:00 am. Jun was allowed to go to see the other bar for killing time but to 'off' any other girl was strictly prohibited. At one time Ann confessed to me, "I don't know why but I love him very much."*

In this example, the relationship between a man and a woman is highly socio-psychological. Their liaison simply seems mutual affection of lovers. Economic interest plays almost nothing in this relationship. Actually the woman decreased her earnings by entering the relationship with her current boyfriend. They are mutually regarded as what expressed as 'phua-mia' in Thai, which means husband and wife. Monetary assets are shared and neither of them can afford at that time to pay for daily expences on foods or sundries. Such an economic relationship is quite similar to the sharing

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<sup>25</sup> The area where many budgeted accommodations targeted backpackers are located.



within household. The debts outstanding are again overlooked and diffused obligation to reciprocate strengthens their connection.

Prostitution: Weak emotional attachment and strong economic demand

Case: Sa

*Sa worked at Rainbow 1 bar at Nana Plaza. She had one customer who visited the bar every two or three weeks to pick her up. His name was Ueda, 26-year-old Japanese man working in Thailand. He had been in Thailand more than three years and so spoke Thai very well. Although Ueda was a good customer, she did not really like him. According to her, he was too unsophisticated and she did not like his face. When he came to see her, she welcomed and took care of him with a smile but a little brusqueness was undisguised. But fortunately Ueda was not sensitive enough to read her face. Sa received 1,500 baht every time she went to his room. Sometimes he offered her 2,000 baht or more in exchange with her staying at his room the whole night but she had never accepted it. Whenever asked to spend a night with him, she told a lie for some reasons to go back. She told me that if Ueda was just a tourist for a short stay, she would have no sexual intercourse with him and just bilk him of some money. She said that she hated his trying to kiss her. "He must realize that no girl would like to be given a kiss from him." I have asked him the reason why he stuck to her. He admitted that her service in the bed was terrible (He said she was 'maguro' in Japanese) but her appearance was good enough to compensate it.*

Here, sexual intercourses are held under strict monetary arrangement. There is a firm understanding from both side that woman's sexual services are provided only in exchange with money. The relationship between the man and woman is nothing but economic. The relationship like this is very close to the Western concept of prostitution where woman shows no emotional involvement with the sexual relations with customers. In addition, the girl feels no obligation to be faithful to the customer. She is on the lookout for an opportunity to cheat him out of his money. This is a typical example of "negative reciprocity." The transaction accompanies a clear quotation of the price of the service to be offered, price negotiation and trick of the trade where, at the price agreed upon, the customer try to gain more services and the girl attempt to reduce her labor. In this case the girl has disrelish her customer. If her feeling for him were more positive, the relationship would be just neutral - fair economic exchange just as "balanced reciprocity."

Casual romance: Weak emotional attachment and weak economic demand

Case: Miao

*Miao works at Tilac bar at Soi Cowboy for a year. She has many friend there and some of them have a foreign boy friend or a regular customer. One day, one of such boyfriends of her friend, named Jim, visited the bar. It was late at night and, unfortunately, her friend was out with another customer already. He knew Miao because they had been to discotheque together with some friends at the bar and he bought her a drink. That night he was free with his money because it was a payday. He drank a lot and treated Miao and some other girls with whom he was acquainted. After the bar close, they went to a discotheque. He bought a bottle of Johnny Walker Black Label and they killed it. Since he was mortally drunk, Miao saw him home. Miao was also heavily drunk. Then she slept with him. What happened that night is secret to her friend - if she finds it, she would be burned with anger. Both Miao and Jim are really afraid of that.*

Although not very often, the relationship like this does happen. Sexual intercourse is held under neither emotional attachment nor economic demand. In many cases women had such relationship accidentally or as a consequence of certain situations. Some particular states of mind, such as loneliness or strong sadness, can lead women to have sexual relations with a man toward whom she is not really favorably disposed. Drinking alcohol or taking drugs<sup>26</sup> such as amphetamine ('yaa baa') or marijuana ('ganchaa') can also play the same role. Since women usually have no strong motive to continue or cement the relationship, love-affair type liaison tend to be unstable and not to last for a long.

Note that the model of bar girl - customer relationship explained above is irrelevant to the time factor. For example, 'prostitution' relationship where sexual intercourse are held strictly in exchange with money with diplomacy, bargaining and haggling can be both only-once transaction or long term relationship if both sides consider the transaction reasonable. In reality, the relationship between the bar girl and customer started as pure economic transaction seems to tend to become longer and involve emotional factors. It is obviously one of the factors that make the bar girl -

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<sup>26</sup> For more information on drug abusing, see Section 6.3.2.

customer relationship complex as explained above. The mechanism and background of such tendency of the bar girl -customer relationship are explained in Chapter 5.



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## CHAPTER 5

### From pure economic transaction to emotional relationship

#### 5. 1. Introduction

Prostitution in the Western countries is commonly understood as a pure market exchange where prostitutes provide sexual services in exchange with only money (or equivalents). But in the go-go bar scene in Bangkok, the situation is not so simple. There are many cases where bar girls and their customers keep a long-term relationship including marriage. Such a long-term relationship could involve many additional factors besides exchange of sexual services and money, and tend to become more various, complex and often strengthened. Such a development or reinforcement of the tie between a sex worker and customer tends to be considered as rare case in the Western countries or Japan but I do not insist that such a more-than-prostitution relationship is special in Thailand. Indeed *farang* customers at go-go bars often believe so and relate that is the reason why they are attracted by Thailand and Thai girls. But I believe that hardly is there a pure economic relationship among individual human beings including sex workers and their customers. More or less they have social interchanges although money is the central mediator of their irreconcilable cross desires. Overemphasis of tropical passion of Thai women makes us overlook reality. In this chapter, I examine the background of the tendency that the relationship between sex workers and customers often become a long-term one, especially regarding the two factors presented in the previous chapter, namely, economic demand and emotional attachment.

#### 5. 2. Economic demand

##### 5. 2. 1. From bar girls' perspective

The situations where the bar girl is not given any monetary benefits from keeping the relationship with her Japanese 'boyfriend' are indeed found but not very often. Usually bar girls more or less extract a certain amount of money from their 'boyfriend' even when the relationship is primarily based on emotional attachment. Because of the considerable gap between their senses of money values, girl's request

of money is often not really a burden to him as long as the amount required does not exceed threshold value (which varies by individual, usually from several to few scores thousands baht). Bar girl can make the most of this gap and keep the flow of goods from a foreign man to bar girl always asymmetrical for a considerably long period. In reality, girls often choose to squeeze a small amount of money out of their customers throughout a longer period rather than clean them out at one night. By doing that, a girl may extract larger amount of money than simply to contend herself to a charge for sexual services. This is one of the common strategies adopted by bar girls to maximize their financial return on one customer.

The other common long-term profit maximization strategy of bar girl is to break a customer in and allure her customer to buy expensive commodities for her. If a bar girl succeeds to achieve customers' strong attachment, she can have a chance to furnish herself with high-price jewelries or durable goods such as TV or stereo sets, cars or motorbikes, or houses. It is very common to ask customers to get mobile phone 'to make it easy to get in touch with each other.' The total pecuniary values of such non-monetary presents often far exceed and away the potential amount of cash that the customer may spend on the bar girl. Customers more or less have a reluctant feeling to 'buy' a girl by handing cash over to girls. Their mental conflict is wiped out by understanding that they present those things to their girlfriends.

Cohen (1996b) designates that establishing a steady relationship with particular customers is one of the risk aversion strategies of open-ended prostitutes including bar girls. He emphasizes that the income of open-ended prostitutes tend to highly depend on chance.

Open-ended prostitution is a non-routine occupation. By the same token it involves a strong element of chance — in the sense of both risk of life and limb and opportunity for success and riches — which is significantly greater than in more routine forms of prostitution, such as brothels or massage parlors. This is element of chance, which cannot be completely reduced and mastered through knowledge and skill, takes on emically the character of "luck" (*chok*). Work in open-ended prostitution thus becomes a skilled game of hazard or "luck." This forms an important ingredient in the motivation and attitude of the women toward their trade (Cohen, 1996b: 281).

The risks of open-ended prostitutes that Cohen (1996b) lists are:

1. *Material.* Customer may not pay proper remuneration for given sexual services or even steal sex worker's property. Or sex workers may be required to pay certain amount of money to corrupt policemen in exchange with their overlooking illegal prostitution<sup>27</sup>.
2. *Physical safety.* The women may suffer violence from disturbed or unsatisfied customers. In addition, interviews to the sex workers listed in Walker and Ehrlich (1992) and Ieda (1996) indicate that foreign customers often have a sadistic sexual brutality or beat a woman to his knees by brute force. Bar girls cannot always know in advance if her customer has such a tendency when spend a night with a undesirable customer in a locked room.
3. *Health.* Sex workers are always under the risk to get sexually transmittal disease (STD). Although I heard only a few cases of AIDS patient among bar girls during the fieldwork, people infected with less serious STDs such as gonorrhoea or chlamydia were often found. Since most sex workers are not in the shadow of health care insurance, catching a STD becomes a considerable financial burden to them.

Keeping a longer relationship with only regular customers and avoid having a pickup customer are theoretically the best ways to avert those risks. In reality it is not easy to always hedge a risk even after they are aware of utilities of having a permanent liaison with particular customers as a risk reduction measure. In addition, the stock of such old customers can provide insurance. Sex workers really got into trouble can ask them for help then. Foreign customers are usually willing to give financial aids to sex workers in good relations.

If sex workers are offered to be a concubine of a foreign customer under the contract to receive a certain amount of money in exchange with leaving the current job and staying exclusively with him, in most cases they do not hesitate to take the chance. Usually the payment is fixed and considered as the woman's net monthly income at the time (often 30,000 to 50,000 baht). Continuing such a stable contractual relationship, the woman is free from fluctuation of her income, which is unavoidable a bar dancer.

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<sup>27</sup> This risk is not really crucial in the case of bar girls because usually it is bar owner that negotiates with policemen. Each bar owner pays certain amount (usually several score thousands baht) of monthly unofficial street tax to the police station concerned to avoid obstruction of business.

Moreover, she may continue to have another customer behind the back of her patron. In such a case, her income may substantially surpass the maximum amount that possible by simply being a bar dancer.

The principal requirement for establishing a desirable relationship is, as always, appearance. The girls who are blessed with good looks and sexiness are more likely to have an opportunity to establish a steady relationship with their customers. Actually, it is common knowledge among repeat visitors of Nana Plaza, Soi Cowboy or Patpong that young and very attractive girls are rarely found because such girls with prominent personal appearance are soon ransomed by wealthy foreigners to be their concubine or even wife. General hospitality is another factor to attract customers. Customers are often impressed with bar girl's devoted care and attention beyond those sex workers in the Western countries. They are found among such as washing customer's cloths, preparing the meals, or any other kinds of personal care. These services may be offered purely out of courtesy but bar girls often intentionally turn such services to practical use for winning their customers' affection. Verbal communication skills including English or Japanese conversation are indeed important for establishing a longer-term relationship. But in reality its usefulness does not measure up to behaviorally demonstrated personal care or other non-verbal factors such as cheerfulness or pleasantness.

It is basically true that "As in most areas of informal economic sector of Thai society, supply also always exceeds demand in tourist-oriented prostitution: there are many times more girls than potential customers. Hence, the fortunes of any particular girl fluctuate wildly and depend much on chance (Cohen, 1996a: 266)." Hence most girls do not frequently have the opportunities to find a customer. However, the girls with good appearance are scarce and they are in seller's market. Customers' demand is centered on only a few girls who are the most attractive at the bar. There is a clear polarization of very few highly demanded girls and majority of distress girls. This mal-distribution of demand increases the value of having a reliable patron as a risk hedge strategy for most bar girls.

### **5. 2. 2. From customers' perspective**

From the perspective of customers, having a steady liaison is expected to bring similar risk reduction effects. Concerning STDs, the only way to avoid them is to have a sexual relationship with only fixed partners. Actually nobody knows if the female

partners have other men. But all the same having a sexual relationship with limited and qualified partners is better than continuing promiscuous sexual behavior. Another merit is in connection to economic risks. Although those girls belonging to go-go bars are to some extent identified and are less likely to commit criminal imposture than free prostitutes found at coffee shops or in the street, foreign customer cannot fully trust them. Indeed there always are rumors of unfortunate foreign tourists who had their wallets (and sometimes passport) stolen by naughty bar girls. The thieving woman by whom those tourists are victimized is usually the ones they have just met for the first time. Those women with whom the customer is familiar with are of course less prone to betray his trust.

In the similar way, establishing a long-term liaison with a bar girl may optimize customer's investment especially if he succeeds to involve a girl with emotional relationship. In other words, he may enjoy sexual relationship with the girl with minimum outgivings. Most customers have seen or heard the successful examples and expect to run into the same good luck. Usually male customer does not have the intention to fulfill his responsibility to woman even though he makes the girl pregnant or infects her with STD. Therefore they are free from social responsibility to their partners. Of course they may be willing to pay small amount of money if the girl is pregnant or has any other problem. But even in such a case, man's economic or social cost is not at all equal to the case of having a similar problem with non-prostitute woman (especially in their home country). This is one of the reasons which attract men to sex sector in Thailand. There are some people who even intentionally approach a bar girl for enthralling her so that she may be willing to give sexual services at a discount price or even for free, or to stay with the man without monetary request (cf. Cohen, 1996a: 262). The following case is a good example of a customer who attempts to minimize his financial burden by winning a bar girl's heart.

Case: Takashi

*Takashi was a 27 year-old Japanese man. He spent six months of the year to make money by working at a factory and the another six months to enjoy easy-going life in Bangkok. He had kept such a lifestyle three or four years already. When he was in Bangkok, he did not work at all. He solely relied on the money he saved in Japan. His budget was around 30,000 baht per month. This amount was not really enough for him because he loved to hang out at the nightspots. One of the chief reasons why he visit Bangkok was woman. He felt he could make friend with a girl (though it was only sex worker) in Bangkok easier than in Japan in terms of both money and effort. He*



wanted to have a girl every night while he was in Bangkok but his budget was not enough to give some 1,000 baht to a prostitute everyday. To cope with this problem, he learned Thai language and tried to win a bar girl's heart. It seemed much easier to do so in Thailand although he would have no chance of success in Japan no matter how seriously he tried. He visited Nana Plaza or Soi Cowboy every night and searched for a girl who had just come from upcountry. Once he found a target, he paid bar fine and took her out immediately. Then he gave sweet words to her as many as possible. That was his technique. At the time I conducted my research, he was fairly famous among bar girls as a man of *paak waan* (flattering).'

As described above, both man and woman have a certain incentive to make their relationship longer. However, since their economic interests are reverse, long-term liaison based on pure economic interest of either side tend to be unstable since, in such relationships, the advantage for one side should be the disadvantage of the other side. Here, we find one of the primary bases of diplomatic fencing between man and woman. Both try to gain an advantage over the partner by even feigning love so as to optimize their economic benefit. Such a relationship involving no emotional attachment is a typical state of 'negative reciprocity' in Sahins's terminology.

### 5. 3. Emotional attachment

Walker and Ehrlich (1992: 1) describe "many foreign men who somehow do find true love in Bangkok' bars" through collection of love letters and interviews. A number of the letters of *farang* men to Patpong prostitutes in the book are indeed full of sweet nothings. These men wrote letters after leaving Bangkok - in their home or on the seat of airplane back to home. Of course they had become hyperactive with the exiting experiences in foreign country or those words of love included a certain portion of diplomatic remarks and passionate words — "I love you; I miss you; You are my only hope; I have nobody else more than you; My heart is in Thailand and my body in France (Walker and Ehrlich, 1992)."

Nobody knows if their feelings to Thai sex workers can be said a true love<sup>28</sup> but it seems clear that transactions which are originally economic and ad hoc can often be transformed into more social and longitudinal relationships. Considering that writing

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<sup>28</sup> It may not be fully appropriate to use the concept of 'love' in Western sense to describe the feeling/emotion of Thai bar girls.

such love letters to sex workers in their home countries should be uncommon to them, those *farang* men's feelings for Thai sex workers who are the addressee are not simply wiped off just after paying for each session. Indeed they often send some money from their home countries to Thai sex workers even though they are not sure when to visit Thailand again. In Walker and Ehrlich's book, many sex workers express 'love' to some of their customer. They often try to believe their customers' honeyed words and wait for their coming back to Thailand although later on they often feel betrayed when they find that these men have no intention to come back or they run around with another woman.

Seabrook (1996) interviewed many *farang* men visited Thailand and found that many of those men who were hurt by sadness, felt lonely for their home, or had the hollowness in one's heart found consolation in the relationship with Thai sex workers. Given Thai women's seemingly devoted attachment, sincerity and honesty, they feel they are loved by Thai women or they simply beguile themselves into believing so. But at the same time they are always under inefaceable suspicion upon the woman. Their feeling toward their 'darling' is very complex.

In fact, many of these said they came originally to Thailand with mates or friends; they were secretly attracted to whatever lay beyond the sexual pliability of the woman and came back later on their own to explore this further. [...] in many of the people I met, there was a pain, a confusion and sometimes an aggressive bluster, which all suggested more complex motives and deeper, often in accessible, feelings (Seabrook, 1996: 36).

Cohen (1996d) points out that these *farang* men who are corresponding with Thai bar girls cannot free from the dilemma of "intimacy and distance," "trust and suspicion" and "love and money." The basic dilemma most *farang* men face is "created by their desire to maintain an intimate relationship at a distance (Cohen, 1996d: 312). In addition, they are to be always tormented by doubts as to the fidelity of the girl they left in Thailand. Although they received the girl's letters which are full of sweet words, they always doubt if she is just doing her business. Actually in many cases girls simply continue the correspondence with the *farang* on business. They often hire a translator or subscriber to read the letters from *farang* men, which are written in English and to write back to them and sometimes they even leave their job to write back in the hands of the subscriber. *Farang* men's suspicion reaches its peak when they found the girl is asking them to send money. Although they believe that "the request for money does not necessarily indicate that the girl's interest in the *farang* is purely pecuniary (Cohen, 1996d: 318)," who can prove that their favorite girl is different from a mere prostitute?

The truth that farang men often drift into a such dilemmas, nevertheless, implies that they have a strong intention to keep a long-term relationship with Thai sex worker even after their leaving Thailand. But it is difficult to tell if their motive to do so can be called a 'love' but at least they have a certain kind of emotional attachment to Thai girls although their attachment to the Thai girls is a mere "single ray of hope" of the man whose "sexual opportunities are typically much more limited as the resume the routine life in his home environment, or returns to work at a lonely job in a foreign country (Cohen 1996d: 312)." The same thing can be said on the girls' side; in many cases they have a strong emotional attachment to the customer and wish and try to protract the relationship with him.

Not only *farang* but also Japanese men can often fall in such a deep and open-ended relationship with Thai sex workers. Ieda (1994) enumerates various stories of Japanese men and Thai female sex workers. She interviewed many Thai female sex workers and asked about the relationship with their customers. Some of them thought cynically that they simply entertained their customer in exchange with money. But at the same time there were some cases where Thai female sex workers fell into one of their Japanese customers. Those sex workers did not hesitate to express their attachment to their 'lover' even after the relationship ended up in catastrophic situation mainly because the man changed his mind. Ieda's report includes the cases of Japanese women and Thai male sex workers as well and it seems that Thai male sex workers (or quasi-sex workers) are less likely to be involved in emotional relationship with Japanese women. Also in my fieldwork, it was often observed that a pure monetary transaction between Japanese men and Thai bar girls developed into a long-term relationship which was motivated by emotional attachment. In such cases, girl's motive to establish and continue such a relationship cannot be fully explained with economic-man-concept, even considering that girls may set a longer-term economic goal which external observer can hardly detects.

Case: Ann and Tun

*Ann was 21 years old and came back to Nana Plaza from Nakhon Patom after finishing her study at high school. She had had a one-year experience of working as a bar girl. The first day she worked at the bar again, she met a farang man who had been her customer around three years ago. She asked him to take her out again and he agreed. He said to her that he would not be a good customer as he had been before since he had quit his job and was currently staying in Thailand as a student. Ann understood that she could not ask him a lot of money. However, she felt comfortable to*

*be with the farang man maybe partly because she had known him since a long time ago. Since Ann had just come to Bangkok, she did not have a friend to stay with. Ann felt she liked the farang man and asked him to live together. She said she did not care even though she got no pecuniary merit by staying with the farang man.*

*Tun had worked at Nana Plaza for four months. She was 24 years old but looked younger than her real age. She was quite popular at the bar and could have many customers. One day, a Japanese young man, who was a 'friend' of one bar girl visited the bar. Unfortunately that girl was not there and he had to sit alone because no girl dare to accompany with him. Tun spoke to him simply because he seemed so bored to drink alone. After the bar closed, Tun, some of her friends visited a discotheque near Nana Plaza. Tun (and her friends) met the Japanese man there and drank and dance together. All Tun's friend went home early and Tun and the man was left together. The man asked Tun to visit his apartment and drink there. Tun agreed because she felt that she liked him. Later on, she came to visit his room after the bar close if she did not have to spend a night with her customer. When she visited his room, she did not ask for money. She never did so because he was not a customer to her. "I don't know why but I love him very much" said Tun. I had no point to doubt her words.*

However, the case like this is not often observed. I admit so-called love sometimes exist between sex workers and their customers and can be a factor to make their relationship longer. Something like 'love' between them, if exist, is certainly one of the most powerful motives to protract the liaison over a long period of time. Indeed there can be 'a boy meets a girl' type love story even at go-go bars but such cases are exceptional. I should emphasize that they often have some sociocultural forces to get emotionally involved during the process of the relationship becoming longer.

#### **5. 4. Sociocultural background of emotional attachment: From bar girls' perspective**

##### **5. 4. 1. Double sexual standard and female sex workers**

In her controversial paper, Ortner insists that "The secondary status of woman in society is one of the true universals, a pan-cultural fact (1974:67)" or "everywhere, in every known culture, women are considered in some degree inferior to men (1974: 69)." From her viewpoint, this women's inferiority is a very essential nature of human society.

The universality of female subordination, the fact that it exists within every type of social and economic arrangement and in societies of every degree of complexity, indicate to me that we are up against something very profound, very stubborn, something we cannot rout out simply by rearranging a few tasks and roles in the social system, or even by reordering the whole economic structure (Ortner, 1974: 67-68).

Then she tries to explain this in the scheme of a Levi-Strauss-like nature / culture opposition.

[...] every culture implicitly recognizes and asserts a distinction between operation of nature and the operation of culture (human consciousness and its products) [...] (Ortner, 1974: 72-73). [Women's] pan-cultural second-class status could be accounted for, quite simply, by postulating that women are being identified or symbolically associated with nature, as opposed to men, who are identified with culture (Ortner, 1974: 73).

Indeed this argument is not widely accepted<sup>29</sup> but it is true that have we hardly found a society where men and women are treated in the perfectly same way. Rosaldo (1974: 17) insists that there is "a universal asymmetry in cultural evaluation of the sexes. Woman may be important, powerful, and influential, but it seems that, relative to men of their age and social status, women everywhere lack generally recognized and culturally valued authority." According to Rosaldo, the logical opposition between men and women tends to be metaphorically associated with the opposition between public and domestic and it provides the fundamental of sexual asymmetry in most societies. Such a conceptual asymmetry between men and women often manifests itself as sexual inequality in social relation, cultural evaluation, political power allocation, and economic ability.

For example, in Levi-Strauss's theory of kinship, women are to be described as things or signs to be exchanged in men-dominant kinship system (that can be understood as system of communication). Human beings have acquired symbolic thoughts by making distinction between culture and nature, and "it is true that the transition from nature to culture is determined by man's ability to think of biological relationships as system of oppositions: opposition between the men who own and women who are owned (Levi-Strauss, 1969: 136)." Women's role defined under such a dichotomous idea system is somewhat passive and subordinate, that is, "The

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<sup>29</sup> For example, Strathern (1981) strongly refutes that conceptual opposition of culture / nature is not universal, based on her fieldwork in New Guinea.

emergence of symbolic thought must have required that woman, like words, should be things that were exchanged (Levi-Strauss, 1969: 496)." Men are always associated with culture and women with nature, and therefore 'In human society, it is the men who exchange the women, and not vice versa (Levi-Strauss, 1963: 47)."

Of course, there is no solid basis for assuming women always have subordinate and secondary status in kinship based societies but certain kinds of sexual asymmetry seems virtually unavoidable. V. Turner analyzes Tallensi society and concluded:

Here we have the opposition patrilineal/matrilateral, which has the functions dominant/submerged. The patrilineal tie is associated with property, office, political allegiance, exclusiveness, and, it may be added, particularistic and segmentary interests. It is the "structural" link per excellence. The uterine tie is associated with spiritual characteristics, mutual interests and concerns, and collaterality. It is counterpoised to exclusiveness, which presumably means that it makes for inclusiveness and does not serve material interests. In belief, matrilineality represents, in the dimension of kinship, the notion of *communitas* (Turner, 1969: 114).

Here, women are not described to be owned by men. But we can easily notice that the relationship between men and women which Turner calls the opposition between structure and *communitas* is pregnant with sexual inequality.

As described above, there are firm social fundamentals of sexual asymmetry and it tends to have unfavorable characteristics to women. Above all, so called double sexual standard is probably one of the most considerable embodiments of conceptual asymmetry or inequality of men and women. It is obvious that the double sexual standard that allows men a greater sexual freedom has been kept throughout the modern period (Thailand is not an exception especially under the outer socio-religious influences (Pongsapich, 1997)). This double sexual standard forces virginity onto women's shoulder but on the other hand logically requires existence of female prostitutes as a victim for males enjoying their sexual freedom. They are given stigma as those who have immoral occupation and clearly distinct from non-prostitute women (and male prostitutes). However, such a distinction or categorization of women is of course not at all substantiated but merely a self-willed product of male centered ideology. Inequalities of the number of prostitute between male and female, and flooding of ill-treatment toward female sex workers can be to considerable extent understood within the conceptual scheme of this double sexual standard.

It is said that, in Thailand, women's losing virginity before marriage has been considered as a shame and loss of respectability while men's pre-marital sexual experiences have been socially allowed. Some intensive interviews of young Thai people clearly indicate that most men considered female virginity as an important factor when they chose their spouse, even though they do not positively state so (Ford and Kittisuksathit, 1996; Knodel et al., 1999). Although the cause of such a double standard is not clearly determined, it seems doubtless that it has been held in traditional Thai socio-cultural context. One large-scale research on Thai young factory workers clearly proves that among those people there still exists a strong sexual double standard between men and women (Ford and Kittisuksathit, 1996). After conducting a survey on the sample (2,033 factory workers within the age range of 15-24 years) and some focus group discussions, they conclude that "the overall sexual culture of youth in Thailand may be viewed as a complex interplay of traditional sanctions and modern expectations, which are structured by the 'double standard' for women and men (Ford and Kittisuksathit, 1996: 149)."

Double sexual standard which comes to surface by the construction of sexual role with different and unequal characteristics between both sexes no doubt forms the principle of knowledge or idea on sexuality, which leads to "the apparatus of sexuality (Foucault, 1981)." Foucault insists that such knowledge or idea on sexuality must be analyzed in the domain of power<sup>30</sup> relations.

Hence the objective is to analyze a certain form of knowledge regarding sex, not in terms of repression or law, but in terms of power. (Foucault, 1981: 92).

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<sup>30</sup> Foucault's concept of 'power' does not refer only to that of particular organizations or individuals. Rather he emphasizes the indistinct form of power embedded in the reticulation of relationship among people. Foucault writes: "By power, I do not mean, either, a mode of subjugation which, in contrast to violence, has the form of the rule. Finally, I do not have in mind a general system of domination exerted by one group over another, a system whose effects, through successive derivations, pervade the entire social body (1981: 92)." Or "there is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives. But this does not mean that it results from the choice or decision of an individual subject; let us not look for the headquarters that presides over its rationality; neither the caste which governs, nor the groups which control the state apparatus, nor those who make the most important economic decisions direct the entire network of power that functions in a society (and makes it function)(1981: 95)."

It can be said than in Thailand women in general are given fairly limited social power in comparison to men. Especially sex workers including those women working at go-go bars are not fully respected, or rather stigmatized and condemned, by society because of their occupation. Even though female sex worker's labor might be appreciated as a self-abnegation for supporting their family in their home town (Phonpaichit, 1982), it is clear that they are still disparaged in Bangkok where they live a daily life. After her fieldwork in Patpong, Odzer (1990: 190) concludes that "in general, the Patpong prostitutes have more independence and opportunities than non-prostitute Thai women." According to her observation, prostitutes enjoy an equal relationship with farang men. Indeed they are economically dependent on *farang* men but their way of acting is independent and they often take the initiative for decision making on anything, including whether or not to quit the relationship (Odzer, 1990; 1994). But in my opinion such a freedom is of mere surface-level (c.f., Section 6.4.3). Working at go-go bars means to be subject to the laws of sexual double standard. Indeed it seems that Thai men's (especially unmarried ones') patronage of commercial sex is generally accepted (Ford and Kittisuksathit, 1996; Knodel et al., 1999; Saengtienchai, et al., 1999), it does not necessarily mean female sex worker is accepted and appreciated as a respectable laborer. Sex workers are subject to male-dominated sexual ideology even though it seems that they have a certain degree of sexual freedom which is generally not allowed to Thai women. Although successful prostitutes are not labeled infamy in their hometown and can easily find a spouse in the North (Phongpaichit, 1982) or even sometimes warmly treated "like a queen (Odzer, 1994)" in the Northeast, their social status is significantly lower in Thai hierarchy. Especially in the Northeast where most bar girls came from, being a prostitute "is still very problematic. She would be stigmatized and she could be the focal point of gossip and a mockery of her village. So northeasterners usually don't make it known to their friends and their families that they are prostitutes (Santasombat, 1992, 23)."

#### 5. 4. 2. Women in Buddhist Thai society

When we talk about gender relations of social power in Thai society, first of all religious idea on men and women must be thoroughly analyzed. Probably it is true that Thai majority's way of thinking about social hierarchy and human relationship (e.g. that of men and women) can be interpret as a reflection of the Buddhist cosmology (Podhisita, 1998). It seems that Thai Buddhism (or Buddhism in a modified form



(Anuman Rajadhon, 1988)) provides Thai masses with effective sketch map of what Geertz (1973a) calls "common-sense perspective"<sup>31</sup>.

In reality, indeed Thailand is a "Buddhist" country as long as the people there believe and insist so but the majority of Thai people are actually not an orthodox Buddhist in a literal sense (Terwiel, 1976; 1994; Mulder 1979). At the time when Thai people accepted Theravada Buddhism in the Sukhothai period, they already had a long prehistory of their own religious practice: "Animism, with ancestor-worship, is the primitive belief of the Thai and their neighbours as well, and this formed the first layer of the Thai religion (Anuman Rajadhon, 1988: 39)." Most so-called Thai Buddhists only have knowledge of mere acquaintance on the Buddhist salvation in the strict sense or, I even doubt, they sometimes do not have any knowledge on it. Of course, it is very difficult for them to have a strong concern on the orthodox Buddhist doctrine, with eventually no knowledge about it. The main concern of common people is usually directed to their reality, that is, the world of everyday life. That is about various phenomena or happenings usually and frequently they are confronted to. They hardly think seriously about the problems beyond this "common-sense perspective (Geertz, 1973c)" or "common-sensual world (Schutz, 1973)." Given such a condition, the practice of orthodox Buddhist doctrine has been left only to professional monks in Thai society and the majority of people have been wishing for nothing but a mere "knowledge of acquaintance (James, 1929)" concerning Buddhism.

According to E. R. Leach (1968: 1), religion has two dimensions. "In the religious sphere, the gap between the theology of the higher philosophers and the religious principles which guide the behaviour of an ordinary churchgoer may be very wide indeed" and therefore we need to "take into account this distinction between philosophical religion and practical religion". Similarly, Max Weber points out that in the case of Asian religion including Buddhism, "The same religions dispensed different forms of holy values and in terms of these they made demands of variable strength on the different social strata (Weber, 1958: 330)".

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<sup>31</sup> According to his explanation, "A perspective is a mode of seeing, in that extended sense of "see" in which it means "discern", "apprehend", "understand", or "grasp". It is a particular way of looking at life, a particular manner of constructing the world, as when we speak of an historical perspective, a scientific perspective, an aesthetic perspective, a common-sense perspective, or even the bizarre perspective embodied in dreams and in hallucinations (Geertz, 1973c: 110)."

Ishii (1986: 3) writes that "Theravada Buddhism shows man the way to salvation through his own endeavour." In this sense, Theravada Buddhism is highly 'normative' religion, as Spiro (1970) summarizes<sup>32</sup>. However, its norm of conduct for getting out from suffering is very difficult to follow for the ordinary people. This is the reason why Theravada Buddhism has two styles in terms of its practice. "One system - 'the ordinary norm'- was intended for the religious majority; the other -the 'extraordinary norm'- was confined to a much smaller group, whose primary concern was with salvation (Spiro, 1970: 11)." Spiro names the former 'kammatic' and 'apotropaic'<sup>33</sup>, Buddhism, the latter 'nibbanic' Buddhism. Both are soteriological system but are distinctive in the following sense. Those who practice nibbanic Buddhism are "limited to a small religious elite seeking to transcend the this-worldly order and attain the supreme bliss of the Other World (Ishii, 1986: 29)." On the contrary, most people practice kammatic Buddhism so as "to enhance their position in the hierarchy of this-worldly beings (Ishii, 1986: 29)" and apotropaic Buddhism for escaping evil or danger, and achieving luckiness and blessing.

It has always been questioned why prostitution is so prosperous in a Buddhist country like Thailand. The doctrine of Theravada Buddhism is very ascetic and it seems that there is no room for allowing prostitution. It is the above mentioned dichotomy of its normative and nonnormative practices that makes it possible for most Thai men to visit prostitutes. What is more, women's position and role of various aspects in Thailand has been defined by Buddhist worldview (especially Thai popular Buddhism). Nonnormative and less idealistic religious doctrine (though it is usually fairly informal) allows the majority to accept the idea to give women only a secondary social status, although it is unknown if sex discrimination is inherent in Lord Buddha's thought.

In Thailand, existence of distinct hierarchy of the society and the position of each individual within society are understood and explained in the cosmology of

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<sup>32</sup> Although Spiro's theory is constructed on the data of Burmese society, it can be applicable to Thai Buddhism to some extent because, as far as concerning Theravada Buddhism, the fundamental circumstances in Thailand and Burma are somewhat similar.

<sup>33</sup> Ishii (1986: 29) insists that "since this term refers only to the aversion of evil and excludes the positive aspect of asking for blessing, I prefer to call it "magical Buddhism" in line with the form in which it is manifested." This suggestion appears acceptable since many empirical reports (cf., Tambiah, 1970; Terwiel, 1994) describe the magico-animistic aspect of Buddhism, where people enthusiastically pursue luck and earthly benefit.

popular Buddhism, especially its idea of karma and merit explained above. Given such a framework, it is understood that those who take a higher position in social hierarchy, such as a noble, bureaucrat or rich accumulated a large amount of merit and, on the contrary, those who are at the bottom of the social pyramid did not. The discourses like that are fully utilized and disseminated by the elites to fix existing hierarchy and maintain their power and status. The relationship between men and women is also formulated under the idea of karma and merit and it has always pointed to the direction to reinforce men's predominance by authorizing the disparity in political, social and economic power between two sexes. The logic is: The reason why one is born to woman is that she did not accumulate enough amount of merit and therefore women are inferior to men in any aspect and given socially lower position. This formula is applied to every layer of society — from state politics to the marital relationship. Kirsch writes:

[Asymmetric relationship between husband and wife] is achieved by defining the relation of woman to Buddhist goals as qualitatively different from that of men. This is most strikingly manifested in denying women access to the highest Buddhist defined status possible to achieve in the world — monkhood. Any women who aspired to achieve this exalted status must reborn as a man in some future life (Kirsch, 1982: 27).

Moreover, the scholars like Thitsa (1980) and Kirsch (1975) take a position that inferior social status of women in Thai Buddhist worldview provides the condition of today's prosperity of prostitution<sup>34</sup>. Thitsa (1980: 23) writes that “with the low value attached to the female body and female spirit by Buddhism, woman has been sufficiently degraded already to enter prostitution.”

There is a famous phrase of a queen mother, which is inscribed on a stone monument in the 14th century:

“By the power of my merit, may I reborn as a male (Reynolds, 1977: 3).”

Although this instance is a woman from the upper class, women's social inferiority finds their expression in various Buddhist discourse commonly accepted by

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<sup>34</sup> This is of course at the level of current practice of Thai popular Buddhism. Kabil Singh (1991) emphasizes that women and even prostitutes were not given negative values (although prostitution was considered as an occupation hopefully to be abandoned) in original Buddhist view point.

the masses. Satha-Anand (1997) points out in her feminist analysis of jataka tales that the male-central ideology is clearly shown embedded in Vessantara jataka. Among Thai common people, jataka tales have been widely accepted as a text of Buddhist thought rather than intellectual and philosophical doctrinal texts. Especially, “Vessantara-jataka is one of the most important cultural resources which has functioned as existential framework of Thai Buddhist (Satha-Anand, 1997: 244).” Vessantara jataka is the story of the Lord Buddha’s last reincarnation as Prince Vessantara. He is considered as a “bodhisattva” because, in the story, he successfully practiced selflessness through giving away his possession, social status and even children. He had a devoted wife Princess Madsī who followed Prince Vessantara and complied with his every decision — means she also gave away everything as he did. Then Satha-Anand questions: “Why is Madsī not also considered a bodhisattva? What does that omission imply or assume? (1997: 244)” Throughout the story, Madsī’s figure “implies the existential condition of woman whose meaning is embedded and circumscribed by her reaction with a man (Satha-Anand, 1997: 248).” When Vessantara gave away all his belongings and went into the forest, Madsī accompanied him of her own free will. When Vessantara gave away his children to a beggar, Madsī also accepted it, enduring a great sorrow. However, since Madsī had no right to her children or belongings (Vessantara was the one to be entitled), her action was understood that “she gives only in “respect of” her husband’s giving (Satha-Anand, 1997: 248).” Similarly, since she is described as a woman subordinate to man, her wishes to give are merely “those of husband (Satha-Anand, 1997: 248).” Satha-Anand concludes that “as she [Madsī] is not to be considered an independent being, her giving is only his [Vessantara]. Therefore, we have Vessantara bodhisattva, not Madsī bodhisattva (Satha-Anand, 1997: 250).”

Inferiority or subordination of women is plainly demonstrated in the level of not only religious discourse but also various social practices. One of the most symbolic instances is that women are never admitted to the Sangha. Given that being a trainee monk as a member of the Sangha is the only way to attain nirvana, the door into salvation is eternally shut to women. The only way to get out of this situation is to reborn as a man in the next life and so a woman is to devote herself to accumulating enough amount of merit. This becomes a part of the condition that forms Thai villagers’ ethos (especially Northern and Northeastern Thailand) of expecting women to take only economic and reproductive responsibilities in their households<sup>35</sup>. For instance, even in

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<sup>35</sup> As explained in Section 4.1, a woman cannot repay a moral debt to her parents by becoming a monk and consequently she is expected to compensate it in economic terms.

the Northeast villages where matrilineal marriage is commonly seen, “Women are the key members of the household through whom the majority of the household is obtained and regulated. But jural authority does not lie with woman (Pongsapich, 1997; 10, cf. Podhisita, 1984).” Similarly in the North, Potter pointed out matrifocal characteristics of social system (the youngest daughter is the one to inherit the family’s holdings) itself in the Northern Thailand does not necessarily mean women enjoy their dominant power in the society; rather, the reverse is often the case (Potter, 1977). Here, it is clearly seen that women’s social status is in general substantially lower than that of men even though women often retain some power as a home keeper in their family.

#### 5. 4. 3. Meaning of having a foreign ‘lover’

It seems true that sex workers feel proud of themselves or even powerful when they found that they have sexual magnetism for which men are willing to pay. Delacoste and Alexander, the researchers who collected the writings of sex workers in the U.S., reminisce: “Many women told me that the first time they felt powerful was the first time they turned a trick (Delacoste and Alexander, 1987: 15).” One woman in their book states how she felt when successfully earning a money as a prostitute — “There’s an immediate value on you, you’re selling yourself, your person, your charms, your appearance, your ability to persuade, your ability to sell. It takes skill, definite skill, and a lot of strength. I’ve come to appreciate those qualities in myself (Delacoste and Alexander, 1987: 54).”

Case: Noi

*I knew one bar dancer at Nana Plaza who had served in a bar for three months already but had nobody ‘pay bar’ for her. Her name was Noi, 31-year-old abandoned wife. Her husband had another young woman (mia noi) and left her and their two children. She farmed her children out to her parents and came to Bangkok to make money. However, since she had never had a customer, her monthly income was only some 5,000 baht. She seemed to have lost her self-assurance. One day she seriously said that she was going to have another job after payday — maid at farang’s house near airport. Though the salary would not be as much as working as a bar dancer, she may remit more because bed and meals are provided free. The next time I visited that bar, she was not there. Her friend told me that she had farang to take her out. Then after the payday I dropped in the bar again and found her still working. She declared that she had changed her mind. “Trying hard here seems better than being a maid,”*

said she, “by the way, can I have a glass of cola?” It was the first time for her to ask me for a drink. It seemed that having the first customer changed her to be more aggressive.

This example indicates that Thai women also may come to appreciate the value of their sexuality through the experience of working as a prostitute. However, in most cases the sociocultural environments spoil their self-confidence. As explained in the previous section, Thai women, especially sex workers, are reconciled to inferior status in Thai ideological social hierarchy because of the strong double sexual standard and male centered ideology of popular Buddhism. Even though they achieve economic success through their job, sex workers are hardly respected in both their hometown and working environment in Bangkok. Indeed successful sex workers seem to be welcomed when they return home (cf. Phongpaichit, 1982; Odzer, 1984) but that does not necessarily mean they are fully accepted as a respectful working woman. In reality, most bar dancers cover up a fact that they work as a go-go dancer and turn a trick in Bangkok even when they admit they serve in a bar. Considering the amount of remittances, sometime it is obvious that a woman sells her favors but nobody at home mentions or points out the truth as long as the woman herself confesses it.

At many go-go bars in Sukhumvit area, entrance of Thai men (except policemen) is prohibited. The primary reason is that foreign customers do not like behavior of Thai men or the atmosphere they create. Foreign customers may feel insulated or even insulted when bar girls and Thai customers are talking in the local language. More importantly, foreign customers may suspect that those Thai men are pimps rather than customers. Bars owned by farang strictly follow this rule. However, what to note is that most bar girls do not like to have a Thai customer. Since Thai men have no communication problem, it is difficult for bar girls to refuse Thai customers without causing a trouble. Moreover, for Thai female sex workers, Thai customer is merely a man who seems to be looking down upon them with the feeling which Thai people generally have and which they know and can imagine realistically. One young bar dancer disgrunt that she hated (*naa kliat*) to have a Thai customer. She simply wanted to avoid being made to realize in a definite manner that they were prostitute by working with a Thai customer. Since foreign customers have a different cultural background, a bar girl does not really have to bother her head about customers' imagined scenery concerning herself.

Having a foreign boyfriend or husband is, nevertheless, different from prostitution in a bar girl's mind. It is not illogical for her to think like this — Indeed a woman may get money or other valuables through the relationship with her partner but

those are given as a present or obligation to the girlfriend as a matter of course. Given such a justice, the woman achieving pecuniary benefits from her foreign 'boyfriend' has no point to be talked about behind her back. Moreover, since *farang* or Japanese are considered to have somewhat better social, cultural and economic backgrounds than Thai lower socioeconomic class where she is originated, she can feel and even show off that she have ascended the social stairway and got a place on upper social class, as if she practiced hypergamy. Considering that, in Thai conventional sociocultural context, women's social identity is often embedded in that of husband, utility of having a high-status husband or boyfriend is peculiarized. She, and even the people around her, may be convinced that the purchasing power of her partner or courtesy of common Thai people shows to foreigners are the indicator of her own power.

Such tendency that the status of woman is virtually determined by her male partner is evidently seen within the interpersonal positioning among bar girls at their workplace. Those women have a young, good-looking, or wealthy boyfriend is apt to be not only envied but also given an important position, though informally and inexplicitly, on the cognitive map of the girls working at the bar.

Thai bar girls' extremely strong possessiveness about their customer can partly be explained by the above explained connotations of having a male partner in the bar social environment. Once a bar girl has a customer, usually she claims the property right to him and show a very strong suspicions and jealousies when she find any possible tip that implies his having another woman.

On a superficial level, such possessiveness may well express the girl's fear of losing her source of support. But on another level, it expresses, like the demand for money, a deeper cultural theme: the sense of "losing face" or shame caused by the discovery of identify, the intensity of which is often incomprehensible to foreigner, unaware of the cultural importance of keeping one's face in Thai culture (Cohen, 1996b: 263).

Here, the problem of jealousy has rather a social aspect in addition to psychological or emotional ones. Broken romance means not only 'losing face' but also losing her socio-psychological advantage over her colleagues. This may disrupt her social positioning among her colleagues and it makes her feel less comfortable than before when she work at the bar. Hence such wariness is exhibited especially against her colleagues at the same workplace. Bar girl loses her temper if her customer expresses, in front of her colleagues, that he has no interest to her any more and want to leave her. Similarly most bar girls hate to see the customer have another girl at the

same bar since it is obvious that she has succumbed in a competition and lost her customer.

A motive to maintain certain social status and preferable positioning among colleagues is often one of the main reasons for bar girls to hope a long-term liaison with their customers. Having a stable patron provides a woman with not only monetary support but also the source of socio-psychological power. This makes the relationship between bar girls and their customers more complex and incomprehensible to a casual observer.

## **5. 5. Sociocultural background of emotional attachment: From customers' perspective**

### **5. 5. 1. Male-superiority complex and weak/subordinate-woman illusion**

For most foreign customers of Bangkok go-go bars, one of the reasons why they came to Thailand and got attracted by Thai girls is conventional male-centered ideology with which they cannot break up with even in the modern Western society under the stated principle of equality between the sexes. Seabrook (1996) interviewed many farang men who had been locked to the sex industry in Thailand and designates that they feel comfortable when they are in Thailand where their 'macho-man' illusion is not jeopardized by termagants. They think they found the ideal women who are weak and subordinate to them without destroying their fragile self-image of strong men. Thai sex industry is the resting place for an exhausted man to pull a bluff.

Thailand is like a stage, where men from around the world come to perform their role of male supremacy over Thai women, and in their own words, we see they do not want to learn about the people and culture, they just want to exploit the natural beauty and the female body (Skrobaneck, 1996: viii).

When they are served by exotic Thai girls, they can feel completely superior. That is the feeling they have never found in their home. Thailand seems to be a paradise to them, at least until when he becomes aware of the truth that everything — benignity, devotion or love of his partners — is a mere inept trick to take him for his wallet.



Men come to Thailand with money, and this gives them a feeling of great power and strength. It is strange how many of them are transformed, in their own imagination, into victims: they, the conquerors, the invincible, wind up feeling they have been cheated, their 'innocence' taken advantage of, their good-heartedness exploited. It is a strange reversal of reality (Seabrook, 1996: 37).

Such a healing music Thai women play reaches not only to ears of *farang* men. Japanese men are also companies of those happy people who find the men's authority of good old days in Thailand. Ieda (1994: 225) interviewed many Japanese men and discovered that one of the triggers attracting most Japanese men who started to immerse oneself in the liaison with Thai woman was that the woman washed the man's clothes. Laundry is one of the most physically tough domestic affairs, especially in the common Thai lower class living environment where laundry machine is not equipped. It seems that those Japanese men perceived washing clothes as a symbol of woman as subordinate being in the context of traditional system of patriarchy.

Throughout the fieldwork, I met many Japanese men who praised Thai girls' tenderness and tolerance (except concerning love affair). They seemed to be very happy to be with bar girls although they could not communicate with each other. In many cases language problem did not disturb the relationship between them. On the contrary, Japanese men could feel very happy when they saw Thai girls made much effort to understand what Japanese men said in poor English or Thai. Some Japanese men said to me that Thai girls were much better than Japanese women because they did not say anything to look down their men. Even if they did so, Japanese did not really hold in contempt because their language (English or Thai) abilities were very poor and could not catch what women said.

### **5. 5. 2. The transformation of sexuality in Japan**

At least in the case of Japanese men who came to Thailand in pursuit of a healing hand of Thai women, the situation seems a bit more complex.

Ueno (1992) points out that the social aspect of sexuality of Japanese young women has been transforming in the modern Japanese society. The value of women's chastity approved within double sexual standard which has been kept throughout the process of modernization of Japanese society is now losing its normative authorization.

They have begun to pursue pleasure in the same way men has been exclusively doing under double sexual standard.

Women are given abilities and conditions to play a sexually subjective role but are not willing to stop to be objective (Ueno, 1991: 82-84). Fundamentally, it is the men who are forced to play a subjective role when having a sexual relationship. Women ostensibly keep following a traditional female role of subordination in the bed but are potentially on even sexual ground with men. Such a strategy of women makes men feel pressured to be criticized and denied their sexual ability. In addition, Japanese young women are generally very immature in terms of sexual behavior (Ueno, 1989: 176-179). They can easily go to bed with men but would not act positively in the bed. When a boy sleeps with a girl like that, he cannot but take the initiative in making love so that the sexual intercourse works out without mishap. Within such asymmetrical relationship of man and woman in the bed, Women's orgasm is laid in men's charge (Ueno, 1989:199). When the woman cannot attain orgasm with sexual intercourse, it is the man who is to be blamed and reproached.

Women are now recognized as an existence that expects men to provide women with complete pleasure (Ueno, 1989: 193-195) which men can never understand as own sense. Men are required to have responsibilities in something not belonging to them. When the task in which they cannot be confident is unreasonably pushed onto men, their only alternative is to escape. Men averted from a pressure and the requirement posed by sexually aggressive women in the bed and take refuge in masturbation. By objectify the woman with whom he goes to bed and denying her personality, a man can be free from worrying about her orgasm to which he must be responsible, and fear that she may deride his sexual disability (Ueno, 1998). Men's regressive sexuality currently observed in Japan is the natural consequence of the gynephobia and misogyny cultivated under the reality where women have become sexually more aggressive.

Rape and prostitution are basically the mean of men's objectifying women so as to pursue sexual pleasure without being threatened by any socio-psychological pressure. But even in the scheme of rape or prostitution, men cannot really free from the shadow of aggressive women as long as men have to take an initiative within the process of sexual intercourse. As a result, the various forms of commercial sex emerged after 1970s where sex culture in Japan is stated to have been changed drastically by allowing male customers avoid having a sexual intercourse with women directly and positively. Similarly, since the 1980s, emergence of those young men who

are attracted to cartoon/animation style drawings and figures of Lolita-looking girls rather than mature real women seems to be manifestations of the same trend.

### **5. 5. 3. Taking shelter in fantasy of supremacy over Thai sex workers**

Japanese men are now looking for a shelter and, theoretically, sex workers can play a role of ministering angel because buying sexual services is merely a masturbation using sex worker's body (Kanaduka, 1987) and men do not have to care about their ability to meet woman's requirement. Nowadays in Japan, there is a flood of magazines introducing sex workers (just like a catalog). The captions given to those sex smiling workers' images usually emphasize how the girl is tender and obedient. But unfortunately most Japanese men cannot always feel that they have advantage over women by simply visiting sex workers and purchase their services. A man sees the abundant sexual experiences of sex workers behind their smile and afraid if she sneers at his poor sexual ability. Actually if one has a girl friend<sup>36</sup> working as a sex worker, he is somewhat respected within the fold of friends. That is because, within the context of the myth that a man are required to exclusively plays a sexually subjective role in the bed, man's sexual ability must exceed that of his female partner and consequently the sexual abilities of the man whose girlfriend is a must-be-sexually-very-experienced sex worker should be excellent. In the current understanding of ordinary Japanese men, sex workers are positioned on the upper part of sexual hierarchy. Therefore it is very difficult for especially those sexually disadvantaged, such as aged men, frumps or premature ejaculators to feel superior because they have gone through the process of buying the services of sex workers.

When a man is confident enough in his own allure or have something else, such as fortune, power or fame, to compensate for his poor sexual attractiveness he would feel no problem for purchasing sex workers' services. He is a customer and therefore has no point to feel pressured. But there are many men who has poor sex appeal, unmeritorious appearance, just ordinary or below average income and social status, and consequently cannot get a lot of attention from women. The men of that kind may not feel to be superior enough not only to the women around them in their daily life but

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<sup>36</sup> It must be a girl friend, lover, or mistress rather than wife. Since marriage is to considerable extent social relationship beside personal and sexual, wife is not really appropriate object with which one demonstrates his personal and sexual abilities.

also the sex workers they occasionally visit. Thailand could be an oasis for them to find a shelter in relationship with bar girls.

Racist idea can provide authority on self-glorification without credible substantial grounds. Seabrook (1996) sees the apparent racist and sexist attitudes behind the attachment of those *farang* men staying in Thailand toward Thai women.

Some were doubtless attracted to the opportunity provided to play out sexist and racist stereotypes, which they could no longer get away with at home (Seabrook, 1996: 36).

Indeed most of those *farang* men do not seem to consider their partner as an individual who have respectable personality. Some of them show no hesitation to express that they have interests on Thai women's body, not mental aspects. By looking at only the flesh body of human being, one can avoid the issue of human relations. Abstracting away from her personality, one can treat a woman as if she were a dead sex doll. Of course, he has no occasion to feel inferiority or oppression toward her. It is a very effective tactic of ego-defense, indeed.

From the experience of her own fieldwork in Japan, Babior (1996) points out that racial bias against the Southeast Asian people is the basis of severe suppression and exploitation of immigrant female sex workers from the countries like Thailand or Philippines. This is obliquely proved by the truth that the immigrant sex workers from Western Europe or North America, especially those blond women, are given much better working conditions and well paid in comparison to those from Southeast Asia.

Ieda (1994: 126-130) interviewed several women served in karaoke bars on Thaniya Road<sup>37</sup> and they stated that many Japanese middle-aged customers were not willing to take shower before going to bed with a sex worker who they have taken out to their hotel rooms. When the woman asked her customer to take shower and brush his teeth, he is often enraged and denied to grant her request. Taking shower (and brushing teeth) is usually built into the process of standardized sexual services in the sex industry in Japan. It is quite unlikely that the man who rejects Thai sex worker's request to take shower shows the same attitude toward Japanese sex worker. Those Japanese customers clearly look down on Thai sex workers and have the desire to overpower them by behaving in audacious way which they can no longer do in their home.

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<sup>37</sup> The place where karaoke bars exclusively for Japanese men are concentrated.

Similarly, in the case of Japanese men visiting Bangkok go-go bars, it seems obvious that those Japanese customers have a strong racial prejudice against bar girls. Their conversations are full of discriminatory expressions. Japanese men can establish and confirm a feeling of an advantage, racially and socially, over bar girls, which forms the basis of psychological relaxedness. Explicitly tantalized economic discrepancy between Japanese customers and bar girls is the other primary reason of their superiority complex toward Thai girls. Most Japanese have no opportunity to recognize that they substantially surpass another in terms of economic power in their daily life and therefore such a feeling of economic superiority is to positively affect their self-perception. Actually, the truth that Japanese men can have an illusion of absolute superiority toward sex workers is one of the most important reasons to attract them to Thai sex industry.

One of the Japanese men appears in Iwamoto's reportage about overstaying Thai people at Kabukicho<sup>38</sup> area in Shinjuku, Japan stated that he can relax when he visits the Thai karaoke bars because he does not have to take hostesses' feeling into consideration, play the peacock, or feel to be appraised (Iwamoto, 1996: 58-61). He stated that Japanese female hostesses or sex workers may look down on him but Thai women do not. One of the reasons he feels so may be that he does never bother about the hidden meaning of words of Thai women because of a language problem. In his statement, it is clearly read that Japanese man who cannot takes an advantage over sex workers of their home country finds Thai sex workers as a substitute for their masturbation.

Japanese men visiting Bangkok go-go bars first of all achieve a strong feeling of superiority over Thai sex workers based on both racist and sexist ideas, given a support of yen's purchasing power. Lack of communication (because of language problem) reduces the perceived danger of being criticized or abused. They feel relaxed — They do not have to be required to provide Thai sex workers with orgasm because in their understanding, Thai bar girls are simply not a human being given equal rights with Japanese men. Moreover, usually bar girls are not equipped with systematized sexual techniques and it makes Japanese men free from discomfort that they may feel

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<sup>38</sup> The famous entertainment district where every kind of amusement facilities including sex related services is found. Kabukicho is often described as the biggest amusement center in the East, which attracts many illegal immigrants from many countries including Thailand. They usually form their own self-contained communities.

when they are confronted with Japanese sex workers. All these factors play a role of removing the psychological obstacles of Japanese men to continue a relationship with Thai bar girls.

Recently, in Japan, several books<sup>39</sup> which were a collection of guidance-like narratives about Thai prostitution were published. Such books were edited in a highly market-oriented manner and consequently well reflected what Japanese men expected their sex tour to Thailand to be. Various short articles in the books of that kind often describe the reporters' experiences of buying Thai girls as a 'girl hunt.' What to be expressed is how Thai girls were passionate and, what is important is, the reporter's impression that the girls' attitude was not at all businesslike. Actually it is a common rhetoric for such Thai prostitution guidebooks (the books are not really a guidebook but as a matter of fact they intend the books to be used as a guidebook) to describe prostitution as a somewhat romantic affair of love. Attractiveness of Thai prostitution is in not only in its high cost effectiveness but also in such an illusionary belief which makes it possible for men to evade feeling awkward when putting their hand to an illegal and disregardful behavior — to be a customer of prostitute.

Not a small number of Japanese customers find socio-psychological pleasure in developing a rather emotional and intimate liaison than pure monetary relationship of sex worker and customer. During the fieldwork, I had many occasions to hear statement of Japanese men, in a triumphant manner, that he had slept with a bar girl without paying money (or with an unexceptionally low price), or, more preferably, he had become a 'real' boy friend of a bar girl and therefore the girl requires no money for act of love. In the situation where such a relationship is successfully established, a man often can achieve, in addition to some economic benefit, a strong self-satisfaction. By having a girl friend serving as sex worker, he can prove and show off that he has a good enough sexual attractiveness. This can be a primary motive to prolong the relationship between particular partners.

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<sup>39</sup> Some examples are: Genchifuzokujoho, ed., (1997); Office AAR, ed., (2000); Be's Group, ed., (2000).

## CHAPTER 6

### Social relations in temporality

#### 6. 1. Introduction

Certain characteristics of social relations among bar girls and their customers are to considerable extent conditioned by social setting itself. Most bar girls and customers more or less consider that they are a mere temporal member of the bar scene. Some characteristics of social relations among bar girls and customers seem peculiar to temporal social status or condition. Apart from economic demand and emotional attachment, how temporality characterize the social relations in the bar scene is discussed in this chapter. The next section provides a brief review of general anthropological theories of temporality and status transition and the remaining sections are set aside for the analyses of the case of Bangkok go-go bars.

#### 6. 2. Review of the theories of temporality and status transition

##### Rite of passage

The widely used concept of rite of passage was introduced by Arnold van Gennep (Van Gennep, 1909). He ranged extensively over the literature and found that, in various societies through all ages, ritual with particular structure was held when to cross a boundary of any kind, such as special, social, positional and so on. According to Van Gennep (1909), one of the most symbolic examples of such a boundary is the threshold. The threshold separates the space into, say, inside and outside of the house. When one strides over the threshold, that person is considered to cross a boundary between the spaces of two different categories. Such a way of thinking can be expanded to people's social life as well. When one faces the change of social status or position, that person is cognitively crossing the boundary between one category and the other. For instance, a prince who is on the verge of succeeding the crown is recognized as a person who is crossing the boundary of two social statuses (prince and king). Rite of passage (in the case of this example, coronation) is held to symbolize the process of such transition.

## Liminality

Van Gennep systematized the three phase structure of rite of passage, that is, separation, margin and aggregation. Rite of separation symbolizes the participant's separation from the social status or position which he had until the last minute. Rite of separation could take the form of confinement to young men's house or isolation from village site. The third phase is rite of aggregation where the participant with a new social status is received to the society. What to be noticed here is the second phase, rite of margin. In the marginal phase in the three phased positional transition process described above, participant is given somewhat special properties so that he/she is differentiated from the people who are in the normal world. Victor Turner took notice of such unique properties given to people under rite of margin and developed the concept of liminality. Liminality is the gap between one state/position to another. Therefore, participant in the rite of passage is in logically transitional and unstable state and is often recognized as something ambiguous and double-barreled. Turner writes:

The attributes of liminality or of liminal *personae* ("threshold people") are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions. Thus, liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon (Turner, 1969: 95).

Turner exemplifies "the difference between the properties of liminality and those of the status system in terms of binary oppositions or discriminations (Turner, 1969: 107)" as follows:

- Transition / state
- Totality / partiality
- Homogeneity / heterogeneity
- Communitas / structure
- Equality / inequality
- Anonymity / systems of nomenclature
- Absence of property / property
- Absence of status / status



- Nakedness or uniform clothing / distinctions of clothing
- Sexual continence / sexuality
- Minimization of sex distinctions / maximization of sex distinctions
- Absence of rank / distinctions of rank
- Humility / just pride of position
- Disregard for personal appearance / care for personal appearance
- No distinctions of wealth / distinctions of wealth
- Unselfishness / selfishness
- Total obedience / obedience only to superior rank
- Sacredness / secularity
- Sacred instruction / technical knowledge
- Silence / speech
- Suspension of kinship rights and obligations / kinship rights and obligations
- Continuous reference to mystical powers / intermittent reference to mystical powers
- Foolishness / sagacity
- Simplicity / complexity
- Acceptance of pain and suffering / avoidance of pain and suffering
- Heteronomy / degrees of autonomy (Turner, 1969: 107-108)

The above listed properties of liminality associated with the process of transition social status/position stems from the fact that liminality is a symbolic manifestation of classificatory boundary in cognitive taxonomy. Mary Douglas (1966) argues that an idea of pollution and danger marks what cannot be clearly classified within the existing classification system.

### Communitas

A point to notice is that, communitas, which is one of the most significant properties of liminality may occur in various sociocultural situations. As explained later, the bar scene I observed seemed to be a sociocultural setting where certain conditions associated with occurrence of communitas were sufficiently given.

Victor Turner is the one who firstly used the term 'communitas' and he documented intensive works regarding communitas in various social settings. However, Turner did not present a clear definition of the concept of communitas. In place of Turner's writings, the following paragraph written by Barbara Myerhoff seems to provide a simple explanation of communitas.

The term “communitas,” as used by Victor Turner, refers to a type of interpersonal relationship that may and does occur almost anywhere and in all kinds of societies — complex and simple, archaic and modern, unplanned and planned. This usage of communitas differs from the historical, temporal, and spatial limits usually implied by “community,” and emphasizes that communitas is not limited to communities and is not necessarily more intense or common in that or any other given social type of relationship (Myerhoff, 1975: 33).

The explanations of communitas made by Turner himself are not really simple and explicit although each of them convey important information concerning communitas. What follows are some of Turner’s explanations of communitas.

[Communitas is] an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, community, or even communion of equal individuals (Turner, 1969: 96).

Essentially, communitas is a relationship between concrete, historical, idiosyncratic individuals. These individuals are not segmentalized into roles and statuses but confront one another rather in the manner of Martin Buber’s “I and Thou.” Along with this direct, immediate, and total confrontation of human identities, there tends to go a model of society as a homogeneous, unstructured communitas, whose boundaries are ideally coterminous with those of the human species. Communitas is in this respect strikingly different from Durkheimian “solidarity,” the force of which depends upon an in-group / out-group contrast (Turner, 1969: 131-132).

[...] bonds of communitas are anti-structural in that they are undifferentiated, equalitarian, direct, nonrational (though not *irrational*), I-Thou or Essential We relationships, in Martin Buber’s sense (Turner, 1974a: 46-47).

[...] communitas, a spontaneously generated relationship between leveled and equal total and individuated human beings, stripped of structural attributes, [...] constitute[s] what one might call anti-structure. Communitas, however, is not structure with its signs reversed, minuses instead of pluses, but rather the *fons et origo* of all structures and, at the same time, their critique. For its very existence puts all social structural rules in question and suggests new possibilities. Communitas strains toward universalism and openness; it must be distinguished, for example, in principle from Durkheim’s notion of “mechanical solidarity,” which is a bond between individuals who are collectively in opposition to another solidarity group (Turner, 1974b: 202).

As implied by these quotations, *communitas* is a concept which should be understood in contrast with social structure<sup>40</sup>. Myerhoff (1975: 33) points out that “*Communitas* is only comprehensible in terms of “structure,” which is its opposite; indeed *communitas* is antistructure.” *Communitas* occurs in the process of transition from one structure to another, or in periphery or cracks of structure. Individual’s social reality is made up as a dialectic of structure and *communitas*. Turner himself explains as follows:

[...] for individuals and groups, social life is a type of dialectical process that involves successive experience of high and low, *communitas* and structure, homogeneity and differentiation, equality and inequality. The passage from lower to higher status is through a limbo of statuslessness. In such a process, the opposites, as it were, constitute one another and are mutually indispensable. Furthermore, since any concrete tribal society is made up of multiple personae, groups, and categories, each of which has its own developmental cycle, at a given moment many incumbencies of fixed positions coexist with many passages between positions. In other words, each individual’s life experience contains alternating exposure to structure and *communitas*, and to states and transitions (Turner, 1969: 97).

The reason why I stick to the concept of *communitas* is that, to repeat what I said earlier, actually “liminality is not the only cultural manifestation of *communitas* [or vice versa] (Turner, 1969: 109) and therefore it can be found in various situations in people’s social life. *Communitas* is found not only in liminality but also “liminoid” phenomena which occur in periphery, crack or surface of social system in the modern society where contract is the most dominant form of social ties rather than in the

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<sup>40</sup> Turner defines his concept of “structure” as follows: “What I intend to convey by so structure here — and what is implicitly regarded as the frame of social order in most societies — is not a system of *unconscious* categories but quite simply, in Robert Mertonian terms, “the arrangements of role-sets, status-sets, and status-sequences” consciously recognized and regularly operative in a given society. These are closely bound up with legal and political and sanctions. By “role-sets” Robert Merton designates “the actions and relationships that flow from a social status”; “status-sets” refers to the probable congruence of various positions occupied by an individual; and “status-sequences” means the probable succession of positions occupied by an individual through time (Turner, 1974c: 236-237).” According to Myerhoff, “By structure, Turner is not referring to statistical outcomes or unconscious categories, following the usages of some anthropologists. Instead he refers to the frame of social order that consists in a system of roles, statuses, and positions occupied by individuals through time (Myerhoff, 1975: 33).”

process of transition from one position to another position in traditional society (Turner, 1981). Turner writes:

Communitas is a fact of everyone's experience, yet it has almost never been regarded as a reputable or coherent object of study by social scientists. It is, however, central to religion, literature, drama, and art, and its traces may be found deeply engraven in law, ethics, kinship, and even economics. It becomes visible in tribal rites of passage, in millenarian movements, in monasteries, in the counterculture, and on countless informal occasions (Turner, 1974c: 231).

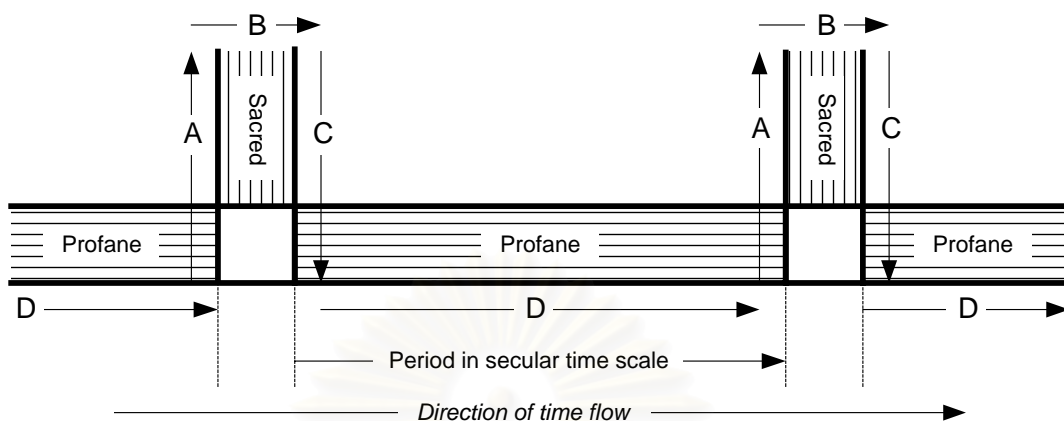
Communitas can be seen in the following three kinds of sociocultural status: "liminality, outsiderhood, and structural inferiority (Turner, 1974c: 231)." According to Turner's definition, "liminality represents the midpoint of transition in a status-sequence between two positions, outsiderhood refers to actions and relationships which do not flow from a recognized social status but originate outside it, while lowermost status [or structural inferiority] refers to the lowest rung in a system of social stratification (Turner, 1974c: 237)."

Turner gives the examples of outsiders: "shamans, diviners, mediums, priests, those in monastic seclusion, hippies, hoboes, and gypsies (Turner, 1974c: 233)." Foreigners are, of course, considered as an outsider. Moreover, "Marginals," who are simultaneously members (by ascription, optation, self-definition, or achievement) of two or more groups" also have properties of outsiderhood (Turner, 1974c: 233). Examples of marginals are: "migrant foreigners, second-generation Americans, persons of mixed ethnic origin, parvenus (upwardly mobile migrants), the declasses (downwardly mobile migrants), migrants from country to city, and women in a changed, nontraditional role (Turner, 1974c: 233)."

### Role reversal

The other notable characteristic of liminal state beside communitas is role reversal. In his analysis of ritual/festival, Leach (1961) points out that human beings recognize time as repetition. He says that "time is a "discontinuity of repeated contrasts" is probably the most elementary and primitive of all ways of regarding time (Leach, 1961: 228)." The flow of time with repeated contrasts are recognized and symbolized as ritual in the way diagramed as Figure 6-1.

Figure 6-1: Diagram of time flow



- Phase A. The rite of sacralization, or separation. The moral person is transferred from the Secular-Profane world to the Sacred world; he “dies.”
- Phase B. The marginal state. The moral person is in a sacred condition, a kind of suspended animation. Ordinary social time has stopped.
- Phase C. The rite of desacralization, or aggregation. The moral person is brought back from the Sacred to the Profane world; he is “reborn,” secular time starts anew.
- Phase D. This is the phase of normal secular life, the interval between successive festivals.

Leach: 1961: 228

Leach suggests that role reversal occurs in Phase B of the above diagram (liminal state). Phase A is logical reversal of Phase C, and in the similar way Phase B is logical reversal of Phase D. Since Phase D is “merely ordinary secular life,” its logical reversal of Phase B should be role or status reversal. Turner makes similar indication:

I wish to distinguish two main types of liminality — though many others will undoubtedly be discovered — first, the liminality that characterizes *rituals of status elevation*, in which the ritual subject or novice is being conveyed irreversibly from a lower to a higher position in an institutionalized system of such positions. Secondly, the liminality frequently found in cyclical and calendrical ritual, usually of a collective kind, in which, at certain culturally defined points in the seasonal cycle, groups or categories of persons who habitually occupy low status positions in the social structure are positively enjoined to exercise ritual authority over their superiors; and they, in their turn, must accept with good will their ritual degradation. Such rites may be described as *rituals of status reversal*. They are often accompanied by robust verbal and nonverbal behavior, in which inferiors revile and even physically maltreat superiors (Turner, 1969: 167).

What to be noticed here is that status or role reversal does not occur in the liminality associated with the permanent transition from lower position to higher position. Accordingly, it could be said that symbolic role or status reversal is a characteristic of cyclical or impermanent social changes associated with the time flow. If so, role reversal can be considered as a distinctive mark of such a non-elevation status transition from usual status elevation. To make further reference to this point, it logically follows that transition between nonsocial statuses or categories (such as economic) may also be associated with role reversal.

### **6. 3. Temporality and transition**

#### **6. 3. 1. From bar girls' perspective**

It is clear that there is no woman who plans to work as a bar girl until the end of her life. The literature (e.g., Phongpaichit, 1982; Boonchalaksi and Guest, 1994) suggests that most Thai prostitutes not only make a remittance to their family but also hope to return home loaded with honors (maybe by building a new house and/or carry valuables to home). Moreover, it is not rare to find prostitutes who save money to set up their own business in the future. What these facts indicate is that they never recognize prostitution as a permanent job. This is fully applied to bar girls as well. Indeed, bar girls usually have strong perception of casual employment even though they work as a full-timer. Virtually every woman working at go-go bar regards her status as a mere temporary one.

Indeed there are not many women who work as bar girl for more than several years. The job as bar girl has a clear age limit. Women can get a job as bar dancer in any age but it does not necessarily mean they can get a customer. Usually it is very difficult for those 'older' bar girls who lost their figure to find a customer very often. Of course, there are some bar girls who can attract men not sexually. Some have a good English skills and cheerful or healing conversation. But most women do not have outstanding skills and consequently, for those women, decline of sexual attractiveness directly means decrease of income. If a woman finds no customer to go to sleep with throughout a month, hardly will her monthly income reach 10,000 baht. What is even worse, in the case she cannot get any opportunity of 'off,' her total monthly income is probably less than 5,000 baht. Does this income summon enough motivation to be a bar dancer?

Some women have virtually no choice but being a bar girl even though they do not have enough sex appeal to be successful. They have no education and professional skill, and have over-acclimatized to the life in the bar scene. But such women are usually considered as a loser and no one wants to be so. Most bars have large mirrors on the wall and bar dancers can see their own and colleagues' bodies when they are on the stage. They always look at their bodies objectively and make a comparison among co-workers. It is obvious that young girls with beautiful bodies are always taken away from the bar while those girls showing signs of age or parturition experience are not. They count the number of 'off' and drinks everyday and know how aging dramatically decreases them. Even very young and popular girls of 17 or 18 years know that they cannot stay on at a bar scene for a long time. They are getting on and younger girls are being provided one after another.

Given such a time restriction, many bar girls attempt to achieve pecuniary rewards which are satisfactory enough. The goal is often set as making a fortune. When they have retired, they may have built a house for their parents, own a car and/or motor bike, equip their parents' house with TV, video, stereo, karaoke and refrigerator, and dress up themselves with a mobile phone and large gold accessories. It is also possible to get a rich farang or Japanese husband. Some bar girls may be promoted to be a *mamasan* or even an owner of a small bar. There are many women with a successful story. Young girls are told variety of legend of successful women who amassed a fortune without anything to start with. Young bar girls are envious of the triumphant attitudes of the women of that kind. On the other hand, they can easily find those older (but still in their mid thirties or forties) women who have no customer and barely manage to survive from one day to the next. Young girls see such people who serve as an example of how not to behave and are afraid of becoming so. They more or less mutter to themselves something like this: 'Indeed I demean myself to sell my body but I only have to exercise my patience for short time. Several years later, I will have climbed the ladder of success!'

The women's desire for economic/financial improvement is often described in contrast to men's intention to become a monk. Man can be dutiful to their parents (especially to mother) by becoming a monk. To be a monk is the most effective way of merit making. "It is popular belief that by becoming either a novice or monk one gains great merit and so also the person or persons who sponsor the undertaking (Anuman Rajadhon, 1988b)". Therefore especially for women (who cannot make merit by being a monk on their own), to have the children become a monk is a very desirable thing. Indeed, it is said that many temporary monks who are ordained for a period of a

Buddhist Lent would answer "For my mother" when they are asked the reason why they decided to sacrifice their three months to be a monk. On the contrary, women cannot help their parents in merit-making by becoming a monk. To make up for their inability to contribute to their parents in the scheme of Buddhist soteriological system, women become prostitutes and help their family members in economic terms as a good mother, wife or daughter<sup>41</sup> (See Section 4.2). Setting aside the question of truth, such a discourse can be often seen when one asks Thai female sex worker the reason why she became a prostitute. There is surely a logical coincidence between man's becoming a monk and woman's becoming a prostitute.

Another remarkable connotation of becoming a monk is that it is something like the biggest rite of passage for a Thai male. Not only "the Thai *rite de passage* of life from birth to death has been inseparable from the *wat* (Anuman Rajadhon, 1988b)", but also the monkhood is regarded as a necessary pass to be an adult man. A man who has not passed through the monkhood is regarded as a "raw" or "immature" man. Indeed, in "the good old days", it would "be difficult for him to find a wife, for decent folk will look at him askance wondering whether he is a proper and suitable man to be a husband or son-in-law (Anuman Rajadhon, 1988b)". Nowadays the role of the monkhood as an initiation rite may not so obvious. But when we see many people spending some of their time in a monkhood, we are sure that such belief and thoughts should still remain in the minds of Thai people.

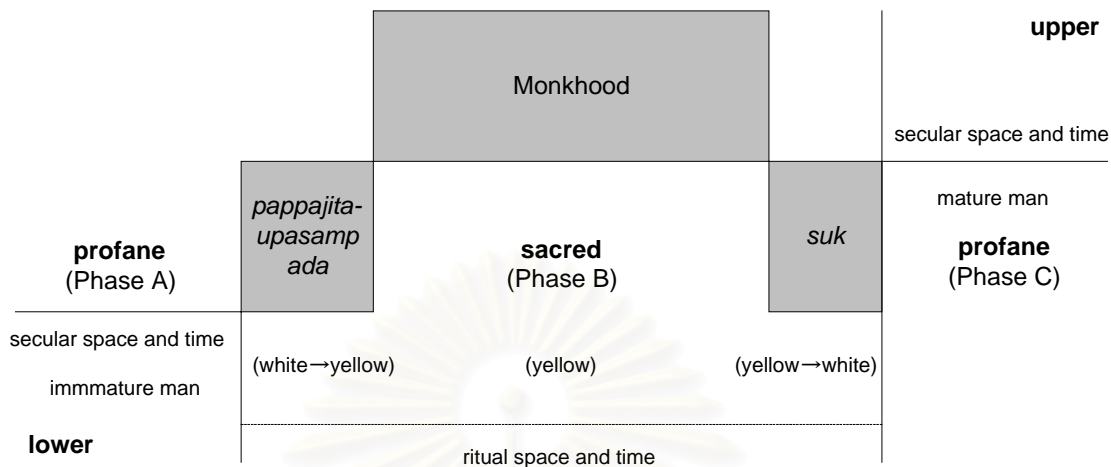
Aoki (1984) provides a detailed description of monkhood as a rite of passage. He points out that not only the ritual of becoming a monk (*pappajita-upasampada*) but also monkhood itself can be regarded as a rite of passage in the cultural context of Thai Buddhist cosmology (Figure 6-2).

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<sup>41</sup> There are some researchers who refute the arguments of this kind. Keyes (1984: 229) writes: "I do not find any significance to the fact that women play roles as market women. Rather, these roles can be seen as in keeping with the ideal of woman as mother, since they serve to enhance the well-being of the family." My fieldwork suggests that the beliefs which to considerable extent provide the physiological background for bar girls to play a role of financial supporter within their family are complex religio-social ones and such beliefs cannot be clearly classified as neither religious nor social.



**Figure 6-2: Structure of *pappajita-upasampada***



Source: Aoki, 1984: 247

Aoki gives the explanation of the diagram as follows:

To be 'matured man,' one changes over from Phase A to C but passage of Phase B is necessary for doing that. Phase B is training in a monastery. However, both Phase A and C are in the normal secular world but their positioning is different. Transformation from A to C means change from lower to upper. B is a state, which is neither A nor C, of 'ambiguity' and regarded as a 'border.' But, different from normal 'ambiguity,' it is 'ambiguity' with a position of 'monk (Aoki, 1984: 249-247).'

For most Thai men who follow the custom of becoming a temporary monk (often for three months), monkhood simply indicates a liminal state<sup>42</sup> within the rite of

<sup>42</sup> Being a monk has the other connotation of liminality. One of the most important characteristics of Theravada Buddhism is its lack of the God in the sense of either Hindu or Judaeo-Christian tradition. Buddha is the man who shows the way to salvation but neither the God nor the Savior in the style the Bible describes. These who want salvation must attain it through their own effort. According to Spiro (1970: 9), "[Theravada Buddhism] denies the existence of God and souls; it views all human existence as caught up in suffering; it denigrates the world, valuing rather detachment from it and stressing the extinction of all worldly desires; as its ultimate goal, it offers the hope of the extinction of life; finally, it teaches that man must achieve salvation, unaided, without any supernatural assistance." Theravada Buddhism is nothing but "the doctrine of salvation by self-effort. In Thai, this doctrine is called *kammalikhita* (Ishii, 1986: 3)." For Theravada Buddhist, ultimate goal is to "extinguish suffering and attain the state of Enlightenment (*nibbana*). Man can reach this state by obtaining "higher insight (*panna*)",

passage from immature to mature man. The process of being a monk obviously follows the three phase structure (separation, margin and aggregation) of rite of passage, that Van Gennep defined (Gennep, 1909). Transitions from state A to B and B to C are marked by the ritual of *pappajita-upasampada* and *suk*, respectively. Both rituals symbolize the transition between sacred and secular states. The ritual of *pappajita-upasampada* bridge a transition from secular to sacred state, and vice versa in the case of the ritual of *suk*. The rite of *pappajita-upasampada* is considered as separation rite, and the rite of *suk* is aggeragation rite in Gennep's terminology. These transitions of social state of participant are symbolized by color of cloths. Monk is required to wear symbolic yellow cloths, and during a ritual of *pappajita-upasampada* and *suk*, ambiguous status of participant is symbolized by the cloths of white color.

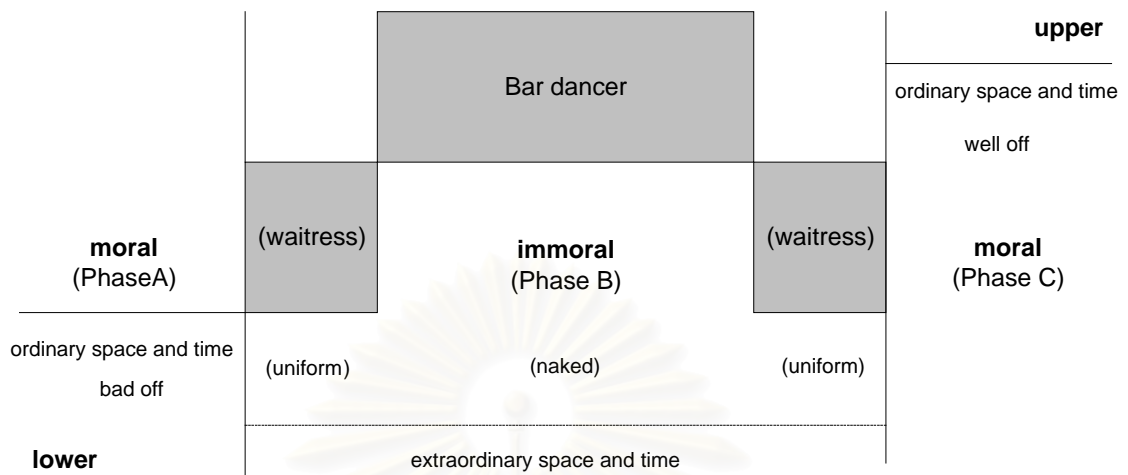
As explained above, many bar girls deem it a step to economic success to work at go-go bars. This means that they expect the transition from one state (underprivileged or bad off) to the other state (well off). Actually the process of the women's being prostitute can be described as structurally (in Levi-Strauss's sense) reversed form of the above-described process of men's being a monk (Figure 6-3). Different from the case of men's monkhood, there is no formal rite or ceremony when a woman become a bar girl (or masseuse or so) and consequently the process of being a bar girl cannot be really explained in the scheme of rite of passage. However, the logical connotation of transition process seems to explain how bar girls understand being a prostitute quite well.

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that is, man's dispelling ignorance which brings suffering (Ishii, 1986: 4). For those who stay in *wat* as a trainee monk for life so as to attain *nibbana*, monkhood logically means a liminal state which bridges the split between world of suffering and *nibbana*.

**Figure 6-3: Desirable process of being a bar dancer**



In this case, what is primarily concerned is not social status but economic situation. One who is in undesirable economic state (Phase A) can achieve somewhat more favorable economic state (Phase C) by working as a bar dancer (Phase B). Both state A and C are ordinary sociocultural world where conventional monogamous sexual morality (with sexual double standard) is basically respected. By contrast, usual sexual morality is by no means kept in the bar scene (state B) where women exhibited their naked body to catch a 'customer.' Although there is no formal rite of separation and separation, considerable portion of women work as a waitress for a while before and after being a dancer.

This process of transition that most bar dancers envision can be understood as a reversed form of the process of men's becoming a temporary monk. Binary oppositions between the properties of becoming a temporary monk and those of becoming a bar dancer are exhibited in Table 6-1.

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**Table 6-1: Binary oppositions between becoming a temporarily monk and a bar dancer**

| <i>Becoming a temporarily monk</i>  | <i>Becoming a bar dancer</i>  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participant is male</li> <li>- What is primarily concerned is a transition from lower to upper social status</li> <li>- Training as a monk is other-worldly activity</li> <li>- Abstention of / emancipation from sex</li> <li>- Morality</li> <li>- Denial of worldly indulgence (money, sex, vanity, alcohol or drug, gambling etc.)</li> <li>- Participants must keep away from money so as to keep respected</li> <li>- Those who are in liminal state (monkhood) are socially respected</li> <li>- The elders have higher social value</li> <li>- Monkhood is symbolized by yellow cloths</li> <li>- Shaven head</li> <li>- Buddhist temple (<i>wat</i>)</li> <li>- Accumulation of merit (<i>bun</i>)</li> <li>- Dominant transactional mode = sharing (e.g., food)</li> <li>- Silence and traditionally designed life environment</li> <li>- No foreigners (even though there is some foreign trainee monks, no distinction is made from Thai trainee monks)</li> <li>- Austereness</li> <li>- Morning / daytime</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participant is female (or transsexual)</li> <li>- What is primarily concerned is a transition from lower to upper economic state</li> <li>- Working as a bar dancer is this worldly activity</li> <li>- Overabundance / emphasis of sex</li> <li>- Immorality</li> <li>- Pursuit of worldly indulgence</li> <li>- Participants fall into contempt because of the nature of their money making activity</li> <li>- Those who are in liminal state (bar dancer) are socially stigmatized and looked down on</li> <li>- The young have higher economic value</li> <li>- Being a bar dancer is symbolized by naked body</li> <li>- Long / dyed / permed hair</li> <li>- Spirit house (is found at every bar)</li> <li>- Accumulation of money</li> <li>- Dominant transactional mode = market exchange (with customer, bar owner etc.)</li> <li>- Loud music, spot lights, mirror ball, neon sign, and flamboyant decoration in bad taste</li> <li>- Many foreigners</li> <li>- Consumption / extravagance</li> <li>- Nighttime</li> </ul> |

Bar girls often state that they make money by selling sex so as to help their parents instead of becoming a monk. It can be said that, at least for bar dancers, being a bar dancer means not only temporarily job but also the process or step of achieving better economic situation. In other words, the life in the bar scene is regarded as a liminal state associated with transition to from bad-off state to well-off state. Structural equivalence between becoming a temporary monk and becoming a bar girl, which is actually inexplicitly recognized or unconscious understood, certainly contributes to forming a sense of marginality or liminality, which is shared among most bar dancers in Sukhumvit area.

### 6. 3. 2. From customers' perspective

Most male customers in go-go bars are in temporary status in double sense. Firstly, male customers who visit go-go bars are mainly foreign residents or tourists. Some of them work in Thailand for several years and others are students studying in university or Thai language school. There are certain numbers of long-term vacationers or backpackers. Thailand is known for its tourism and actually sex industry is one of the most prominent tourist attractions. Therefore there are number of male short-term tourists visit go-go bars. Some male tourists visit Thailand exclusively for enjoying sexual exploration. All these people are aware of their temporary status in this country.

Secondly, most customers consider visiting a bar as a special activity that is separated from their daily life as a good citizen. They are a wholesome businessman, student or tourist and not men of night lives. Most customers visit go-go bars occasionally for fulfilling sexual desire, having fun or getting rid of stress. Even though they have problems at the office, school or home, they do not have to bring them to go-go bars. They can forget troubles when they hang out at go-go bars by drinking, watching dancers' body and flirting with bar girls. Usually go-go bars close at around 2:30 am. After the feast, when they go back home alone, they strongly feel that what they have seen at the bar was a mere illusion. They cannot stay at the bar for ever.

Hashimoto (1999) criticizes the defocused definitions of tourism given in the scheme of conventional 'anthropology of tourism' and advocates for a more narrowed-down definition. Different from Smith (1977) or Nash (1981), Hashimoto insists that it is necessary to make the domain of 'tourism' clear and definite so as to achieve a deeper and appropriate understanding of the nature of tourism. He defines tourism as "In a foreign land, trading a little bit of what is well known for a temporary pleasure (Hashimoto, 1999)." In his definition, tourism is clearly distinct from pilgrimage or carnival.

For most male customers (regardless of tourist or resident), visiting go-go bars can be a kind of tourism in Hashimoto's sense. Go-go bar in Bangkok is internationally well known and most people visit there to reconfirm what they have seen in TV programs, magazine articles or guidebooks. In addition, the bar scene is a foreign land for male customers in many senses. People there speak different language and have different custom. Bar girls are exotic and different from women in home country. They may be much more easygoing but sweet-natured (because they work as a bar girl to help their parents!). What is important is the difference from their home country. They

can keep their self-image of strong men and enjoy feeling superior to weak and subordinate Thai women. Moreover, the bar scene can be a good sightseeing attraction because of the following two reasons. (1) They have more opportunities to find 'real' Thai cultural elements that are not 'prepared' for tourists. (2) They have more opportunities to observe the culture of 'bar people,' which is deliberately hidden at similar places in their own countries.

Therefore, the male customers visiting go-go bars in Bangkok generally feel they are in temporary status as a tourist. Even though they stay in Thailand for a longer period (they may be a businessman or student), the situation is fundamentally similar. They simply visit an exotic entertainment spot for a temporary pleasure and will never become a true resident of the bar scene.

#### **6. 4. Social relations in the bar scene**

##### **6. 4. 1. Liminality and communitas**

As Aoki (1984) describes, most of the properties of liminal state, which Turner listed, can be observed in the process of men's being a temporary monk in Thailand and consequently it is quite rational to consider monkhood as a kind of liminality. However, on the contrary, those characteristics of liminality are not necessarily observed in the process of women's becoming a bar girl. Indeed they are extraordinary, somewhat ambiguous (because they have both weakness and strength; cf., Section 6.4.3) and seemingly free from existing social rules but still they are not characterized by the properties of liminality in the way Turner described. Particularity or markedness of bar girls is indicated by overemphasizing the properties of the normal or secular world. This is partly because the transition from one economic status to the other associated with becoming a bar girl does not involve the permanent change of position in the social taxonomy from one stable and distinctive cognitive category to the other.

The process of becoming a bar dancer is indeed a transition from one state to another state, which involves temporal and liminal status, but it is not completely consistent with Turner's definition of liminality. The statuses of before and after being a bar girl (prostitute) are not really given independent language or cognitive category and therefore it is natural that the bar girl in the liminal state stems from transition from bad-off to well-off economic state is not given the properties of Turner's liminality. As

explained in Section 6.3.1, it can be considered as a reverse form of Turner's liminality which is observed in the process of men's becoming a temporary monk.

However, even though being a bar girl (or visiting go-go bars) does not really involve liminality in Turner's sense, it still seems that *communitas* can be found in the bar scene. Male customers at go-go bars, who are foreigners impermanently stay in Thailand, have double outsiderhood as outsiders and marginals. On the other hand, bar girls can be considered as marginals because they are against traditional desirable normative role of Thai woman and, at the same time, most bar girls are migrants from rural area. With reference to *communitas*, structural inferiority is the other property of bar girls. As explained in Chapter 5, women, especially prostitutes (sex workers) are clearly confined to periphery of the social system formed under Thai Buddhist ideology. In the normal sociocultural context, they are given very limited social power in comparison to men or even 'respectable' non-prostitute women. Female sex workers are stigmatized and condemned simply because of their occupation. Since structural inferiority linked to *communitas* "may be an absolute or relative, a permanent or a transient matter (Turner, 1974c: 234)," at least from theoretical perspective, it comes as no surprise that *communitas* is a social and cultural manifestation of sex workers' inferiority brought by their temporal occupation. Indeed, Turner admits that "In literature, we find the values of *communitas* represented by [...] such characters as Dostoevsky's prostitute Sonia [...] (Turner, 1974c: 265)."

The above mentioned properties of bar girls and their customers implies that *communitas* may be observed in the bar scene. The concept of *communitas* provides a cue to explain the social relationship at go-go bars. In the next section, I examine the characteristics of social relations among bar girls and their customers in the light of *communitas* which is a typical pattern of social relations in liminoid situations like nightlife.

#### **6. 4. 2. Characteristics of social relations in the bar scene**

In the previous section, I implied that the concept of *communitas* might help the characterization of social relations observed in the bar scene because it is one of the most very widely used conceptual apparatuses to explain human relations in exceptional or extraordinary sociocultural situations. Since Turner himself very loosely defines the concept of *communitas* and shows the possibilities of application to quite various sociocultural phenomena (such as liminoid phenomena), *communitas*-like

characteristics of social relationship can be detected in virtually every observed social situation. This flexible and convenient nature of the concept of *communitas* often results in its abuse or misuse. Indeed mentioning *communitas* is an easy way out but it has a risk to stereotype observed complex realities. Therefore, in this section, I attempt to describe social relations among bar girls and their customers by considering the points of both comparison and difference.

The relationship among bar girls seems highly informal and easygoing. Partly because their working hours are nighttime, bar girls tend to be isolated from those people engaging in usual daytime job. In addition, the society's negative attitude toward sex workers made them stay small group of sex workers and their relatives. Bar girls working in Sukhumvit area usually live in apartments of price range between 2,000 to 3,000 baht per month. They usually live alone or with other women who are often fellow workers. Most bar girls prefer to live near their working place and consequently, reasonably priced apartment in certain areas are full of bar girls or other kinds of sex workers. In their living space, bar girls are surrounded by birds of a feather and do not have to feel stigmatized or isolated.

Many bar girls are snowed under with work. Typically they are given only two days off a month (if they have more than two days off, their salary is reduced). This makes them feel that they have to work virtually everyday. Although actual on-duty hours at bar are not very long (around eight hours, from 19:00 to 2:30 or 3:00) but once they catch a customer, they may have to stay with the customer all night. Those bar girls who could not get a customer during work time often visit a discotheque or coffee shop near work place after the bar closed so as to seek for another opportunities to meet *farang* or Japanese men. Even though they are not to get a customer, it is common practice to visit a discotheque or karaoke with fellow workers for pleasure. As a result, bar girls tend to spend a major part of the day only with friends at work place. Given such a small circle of acquaintances and deeply immersed in fairly limited range of human relations, bar girls come to have very frank conversation. It is often a complaint about their job and labor conditions, a full and detailed report on customers they met, and a gossip about fellow workers. Most of their free time is spent for interaction with another females in the trade. Especially those women working at the same bar or living in the same area tend to form closely linked peer-groups.

The other major areas of interest are fashion and appearance. Although appearance is crucially important factor to attract customer, make-up and dressing up does not help much because bar dancers have to show their naked body when they



are working at the bar. Therefore, such efforts concerning their appearance are intended to rival each other in beauty, to compare with friends, or show off to fellow workers rather than to attract customers. Clothing, cosmetics, bags, accessories and character goods (such as Hello Kitty and *Tarepanda*) are subjects of their interest. Especially, gold jewelry and mobile phone are necessary item to show off. Most bar girls spend a considerable amount of their time on conversations of such topics. Usually, young bar girls are quick to catch on to a trend and their style of dress is not much different from that of teenagers found at Siam Square.

The other important aspect of human relations among bar girls is the awareness of each other in illegal or immoral activities. Everyone knows that prostitution is illegal in Thailand although go-go bars are under the protection of the local police station. In some bars, bar girls are dancing with completely nothing on. Topless is very common at Nana Plaza. These bars often offer nude and trick shows. The authority concerned intermittently tighten the regulations against topless and erotic show and, in such occasions, bar girls have a gut feeling that what they are doing is illegal. Even though a legal problem is not seriously concerned, everyone knows that what bar that dancers do at their workplace (prostitution, showing naked body to the other people, and straightforwardly trying to arouse men's sexual interest and so on) are considered extremely immoral in Thai cultural context. Most dancers are not proud of what they are doing. Indeed many bar dancers do not conceal that they work as a bar girl but at the same time a considerable portion of them do not tell their parents or other family members what they actually do. Bar girls commonly feel as an accomplice in those unedifying activities.

Use of drugs also characterizes the relationship among bar girls to some extent. Drug abuse<sup>43</sup> is somewhat common among bar girls and many of them have some

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<sup>43</sup> A tablet of amphetamine/metamphetamine (*yaa baa*: 70-100 baht a tablet) is most commonly used among bar girls since it is cheap and easy to obtain. Abuse of amphetamine makes them keep being mentally and physically hyperactive without sleeping (It is not rare for amphetamine takers not to sleep for several days). In the bar scene where cheerfulness and excitation are important factors to get a customer, energetic vitalities which come from use of amphetamine are welcomed. Some foreign customers, mainly dropout-type tourists, prefer to smoke marijuana (*ganchaa*: 80-120 baht or more a bunch) and often ask bar girls to obtain it. In such a case, bar girls are usually willing to smoke with them although marijuana is less attractive than *yaa baa* because of its 'downer' effects (depression of activities). The other commonly used drug among foreign customers is MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxy-N-

experiences of using drugs<sup>44</sup>. Several kinds of drugs are available around Nana Plaza, Soi Cowboy and Patpong, and a considerable portion of bar girls abuse them. Especially curious teenagers and stressed-out middle age women tend to get hooked on drugs relatively easily. Although most users of drugs have drug addiction habit, those who become to rely heavily on drugs are to ruin their health and leave the bar scene. Indeed a considerable portion of bar girls does not often touch illegal drugs but drug abuse is generally considered as normal incident. They encounter those colleagues who are addicted to drugs and see their freaked out behaviors on a daily basis. Drugs are always within their reach. Indeed a substantial portion of those women who are self-confessed drug-free have trial experiences of using *yaa baa*, *ganchaa* or *yaa ii*. The high, psychedelic, euphoric and hedonic experiences brought about by drug abuse are inseparably connected to bar girls' imagined scenery.

Drug abuse promotes a sense of solidarity. This is not only because of a sense of complicity in joint offense against narcotic law. Bar girls at Nana Plaza or Soi Cowboy usually take drugs with several friends of the same sex who often work as a bar girl at the same bar or different bar in Sukhumvit area. Especially when amphetamine is used, they are high; feel cheerful, alert, energetic vital and have a sense of confident superiority — and talk the night away. Alcohol is much more common among bar girls. Most of them more or less drink alcohol (beer, whisky, tequila and so on) and intoxication helps them more frank and outgoing.

The above descriptions suggest that social relations among bar girls certainly have characteristics of anti-structure in Turner's sense. The relationship among bar

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methylamphetamine hydrochloride) type stimulants which are commonly known as ecstasy or love drug (*yaa ii* or *yaa love*: 250, 700, 800 or 1000+ baht a tablet). Since nowadays MDMA is expensive and undersupplied comparing with amphetamine, bar girls use it only when their customers require. Although the physical effects of MDMA resemble those of amphetamines, *yaa baa* and *yaa ii/love* are considered as clearly different drugs among bar girls. *Yaa ii/love*'s common effects are usually recognized chiefly in connection with sexual intercourse. It is said that, like amphetamine, MDMA lets users have a long-continued sexual intercourse and attain great sexual pleasure (although whether pure MDMA really has such an effect is doubtful). Abuse of hypnotic or tranquilizer, such as triazolam or alprazolam, is also common since these drugs are easily obtained at drug store at a considerably cheap price (e.g., 10 tablets of alprazolam are sold at 80-100 baht).

<sup>44</sup> One bar girl stated that she guessed that 80% of bar dancers working at the same bar were habitual or occasional user of *yaa baa*.

girls is indeed interpersonal rather than being defined by social position. The individuals are not segmentalized into social roles and categories. Their relationship is rather informal, direct and immediate. They develop “a fellowship, a comradeship, among themselves, based on individual choice of friends rather than on kinship and neighborhood (Turner, 1974b: 201).” These are indeed consistent with characteristics of *communitas*.

However, in some aspects of their relationship does not seem to fit Turner’s *communitas*. As seen above, their relationship is indeed frank and close but their intimacy often seems limited to surface level. It is common that they have conversations on only frivolous topics and do not talk about serious personal problems. Indeed, the English word ‘serious’ is naturalized and straightforwardly used in bar girls’ conversation in Thai. Even living together does not necessarily mean truly intimate relationship. Sometimes they do not tell a roommate that they use drugs, they have got a foreign boyfriend, or they are looking for other roommates. Money is given high value and the relationships between peers sometimes are valued in monetary sense. Money matters are often the reason of their broken friendships. Such relationships often observed among bar girls are neither substantial nor comprehensive relationships that Turner explained as the characteristics of *communitas*.

Such a tendency becomes obvious in the relationship with customers. Cohen writes:

[The tourist-oriented prostitute] tends to interpret the money received from the foreigner not as payment for her favors, but as a “gift”, or as support for her and her family. The amount provided served her as an indicator of the depth of her boyfriend’s obligation towards her and of his esteem and attachment to her (Cohen, 1996a: 262-263).

The relationship between men and women in the bar scene is not separated from money (although there are a few exceptions). Indeed very easygoing and guardless relations are often observed (e.g., Women take male customers to their apartments easily) but economic pros and cons of the activities are always carefully considered. Normally, *communitas*-like relations between men and women can be seen at go-go bars simply stem from women’s professional hospitality as “open-ended (Cohen, 1996a; 1996b; 1996d)” sex workers.

Similarly, from men’s perspective, the girl’s willingness to let the man not spend much money (e.g., no requirement of money when they sleep together or of expensive

presents) is regarded as one of the indicators of the girl's affection. As mentioned in Chapter 5, the relationship between the bar girl and her customer is more or less economic even though they have emotional attachment to each other. To maximize economic benefits, man and woman tend to tell a lie to each other. They always doubt their partner to a greater or lesser extent. Indistinctness of the border between truth and lie is one of the prominent features of the relationship between bar girls and their customers.

Among male customers, what is observed is often much poorer interpersonal relations than those among bar girls. Usually male customers visit go-go bars in companies with their friends. Especially those short-term tourists tend to fall into this category. A typical short-term tourist who visits go-go bar is accompanied by two or three of his friends and enjoys talking to each other. In such a case, he is still tied to various restraints in his own social environment. The only way to be free from the social structural rules which he follows in his home country is to interact with bar girls. However, in many cases such an effort results in highly economic prostitute - customer relationship. Often because of language problem, it is difficult for short-term tourists to get to know wide range of people at go-go bars. In addition, especially Japanese tourists tend to neglect each other when they find another Japanese tourists so as not to disturb their feeling of being under a foreign sky.

Of course, there are occasions when customers get acquainted with another customer at go-go bars. Different from karaoke bar or massage parlor, go-go bars at Nana Plaza and Soi Cowboy is designed with open floor plan. Even when one is inside of a go-go bar, it is quite easy to speak to another customer. Moreover, customers can hang out not only in go-go bars but also on the road or open-space in front of each bar. Sometimes bar girls mediate between one customer and another as a mutual friend.

Those customers who have gotten to know each other at go-go bars tend to be friends only at nighttime. They have different job, position and social life but they respect each other's privacy. Actually it is quite common that those friends who become acquainted at go-go bars do not meet during daytime (except when they visit massage parlor together). They rarely introduce their friends at workplace or school to the 'go-go' friends. They clearly separate their social life of daytime and that in the bars. Consequently, the social relations among customers are also highly interpersonal. Social rule, positioning, or even age is virtually disregarded. In this sense, social relationship among customers is quite similar to Turner's *communitas* but it usually lacks substance and intimacy.

Generally speaking, some characteristics of what Turner says 'anti-structure' are certainly observed in the relationship between bar girls and customers, among bar girls and among customers. However, Turner's concept of liminality cannot be fully applied to the social relations observed in the bar scene.

#### 6. 4. 3. Role reversal

Odzer (1990; 1994) insists that Patpong prostitutes enjoy an equal relationship with *farang* men. In some aspects, they are even dominant to their foreign boyfriends. They are economically dependent to *farang* or Japanese men but they have a right to decide to continue or quit the relationship. When they are with foreign boy friend, their behavior is not suppressed by intolerant cultural norms of neither Thais nor foreigners. As Cohen describes, they can take the initiative in the relationship with their boyfriends by writing skillful love letters.

Does it seem that the status of men and women are reversed in the bar scene? Unfortunately my fieldwork does not fully support Odzer's overemphasized arguments about freedom and independence of Patpong prostitutes. Indeed, sometimes bar girls trick male customers out of their money. They may fascinate and enthrall foreign men. They can take the initiative in starting and quitting the relationship with their customers. But all these things are exclusive role of neither men nor women. It can not be easily said that there is status reversal between man and woman at go-go bar.

However, I dare to point out that there is at least one very obvious reversal of role between man and woman, which can be exclusively seen in the bar scene (or some other parts of Thai sex sector). In Section 5.4.3, it is explained that Thai bar girls tend to show extremely strong possessiveness toward their customers. Customer is treated as if he is the girl's possession and she claims the right of ownership and indicates to fellow workers that they should not make a pass at him. At the same time she strongly asks the customer not to have another woman. On the other hand, she continues to have many customers. She goes out with, has sexual relations with, and sleeps with other customers. Of course, that is her job! What can be seen here is the reversed double sexual standard where men are asked to keep monogamous relationship with a particular partner and women are allowed to have as many men as possible. In reality many male customers are butterflies (who has a relationship with

many girls) at least superficially. But they accept the reversed role so as to avoid having unnecessary troubles with a girl.

When we examine role reversal found in the bar scene, we need to recollect Leach and Turner's argument that status or role reversal does not occur in the process of permanent transition from lower position to higher position (See Section 6.2). Therefore, in the case of temporary monkhood in Thailand, status reversal is not observed. On the contrary, women cannot obtain permanent and stable wealthy economic status through being a bar girl. In reality, it is commonly seen that women who made small fortune or married rich foreigner and washed their hands of prostitution came back to go-go bar. In some cases they run out of the money they saved, and in another cases they simply made mistakes or failed in living with foreign husbands. In this sense, transition of economic status through becoming a bar girl should be understood in the scheme of repeated contrasts. Therefore, role transition between men and women observed in the bar scene is quite consistent with Leach and Turner's theoretical perspective.

Role reversal often logically reconfirms or even reinforces the existing social order. Turner writes:

Cognitively, nothing underlines regularity so well as absurdity or paradox. Emotionally, nothing satisfies as much as extravagant or temporarily permitted illicit behavior. Rituals of status reversal accommodate both aspects. By making the low high and the high low, they reaffirm the hierarchical principle. By making the low mimic (often to the point of caricature) the behavior of the high, and by restraining the initiatives of the proud, they underline the reasonableness of everyday culturally predictable behavior between the various estates of society (Turner, 1969: 176).

Reversal of double sexual standard observed in the bar scene is, in the event, interpreted as a reconfirmation of the inferior status of women within the conventional Thai Buddhist cultural environment. As a matter of fact, bar girls obstinately require male customer's loyalty only because they have resignation to the common sense that it is natural for men to have more than one women simultaneously. Bar girls play reversed role which represents a fantasy of superiority to men but actually they accept the traditional double sexual standard. In this sense, the gender relationship where bar girls are located is little better than traditional male centric inequality, even though not in such an optimistic way which Odzer (1990) dreams.

## CHAPTER 7

### Summary and conclusions

#### 7. 1. Summary of the findings

Most bar girls are pecuniarily motivated when they start sex work at go-go bars. Usually their primary aim is mainly to increase their income for personal reasons. Most bar girls indeed have moral obligation to the parents but the motivation is not as strong as often emphasized. They tend to send small portion of their income to their families in the hometown. In general, the actual pictures of the bar girls working in Sukhumvit area are different from a stereotyped image of ill-starred woman with complete spirit of self-sacrifice.

Since bar girls are engaged in the trade based on their free will for achieving pecuniary benefits, the whole bar scene can be considered as a free-trade market where female sex workers. Women sell their sexual services and customers buy them. There is no controlling authority and the price of sexual services is to considerable extent determined by supply and demand. The relationship between a bar girl and the bar or bar owner is also nothing but pure market exchange. Bar girls are employed by a bar and they provide labor in exchange with money. The bar girls are not a slave and can change their workplace, as they like. Their salary is basically considerably higher than other simple labor. The premium given to bar girls is the counter value of their sexuality. Bar girls are basically free providers of their sexual services in the sex market.

The researcher developed an operational classification of bar girl - customer relationship using the two indices, namely, strength of economic demand and emotional attachment of men and women. In reality the relationship between bar girls and their customers is extremely various and somewhat ambiguous, therefore the model or classification developed here is a mere construct. In the model schema, the spectrum of "reciprocity" is associated with emotional attachment of either a man or a woman to the partner rather than kinship distance. If a bar girl's emotional attachment to her customer is weak, the relationship wears the characteristics of "negative reciprocity." On the contrary, if emotional attachment is strong, the relationship is more likely to be close to "generalized reciprocity." The spectrum of the economic demand of

bar girl and/or customer can be associated with the nature of their relationship. In the case a bar girl pecuniarily or materially demands a little or nothing from a man, the relationship between them is more socio-physiological rather than economic. The logical scheme presented here seemed helpful for grasping the multifarious and ambiguous relationships between bar girls and their customers.

Hardly is the relationship between bar girl and customer pure economic. In reality, bar girl - customer relationship that started as economic interchange tends to transform to more complicated and long-term liaison. Emotional attachment can certainly be one of the reasons that the relationship becomes longer. Nobody knows where the final destination of the relationship is but we do find a kind of love story set at go-go bars.

Having a longer liaison with a particular partner economically benefits both bar girls and customers. From women's perspective, women may maximize the pecuniary withdrawal from customers by establishing a longer and deeper relationship. From customer's perspective, they may succeed to minimize their investment for having sex especially if he succeeds to involve a girl with emotional relationship. For both men and women, establishing a long-term liaison brings some risk reduction effects in terms of the partner's violence or other undesirable activities and sexually transmittal disease including AIDS.

Sociocultural background should also be considered. In Thailand, women, especially sex workers are given less political power. So-called double sexual standard forces virginity onto women's shoulder but on the other hand allows males to enjoy their sexual freedom. Under the male-centric double standard, sex workers are stigmatized and looked down on. Different from prostitution, having a foreign boyfriend or husband is not immoral activity. In addition, since farang or Japanese are considered to have better social, cultural and economic position, the woman who has a foreign boyfriend or marries a foreign man can feel that they are placed on an upper social class. On the other hand, male customers enjoy the illusion of macho man and supremacy over Thai women. Such feeling is largely supported by racist prejudice. Many Japanese male customers want to develop an emotional and intimate liaison with Thai female sex workers. Through successfully establishing such a relationship, a man can achieve strong self-satisfaction because he feel that he is sexually attractive.

Both bar girls and customers are in temporary state in the bar scene. Customers are mainly foreign residents or tourists, and therefore they have a clear



awareness of being in a temporary status in this country. Similarly, virtually every woman working there regards her status as a mere temporary one even though they are going to work as a bar girl for several years. What is different is that they consider becoming bar girls as a process of making a fortune. Its process is recognized as transition from lower to upper economic status in comparison to the process of men's becoming a temporary monk. Monkhood is clearly considered as rite of passage associated with a transition from immature to mature man. The process of the women's being prostitute can be understood as a structurally reversed form of the process of men's being a temporary monk.

Although the process of being a bar girl is a transition from lower state to upper state, the statuses of before and after being a bar girl are not really cognitively categorized, and therefore the liminal state associated is not exactly the same as Turner's liminality. However, beside liminality, the properties that often involve *communitas* are observed in the bar scene, that is, outsiderhood and structural inferiority. But Turner's concept of liminality cannot be fully applied to the social relations observed in the bar scene although some characteristics of what Turner says 'anti-structure' are observed.

One role reversal between men and women can be observed in the relationship between bar girls and customers. The traditional double sexual standard is reversed in the bar scene where male customers are asked to keep monogamous relationship with a particular partner and female sex workers are allowed to have as many men as possible. However, in reality, such a reversal of double sexual standard is interpreted merely as a reconfirmation of the inferior status of women. Bar girls can not get rid of the conventional male-centric ideology in Thai Buddhist cultural environment.

## **7. 2. Implications of the research**

The fundamental object of this research was to understand those who are related to go-go bars and their social realities in certain social setting — the bar scene. Social relationship among bar girls and customers was the point of focus. What I found through the fieldwork is that human interchange observed in go-go bar scene is not only of the sex/money matters. Money is not the only factor which influences bar girls' decision making, way of thinking and behavior. Similarly, male customers do consider many factors beside sex appeal of bar girls (and the cost to have sexual services). Generally speaking, not only pecuniary but also factors of all sorts and conditions

(cultural, social, psychosocial and psychosexual) affect the relations among bar girls and their customers. In addition, both bar girls and male customers consider their status as a temporary one and temporality characterizes the relations among them in various ways.

Since social reality of both bar girls and customers varies from individual to individual and therefore interactions among bar girls and their customers are quite multifarious social activities, attitude to understand their activities only as a transaction of money and sex may be misleading. To achieve a deeper and more useful understanding on tourist-oriented sex sector in developing countries, new approaches with extensive and myopia-free perspective are necessary.

This study describes the social relations among bar girls and their customers through highly microscopic approach where focus is put on individuals rather than sociocultural institutions determining gender role, position or social power. Social relations among bar girls and their customers were described and analyzed as the aggregate of individual relationships of people of all sorts and conditions. I abandoned the approach that assumed the existence of organic and holistic inner structure of social role system (cf., Radcliff-Brown, 1952), or consistent and lasting connections of socio-political groups, (or "segmentary system," cf., Evans-Pritchard, 1940) and focused on situation-specific one-shot relationships among individuals, which were primarily defined by personal loss and gain calculation. Such a microscopic analysis based on the data collected through an anthropological approach (long-term participant observation) exposed some hidden dimensions of bar girl - customer relationship. Since this research focused only on social relations among bar girls and their customers and limited by certain time and resource constraints, further research with the same approach (but with a different, or more broad perspective) could yield more fruitful results.

The findings suggest that even though most bar girls enter the industry on their free will and attempt to improve their economic situation on their own abilities, they are, unfortunately, still not free from male-dominated sexual ideology in Thai Buddhist sociocultural context. They actually accept the traditional double sexual standard and are stigmatized and condemned. Their working condition is therefore not really desirable.

Such a situation should be changed for better. Many bar girls act as a skillful workingperson and play a positive role in the relationship with their customers in order

to maximize their benefit. What they are doing in their workplace should be recognized as a normal economic activity or, using more appropriate words, respectable occupation. As long as conventional male-centric cultural norm is strongly held in Thai society, it is difficult to improve social status of sex workers. However, I hope the microscopic studies like this can contribute to changing stereotyped image of sex work. This study revealed that being a sex worker was not necessarily being a sex slave. Given certain recognition and support from society, work condition of sex worker (at least in some segments) can be dramatically improved.

### **7. 3. Suggestions for future research**

Certain restrictions prevented the researcher to achieve fully microscopic description of observed cultural, social and economic phenomena in the field. I made some explanations about the social relations among bar girls and their customers but still not enough. In future research, it is recommended that further analyses would be made on the social relations forming the reality of sex work at go-go bars, taking into consideration the various sociocultural background of different actors. Especially, not only the relationship between bar girls and customers but also various relations among bar girls, customers, bar owners, pimps, and any other people concerning the bar scene must be taken into consideration.

To achieve deeper understanding of the bar scene, simply focusing on social relations is not enough. What is required is the observations and analyses from more various and wider perspective. Prospective topics could include:

- Economic activities: Consumption, gift exchange, market exchange, economic exchange between those who have different value system or economic background.
- Play and game: Wonderment, excitement and intoxication excitement, sex, gambling, alcohol and drug, Csikszentmihalyi's flow.
- Tourism: Contact of different economic and cultural people, influence on the traditional culture and society, creation of the new tradition of tourism-oriented culture or tourism-oriented local economic system.
- Communication: Semeiotic analysis of communication act, Goffman-style minute analysis of performance (or presentation of self).

- Social network: Information circulation through network, the process and mechanism of bar girls' place-of-work determination and movement, network density, centrality, range, strength of ties.
- Work: Sex work (prostitution) should be studied as a normal or commonplace job. Beside worker - customer relationship, various aspects of workers/customers' social reality can be studied.

Minute and comprehensive analysis of tourist-oriented sex sector from such various and wide-ranged perspectives has never been really attempted in the field of anthropology.

This researcher took qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. However, as explained in Chapter 2, use of quantitative methods at the same time could improve reliability of the research results. Introduction of probability sampling method should enable the researcher to make reasonable statistical inference on the data. It could assess or verify findings of qualitative research. Application of methodological triangulation is highly recommended.

Finally, some implications of this research may be extended to other social settings. The research results should be verified with the other empirical researches on the topic. The generalizability of the results of this research should be examined. In addition, comparative approach among the different tourist-oriented sex sectors could derive meaningful results. The findings of this research are concerned with go-go bar sector in Bangkok. Future research may explore the relationships among sex workers and their customers in other segments, social settings or countries.

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## APPENDIX

Detailed demographic information of the research site

The table below indicates the number of the girls who showed up at the bar on one of the weekends during the period of September to November 2000. These figures include bar dancers, waitresses and barkers. As a rule of thumb, the proportion of dancers was 15-25% at the group-owned or larger go-go bars. This proportion tends to be higher in the case of those independent small bars. I visited these bars and manually counted the number of girls, and in the most cases, checked up the attendance record as well. Since there were always some girls taking a day off, or temporarily not registered (for instance, Tilac bar and Long Gun bar had more than 100 dancers/waitresses registered but actual number of attendants never exceeded 80), the actual population should be more than the figures presented here. The table deals with only those bars located at Nana Plaza, Soi Cowboy and Clinton Plaza. Since there were many beer bars (and the likes) scattered along Sukhumvit Road, total number of sex workers (in broad sense) in Sukhumvit area substantially exceeds the figure presented here.

**List of the bars in Nana Plaza, Soi Cowboy and Clinton Plaza as of Nov. 2000**

| <i>Location</i> | <i>Name</i>             | <i>Style</i> | <i>No. of girls</i> | <i>Owned by</i> |
|-----------------|-------------------------|--------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Nana Plaza 1F   | Pharaoh                 | Beer bar     | 41                  | Crown Group     |
|                 | Redhouse                | Beer bar     | 20                  | Crown Group     |
|                 | Hot Rods Video Arcade   | Beer bar     | 15                  | Crown Group     |
|                 | Game and Bar            |              |                     |                 |
|                 | Lollipop                | Go-go bar    | 56                  | Crown Group     |
|                 | Lollipop (open bar)     | Beer bar     | 14                  | Crown Group     |
|                 | Red Lips                | Go-go bar    | 28                  | Crown Group     |
|                 | Red Lips Mother-Horn    | Beer bar     | 11                  | Crown Group     |
|                 | Pretty Girls            | Go-go bar    | 47                  |                 |
|                 | Pretty Girls (open bar) | Beer bar     | 18                  |                 |
|                 | VooDoo                  | Go-go bar    | 73                  | Crown Group     |
|                 | VooDoo (open bar)       | Beer bar     | 26                  | Crown Group     |
|                 | Obsession               | Go-go bar    | 42                  | Crown Group     |
|                 | Rainbow 2               | Go-go bar    | 114                 | Rainbow Group   |
|                 | Sugar Beat              | Beer bar     | 14                  | Rainbow Group   |
|                 | Hollywood               | Go-go bar    | 92                  |                 |
|                 | Play Skool              | Go-go bar    | 83                  |                 |
|                 | Play Skool (open bar)   | Beer bar     | 21                  |                 |
|                 | Rainbow 1               | Go-go bar    | 89                  | Rainbow Group   |
|                 | Rainbow 1 (open bar)    | Beer bar     | 18                  | Rainbow Group   |
| Spirit House    | Beer bar                | 11           | Crown Group         |                 |

|               |                       |                 |    |                 |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------|----|-----------------|
|               | Lucky Star            | Beer bar        | 18 |                 |
|               | Beer Corner Bar       | Beer bar        | 21 |                 |
| Nana Plaza 2F | Titty Twister         | Go-go bar       | 37 | Hollywood Group |
|               | Three Roses           | Go-go bar       | 25 |                 |
|               | Hog's Breath Saloon   | Go-go bar       | 16 |                 |
|               | Hollywood Star        | Go-go bar       | 23 |                 |
|               | Farang Connection     | Go-go bar       | 34 |                 |
|               | Sexy Night Bar        | Go-go bar       | 19 |                 |
|               | DC 10                 | Go-go bar       | 18 |                 |
|               | G-Spot                | Go-go bar       | 70 | Crown Group     |
|               | Rosemary Bar          | Go-go bar       | 15 |                 |
|               | Spider's Web          | Go-go bar       | 18 |                 |
|               | Fantasia              | Go-go bar       | 46 | Crown Group     |
|               | Paradisio (2F and 3F) | Pub & go-go bar | 23 |                 |
|               | Nancy Bar             | Beer bar        | 14 |                 |
|               | Vixens                | Go-go bar       | 22 |                 |
| Nana Plaza 3F | Hollywood Strip and   |                 | 91 |                 |
|               | Beverly Hills         | Go-go bar       |    | Hollywood Group |
|               | Hollywood 2           | Go-go bar       | 72 | Hollywood Group |
|               | Carnival              | Go-go bar       | 69 | Crown Group     |
| Soi Cowboy    | Country Road          | Pub             | 14 | Tilac Group     |
|               | Five Star             | Go-go bar       | 32 |                 |
|               | Apache                | Go-go bar       | 25 |                 |
|               | Fire Star II          | Go-go bar       | 24 |                 |
|               | New Crazy Cats        | Go-go bar       | 20 |                 |
|               | Tilac                 | Go-go bar       | 74 | Tilac Group     |
|               | Black & White         | Go-go bar       | 38 | Tilac Group     |
|               | Nice Bar              | Go-go bar       | 14 |                 |
|               | After Skool           | Go-go bar       | 32 |                 |
|               | Shitrz                | Go-go bar       | 17 |                 |
|               | New Have & Hound      | Pub             | -  |                 |
|               | D.L. Irish Pub        | Pub             | -  |                 |
|               | Midnite Bar           | Go-go bar       | 17 |                 |
|               | Jukes                 | Go-go bar       | 16 |                 |
|               | Pam's                 | Cocktail Lounge | -  |                 |
|               | Blue Bird Club        | Cocktail Lounge | 25 |                 |
|               | Piccolo               | Beer Bar        | 12 |                 |
|               | Raw Hide              | Go-go bar       | 32 |                 |
|               | Shadow                | Go-go bar       | 18 |                 |
|               | Long Gun              | Go-go bar       | 68 |                 |
|               | Toy Bar               | Go-go bar       | 20 |                 |
|               | Dandy Bar             | Go-go bar       | 25 |                 |
|               | Wet Lips Bar          | Go-go bar       | 21 |                 |
|               | J.B.s' Bar            | Go-go bar       | 20 |                 |
|               | Cowboy One            | Go-go bar       | 29 |                 |
|               | Suziewong             | Go-go bar       | 18 |                 |
|               | Jungle Jim's          | Go-go bar       | 18 |                 |
|               | Moon Shine Joint      | Go-go bar       | 21 |                 |
|               | Tony's                | Go-go bar       | 17 |                 |
|               | Joe's Bar             | Go-go bar       | 30 |                 |
|               | Joy's                 | Go-go bar       | 18 |                 |
|               | Our Place             | Go-go bar       | 37 |                 |
| Clinton Plaza | White House           | Go-go bar       | 39 |                 |
|               | Flowers               | Go-go bar       | 50 | Crown Group     |

|                    |           |       |                           |
|--------------------|-----------|-------|---------------------------|
| Crack House        | Go-go bar | 35    |                           |
| Rock Hard          | Go-go bar | 34    |                           |
| Hollywood East     | Go-go bar | 44    | Owner of<br>Hollywood bar |
| Doll House         | Go-go bar | 52    |                           |
| Bill's Coffee Shop | Beer bar  | 11    |                           |
| (N/A)              | Beer bar  | 8     |                           |
| Wind Mill          | Beer bar  | 7     |                           |
| You & Me           | Beer bar  | 11    |                           |
| Happy Prosper      | Beer bar  | 8     |                           |
| Susie & Crazy      | Beer bar  | 22    |                           |
| Lek's Boozer       | Beer bar  | 6     |                           |
| Yahoo Bar          | Beer bar  | 14    |                           |
| Monica             | Beer bar  | 16    |                           |
| Tivoli             | Pub       | -     |                           |
| Coco Loco          | Pub       | -     |                           |
| Living Room        | Pub       | -     |                           |
| Total              |           | 2,593 |                           |

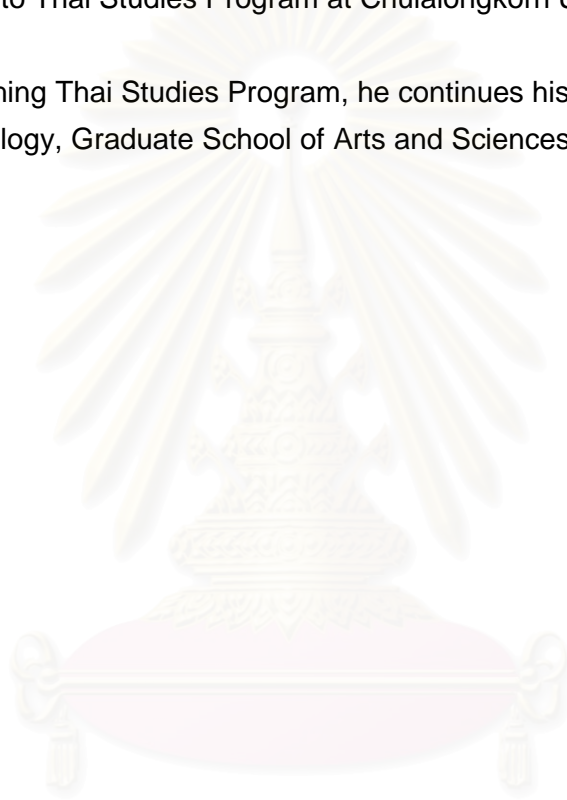
Source: The researcher's fieldwork

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