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FROM PEASANT TO MIGRANT WORKER:
REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE FROM THE CENTRAL
PLAINS OF THAILAND
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'Law over which we have no real control, the laws which govern our expansion, have compelled us to interfere first in the trade and afterwards in the political and administrative affairs of tropical countries. We have come for good or evil, and we cannot now draw back... It must be obvious that if Siam fell under the rule of a power like Great Britain, the face of the country would be completely transformed in half a generation...'

J. Campbell (1902:5), British official in Bangkok at the turn of the century.

'We have seen many changes in the economy of Thailand in the last hundred years, but not much 'progress' in the sense of an increase in per capita income, and not much 'development' in the sense of the utilisation of more capital, relative to labour, and new techniques. The principal changes have been the spread of the use of money, increased specialisation and exchange based chiefly on world markets, and the growth of a racial division of labour'.

J. Ingram (1971:216-17) commenting on development in Thailand up to 1950.

'Formerly if we had no food, we could go to a neighbour's house to eat with them. It was easy to ask for help. We could stay two or three days with them and eat chicken. We could borrow a buffalo for planting. Since there were fewer people, we could plant rice in another's man's field without his paying attention. Now we have to work every day to earn money. Even a banana leaf has value for sale'.

Lament of an elderly woman from a Central Plains village (Sharp and Hanks, 1978:137).

'Given the ease of migration and the efficient operation of the labour market, the lowest income farmers have always been ready to accept employment as unskilled workers if wages were significantly above their present incomes. Since the number of low-income farmers whose incomes have not risen significantly is far larger than the number of unskilled jobs created by economic growth since 1960, unskilled wage rates for year-round employment have remained roughly constant over the past decade and a half, and household engaged in non-agricultural activities without either capital or skills were not able to benefit from the growth process'.

World Bank (IBRD, 1978:64-65) summarising the the employment-income problem in Thailand in the late 1970's.

1. Introduction

In the mid-nineteenth century, the wave of European imperialism sweeping through Southeast Asia stopped literally at the door of Siam. Without actually knocking the door down, it forcefully pried it open through a host of treaties of trade and friendship, first with Great Britain and then with all other imperialist nations, leaving the Kingdom nominally independent but nevertheless drawn into an emerging capitalist world economy. Along with the incorporation of the Kingdom, its semi-autonomous provinces and corporate villages into the world of merchant capitalism and (semi-)colonial rule came unprecedented change. The bases of this change were the 'laws' alluded to in the opening quotation from Campbell: production for exchange instead of for use; the treatment of land, labor and natural resources as exchange commodities; capital accumulation through the separation of labour from capital and the payment of 'opportunity cost' wages to labour; distribution according to exchange entitlements earned in the market.

A century after the opening of Siam, the transformations it brought were found to have been perversely played out within the new nation-state, now called Thailand. Production for exchange had led to highly specialized regional economies with high levels of seasonal underemployment, imbalanced diets and rural economic stagnation. Exchange values for all factors of production worked to undermine local systems of reciprocal and redistributive exchange which, however imperfect and inegalitarian, had maintained a social 'safety net' of guarantees to at least a daily subsistence within the corporate village (Moerman, 1968; Scott, 1976).

In being linked with new laws legitimizing rights to private ownership of land and other capital, and in being wedded to credit relations and risk-taking in producing for the market, the exchange economy also allowed claims on peasant landholdings by creditors as floods, drought, price fluctuations, and other vagaries struck repeatedly to undermine the economic viability

of small producers. Resulting land loss and concentration in land ownership were mirrored by increasing rural social stratification to a point at which the peasantry could no longer be considered a single class (Elliott, 1978). At the bottom of the social scale, a new class of landless labourers appeared within the villages.

Accumulation did not, in the main, lead to reinvestment in production the countryside. Agricultural production expanded extensively, rather than intensively, and by the late 1970's the prognosis was one of general rural stagnation, with expected growth rates in key agricultural commodities set well below macro-economic requirements for labor absorption with increasing incomes (IBRD, 1978:72-78). For rural households witnessing constant threat of a downward slide into landlessness and destitution, entitlements to food, housing and other basic goods gained through daily and seasonal wage work proved insufficient. Migration to the Bangkok metropolis became an increasingly important component of household survival strategies as frontiers closed and local sources of economic security deteriorated.

As suggested by the reference to migration, the processes of change are spatially as well as socially uneven. Not only do the forces of change appear in differing combinations among sub-national regions; the opportunities for gaining economic security and enhancing household incomes also arise differentially over space. This can only be partly explained by the natural resource endowment and other physical characteristics of a given area. Equally if not more important are the socially determined rules of resource allocation, production, and distribution which are themselves historically developed in the area. By focussing attention on the Central Plains of Thailand, this paper attempts to both identify the internal spatial dimensions of the incorporation of Thailand into the world economy, and to show how spatial mobility, in turn, is not so much an opportunity for upward social mobility but rather an indicator of the increasing stress placed upon peasants cum landless workers.

The paper is divided below into four sections. Section 2 addresses the spatial dimension directly by comparing social changes related to production in the Central Plains with changes in other rural regions. Section 3 juxtaposes processes of social stratification with migration in a regional setting marked by a virtually complete settlement of lowland areas, the development of large-scale farming systems in upland areas, and the polarization of non-farm production in Bangkok. In the 4th section, the turn of migration toward Bangkok is viewed more closely in terms of its consequences for migrants in the metropolis. Finally, conclusions are reached in section five which argue that as the Central Plains and Bangkok have developed a single, integrated labour market, migration as a survival strategy becomes self-defeating: the opportunity costs of the steady supply of cheap wage labour work toward the expansion of the unskilled labour force rather than toward increased family welfare. Rural migrants become the cutting edge of the expansion of an urban proletariat.

2. Development in an Open Economy: A Regional Perspective

The opening of the Thai economy in the mid-nineteenth century coincided with the appearance of a steady external demand for rice, a basic food becoming of increasingly short supply in the European colonies of Asia, particularly in the Dutch East Indies and British India. The lowland regions in Southeast Asia - particularly around Rangoon in Burma, Saigon in Vietnam and the Central Plains in Thailand (Map 1) - became the focus of a rapid process of agrarian commercialization. Between 1850 and 1900 rice exports from Thailand increased from less than 5 percent to more than 50 percent of total production. Van der Heide (1906) estimated that no more than 3 percent of exported rice originated outside of the Central Plains at the turn of the century. In other rural regions, commercialization either proceeded extremely slowly, or took the form of extracting teak from forests on the margins of settled areas. In the Central Plains it penetrated directly into the everyday life of peasant households.¹

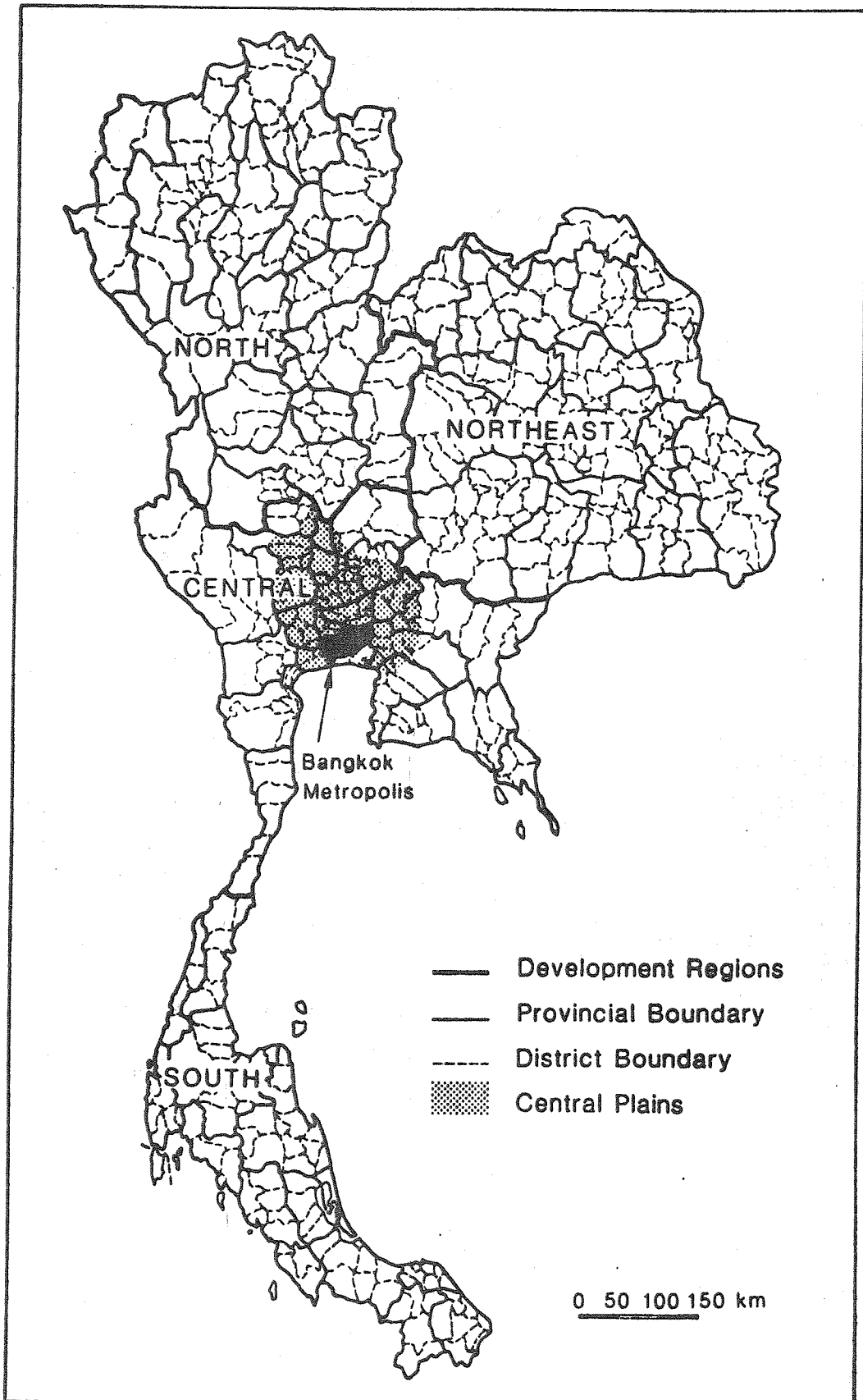
One of the more immediate impacts of the drive toward commercialization of production in the Central Plains was the redirection of labour time and resource use toward rice production (Resnick, 1972; Ingram 1971). Cottage industries, especially cloth production, quickly disappeared in the region, while elsewhere well into the twentieth century "in the outlying districts most of the clothing was woven at home" (Zimmerman, 1931:109). Land formerly devoted to the production of locally consumed products such as cotton, tobacco, betel and sugar cane was turned over to the production of rice. Interregional trade linkages developed, especially via provincial towns to Bangkok where British textiles and other imports were channeled into the economy.

For the regional economy as a whole, this specialization in rice production was, until the Great Depression of the 1930's, a boon. External demand for rice was high and prices rose appreciably after 1860. Most imports were luxury goods which could be dispensed with in lean years (Ingram, 1971:131). The underlying currents of change in the region were, however, creating a new set of social relations revolving around land ownership, credit relations and market failures.

In precapitalist Thai society ownership of land was not a source of accumulation. Usufruct rights predominated, and although the ruling sakdina class pretended to the ownership of vast amounts of land, it was actually control of manpower which, in a land abundant setting, was of critical importance.² As such, peasant households were able to farm enough land to satisfy their basic consumption needs. The insular nature of village society, which stressed reciprocity within and corporate strength against outsiders, minimized the prospects of accumulating land by non-producers. The absence of markets for agricultural products meant, too, that large-scale commercial production could not be promoted.

Commercialization of village production changed these basic parameters. In 1910 land registration became a law, and limits to the amount of land which a single person could own were removed. At the same time, the need for cash to buy land and to pay for

M A P 1 Thailand: Administrative Divisions in 1960



'imported' consumption goods led to increases in indebtedness. In the 1920's consecutive years of bad weather came to the eve of the Great Depression, and when worldwide demand for rice fell, so did incomes in the Central Plains. With this fall came the first revelation of high indebtedness and tenancy in the region.

Table 1 uses data collected by Zimmerman (1931) to compare the situation in the Central Plains with other rural regions. It shows that the percentage of households in debt in this region was three to five times more than that of other regions. One reason for this was the more severe nature of the terms of credit. Interest rates reached the highest of any region, climbing to more than double those elsewhere. Zimmerman reported, too, that the Central Plains was the only region where city-based moneylenders were prevalent. Failure to repay debts also had the most serious consequences of any region. Interest was added to the principal and foreclosure with land loss was the outcome of chronic debt repayment problems. Almost two-fifths of the cultivated land area was in tenancy in a region which had the highest per capita production of rice, and in which rice production accounted for 75 percent of the household income.

Ingram (1971) estimates that transport expansion within the Central Plains following World War II proceeded at a rate fast enough to allow the expansion of cultivated land to outstrip population growth, resulting in actual decline in tenancy in this region up to the early 1960's. After this time, tendencies toward increasing tenancy and land concentration once again appeared. Given the unreliability of official data on this matter, it is difficult to establish the truth of this claim. What is evident from village studies in the region is that by the end of the 1960's tenancy was high and, in addition, a new strata of landless labour had begun to emerge from within the villages of the Central Plains.

Table 2 shows the distribution of households in selected villages in provinces of the Central Plains, the North and North-east.³ In Ayutthaya Province in the Central Plains less than one-quarter of the cultivators were full owners; pure tenants (sharecroppers and renters) accounted for 30 percent. Furthermore, much

Table 1 Credit and Tenancy: A Regional Perspective
1930-31

	Central Plains	South	North	North- east
% households in debt	49	18	18	11
main reason for indebted- ness	land pur- chase; 'thrift- lessness'	poor crops, cattle loss	poor crops, cattle loss	poor crops, cattle loss
interest rates	15-60%	30-36%	15-24%	24-36%
result of failure to repay	interest added to principal; foreclos- ure and land loss	occasional produce confisca- tion; few foreclos- ures	repayment usually made; some foreclos- ure and land loss	lenders not strict; few cases reach court
% cultivated land rented in	38	15	12	6
% agricultural income from rice				
a) non-glutinous	74	15	2	27
b) glutinous	1	1	38	29
c) total	<u>75</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>56</u>
rice production per capita (kg.)*	600	-----280----- (average all other regions)		

source: C. Zimmerman, Siam, Rural Economic Survey, 1930-31 (Bangkok, 1931).

*source: J. Ingram, Economic Change in Thailand 1850-1979 (Stanford University Press, 1971, p. 48).

Table 2

Land Tenure: A Regional Perspective, 1969

(in percent)

Households	Central Plains (Ayutthaya)	North (Chiang Mai)	Northeast (Khon Kaen)
Full Owner	23	56	88
Part Owner	36	21	1
Share Cropper	15	3	0
Renter	15	3	0
"Other"	2	1	0
Land Used			
Without Title	5	10	11
	100	100	100

source: F. Fuhs and J. Vingerhoets, Rural Manpower, Rural Institutions and Rural Employment in Thailand (Bangkok: NESDB, 1972).

Table 3 Agrarian Class and Tenurial Status, Ayutthaya Province, 1970

Tenurial Status	(in percent)			
	Marginal Peasant	Middle Peasant	Commercial Farmer	All Classes
Pure tenants	44	37	8	35
Part-owners	0	47	70	39
Owners	55	16	22	26

source: after J. Amyot, Village Ayutthaya (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1976), Table 6.6.

note: marginal peasant = 1 - 15 rai; middle peasant = 15 - 44 rai; commercial farmer = more than 44 rai.

of the tenancy in the Central Plains had fallen under the control of absentee landlords. Only 40 percent of the landlords in Ayutthaya lived within the tambon (sub-district) of their land; in Chiangmai the figure was 94 percent (Fuhs and Vingerhoets, 1972). None of the landowners lived outside of the province in Chiang Mai; 16 percent did in the case of Ayutthaya.

The appearance of a class of non-producing landlords was matched by increasing stratification within the peasantry into several classes: large commercially viable producers; 'middle peasants' with farms in a size range which, while sufficient for household consumption needs, involved substantial risks in producing for the market; marginal peasants who had the security of enough land to build a house on, to maintain a few fruit trees, and to produce some portion of household needs, but who were nonetheless required to engage in non-farm activities to cover basic living costs; and, finally, landless labourers, many of whom were driven to building houses dangerously on the banks of rivers, with no land suitable for food production, and virtually complete dependence upon wage work for household incomes.

Table 3 gives an indication of the relationship between agrarian class divisions and tenancy in the Central Plains in the late 1960's. Three points are of interest. First, landlordism stands apart from producers in that all classes of producers rent in land. Secondly, pure tenancy is concentrated among marginal peasants. Third, in the three villages of study, marginal peasants were either full tenants or full owners. The latter phenomenon arises from the inability of marginal producers to maintain ownership of any portion of land once problems of indebtedness begin to spiral out of control.⁴

Available studies indicate that a resident class of landless laborers did not emerge from within the villages of the Central Plains until approximately the 1960's. In village Bang Chan near Bangkok even by the late 1950's land speculation, soaring land prices and indebtedness did not "prevent a person from finding land to rent, and each farmer worked land up to the limit of his labor force" (Sharp and Hanks, 1978:223). Full-time (landless) wage labour, to the extent

Table 4 Credit by Agrarian Class, Source, Interest Rate and Purpose in the Central Plains, Chainat Province, 1974 (in percent)

Agrarian Class	Source			Use for Production			Share of Total Value of All Loans					
	relative neighbor lender	commercial lender	cooperatives (a)	land purchase	farm operation	machine purchase		total for production				
Marginal & Middle Peasants	67	11	15	7	-	42	16	59	20			
Commercial Farmers	21	25	18	21	11	12	100	7	18	53	77	24
Large Landowners	26	13	30	17	9	3	100	39	10	25	74	56
Percent of Total Value	29	19	28	10	5	9	100	23	13	36	71	100
Average Interest Rate (per month)	1.9	2.2	3.1	1.0	1.0	0.0	2.0	2.6	1.9	0.3	1.8	1.8

Source: T. Onchan et al., Agricultural Credit in Chainat Province of Thailand (Bangkok: Kasetsart University, Research Report No. 9, 1974), Tables 12, 18, 20, and 22.

(a) Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives

Note: marginal & middle peasants = less than 30 rai; commercial farmers = 30-60 rai; large landowners = more than 60 rai.

that it existed in agriculture, was comprised of migrant Lao from the Northeast and, to a much lesser extent, Chinese immigrants. Thus, while the Central Thai participated in wage work, it was mostly in addition to household production rather than as a substitute for it.

Recent evidence indicates that landless households now account for 10 to 25 percent of the village households in the Central Plains. (Douglass 1978). For these people

Life is a constant struggle without even the security of an assured food supply. Such families have no reserves to meet crises; they live on the very margins of existence (Potter, 1976:56).

While elsewhere, and until very recently, social stratification within the peasantry has been relatively low and land relations have not been a major source of impoverishment, in the Central Plains conflict of interests between various strata are marked. For marginal peasants and landless labourers, constructing strategies for economic security and advancement is a daily task of increasing difficulty in a region which is nominally the richest rural area of the country. By looking at the elements of these strategies, the transition from peasant to migrant worker becomes more clearly understandable.

3. Household Survival Strategies

In a situation of widening social disparities accompanied by the dissolution of traditional sources of mutual support for both production and consumption, the highly specialized rice economy has produced its own unique blend of household economic strategies to cope with the hand-to-mouth existence facing, especially, marginal peasants and landless laborers. For purposes of discussion, these strategies may be organized into five categories:

1. obtaining land for subsistence and commercial production;
2. strengthening traditional reciprocal relations;
3. becoming non-farm entrepreneurs;
4. obtaining local wage work;
5. migrating to upland frontiers or to Bangkok

3.1 Obtaining Land

For landless and marginal peasants, the ability to obtain new land for farming is severely limited. With the closing of land frontiers by the late 1960's there are no longer opportunities to clear forests to establish new farms (MAC 1969). Furthermore, if there is any consensus among the numerous recent case studies dealing with land ownership in the Central Plains, it is that land loss by smallholders is an irreversible process (Pakkasem et al., 1978); Amyot, 1976; Takahashi, 1976; Tomosugi, 1969). A primary source of the inability to reclaim land once it has been lost has been the rising price of land. In 1974 land prices in paddy growing areas of the Central Plains were on the average 50 percent higher than

paddy land elsewhere (MAC, 1975), even though average yields were only 10 percent above the national average (IBRD, 1980:83).

Added to the high cost of land is the low income of these households coupled with the inability to obtain credit for either land purchases or increasing production. Table 4 shows credit sources and uses by agrarian class in Chainat Province in the Central Plains in the mid-1970's. It shows not only the low level of access to institutional credit on the part of marginal and middle peasants, but also indicates that none was used for land purchase, even in this, one of the most recently settled areas of the Central Plain.

For those who can rent in more land, conditions of tenancy have become more onerous in recent decades. Leases are generally given on a one-year basis, with no provisions for automatic renewals. Furthermore, whereas in the early twentieth century landlords were as often as not neighbours and kin who rented out fallow land on a share-cropping basis with remissions in poor years, rents are more and more collected by absentee landlords who, for obvious reasons, have turned to fixed rents rather than sharecropping arrangements (Takahashi, 1976). Remissions are granted less frequently and, as a reflection of the competition among potential tenants, rent may now even be collected before the season begins, absolving the landlords of all risks whatsoever in the production process.⁵ Relatedly, as a 'patron' of the tenant 'client', landlords - like other new merchant and creditor patrons - have been increasingly able to abrogate the former 'multi-stranded' protective role of patrons. As summarized by Turton (1978:111):

Even tenants may be dispossessed if they demand their legal rights or may be downgraded to the status of agricultural laborer to enable the landlord to evade his obligations towards them.

As protective roles have weakened, the demands placed upon clients have not. Free labor services may be demanded in return for the 'right' to rent land or to obtain high interest loans. In fact, loans given to those with little or no capital are arguably made available only because these labour services can be called upon at the whim of the creditor.

Finally, renting in land does not mean reduction in risk or the ability to successfully gain from production for the market. Although much of the credit obtained by peasant producers is used for farm operations (Table 4), recent surveys show that these inputs - such as fertilizer - have not been used to expand production but rather merely to keep production at previous levels (Utis, 1978). As noted by Amyot (1976:108), small producers in a turbulent natural and social environment face almost inexorable pressure on holdings, with little hope of gaining new land and high probability of eventual landloss:

There seems to be what amounted to a law in the agricultural economy of the area (Ayutthaya villages) as to the minimum size a farm holding must have to be exploited profitably. The break-off point seemed to be about 15 rai (2.4 ha.). If a farmer had less than that, he could not survive economically as a full-time farmer without acquiring additional land. Failing this possibility, if he was an owner he either sold or rented out his land; if he was a renter he withdrew from farming. In either case, land was made available for othermore successful farmers to purchase or rent.

3.2 Strengthening traditional reciprocal relations

Most peasant and landless households attempt to establish some level of economic security by promoting reciprocal relations with others. Much of contemporary anthropological literature on rural Thailand stresses the variety of ways in which these relations are sought: formation of small 'compound' groups among so-called cottage producers, taking advantage of kin and fictive kinship relations, and, in a vertical or asymmetrical manner, joining in village factions, entourages and patron-client relations. At the risk of oversimplifying on the successes in making these attempts, two tendencies may be noted: the decreasing scope for 'horizontal' relations within each class, and the increasing imbalance in the more vertical relations between strata. The latter trend has been discussed above in reference to patron-client relations. Concerning horizontal relations among small-scale producers, an initial observation is that the traditions of labour exchange in agricultural production have all but

died out in the Central Plains (Ingram, 1971:57). Rather than covering the entire production cycle, labour exchanges are now primarily organized only during harvesting and only among middle peasants. In Amyot's 1976 (Table 7.9) study of villages in Ayutthaya, only 5 percent of marginal peasants participated in labour exchanges, and 15 percent of the middle peasants did so. No commercial farmers participated in them. Amyot (p.254) concludes that although cooperation with fellow villagers would be quite essential to the task of overcoming the economic weaknesses of individual households, "the existing pattern of association to enhance economic power is open to richer farmers who need it less."

Concerning other forms of association, evidence also indicates an atrophy of traditional sources of economic security. Neighbours and neighbourhood associations within the villages, which are reportedly still strong in the North and Northeast, have atrophied in the Central Plains.⁶ As noted in the case of a village near Bangkok:

Bang Chan's neighbourhoods began to decline in the early 1950's... a decade later the only vestige of dependence on neighbourliness was at temple ordinations (Potter: 165-65).

Even the larger compounds established among kinship groups have mostly disappeared (Wijeyewardene, 1967; Kaufman, 1960), and most households have become nuclear, and depend upon kin support less frequently. Rural household sizes have been found to be directly proportional to the amount of land owned (Amyot, 1976), and the ideal of the cooperative extended family is found only among big landholders (Piker, 1968). Poorer householders find that they are "disintegrated by poverty" (Moerman, 1968:104).

It is also important to note the decline of religious institutions in acting as sources of redistribution toward poorer village households. Pressures on wealthier households to perform merit-making donations have decreased along with their dependence upon the village for political and economic support (Ingle, 1974:40).⁷ At the same time, Kaufman (1960) reports that the poor are often not able to avail themselves of the temple because they are unable to

make the minimum donation thought appropriate for the collection bowl.

3.3 Becoming non-farm entrepreneurs

If communal relations can no longer be called upon for purposes of production and economic security, many marginal peasant and landless households may try to strike out on their own to run small-scale enterprises. It is difficult, if not impossible, to summarize the array of small-scale activities engaged in or operated on an individual or household basis in the Central Plains. Many of these activities, such as food processing and manufacturing, remain relatively undocumented and outside of the market (Visser 1980). Those which do enter the market include such diverse activities as selling fried bananas, weaving mats, making bricks, making and selling sweets, running beauty parlours, acting as midwife, giving massages, telling fortunes, and repairing simple implements. Near to towns there are also opportunities to sell food products and vegetables.

If there are commonalities among these activities, however, it is their small scale, low levels of fixed capital, spatial restriction, and the small income received from them. In addition to the low purchasing power of potential rural customers for many of these activities, the commonalities result from at least two other factors. One is the lack of financial resources for capital investments and running costs, and the other is the fact that although in appearance they are entrepreneurial, they are often conducted on a piece-work basis for a larger, controlled system of production. As a result, most of these non-wage activities remain side-line activities which rarely allow for a transition from peasant or rural wage laborer to non-agricultural entrepreneur.

To enter into owner-operator non-farm activities, the primary and continuing concern is capital. The need for capital even of Lilliputian proportions is a hurdle which few peasants or landless households can overcome. As Visser (1980) found in his study of village Baan Dong, low income households are already deeply in debt just for purposes of achieving household consumption objectives.

For those who do attempt to borrow money to enter into entrepreneurial activities, loans from friends and relatives may not be

forthcoming. Such requests are either considered to be beyond the normal scope of reciprocal support or may be insufficient even when available. The loans are instead obtained from professional money lenders or, more commonly, the sellers of the capital goods needed for a particular enterprise. In a case reported by a landless person, who stated that after twenty years as a tenant he had given up farming due to the increasing unscrupulous demands made by his landlord, the cost of starting a coffee vending business included a 1000 baht (\$50) loan for a vending cart. The loan was actually a deferred payment for the cart, with interest set at a competitive but nevertheless extraordinary 10 percent per month. Just to pay the interest to avoid compounding charges, he had to earn at least 100 baht per month above his own living and production expenses.

Inability to repay debts for extended periods holds frightening prospects. Failure to repay any part of the loan for a single year would have seen, in the example above, the debt increase from the initial 1000 baht to slightly more than 3000 baht. In a business which, like agriculture, is highly seasonal (the roads were unusable in his inter-village trade area for at least three months a year), and each glass of coffee sold for no more than 1 baht, the chances of ever climbing out of the debt were extremely low. Just keeping even with interest payments was a never-ending task for a man who was so totally lacking in economic resources that he built his house in a river because he could not purchase even enough land for it to sit on.

For occupations which may be nominally listed as cottage industries similar relationships appear. A typical example is mat weaving. Because inputs are supplied by the buyer of the mats and mats are competitively produced by a number of households who contract with the input supplier cum buyer, it is, in effect, piece-rate work. Control over input prices and purchasing prices could be worked to maintain constant returns to workers. Independent studies of this activity (Douglass 1978; Amyot 1976) show an effective income at or slightly below the average rural wage. As with coffee vending, inputs were also only seasonally available, and therefore production was not possible for at least four months a year.

Even such apparently promising activities as brickmaking, which is carried out in some of the more fortuitously located villages

where appropriate clays can be found, are subject to relations which squeeze small producers on both the production and selling side. The simple technology and materials involved - water, clay, brickmold, rice husk, and rudimentary kiln - may still require more resources are available to low income households. Clays may be available only to a few landowners, and rice husks used for firing kilns are often supplied by the brick buyers who, like suppliers to mat weavers, can manipulate the prices of use production inputs to reduce value added accruing to the small entrepreneurs. Amyot (1976) estimated that brickmakers in Ayutthaya villages had average household incomes of between 600 to 1000 baht per month, a level which constituted a band ranging around the official government poverty line.

3.4 Obtaining local wage work

One of the more telling spatial manifestations of development in Thailand has been the strong polarization of growth of non-farm activities in Bangkok. A key indicator of this is the slow growth of rural towns. The Central Plains remains the least urbanized region of the country, with 90 percent of its population living in villages, and with no town larger than 40,000 in population. Between 1971 and 1978 towns in the Central Plains grew at only 1.5 percent a year, a rate half that of natural population growth, and one indicating net population losses. In his study of 56 towns in six provinces in the Central Plains, Utis (1978) found that only four were growing in excess of the 3 percent national population growth rate.

On close inspection, the 'role' of small towns in the Central Plains has primarily been one of strengthening rural-Bangkok linkages rather than one of heightening local access to employment opportunities. Most activities are in commerce, in selling goods imported from or through Bangkok and, less frequently, in acting as middle-stage trans-shipment points to the capital city and abroad.

Low or negative urban growth rates indicate low or negative rates of absorption of labor. The structure of urban enterprises also works against the absorption of an expanding rural labour force in

local towns. Most firms are small in scale, having less than five workers, and are informally protected by family and ethnic Chinese relations. Existing urban enterprises are long-established ones, and there are few signs of new firms being established in the region. Utis's study team concluded that the typical, town business was

known to be conservative in operation, to provide little employment because it attempts to call on relatives instead, and lacks the ability and ability and capital to expand. A full time job in the town is impossible for almost all the rural labor force; towns are insignificant in providing off-season employment (Utis 1978: 181-82).

Wage employment is therefore found outside of the towns, where it consists primarily of seasonal work in agriculture-related activities. In the Central Plains a full 85 percent of farming households are still primarily involved in the production of a single crop, rice. Yet rice yields in this region remain among the lowest in Asia (ADB 1977). Furthermore, in the 1970's output per area of land fell from the low growth rate of 0.6 percent per year of the 1960's to an even lower 0.3 percent. Although land consolidation areas and some commercial farmers may have increased the productivity of land, for the region as a whole there was no discernible increase for the 1970's. The rice economy had become stagnant. As a result, opportunities to increase income through wage employment have also become limited.

Unlike the Philippines or in Latin America where huge farms may employ a permanent wage labour force, in Thailand rural wage labor is hired out either on a daily or piece-work basis. Amyot (1976) could find no instance of a rural wage worker in Ayutthaya being hired on a yearly basis. With almost all urban employment consisting of family labor, and with 50 to 70 percent of all so-called manufacturing employment in the Central Plains in seasonal agro-processing of rice, maize or cassave, Utis (1978) found in his study that only 1.4 percent of the labor force in the villages of the Central Plains was engaged in permanent wage employment.

Given the almost exclusive absorption of wage labor into agricultural activities, changes in real wages in agriculture are the singlemost important indicator of the economic welfare of the landless and many marginal peasants. Table 5 shows trends in real agricultural wages in the Central Plains between the years 1965 and 1976. Changes in nominal wages reflect the low levels of inflation up to 1973, followed by extraordinary rates of increase associated with the 'oil shock' and worldwide inflation.

Because the data is a source of a polarized debate among development theorists and planners, three different types of conversions from nominal to real wage rates are given. The first (A) gives nominal wages weighted by the consumer price index of the Central Plains.⁸ The fallacy in making this estimate is in its failure to account for differences in the basket of goods consumed by each strata of the rural population. Food prices have risen at a rate faster than other prices; since the poor, who gain most of their income from wage work, spend relatively more on food, the average consumer price index underestimates the impact of inflation on their incomes. Whereas the 'average' household spends less than half its income on food, poor households may spend two-thirds or more on food (NSO 1978b: IBRD 1979).

Estimates B and C attempt to take the differences in Engel coefficients (proportion of income spent on food) among groups into account, showing that on the most optimistic side real wages have shown only a slight increase, and on the pessimistic side they have fallen. The most acceptable position, given the conditions of the rice economy as a whole, would be that real wages have stagnated along with the rural economy.

Table 5 Agricultural Wage Rates in the Central Plains, 1965-1971

Year	Nominal Rate	(baht per day)		
		Real Wage Rate (1965 Prices)		
		(A)	(B)	(C)
1965	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.0
1967	10.0	9.2	-	-
1970	12.0	10.4	-	-
1972	12.6	10.6	10.3	9.0
1975	24.0	13.6	11.6	9.7
1976	30.0	15.6	12.0	9.7

(A) adjusted by the consumer price index for the Central Plains;

(B) adjusted by cost of living index for low income farmers;

(C) adjusted by the price index for rice.

source: nominal rate and column (A): IRRD, 1980, Thailand: Case Study of Agricultural Input and Output Pricing, Table 4; columns (B) and (C) calculated from indices from Ministry of Agriculture, Division of Agricultural Economics.

3.5 Migration: the turn toward the Metropolis

Migration as an element of household economic strategies reflects both the uneven social and uneven spatial dimensions of development in Thailand. Not only are migration patterns characteristically different for each agrarian class; they also show an increasing orientation toward the rapidly growing capital city, Bangkok). Table 6 indicates migration differences between classes by showing that while middle peasants (and commercial farmers) have a high propensity for intra-changwat (province) moves toward rice farming pursuits - either through marriage, inheritance or land purchase - marginal peasants (and landless) tend to move to Bangkok. Behind these figures lie the calculus of household economics particular to these classes. For marginal peasants and the landless, migration to other rural areas is primarily aimed at obtaining wage work; there is now little hope of obtaining land or becoming successful rural entrepreneurs through rural-rural migration (Utis, 1978).

Maps 2 and 3 show major migration patterns in Thailand in the late 1960's. Map 2 indicates that inter-provincial rural-rural migration had entered a penultimate stage. Provinces showing positive net migration were, with the exception of Bangkok, all located outside of the traditional, densely-settled heartland areas of the North, Northeast, South and the Central Plains and in the last sparsely-settled frontiers of the country. They were either along the extreme border areas of the nation or along the mountain ranges which divide the major geographical regions. Map 3 shows that in the Central Plains, in particular, all major streams and net migration focused on the Bangkok Metropolis. Movement into Bangkok was at a higher rate than even inter-provincial rural-rural migration within the Central Plains (Utis, 1978).

Movement between the Central Plains and Bangkok, as found in other recent studies on migration (McGee and Yeung 1977; Internet 1973; Findley 1976), is in Thailand an organized, low risk venture (ILO 1965; NSO 1978). The existence of jobs is usually well known beforehand. Well-travelled migration trails exist between specific villages or kin groups and types of work at specific destinations (Textor 1976; Mowat 1977).

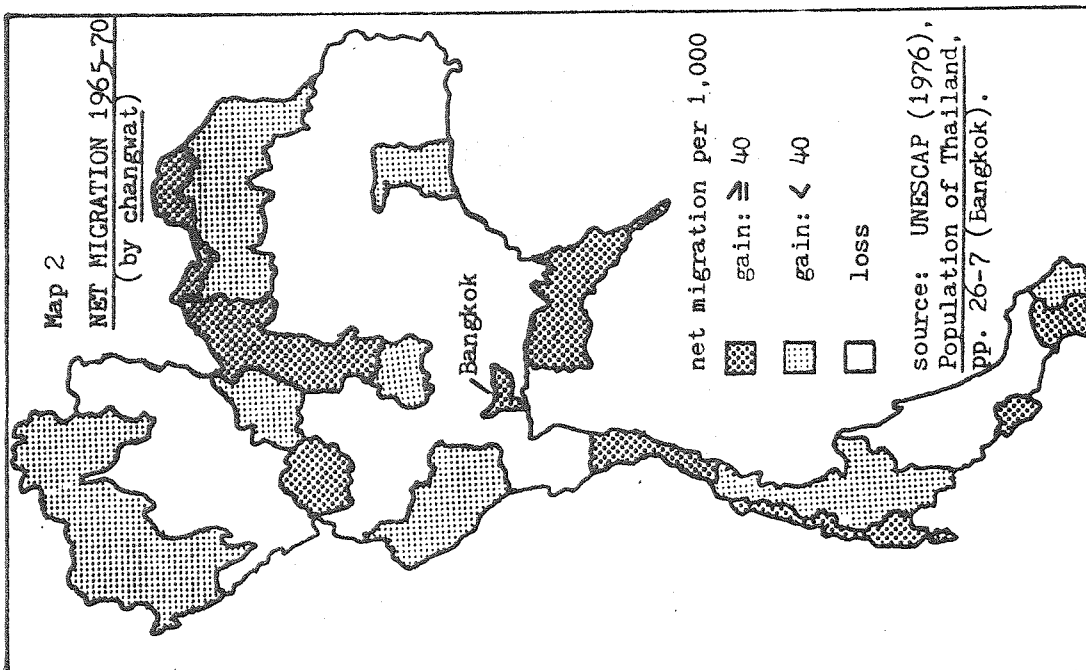
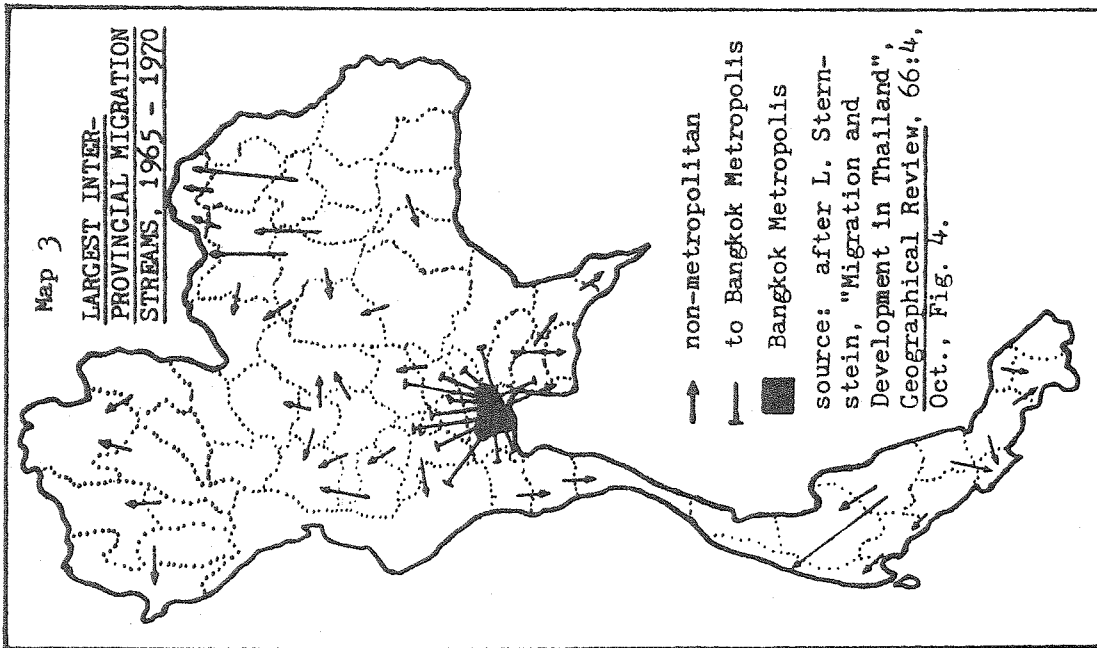
Table 6 Distribution of Migrants by Agrarian Class, Selected Changwat of The Central Plains*

Destination of Migrant**	Marginal Peasant (<20 rai)	Middle Peasant (20-40 rai)	Commercial Farmer (> 40 rai)
<u>Some Changwat</u>			
rice farming	24	50	31
non-farm	0	0	0
<u>Other Changwat</u>	34	30	42
<u>Bangkok Metro</u>	42	20	27
<u>Total</u>	100	100	100

Source: Utis (1978), p.183.

* Chachoengsao, Chainat, Nakhon Nayok, Singburi, Suphanburi.

** Migrant defined as any household member currently residing away from the place of usual residence.



From the metropolis large and small firms eager to maintain constant supplies of cheap labour send recruiters to the rural periphery, offering free transport, housing, and wages in advance to rural households for the services of (often female) unskilled labour.⁸

The risk-avoiding nature of migration and the role it plays in household survival strategies are displayed by its seasonality and its selectivity among potential migrants. The overwhelming majority of migrants not only move to the metropolis during agricultural slack seasons; they also return to their rural households when peak seasons begin. Utis (1978) found that as much as 85% of migrants from Central Plains Villages intended to return with the new rice planting season. And, in keeping with the general acceleration of migration to Bangkok, Lauro (1979: 254) estimates that the rate of seasonal migration between the Central Plains and Bangkok tripled between the 1960's and 1970's.

Figure 1 demonstrates the relationship between the seasonality of agrarian activities and migration to Bangkok by comparing the intensivity of rural labour use with the seasonality of migration from sample villages in Ayutthaya Province. The data shows that in the sample Central Plains villages, available labour time approached full use (using a generous cut-off point at an index of 80) only half of the year, during the peak planting season in summer and the harvesting in early winter. In the absence of non-agricultural employment opportunities, during these low months the decline in agricultural activities is partly compensated for by a re-allocation of labour to domestic chores, rural wage work, or cottage industries. These activities do not, however, serve to fully compensate for the loss of time in agriculture. Many domestic activities have been described as time-filling rather than productive (Fuhs and Vingerhoets, 1972). Although something may be said for the virtue of leisure time in slack seasons, the broad cycle of labour time usage nevertheless continues to reflect the demands for labour in the dominate single-crop rice economy.

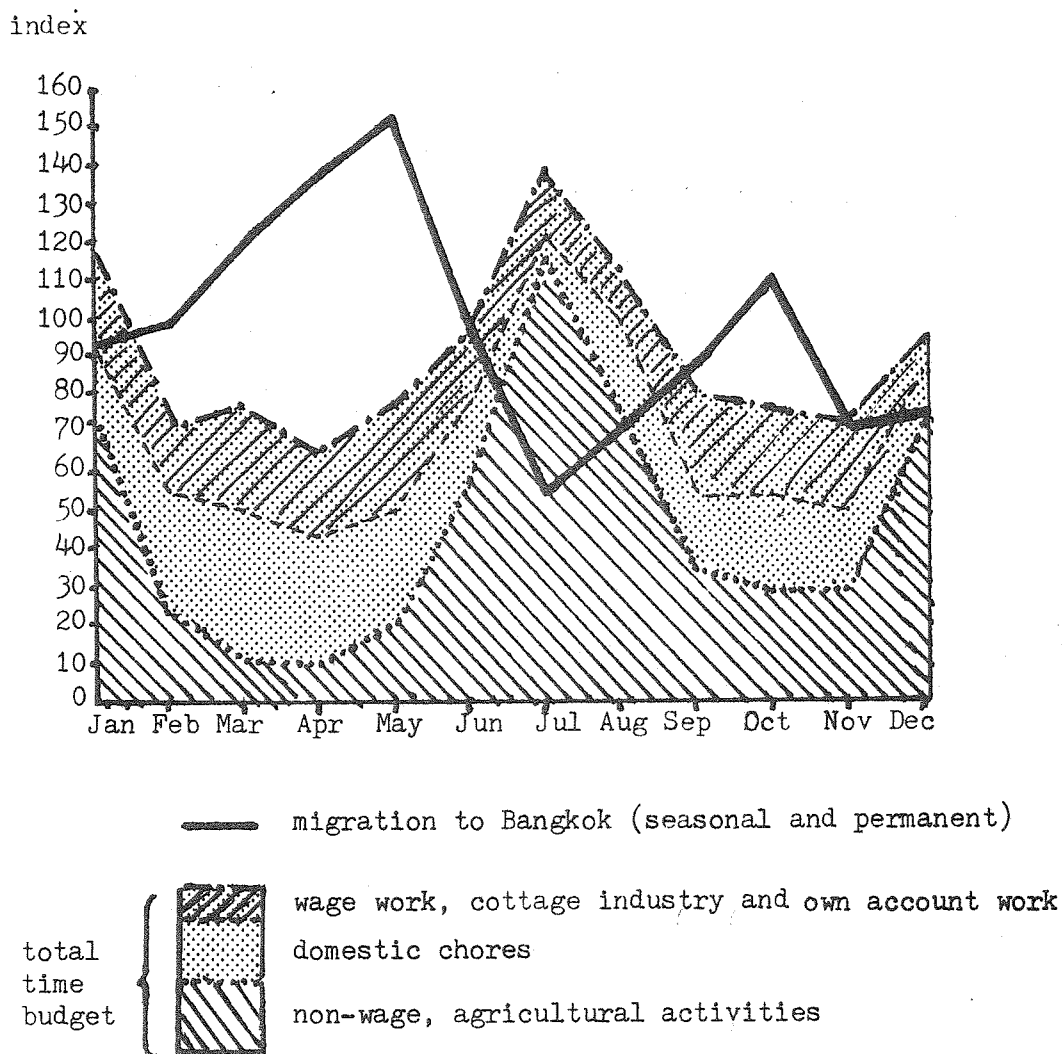
In peak agricultural seasons, labour shortages may be experienced throughout the Central Plains, but for the remainder of the year many households have labour power available which is not absorbed locally. The need to maintain a hold on rural assets,

the conservative nature of migration in avoiding risks, low urban wages, and other imperfections in information flows mean that the opportunities allied with the polarization of development in Bangkok do not wholly compensate for the seasonal decline in demand for labour in the Central Plains.

Besides its seasonality, interaction with the metropolitan labour market is further characterised by the selectivity of migrants among household members. The age, education and life-cycle selectivity of migration has been widely observed throughout the world (Findley 1976). When put in the perspective of the household decision-making matrix, the selectivity of migration concerning age, marital status and education can, in part, be seen as a selection among children by household heads on the basis of promoting the best candidates who can add to the family income and who also have the best chances of succeeding in the city. Whereas rural-rural migrants tend to have older household heads, tend to move as a family unit, and have often received no formal education, those being sent to the city are young, attached to the rural household and are among the more well educated of the rural population (ILO 1965; Arnold and Boonpratuang 1976; Goldstein 1974).

Studies of remittances by migrants, in pointing again toward the class-based nature of migration, confirm the proposition that migration plays a more important economic role for poorer households based in rural areas. Remittances are both more common and more frequent among lower income groups. 90% of all employed migrants in Bangkok who sent remittances back to their homes were either labourers (42%) or service workers (49%) (NSO 1977), the lowest income groups which represent three-quarters of the migrants to the metropolis. Only 2.5% of the migrants sending remittances to their homes were white collar workers. Stantiphab (1979) conservatively estimates that during the 1974-77 period, migrants working in Bangkok remitted a total annual average of 12 million baht (\$600,000) to places outside Bangkok.⁹

Figure 1 Rural Time Budgets and Migration to Bangkok*



*rural time budgets are indexed using 100 = 200 hours per month (8 hrs/day, 25 working days per month); migration to Bangkok is indexed using 100 = monthly average for years 1974-1977.

sources: data compiled from Amyot, J., Village Ayutthaya (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1976), pp. 235, 236, 239, and NSO, Migration to Bangkok Metropolis (Bangkok, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978).

From a rural perspective, then, migration to Bangkok reflects attempts to compensate for the deterioration in the economic-position of, especially, marginal peasants and landless labourers in their home villages and in the Central Plains as a whole. Despite the increasing use of migration as a tool to maintain the economic integrity of the household, seasonal under-employment remains high for these classes. Related studies show, too, that the incidence of 'basic needs' level poverty has at best remained unchanged in the region (NSO, 1978b). Village level studies indicate that, more probably, poverty has increased (Amyot, 1976; Douglass, 1981).

4. Migrants in the Metropolis

Government surveys of migration to Bangkok indicate that by the late 1970's migrants were adding 40,000 people to the population of the capital city every year (NSO, 1975-78). The Central Plains, which accounts for about 19% of the population outside of Bangkok, was contributing approximately 40% of the Bangkok-bound migrants. While these figures may have wide margins of error, they do help to indicate why Bangkok, a city already more than 50 times the size of Thailand's second largest, has become one of the ten fastest growing metropolitan areas of the world (Todaro, 1976).

Just as social relations of production have been transformed in the Central Plains, so have those in the metropolis. Migration has been used as the cutting edge of this transformation, which is typified by a shift of the metropolitan labour force away from unpaid family work and toward wage work. Data for the decade beginning in 1963 show that while non-wage workers in Bangkok increased in number by 21%, wage workers increased by 72%.

By the mid-1970's, one quarter of the metropolitan labour force was in unskilled and semi-skilled labourer occupations (NSO, 1975b).

How do peasant and worker migrants fit into the urban labour market? Is there a 'dualistic' labour market with informal/formal sector differences in employment opportunities? What level of income do migrants achieve? What are the long-term prospects for upward social mobility? Answers to these questions are not only

relevant for the migrants concerned; they also illuminate the economic and social outcomes of an integrated rural-urban labour market which, to use a popular term, has no turning point toward poverty elimination or rising incomes for either peasant or worker in either the countryside or the city.

Table 7 compares the Bangkok labour force with migrants in Bangkok. If the analysis in 3.5 is accepted, namely, that the vast majority of migrants in the farmer and labourer/craftsman categories - who account for 80% of the migrants from the Central Plains - are from marginal peasant and landless labourer households, the comparisons are quite revealing.¹⁰ Concerning wage/non-wage work, the data show that more than nine-tenths of the migrants enter into wage work; whereas less than two-thirds of the Bangkok labour force is involved in wage work. In part this reflects the dominance of much of the Bangkok economy by small Chinese shops using unpaid family labour. To stop at this observation, would, however, be incomplete. First, it would fail to indicate that even the small shops are apparently turning more and more toward the use of non-family paid employees, as wage labour markets become more stable and dependable. A longitudinal study on female employment by Nibhon (1977), for example, indicates that women in own account and unpaid family work in Bangkok (but not in towns elsewhere) have shifted to non-working status at a faster rate than have women in wage occupations. The hypothesis accompanying this trend is that the small (Sino-Thai) enterprises have allowed family members to be released from unpaid work by taking advantage of the increasing availability of cheap wage workers, including children. Although available data do not allow further investigation of this hypothesis, in 1979 one-fifth of all wage workers were in shops with less than 10 employees (Brun, 1982: 5).

More generally, Sarkar's (1974) study of the industrial structure of Bangkok found wages to be insensitive of the size of the firm. Difference between wages offered in small, medium and large firms were insignificant. The only major differences were the greater use of children in smaller firms, the dominance of adult

Table 7 Occupation and Work Status: Bangkok Labour Force and Migrants in Bangkok
1975-76

Work Status Occupation	Bangkok Labor Force ¹				Migrants in Bangkok ²				
	Wage		Non-Wage		Wage		Non-Wage		
	Govt.	Private	Own Account	Unpaid Family	Govt.	Private	Own Account	Unpaid Family	
Farmer	0.1	1.0	3.7	4.9	0.0	1.2	0.1	0.3	1.6
Laborer/craftsman	2.8	22.0	4.9	1.4	0.5	40.5	1.4	1.0	43.4
Sales Worker	0.0	5.4	13.2	6.4	0.0	2.5	2.7	1.7	6.9
Services	1.7	7.0	0.6	0.0	0.6	35.5*	0.2	0.1	39.4
Transport/Commun.	1.3	3.4	2.2	0.2	0.9	2.0	1.3	0.1	4.3
Professional/Admin	8.3	8.7	0.7	0.2	1.5	2.8	0.0	0.1	4.4
Total	14.2	47.5	24.2	13.1	3.4	87.5	5.7	3.3	100.0
	61.7		38.3		91.0		9.0		

¹ tabulated from NSO, Report of the Labour Force Survey, July-September, 1975 (Bangkok)

² tabulated from NSO, The Survey of Migration in Bangkok Metropolis, 1978 (Bangkok)

* 89 percent of this category is female.

males in medium size firms, and the disproportionately high use of female labour in large, often foreign-owned, firms. In fact, the protective nature of many activities in the so-called informal sector - especially vending and hawking - has both excluded peasants and workers from these occupations and has most likely been one course of the channeling of rural migrants at the same 'opportunity cost' into small and big firms alike.

As Table 7 indicates, three-quarters of migrants to Bangkok (which includes urban-to-Bangkok migrants) become wage workers in labourer and service occupations. Table 8 shows the income implications for many of these migrants. The steady supply of labour from migrants (and urban slums) into these occupations has exerted a downward pressure on wages, keeping them virtually constant in real terms throughout at least the decade of the 1970's (IBRD, 1978). There is no indication that the 1980's have brought any change in these wages (Brun, 1982).¹¹

Table 9 shows the consequences for migrants in terms of unemployment, hours worked and poverty. Reflective of the need of the poor to find work soon after entry into the city, unemployment is not significantly higher for migrants from rural areas than for other categories of workers. Yet many unskilled migrant workers have little or no job security. Jobs are either organised around a specific short-term projects - especially semi-skilled construction work - or on a day-to-day basis.

Other data in Table 9 indicate that part of the unemployment problem for migrants from rural areas relates to their high participation rate; that is, the necessity for all employable family members to be in constant search for work. Very few claim insufficient working hours. Yet more than three-quarters of these migrants have incomes below the ₪ 1000 (\$50) level estimated as the amount necessary to cover minimum living expenses. Studies of expenditures by Bangkok slum dwellers, the majority of whom are migrants from rural areas, estimate that 80% or more of household income is spent on food and rent (TURA, 1976). Average debts were found to equal average incomes (Morell, 1972).

Table 8 Unskilled Wage Rates, Bangkok Metropolis
1972, 1975
(baht/day, 1972 prices)

Industry	1972	1975	
		nominal	real
Manufacturing	19.5	29.2	18.8
Textiles	16.9	27.2	17.5
Construction	16.1	24.0	15.5
(price index)	(100)	(155)	

Source: Bank of Thailand, Department of Labor, cited in IBRD, Thailand: Toward a Development Strategy of Full Participation (Washington, D.C.).

The need for the entire family to work just to maintain a hand-to-mouth existence passes poverty on as an inheritance to children of these migrants. Most enter the labour force by age 12, a point at which many are not yet functionally literate (Prasert, 1973).

Nor are the long-term prospects for upward mobility for the migrants themselves appreciable. Table 10 uses data from a longitudinal survey of migrants in Bangkok to show that for migrants rural origin with primary education or less (the vast majority of rural people never go beyond primary school), there has on the average been no upward occupational mobility even after 15 years in the city. This does not mean, of course, that niches are not found and that jobs remain forever insecure. Rather, it shows that moving out of poverty-level employment is unlikely for workers who migrate to the 'City of Angels'.

Table 9 Unemployment, Hours Worked and Poverty by Migration Status

Bangkok Metropolis, 1975

Migrant Status ^a	Unemployed ^b	In Poverty ^c	Insufficient Hours ^d	In labor force (age 11+)
<u>Non-Migrants</u>	4.1	47.4	1.4	49.8
<u>Migrants</u>	4.8	59.6	0.9	62.2
from urban areas	2.7	48.5	0.7	56.7
from rural areas	5.2	77.3	1.3	70.9
<u>Total</u>	4.2	50.1	1.3	51.8

a living in Bangkok Metropolis at time of survey but outside Bangkok five years before the survey
 b those who did not work at all during the survey period but who wanted work
 c having income less than 1000 baht (\$50) per month
 d working less than 35 hours per week but wanting more work

Source: NSO, The Utilization of Labor in Thailand, 1975 (Bangkok), Table 14.

Table 10 Occupational Score of Male Household Heads by Migration Status, Place of Origin, Duration of Metropolitan Residence and Education.

Migration Status, Place of Origin, and Years in Present Residence	Total	Education		
		Primary or Less	Secondary	College
		<u>Average Occupational Score</u>		
Non-migrants	3.8	3.4	4.1	5.2
Migrants:				
Total (years)	3.8	3.2	4.2	5.1
Less than 5	3.5	3.2	3.9	4.5
5 - 14	3.7	3.0	4.0	5.0
15 or more	3.9	3.3	4.4	5.5
Urban Origin:	4.3	3.5	4.4	5.3
Less than 5	4.1	-	-	-
5 - 14	4.2	3.4	-	5.1
15 or more	4.4	3.5	4.6	5.5
Rural Origin:	3.4	3.1	4.1	5.0
Less than 5	3.4	3.1	3.8	-
5 - 14	3.5	2.9	4.1	-
15 or more	3.6	3.2	4.2	-

Source: Penporn Tirasawat, Economic and Housing Adjustments of Migrants in Greater Bangkok (Bangkok: Institute of Population Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 1977), Table 2.

Note: scores reflect general occupational income differences, with lower index representing lower income: 1 = farming; 2 = service; 3 = laborers, craftsmen, transportation; 4 = sales; 5 = clerical and unspecified government office work; 6 = professional and administrative.

5. Conclusions

Rural-to-Bangkok migration has been accelerating in recent years. Prevalent theories of migration suggest that the principal forces behind this movement are the 'push' of increasing rural population pressure in traditional peasant agriculture combined with the 'pull' of modern industrial growth in the metropolis (Lewis, 1954; Fei and Ranis, 1964). Recent amendments to this view suggest that within the city migrants from rural areas queue up in a low wage informal sector as they wait for employment in a protected high wage formal sector dominated by large, modern firms (Harris and Todaro, 1970; ILO, 1975).

In attempting to place migration into its historical setting in Thailand, these views have been challenged in several ways. First, these theories have difficulty in accounting for regional differences in the incidence of and explanations for migration, resting as they do on very blunt rural-urban dichotomies. Secondly, the focus on the Central Plains indicates that there is very little about rural social relations and the economy which can be called traditional. The persistence of low productivity agricultural production, either for household consumption or for the market, is a consequence not of isolation of the rural economy from market forces, but rather of the incorporation of the village economy into the national and world capitalist economy. This incorporation, moreover, has not in the main left a single class of rural peasants to sink on their feet as population densities increase and agriculture fails to modernise. Although increasing demographic pressure in low productivity activities is a problem, the causes of rural poverty may be more appropriately assigned in the Central Plains to processes of agrarian social stratification, centering mainly on land relations, the demise of mutual support relations in the village, and specific state policies (notably the heavy tax on rice exports) - none of which find mention in the migration models cited above.¹² At the same time, it should be recognised that rural landlords, commercial farmers and the new agro-business in upland areas have all been able to prosper from the transformations of the village and rural economy.

From a metropolitan perspective, doubt has been cast on the utility of the formal/informal sector dichotomy as a way of understanding rural-urban migration. Few migrants from villages enter into self-employment in hawking and vending activities; wage differentials by firm size show little variation; wages for unskilled workers in large establishments are not protected or set above market clearing prices; and there is little evidence to support the proposition that migrants wait in small-scale activities with the hope of future employment in high wage paying modern enterprises.

More accurately, the emergence of a migrant labour force should be seen as an outcome of the social and spatially uneven nature of capitalist development in Thailand. Processes of rural social stratification have occurred along with other processes creating a spatial division of labour within the country. The result has been that in the highly commercialised region of the Central Plains, pools of marginal peasant and landless wage workers have been produced in a setting which offers little employment outside of wage work in rice farming. Seasonal swings in agricultural employment opportunities combine with the continued absence of local urban or manufacturing employment activities outside of disguised piecework in cottage industries or petty service activities, such as coffee vending, to exacerbate the employment-income problem facing peasants and workers in this region.

With increasing ease of movement to Bangkok, families losing their hold in the rural economy turn to the metropolis as a means of shoring up their economic positions. This solution is, however, an imperfect one. Evidence suggests that the poorest of the poor do not migrate, that in any event poverty in its most severest form is bottled-up in rural areas (ILO, 1965; Sternstein, 1976; Brigg, 1973). Furthermore, there is also evidence that children sent to the metropolis may, over time, begin to neglect to send remittances back to rural areas (Nelson, 1976). Finally, the sheer scale and reliability of migration as a source of unskilled urban labour has placed downward pressure on urban wages, with urban as well as rural wages remaining constant over time. At best, spatial mobility has kept incomes at survival levels; at worst it works to deepen the very conditions for the immiserating growth of the Thai economy.

Notes

1. This is not to say that there were not more distant places in which the exchange economy penetrated into the village household economy. Geddes (1976) describes how certain so-called hill tribes of the North have become completely specialized in the production of a single export-- opium, leading to per capita incomes twice that of other rural regions and a dependence upon hired labour from other tribes and urban markets for the purchase of basic goods, including rice.
2. Actual control from provincial capitals and from the capital of the Kingdom declined rapidly over space. As noted by Scott (1976:54), "a major preoccupation of the state was holding the population it administered and (as a reflection of land abundance) persuading runaways to return."
3. Each of these provinces occupy the more commercialized areas of their respective regions; thus while they are comparable in terms of relative distributions between regions, they may overstate the situation within each. Table 11 below shows the more general picture within the Central Plains (26 changwat, or provinces) in the late 1960's. It also shows differences in tenancy between rice-growing lowland areas, where part and full tenancy are the highest, and upland areas, where large privately owned estates have emerged as a new source of rural wage work for marginal peasants and landless labourers.

Table 11 Land Tenure in Delta and Upland Areas of the Central Plains, 1967-68

	<u>Owners</u>		<u>Tenants</u>		<u>Part-tenants</u>	
	<u>farms</u>	<u>area</u>	<u>farms</u>	<u>area</u>	<u>farms</u>	<u>area</u>
Delta	42	36	34	32	24	32
Upland	85	80	8	10	7	9
Delta + Upland	62	56	23	22	16	22

source: T. Tomosugi, Land Tenure Situation in 26 Changwats of Central Plain Region 1967-68 (Bangkok: Land Development Department, Government of Thailand, 1969).

note: data collected at the amphoe (district) level, with 95 amphoe in the delta and 73 amphoe in upland areas.

4. Of importance in the complete loss of land by smallholders is the increased use of khai faak contracts by creditors extending loans to landowners (Senarak, 1976). Under khai faak agreements landownership is actually transferred to the creditor with rights of redemption only if repayment is made within a specified time period. According to Senarak, many peasants are unaware of the nature of these arrangements, and none who had entered into such contracts were able to reclaim the land put under these contracts. With interest rates of 36 percent on khai faak related loans, the failure to repay interest and/or principal in a given year quickly leads to spiraling, irreversible growth in debts.

5. As fixed rents require no close watching of actual production by the landlord, they would be preferred by especially absentee landlords. Takahashi (1976) found that sharecropping arrangements were characteristic of landlords who were neighbors or kin of tenants; fixed rents were the choice of absentee landlords. Furthermore, Table 12 shows that about 90 percent of the tenants interviewed in the Central Plains were paying fixed rents, which meant that even in bad years which threatened the very survival of the tenant household, the agreed upon amount of rice was still due to the landlord. To ensure this return, from 15 to 25 percent of the tenants were required to pay rents in advance of cultivation.

Table 12 Types of Rent Payment

Type of Payment	<u>Part tenants</u>		<u>Full tenants</u>	
	Area	(rai) %	Area	(rai) %
Fixed in kind	4,837	60	6,525	65
Fixed in cash	2,136	27	1,880	19
Share: 50%	678	8	968	9
Share: 33%	414	5	681	7
Total	8,065	100	10,054	100

Source: Dept. Land Development, Relations of Land Tenure and Production of Farmers in 11 Provinces in the Central Plains 1965 (Bangkok, 1969) (in Thai), cited in Takahashi (1976), Table 2-19.

6. Speaking of villages in the North, Potter (1976:163) states that
Neighbors are among the first to help in life crises, such as serious illnesses, births, ordinations, and funerals. Neighbors are so important that they are often treated as kinsmen.
7. While Ingle (1974:71) states that temple activities in the Central Plains have become "exclusively religious," Moerman (1966:167) declares that
The temple acts to equalize private wealth, to structure voluntary kinship, and to provide an enduring corporate organization which trains and certifies village leaders and holds village projects.
- In the Central Plains village of Bang Chan by the 1950's the head priest was not able to raise enough local funds to even finance repairs on the temple; volunteer work sessions had dropped off and hired labourers were used for temple construction (Sharp and Hanks, 1978:197).

8. For rural-rural migration lodgings are rarely provided by employers, and most moves beyond a two-hour range of the prospective worker involve a move of the entire family to set up a new household--often illegally on public land, along riversides, or on construction sites. In contrast, a migration study conducted in the mid-1960's found that 55 percent of the metropolitan employers provided housing to migrant workers, a level which has persisted (ILO, 1965; Mowat, 1977). Such provisions are, however, often of poor quality, and even larger-scale operations with workers' dormitories are able to pay less than 60 percent of the minimum wage by providing lodgings and institutional food.
9. Assuming a regional share in proportion to the number of migrants sent to the metropolis, households in the Central Plains would have been receiving an annual combined amount of more than 4 million baht (฿200,000). Although a paltry sum on a per capita basis (about ฿2 per household), it is still greater than the annual government budget for local development (about ฿1.50 per household).
10. As shown in Table 13 (following page) the occupational profile of migrants does not vary greatly from that of the non-migrants in the Central Plains. About 80 percent of non-migrants and migrants come from farming and labourer occupations. The over-representation of wage workers among migrants is partly explained by the higher proportion of labourers relative to farmers in this group. Table 14 shows occupational change accompanying migration. It indicates that the move into occupations other than those of labourers and service workers (much of the latter is comprised of women in domestic servant occupations) is extremely limited. Approximately 80 percent of rural labourers become urban labourers in the capital city; another 13 percent of this category enter into service occupations. Farmers have a markedly different proportion in the labourer/service categories, but the total percentage in both is approximately the same as that of rural labourers in Bangkok.
11. Brun (1982:53) states that in 1981 about 20 percent of the urban labour force was earning incomes lower than subsistence level, although engaged in full-time employment. In 1981 the ban on strikes, re-imposed in 1976 with the coup following the three-year parliamentary period of limited democracy, was lifted. A number of laws--including those of martial law--exist, however, which give government the right to prohibit strikes for 'national security' and related reasons.
12. The role of the state in fostering processes of social stratification and rural underdevelopment has been inadequately dealt with in this paper. At a general level, the following should give an indication of this role:
 - i. Agriculture normally receives less than 15 percent of the national development budget; much of these allocations is not spent. In the 1977-81 Plan, expenditures programmed for Bangkok were higher than those for the agricultural sector. Bangkok has about 10 percent of the national population; about 75 percent are in agriculture.
 - ii. The various taxes on rice (export rice premiums) effectively reduce farmgate prices to about 70% of the level expected if international prices were used (Pakkasem, 1978; Douglass, 1981). Fertilizers, as part of an import-substitution policy, have been sold well above the international price.
 - iii. Per capita expenditures on Bangkok in the mid-1970's were 15 times those of the poorest province and seven times the level of the second richest province (Oey, 1977).
 - iv. the tax burden as percentage of household income declines as income increases. In 1972 the poorest households, however, received tax benefits of only one-tenth the value of those received by the highest income groups (IBRD, 1978:23).

Table 13 Occupation and Work Status: Central Region Labor Force and Migrants to Bangkok Before Migration

(in percent)

1975-1976

Occupation	Central Region Labor Force ¹						Migrants To Bangkok ²					
	Work Status			Wage			Wage		Non-Wage			Total
	Govt.	Private	Total	Govt.	Private	Total	Govt.	Private	Own Account	Unpaid Family	Total	
Farming	0.0	5.4	5.4	22.5	39.2	67.1	0.0	5.0	9.6	45.7	60.3	
Laborer/Crafts	0.7	9.7	10.4	2.0	0.9	13.3	0.6	13.5	2.6	1.0	17.7	
Sales Worker	0.0	0.4	0.4	5.7	4.1	10.2	0.0	1.0	3.2	4.8	9.0	
Services/Transport	1.3	2.3	3.6	1.9	0.0	5.5	1.2	4.5	1.4	0.0	7.1	
Professional/Admin.	2.8	1.0	3.8	0.1	0.0	3.9	2.6	3.3	0.0	0.0	5.9	
Total	4.8	18.8	23.6	32.2	44.2	76.4	4.4	27.3	16.8	51.5	68.3	
							31.7		68.3			

1. tabulated from NSO, Report of the Labour Force Survey, July-September, 1975 (Bangkok)

2. tabulated from NSO, The Survey of Migration in Bangkok Metropolitan, 1978 (Bangkok)

Table 14 Employed Migrants in Bangkok by Former and Current Occupations

1975-76

Former Occupation	Current Occupation	Farming	Laborer/Craftsman	Sales Worker	Service Worker	Transport/Communications	Professional Admin/Clerical	Total
Farming		1.9	45.5	5.2	43.3	3.4	1.2	100.0
Laborer/Crafts		1.4	78.0	3.7	13.0	1.5	2.4	100.0
Sales Worker		0.4	27.8	42.2	23.1	3.1	3.4	100.0
Service Worker		1.4	13.3	6.1	77.2	1.3	0.7	100.0
Transport/Comm.		3.0	11.0	2.9	4.4	76.5	2.2	100.0
Prof/Admin/Clerical		0.1	6.7	3.0	2.1	2.6	85.5	100.0
Total Current Occupation		1.6	43.4	6.9	39.4	4.3	4.4	100.0

source: National Statistical Office, The Survey of Migration in Bangkok Metropolis, 1978 (Bangkok).

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