

Thai Migrant Workers in Southeast and East Asia: The Prospects of Thailand's Migration Policy in Light of the Regional Economic Recession

Conditions in Destination Countries

**Asian Research Center for Migration (ARCM)
Institute of Asian Studies
Chulalongkorn University**



Supported by

**Thailand Research Fund
Japan Foundation, Asia Center
International Organization for Migration**



July 2001

No./

Thai Migrant Workers in Southeast and East Asia: The Prospects of Thailand's Migration Policy in Light of the Regional Economic Recession

Conditions in Destination Countries

**Asian Research Center for Migration (ARCM)
Institute of Asian Studies
Chulalongkorn University**



Supported by

**Thailand Research Fund
Japan Foundation, Asia Center
International Organization for Migration**



July 2001

No./

Acknowledgement

This research would not have been possible and successful without the generous support of the Thailand Research Fund, the Japan Foundation Asia Center, and the International Organization for Migration.

The Asian Research Center for Migration, Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University wishes to express our sincere thanks to our researchers at ARCM and destination countries, and also to the kind advice and assistance of all agencies and individuals in this endeavor, in particular:

in Thailand, Dr. Chuta Manusphaibool, Dr. Pornchai Danvivathana, Dr. Phunthip Kanchanachitra Saisunthon, Dr. Subordas Warmsingh, Ms. Pranchalee Boodiskulchok Dr. Anchalee Singhanetra-Renard, Prof. Thienchay Kiranandana, Dr. Surapone Virulrak, Mr. Jun'etsu Komatsu, Ms. Nitasana Theeravit, Ms. Wannee Wanpraween, Ms. Regina Boucault, Prof. Nikom Chandaravitune, Mr. Nakorn Silpa-Archa, Mr. Vira Muttamara, Dr. Chumporn Panchusanon, Mr. Vichai Thosuwanchinda, Mr. Supoj Aemmongkolsakul, Dr. Sumalee Pitayanon, Dr. Yongyuth Chalamwong, Dr. Niphon Puapongsakorn, Mr. Sawai Prammanee, Prof. Amara Pongsapitch, Dr. Voravidh Charoenloet, Dr. Ronald Skeldon, Dr. Apichart Chamrusittirong, Dr. Vichitra Vicheinchom, Assoc.Prof. Surichai Wun'Gaeo, Mr. Homma Yutaka, Mr. Akephop Yanawimud, Ms. Wana Denkachornkirt, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Immigration Office, National Statistics Office

in Japan, Prof. Noriyuki Suzuki, Prof. Atsushi Kondo, Ms. Phannee Chunjitkaruna, Mr. Chiaki Ito, Prof. Hiroshi Komai, Prof. Yasuhito Asami, Ms. Noriko Okabe, Dr. Takashi Sawada, Mr. Takato Miura, Ms. Busayaa, Ms. Hiroko Abe, Ms. Pranee Sukkri, Ms. Yasuko Aoki, Ms. Megumi Imaizumi, Ms. Kannari Yoshiko, Mr. Masafumi Sato, Mr. Testuji Kawakami, Mr. Tsukasa Nakazono, Ms. Izumi Yamachi, Mr. Yuji Nagai, Mr. Toru Ogasawara, Ms. Yuriko Fukushima, University of the Ryukyus, Kyushuu Industrail University, Royal Thai Embassy, Office of Labor Affairs, Minato Machi Medical Clinic, MsLa, Kalabaw No Kai, Saalaa, HELP, Association for Overseas Technical Scholarship (AOTS), Japan International Training Cooperation Organization (JITCO), Japan Vocational Ability Development Association (JAVADA), Cultural and International Affairs Division of Planning Department, Chiba Prefectural Government, *Yokohama Shi Kokusai Koryuu Lounge, Koufu Shi Gaikokujin Soudan Ka, Numazu Shi Kokusai Kouryuu Ka, Ibaraki Ken Kokusai Kouryuu Ka and Seikatsu Kankyou Bu*

in Taiwan, Dr. Ching-lung Tsay, Dr. Pi-yuan Tseng, Mr. Samarn Laodumrongchai, Mr. Khompon Sangasigaew, Hope Workers Center, Academia Sinica, Council for Economic Planning and Development, Alien Detention Center, National Catholic Commission on Migration, End Child Prostitution Association Taiwan, Thailand Trade and Cultural Office, Office of Labor Affairs in Taipei and Kaohsiung, Thai Temple in Taipei and Chongli

in Malaysia, Dr. Kadhija Muhamed, Dr. Sharifah Suhanah Syed Ahmad, University of Malaya

in Singapore, Dr. Pomtipa Atipas, Dr Michael Ewing-Chow, Ms. Woon Young Hong, Mr. Supat Gukun, Royal Thai Embassy, Office of Labor Affairs, National University of Singapore, Ministry of Manpower, Construction Industry Development Board, Christian Community Service Society, Woh Hup Pte Ltd, Tonga Agency, Trade Union House, Singapore General Hospital

Our thanks also go to Mr. Andreas Germershausen for his project coordination and management work, Ms. Jiraporn Chotipanich, Mr. Chiaki Ito, Mr. Samarn Laodumrongchai and Ms. Sajin Prachason for their administrative and technical help, and Mr. Khammathat Klausner, Dr. William Klausner, Ms. Jenny Gleeson, and Mrs. Yee May Kuang for their extensive translation and editing work.

Finally, we would like to express our gratitude for the Thai migrant workers and returnees who volunteered to be interviewed in this research. We sincerely wish the best to those cooperated with us and also all Thai migrant workers currently working abroad.

Supang Chantavanich
Director
Asian Research Center for Migration (ARCM)
July 2000

Executive Summary

Labor Migration Flows

Migration flows have continued to increase with a shift to the Asia-Pacific region as a destination over the past decade. In 1994, 56,165 workers migrated to this region and by 1999, this was 163,986. Taiwan and Singapore are the major labor markets, employing Thai workers in construction and manufacturing industries. Projections would suggest that the expansion will continue for at least the next few years.

The labor market in Japan has an acute need in the services sector but foreign trainees are confined to other sectors and are predominantly found in the manufacturing sector. Annually, 6,000 Thai workers are accepted as trainees by Japan, and the remainder are employed illegally.

For Malaysia, the flows are spontaneous with predominantly Thai Muslim workers from the south of Thailand to labor markets mostly in the northern states of Malaysia. The ongoing scale of the largely undocumented flow of labor and the potential for absorbing more labor from Thailand is not acknowledged. Some intervention from the Thai government is needed in order to provide workers with their rightful legal status.

The main reasons for Thai workers going abroad are economic - primarily they are seeking better job opportunities and higher wages. Local unemployment (especially fishermen from the South), and social networks that facilitate their leaving, are also given as reasons for moving. Future trends of migration will see more women moving for work in the services sector. This will have an impact on the family and relationships with their spouses, making gender a significant issue in labor migration.

Recruitment System

The current system is totally market driven, with minimal input from the government bodies in regulating private recruitment agencies. Most job seekers comply with agency demands and are willing to pay high fees to get jobs. Many agencies are run by, or backed up by, politicians who use their influence to abuse the system, sometimes resulting in job seekers being cheated. There is an urgent need for the Thai government to intervene, otherwise only the recruiting agencies, and informal moneylenders who help to raise the fees for the workers, will gain any benefit from labor migration.

Between 1996-1998, more than 15,000 workers were cheated by unlicensed employment recruiting agencies and illegal brokers. This resulted in losses of \$463 million, of which the Department of Labor Promotion can only draw an indemnity of \$200 million to pay back to workers. The most common deceitful practice is to charge workers a fee but never find them a job.

Informal social networks also play a significant role in assisting workers to find jobs abroad. The services of such networks can be either money-oriented or gratis. Trafficking syndicates use such networks to cheat female workers. For Japan and Malaysia, networks of friends and relatives are more common than for Taiwan and Singapore. Networks in destination countries provide accommodation and meals to new arrivals and help them find jobs. In the case of trafficking networks, illegal agencies in Thailand work with illegal agencies, brokers or employers in destination countries. State-run employment recruitment services are perhaps the safest, but they are scarce and limited in their reach, unable to facilitate provincial job seekers adequately. Thus, workers are forced to depend on the private agencies.

Laws and Regulations on Migration for Employment

The Immigration Law B.E. 2522, and the Law of Employment Recruitment and the Protection of Job Seekers B.E. 2528 (amended B.E. 2537), are the two major legal instruments on the Thai side. These instruments do not prevent migration, and cannot protect job seekers when they do migrate. There are no regulations to stop travelers who are well-equipped with travel documents to emigrate. Labor control check-points may be able to stop those intending to migrate but when they are disguised as

travelers or tourists, as many are, they cannot stop them. Penalties meted out for swindling job seekers or illegal recruitment are not severe, and thus offer little protection for job seekers.

Laws and regulations in Japan, Singapore and Taiwan are more specific; they attempt to curb the number of migrant workers. They have placed various state organizations working on labor migration under one single unit to facilitate policy and administrative processes, and more efficient coordination. As for Japan, the government does not accept non-skilled migrant workers but allows trainees who receive lower wages and inadequate welfare. The government strictly controls the hiring of trainees. Most Thai workers who are currently employed in Japan are illegal, and are regularly apprehended and deported back to Thailand. The number of deportees was 1,465 in 1996, 1,457 in 1997, and 1,181 in 1998. Yet, official figures suggest that there are still 37,000 Thais who work illegally in Japan, mainly long stayers. Many have the tendency to settle there, especially those who have Japanese partners. The major problem for this group is the legal status of their children born in Japan.

Taiwan has the highest number of overseas Thai workers. The law allows migrant workers to do domestic work, work for the rehabilitation of Taiwan's economic and social development, and do other types of work which Taiwanese do not want to do. Since 1996, Taiwan has adopted a policy to hire migrant workers only for large businesses with huge investments, and to reduce the wage of workers in order to discourage new comers. It also introduced government-to-government negotiation procedures for recruitment processes. Although the law provides welfare to workers, 54% of Thai construction laborers in Taiwan suffer from deteriorating health through undertaking extended hours of work. A policy of deducting partial wages from workers, ostensibly to help them save, is another issue with workers complaining of not receiving those deductions before their departure.

Singapore has the strictest law on migrant workers. The state has a policy of upgrading the national labor force to the skilled level, including foreign workers. Consequently, they set a high levy for the use of unskilled labor and encourage employers to take the workers for skill tests, in order to upgrade their status and wage. Since 75% of Thai workers in Singapore are in the construction industry, skill upgrades and tests prior to departure would benefit the workers. In terms of protection, Singapore is beginning to be aware of a healthier working environment for workers. However, health problems including nocturnal sudden-death syndrome, and deteriorating health among Thai construction workers prevail, probably due to bad nutrition and occupational health.

Malaysia has no law for foreign workers but instigated cabinet decisions and ministerial decrees to administer workers and employers. Nonetheless, most Thai workers are undocumented. The recruitment needs to be regulated through bilateral negotiations. Despite their illegal status, due to religious, language and cultural similarities, the working environment in Malaysia is the friendliest for Thais.

Impact of Labor Migration for Thailand

Positive impacts

Economically, labor migration reduces local unemployment and yields a huge amount of remittances, estimated at more than \$35 billion per year. Remittances are a source of income to rural populations and thereby alleviating rural poverty. For workers, higher wages means that they can have some savings after paying off debts caused by the high recruitment fees. If they manage their savings efficiently, they can have a small business and improve their living conditions. However, most workers do not have income mobility and occupational mobility after their return, and end up wanting to emigrate again.

Socially, returnees are more acknowledged by their neighbors, although only 10% of them become more active in local/community affairs, or local politics. Generally, the skills acquired while working abroad are not used when they return home, and thus there is no transference of new technologies or skills to local villagers, who are predominantly agricultural workers. Female returnees, it was found, often became more self confident and independent, sometimes leading to difficulties with their husbands.

Negative impact

The high costs associated with recruitment fees was found to be a major disadvantage to workers, with most having to work 8-12 months to break even. Some costs are paid to brokers in destination countries to obtain positions. In addition, since most Thais are unskilled workers, they receive low wages and are not welcome in some labor markets, especially Singapore and Japan. An indirect impact of this is that more workers with good skills will migrate while those with low skills will be left in local employment, resulting in lower productivity.

The social costs of migration are not always apparent, especially in the short term. Many workers experience loneliness and homesickness as a consequence of long stays abroad. Deteriorating physical and mental health (especially for undocumented female workers) is common. In regard to family life, extramarital relationships, polygamy and divorce were found to occur, especially among those who returned from Taiwan.

Thai workers are not considered to be adaptable to new working and living conditions, no doubt a result of inadequate pre-departure orientation.

Regarding comparative costs and benefits of migration, the empirical result showed that only Thai workers in Japan and Malaysia are better off since their net return becomes positive. In contrast, their counterparts in Taiwan and Singapore appear vulnerable with cost exceeding benefits. However, for benefit and cost streams analysis under some assumptions, those in Japan and Taiwan turn to receive higher economic status while the rest are unlikely to gain from their emigration.

When considering positive and negative impacts on their lives, almost half of the sample thought there were more positive impacts, thus over half perceived more negative consequences. However, this is only a short-term assessment in that most had only returned for one year.

Employment Opportunities After the Economic Crisis

Opportunities vary between the four destination countries. For Japan, semi-skilled jobs in the service sector are available, but need to be negotiated. Unskilled work should be discouraged, due to the fact that workers cannot have legal status doing such jobs. The trainee channel should be broadened to cover services work if the trainees are provided with appropriate salary and social welfare.

In Malaysia, the manufacturing and service sectors still have jobs for workers, especially in the northern states of the country. Seasonal agricultural work is also available. It is possible that more workers can commute between Thailand and Malaysia, and the common Muslim culture and language shared by Thai workers and Malay employers can allow for a safety net and ample job opportunities.

Construction work in Taiwan may decline within 3-4 years and workers only hired by large manufacturing companies. The biggest labor market for Thais may be shrinking soon if there is no immediate and appropriate intervention from the Thai side. Negotiations to maintain the quota of Thai workers in Taiwan, and the possibility of workers obtaining jobs through government-to-government mediation without broker's fees are required immediately. Also, an alternative to encouraging more labor exports might be to promote greater foreign direct investment in Thailand, given the comparative advantages that Thailand has in this region. In addition, the Thai Ministry of Labor must intervene in the recruitment system to reduce the high costs of recruitment so that Taiwan can remain an attractive destination for Thai workers. More direct recruiting services, provided by the Ministry itself, without involving charges, will also assist in keeping the market viable.

Recommendations

The negative consequences of migration should deter Thailand from adopting a high priority policy on the export of labor. At the same time, those who do migrate need to be supported with protective mechanisms from the government. Simultaneously, alternatives for local employment with good wages must be provided. The following recommendations are proposed:

To the Ministry of Labor

1. Investigate the over all labor market for Thai workers in order to develop a more concrete policy, covering types of employment, level of skills, and locations of destination areas to be promoted
2. Cooperate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to initiate government to government dialogues with destination countries in regard to the inclusion of the service sector and the trainee channel to employ workers, increase job quotas and attempts to regulate irregular migration.
3. Intervene in the present recruitment system by urgently providing, from the ministry itself, more services to job seekers; and brainstorm ideas for the establishment of an independent organization to administer labor recruitment, and if possible, collect tax from recruitment fees and allocate it to provinces/areas from where most workers originate.
4. Increase workers' skills and provide nation-wide skill tests and training so that most job seekers will be recruited as semi-skilled workers.
5. Provide reasonable accommodation in Bangkok for provincial workers who need to come for skill tests, and training or orientation, and other preparations before departure. All services should be in one-stop centers
6. Improve the pre-departure orientation program to cover language skills, legal knowledge and cultural practices in destination countries. A manual for specific major destinations should be prepared and distributed to workers. The program should last one week instead of 2-3 hours.
7. Revise the mandate of overseas labor offices to provide protection to both regular and irregular migrant workers. Add more staff and more branches for Taiwan, establish an office in Malaysia, and activate the one in Japan. All offices should focus on protecting workers' rights and occupational health
8. Revise the Law of Labor Recruitment to emphasize more on the mandate of protection. Special articles on female workers and trafficked persons should be added. Penalties for crime syndicates, traffickers and swindlers should be more severe.
9. Cooperate with the Ministry of Health to form a joint medical team to offer medical services to overseas Thai workers in major destinations
10. Earmark an amount from the Assistance Fund for Job Seekers to offer low-interest-loans to workers for their recruitment fee. Also use such loans for skills promotion training.
11. Develop a database on Thai migrant workers in all destinations, including information on swindling, and blacklist all illegal recruiting agencies. disseminate such names widely.
12. Promote local labor markets as an alternative for job seekers. Mobilize Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) for more local job opportunities
13. Develop and operate plans to re-integrate returnees into local socio-economic systems. Channeling workers into situations where they use their acquired skills, and transfer those skills to local low-skilled workers. Encourage the use of returnee's savings for investments to help ensure a

sustainable livelihood that might prevent remigration. Explore the means to restore family life.

14. Campaign for a more productive use of remittances: using remittances for agricultural production and processing of agricultural products, and for investments with tax exemption incentives, with training for Small Median Enterprises (SMEs).

To the Immigration Office

1. Cooperate with the Ministry of Labor to improve labor control check points at the immigration control to prevent irregular migration for employment.
2. Consult with NGOs and embassies to develop active measures to combat female trafficking, and to screen female travelers using tourist visas, or those departing for marriage to certain destinations like Japan, Germany, the Netherlands and Australia.

To the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

1. Instruct embassies to provide protection and assistance to both regular and irregular Thai workers and their family members. A database on overseas Thais who request assistance should be compiled for coordination and monitoring purposes at each embassy.
2. Cooperate with commercial banks to offer services to Thai workers in sending remittances or transferring savings to Thailand.
3. Cooperate with the Ministry of Labor to initiate bilateral agreements with major destination countries with regard to protecting workers' rights and expanding labor markets. Negotiate for an orderly return of deported workers so that they can pursue necessary measures before departure and that the Thai government can have enough time to prepare for sustainable reintegration
4. Cooperate with NGOs to disseminate news about Thailand to overseas workers. Offer regular recreational services, such as, print and visual media (VDO, cassettes, magazines), communal activities, sports, non-formal education, legal advice, and cultural events.
5. Seek new labor markets for semi-skilled work and work in the service sector, excluding entertainment businesses.
6. Mobilize FDI from industrial countries, especially from countries with policies to reduce labor migration, emphasizing the strategic location of Thailand with good access to markets in the Middle east, Europe and Africa, plus reasonable wages and political stability in comparison to other countries within the region.

Abstracts of Country Reports

Social Scientific papers

Japan

Overview of Thai Migrant Workers in Japan Recruitment and Problems of Thai Trainees in Japan

The paper consists of two major parts: "Overview of Thai Migrant Workers in Japan" and "Recruitment and Problems of Thai Trainees in Japan". The first part attempted to explore general trends and various issues in Thai labor migration to Japan. The important issues covered in the research include migration flows including documentation and analysis of statistical data with regard to the major tendencies of migratory movements, the present size, potential, numbers, and geographical distribution, the actual situation of the Thai-Japan migration, the problems and challenges that they face in Japan, and political and social structures that impact on Thai migrant workers in Japan. Our findings reveal that the typical Thai migrant workers in Japan are undocumented, worked in either manufacturing or service industries, had a relatively high educational level, paid high recruitment fees, had friends or relatives already in Japan, remitted a large portion of their income, and migrated to Japan not only for better income but also for wider experience and improved social status, though economic motivation was strong. Most evaluated their migration as positive although the study confirmed that there are severe problems and conflicts that Thai migrant workers, mostly female, face in Japan. The second part focused on Thai trainees in Japan in order to understand the recent trends of the trainees, and to examine the most important question "Are Thai trainees workers?", through careful assessment of each training recruitment process. The emphasis was on illustrating the cases of swindling and the conclusion points out the structural problems and flaws of the trainee channels which the Japanese government provide as a so-called "back-door policy" for migrant labor.

Taiwan

Working and Living Conditions of Thai Contract Workers in Taiwan

Based on data set from the 1999 Survey of Thai Migrant Workers in Taiwan, this paper describes the general characteristics of Thai contract workers and explores their working and living situations, including income expectation and adaptation issues. The findings are summarized as follows. The reason for migration is very straightforward: the pursuit of higher pay in Taiwan. The migration cost is very high (about 140,000 Baht), probably due to the burden of interest charged. In terms of personal characteristics, Thai workers were concentrated in northern Taiwan and were young males with limited education. Most Thai workers realized their migration expectations, as they enjoyed good pay in Taiwan. The median monthly income is close to NT\$ 25,000. Thai workers in the construction industry have a much higher income level than their manufacturing counterparts. In terms of job-expectation, however, the former are mostly dissatisfied while the latter mostly satisfied. In terms of satisfaction with income, construction workers tend to feel that they are paid fairly for their work. A higher proportion of manufacturing workers are either dissatisfied or highly satisfied. Most Thai workers do not fully understand their work contract and they tend to work overtime. About a half of them have some problems in the workplace and in health. In comparison to their manufacturing counterparts, construction workers seem to have more problems with their job, workplace, and health. The survey also indicates that there is not much difficulty in dealing with the Taiwanese. The psychic cost of Thai workers might be very high, as nearly all of them often feel very lonely.

Undocumented Thai Migrant Workers in Taiwan

Although the number of undocumented Thai workers in Taiwan is relatively small in comparison to the total Thai labor force in the country, recent statistics shows that more than a few thousands Thai workers, mostly male, are detained by Taiwanese authorities because of their illegal status. In this paper, interviews with undocumented Thai workers, both female and male, are illustrated in case studies. Some

of these workers have been deceived by recruitment agencies and brokers. This paper reveals the means to enter or re-enter the country illegally with regard to visas and passports, and the problems and difficulties the undocumented Thai workers face in Taiwan. The paper also describes the types of the assistance for the undocumented workers from various GOs, NGOs, and temples.

Malaysia

Thai migrant workers in Malaysia

The sample group was composed of 62% male laborers and 38% female laborers and the majority were 21-30 years old (52.7%). 37% were under 20 years old and some were older than 30 years old. 56.4% graduated from primary school, 26.4% graduated from secondary school. Families had an average income of less than 5,000 baht (48%); the rest had an income of around 5,000-20,000 baht (44%). 22.7% of the migrant workers were previously farmers, 15% were unemployed, 9% were businessmen, 11% were fishermen. Even though most of them were not farmers, they had 1-20 rai of family land to work on. Regarding the travel procedures and work in Malaysia, 40% of Thai migrant workers said that the reason that they came to work in Malaysia was because they could not find jobs in Thailand; 47% were not satisfied with their low income in Thailand. Most of the migrant workers entered Malaysia by using border passes and temporary working passes or were without any documents, for it was usual for Thai-Muslims to pass through the Thai – Malaysian border. Malaysians and Thais who lived near the border shared similar language and culture and had kinship ties for a long time. The main reason that Thais went to work in Malaysia was economic; 30% wanted to have working experience; 16.4% wanted to find better working opportunities, some followed their relatives or spouses, some went because it was nearby, some went because they used the same language, and some went because employers persuaded them to go. As for type of work and conditions, 42% of Thai migrant workers worked in restaurants, 16.4% worked in the agricultural sector, 10% worked as factory workers, 7.3% did fishery jobs. In terms of gender, women did not do jobs such as fishing, barbering, as coolies, as vendors and as masseuses. There is a cultural similarity between Thailand and Malaysia. In fact, 75.5% of Thai workers were able to understand the Malaysian language. 56% had new spouses in Malaysia. This is important data because their marital status had an influence on their staying in Malaysia. It was found that 73% of Thai migrant workers were not sure whether they would return back to Thailand or not. Only 21% answered that they would return to Thailand when their contracts ended and only 3.6% would return in 1-2 years. This shows the trend of Thai workers towards remaining in Malaysia for a long time or maybe permanently. The impact of the migration on Thailand and Malaysia can be drawn from the data that 74.5% of Thai migrant workers in Malaysia sent money home, 25.5% did not send any. The reason that there were less workers who sent money back home than workers who went to work elsewhere was because workers could go back and forth between Malaysia and Thailand as Malaysia bordered on Thailand. Workers who used a border pass that was valid for 14 days had to return back to Thailand and then went to Malaysia again; these workers could bring money back by themselves without sending back money through any system. The frequency of sending money back home was not the issue.

Singapore

The Regional Economic Crisis and the Migration of Thai Workers to Singapore

This paper reviews the general situation of Thai workers in Singapore, including the numbers, recruitment and employment, discusses the ongoing debates on immigration issues in Singapore, which also examine the labor market and illegal immigration in Singapore, explore the state of the art in migration research in Singapore, describe the political structure that impacts on migration issues in Singapore. The role of the Singapore government in directing the pattern of immigration will also be discussed to give fuller insight into the issues. Singapore's policy on migrant workers stress higher value added occupations and not labor intensive but capital driven manufacturing and knowledge-based industries. Therefore, they allow labor intensive migrant workers to come to work in only a 1: 5 ratio to the Singaporean work force. All migrant workers, no matter what their nationality, have to follow the law, especially the Immigration Law

and regulations as to duration of stay. In addition, the Singaporean government favors the hiring of skilled rather than unskilled laborers. All of migrant workers have to pass a Skills Evaluation Test (SET). The test is conducted both in the countries of origin and in Singapore by Singaporean officials. During the time of economic downturn, Singapore had a policy to reduce the impact of the economic recession by supporting big construction projects such as housing projects, schools and subways. This would enable migrant workers to continue working and the government would benefit from cheaper than usual construction costs. Finally, even though the Singapore government accepted the need to use migrant workers, they tried to reduce this dependency by improving their domestic industries to be more technologically oriented with improved standards of work. This improvement would encourage Singaporeans to work in such jobs and reduce the number of migrant workers.

Legal papers

Japan

Immigration Law and Foreign Workers in Japan

The Japanese Immigration Office is under the Ministry of Justice and has responsibility to supervise the immigration of 8 regional offices, 5 city offices, and 89 small city offices, including 3 alien detention centers. Japan used the immigration and naturalization law as their prototype. However, they do not have the policy of naturalizing alien workers to become citizens as in America. Japan had a policy of accepting alien workers who are professionals but is strict as to accepting unskilled laborers. Besides that, Japan allows aliens to stay only temporarily. The government follows a policy of bringing in trainees to solve the problem of the shortage of unskilled workers. Persons who have visas usually can stay in Japan for 90 days but could not work. Persons who want to come to work must follow the procedures of requesting permission at the Japanese embassies in the countries of origin. The Japanese embassy would issue a Certificate of Eligibility visa for 23 types of occupations such as diplomats, civil servants, university professors, artists, religious missionaries, newspapermen, investors, legal profession/ accountants, medical practitioners, researchers, teachers, engineers, humanitarian and international workers, employees in the companies who were transferred to work in other positions, entertainers, skilled workers, cultural affairs personnel, persons who come to visit temporarily, university and school students, trainees, persons who come to join their family etc. Persons who receive the first 16 types of visas are able to work while persons cannot work if they have the last 7 types of visas. Persons who overstay their visas would be sentenced to imprisonment of no more than 3 years or a fine of no more than 300,000 yen or both. (section 70 of the Immigration Law). The deportees have no right to return back to Japan within a 1 year period. The Ministry of Justice is preparing to amend this regulation to be extended for a period of 5 years. Workers who worked legally have the right to receive social security welfare benefits no matter what their nationality. For the workers who work illegally, they would not be able to receive these benefits as employers do not want to register these workers with the Office of Social Security (only companies that had more than 5 workers would be registered). In case of accidents incurred by illegal migrant workers, workers would have great difficulty in receiving compensation. There was a trend towards steadily increasing crime among foreigners from 1991 onwards. This resulted in an increasing number of cases that needed interpreters or special care for the accused. The problem of cultural adaptation of foreigners to Japanese society was chronic. As for local politics, some of the local governments started considering proposing foreigners to have the right to vote. However, this proposal had not yet passed through the legislative process.

Taiwan

Labor Code on the Employment and Management of Foreign Nationals in Taiwan

The major law for supervising foreign workers in Taiwan is the Employment Service Act or Labor law. The Employment Service Act of Taiwan has various sections which specify the regulations for employing foreign workers and the roles of employers and foreign workers. Also, they clearly specify punishments for employers and employment recruitment companies which make persons responsible if they violate the law and cause the government to lose benefits. The law applies to all parties including the illegal foreign workers who will be sent back to their home countries. Nevertheless, in reality there are problems in

enforcing the law such as in the case of Thai workers who flee from their employers to work in other jobs. When they come to give themselves up through NGOs, they have to pay their own plane fares (approximately 4,000 Taiwan dollars) to go back to Thailand.

Malaysia

Foreign Labor in Malaysia

The major laws of Malaysia are the Immigration Act 1959 (Amended 1963), the Employment Act (Amended 1998) and the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994. The Immigration Act specifies that persons who enter country to work must have an employment pass which is issued by the Controller of Immigration and must also have an entry permit. There are 2 agencies that supervise these matters; the Immigration Division which is under Ministry of Interior and the National Police Department. The Office of the Attorney General would only be responsible for criminal cases involving persons who enter the country illegally. Foreign workers in Malaysia was a problem that the legal profession did not pay much attention to. As for the benefits, lawyers would earn less income than in other criminal cases. Nevertheless, non government organizations were interested in these matters. There were 2 organizations that provided assistance to foreign workers, the Women's Aid Organization and Tenaganita. These two organizations were unable to do much as the government strictly supervised them by using the internal security law to keep them under watch. The Women's Aid Organization assisted foreign workers by providing a refuge for Indonesian women who worked in domestic work and were physically and sexually abused by their employers. As for women workers who did domestic work, there was a penalty for employers who treated the foreign workers improperly (such as beating, abuse, etc) which was the prohibition for such employers to ever again hire foreign workers to do domestic work. Besides that, employers had to inform women workers of the type of job that the workers would do before hiring them as there were some jobs that women workers could not do as they would violate the precepts of their religion. The problem of illegal foreign workers and the business of inducing foreign workers to enter illegally leads to the problem of other crimes. They include encroachment on public and private property by foreign workers who were mostly Indonesian. As for Thai workers, the problems that occurred were drinking, gambling, and illegal sexual behavior. As for the opportunity of being naturalized as Malaysians, part of constitution regarding nationality stipulated that to be naturalized as Malaysians is very difficult as the problem of nationality is a very sensitive one for a country which has many ethnic groups. In the past, there had been an uprising due to dissatisfaction of certain ethnic groups in 1969. There is only a slim chance that foreign workers can be naturalized as Malaysians.

Singapore

Legal Issues Relating to Thai Migrant Workers

Two laws of Singapore regarding foreign workers are the Immigration Law and the Labor Law and the Singapore Immigration and Registration Agency is the agency which enforces the Immigration Law under the Ministry of Interior. As for the ones who came to work, most of the regulations are related to the employment pass and work permit which is issued by the Ministry of Manpower. As there has been an increasing number of persons who entered Singapore illegally to work, the punishment for such persons is becoming increasingly severe. However, as a matter of fact, very few people are penalized under this section as the officials cannot find evidence to prove that persons who are arrested are actually brokers or the ones who lure aliens into the country. Therefore, they can only be charged as persons who assist aliens to enter the country illegally. Labor law is composed of major laws such as The Employment of Foreign Workers Act 1991 and other 6 related laws. The law specifies that foreigners who are eligible to receive an employment pass are professionals who have at least a bachelor degree. From May, 1999, The Ministry of Manpower issued a work permit I.D. card, this I.D. card is a work permit card, border pass, and permit to enter Singapore. There would be a photograph and the fingerprints of the foreign worker on this card. In the past, the authorities prevented foreign workers from fleeing by holding their passport and work permit. Thus, they only have copies of these documents. However, copies of these documents can be easily falsified. The authorities therefore issued a new card which foreign workers have to carry with them all the time in order for the authorities to be able to check whether the workers have legal status or not. Also, they can prevent workers from falsifying documents. The Immigration law

forces all foreign workers to have their fingerprints on their cards and this data is put into the computer main frame that could be logged on. Consequently, the control of foreign workers and crime is more efficient. In the case of losing or damaging ones card, workers have to notify the authorities within 14 days so as to obtain a new I.D. card. If the authorities decide to end or cancel the work permit of any foreign worker, the employer has to stop hiring such a worker within 7 days after he has been notified, and the work permit of such worker has to be returned to the authorities within 7 days after the hiring of such worker stops. As for collecting the levy, the Singapore government applies the policy of collecting a levy in order to control the number of foreign workers so that it will not be too large. Besides that, there is a setting of proportional quotas so as to require employers to hire local workers as well. Employers must pay a levy for each foreign worker on a monthly basis. The levy rate depends on the type of job and the qualifications of the workers. If employers do not pay the levy in 14 days after the end of the month, they will be charged 2 to 5% interest in Singapore dollars.

TABLE OF CONTENT	Page
Acknowledgement	
Executive Summary	
Abstract of Papers (English)	
Introduction <i>Andreas Germershausen</i>	1
<hr/> PART I: SOCIAL SCIENTIFIC PAPERS <hr/>	
Overview of Thai Migrant Workers in Japan <i>Chiaki Ito</i> <i>Phanee Chunjitkaruna</i>	7
Recruitment and Problems of Thai Trainees in Japan <i>Noriyuki Suzuki</i>	65
Working and Living Conditions of Thai Contract Workers in Taiwan <i>Ching-lung Tsay</i>	91
Undocumented Thai Migrant Workers in Taiwan <i>Samarn Laodumroungchai</i>	111
Thai Migrant Workers in Malaysia <i>Khadija Muhamed</i> <i>Supang Chantavanich</i>	119
The Regional Economic Crisis and the Migration of Thai Workers to Singapore <i>Porntipa Atipas</i>	129
Analytical Report of Expert Interviews on Issues of Thai Labor Migrants in Singapore <i>Woon Young Hong</i>	171
<hr/> PART II: LEGAL PAPERS <hr/>	
Immigration Law and Foreign Workers in Japan <i>Atsushi Kondo</i>	187
Labor Code on the Employment and Management of Foreign Nationals in Taiwan <i>Ching-lung Tsay</i> <i>Pi-yuan Tseng</i>	203
Evolution of Taiwan's Foreign Labor Policy and Management <i>Ching-lung Tsay</i>	209
Foreign Labor in Malaysia <i>Sharifah Suhanah Syed Ahmad</i>	217
Singapore: Legal Issues Relating to Thai Migrant Workers <i>Michael Ewing-Chow</i>	223
Conclusion <i>Sajin Prachason</i>	237
Appendix (Abstract of Papers in Thai)	
Notes on Main Contributors	

Introduction

Andreas Germershausen

This research project, "Thai Migrant Workers in Southeast and East Asia: The Prospects of Thailand's Migration Policy in Light of the Regional Economic Recession", addresses the situation of Thai labor migrants in four East and Southeast Asian countries. Within the project, individual studies have been undertaken both in the sending and receiving countries, namely in Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand. The four foreign countries were selected because they have become the major destination countries for Thai workers in recent years. With regard to both the studies in Thailand and the destination regions, the focus of the research is laid for one, upon recruitment structures into foreign labor markets and secondly, on the social networks which bridge international borders and facilitate cross border migration of Thai citizens. At the same time, the project is not limited to legal migration phenomena, but also covers undocumented migration processes.

Furthermore, the research addresses the costs and benefits which arise for Thailand from sending workers abroad. In this context fall the analysis of the migrants' expected incomes, their expenses for job placement and living abroad, their remittances, generally speaking, the impact of labor exportation on the Thai economy. This appears to be especially urgent in the light of the present economic crisis, which bears a severe impact upon the costs and benefits of Thai migration. On the one hand, it has to be expected that migrants' economic prospects abroad are being diminished as the economy is slowing down. On the other hand, the Thai government is interested in sending more Thai workers abroad. A parallel growing interest of Thai workers can be expected as employment in Thailand is being reduced.

The research approach is comparative and interdisciplinary: comparative, due to the focus upon the four destination countries; interdisciplinary, as in the case studies, empirical research and analysis will be undertaken by social scientists and legal experts. The legal experts focused upon laws and regulations relevant to incorporating migrant labor into the respective societies, while the social scientists concentrated on the social networks and linkages between the home and destination regions and on the labor recruitment systems. The project's interdisciplinary approach enhances again the comparative potentials of the research, as it allows more specific comparisons on the political, social and the legal level between any of the named countries.

A research consortium has been formed, comprising teams in the individual countries and a research team at the applying institution: it conducted the study on Thailand and co-ordinate the work. The project has been designed in comprising a large set of cases and partners. The outlook for a successful realization of the work is positive, though the project can build up upon communal research experience with most of the teams from co-operation in a prior project.

The project thus can build up upon preliminary studies on out-migration of Thai workers, "Thai Migrant Workers in East and Southeast Asia 1996-1997" published by Asian Research Center for Migration, which had been done in preparation of a workshop held in 1996 (Chomchai/Gukun on Brunei, Hong/Lee on Hong Kong, Kang on South Korea, Nagayama on Japan, Tsay on Taiwan, Wong on Singapore, Chantavanich/Risser on migration theories and regional developments, all 1996). The conference papers provide in part a valuable basis for the present project as they allow a first insight into current tendencies of Thai migration. However, some limitations of the preparatory work have to be stated, as the discussion in 1996 was less focused than what is being planned for the future comparative analysis, and, due to lack of funds, not all of the earlier papers were based on empirical field studies. In the present project, these limitations have been reflected upon, and high emphasis is being laid upon a homogeneous methodological approach. While all accessible quantitative data have been evaluated in the project, the main empirical research have been done by both quantitative and qualitative field studies. A number of reasons can be given for this methodological decision, not the least important is that a major part of the present migration processes is undocumented, which can best be analyzed with a qualitative approach.

Although employment of Thai workers abroad has been an important issue for Thailand during

the last three decades, information is lacking both on the recruitment of Thai migration and on their situation in the destination countries. It is expected that the outcome of this research will have an impact on practitioners and decision makers in the political field.

The primary focus of the research in the destination country in this volume was upon recruitment structures into foreign labor markets, and secondly, on the social networks which bridge international borders and facilitate cross border migration of Thai citizens. The research approach, which was also used in studies on migrant returnees in Thailand, was comparative, due to the focus upon four countries; and interdisciplinary; as in the case studies empirical research and analysis have been undertaken by social scientists and legal experts.

The questionnaire was developed based on the ILO (International Labor Organization) Guideline (1997) with special reference to migration progress section. It was also modified to suit the case of destination countries. Information was collected from those who were at the time of research in the destination countries. This questionnaire includes the following sections: personal information, household situation before leaving, reasons for moving, living conditions abroad, attitudes towards migration, and remittances. Each section was assigned to yield details on migration experiences of the migrant workers. On the other hand, information was also obtained from in-depth interviews with key informants except for Malaysia. This was to collect more detailed information on particular issues from key informants, such as government officials and NGO workers, to support the quantitative information obtained in the survey.

ARCM partners in destination countries took main responsibilities for procedures of data collection and analysis. The experts, as described below, are from various disciplines in the case of social scientific studies. All interviews were conducted by the chief researchers in the destination countries with support from other experts and from ARCM.

Japan:

Social scientific scholar:

Professor. Noriyuki Suzuki, University of the Ryukyus, Okinawa

Co-researcher:

Ms. Phannee Chunjitkawna, Post-graduate student, University of Tokyo,

Mr. Chiaki Ito, ARCM, Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University

Advisors:

Professor Hiroshi Komai, Tsukuba University Prof. Yasuhito Asami, Faculty of Social Science, Hitotsubashi University

Associate Professor Surichai Wun'Gaeo, Department of Sociology and Anthropology Director of Center for Social Development Studies, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University

Legal scholar:

Professor Dr. Atsushi Kondo, Kyuushuu Industrial University

Malaysia:

Social scientific scholar:

Associate Professor Dr. Khadija Muhamed, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences University of Malaya

Legal scholar:

Professor Sharifah Suhana, Faculty of Law, University of Malaya

Singapore:

Social scientific scholar:

Dr. Porntipa Atipas, National University of Singapore

Co-Researcher:

Mr. Supat Gukun, Office of Labor Affairs, Royal Thai Embassy, Singapore

Research assistant:

Ms. Woon Young Hong, Graduate Student, National University of Singapore

Legal scholar:

Associate Professor Michael Ewing-Chow, Faculty of Law, National University of Singapore

Taiwan:**Social scientific scholar:**

Professor Dr. Ching-lung Tsay, Academia Sinica

Research assistant: Mr. Smarn Laodumrongchai, ARCM, Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University

Legal scholar:

Pi-yuan Tseng, Division Chief of Labor Utilization, Council for Economic Planning and Development, Taipei, Taiwan

The research in the destination countries was conducted in the following times. In Japan, the survey took place in spring 1999 and interviews with key informants in November 1998, and spring and summer 1999. In Taiwan, both the survey and the interviews with NGOs and in-depth interviews with female migrants who were detained in immigration facilities were conducted in April and May 1999. In Malaysia, the survey in the field was conducted in 1999 while key informant interviews were not carried out. In Singapore, the field work was conducted in June and August in 1999 and expert interviews in June and July 1999.

As for sampling techniques, some points need to be mentioned. In Japan, due to the difficulty of access to undocumented migrant workers, quasi-snow ball method was used in which the partner-researcher personally knew the migrant workers who cooperated with responses to the questionnaires and also introduced the researcher to other migrant workers.

The basic attributes of Thai migrant workers in destination countries' interviews can be summarized in the following table, country by country:

	Japan	Taiwan	Malaysia	Singapore
Sample Number	*97	183	110	145
Major Survey Locations	Tokyo, Shizuoka, Aichi, Mie, Chiba, Osaka, Kanagawa, Nagano, Yamanashi, etc	Taipei, Taoyuan, Taichung, Kaohsiung	Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Kedah, Kelantan	Singapore
Gender Ratio	Male 57% Female 43%	Male 78.1% Female 21.9%	Male 61.8% Female 38.2%	Male 95.8 % Female 4.2 %
Major Occupation	Service 36% Factories 28.9% Entertainment 22.6 Construction 8.2%	Manufacturing 66.7% Construction 33.3%	Restaurant 42% Agriculture 16.4% Factory 10% Fishery 7.3%	Construction 75 % Industry 15 % Service and general office work 10%

* does not include trainees whose questionnaires were not used in quantitative analysis

Once the interviews were completed, a code book was constructed. This was to guide the coding of information from the questionnaires before entering them into the computer. This task was done at the ARCM. The computer experts were assigned to code questionnaires. With facilities provided at ARCM, all data were entered into microcomputers, using a data entry package which had been programmed with consistency and range checks. A range of descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. These included frequency distributions and cross tabulations. The analysis was undertaken by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Program.

Part I

Social Scientific Papers

Overview of Thai Migrant Workers in Japan

Chiaki Ito
Phanee Chunjitkaruna

Introduction

This Japanese social science case study, part of a larger research project "Thai Migrant Workers in Southeast and East Asia: The Prospects of Thailand's Migration Policy in Light of the Regional Economic Recession" was organized by Asian Research Center for Migration (ARCM) in 1998-2000. The main focus of this part is on the economic, political, and social aspects of Thai migration to Japan. The research tried to investigate 1) migration flows including documentation and analysis of statistical data with regard to the major tendencies of migratory movements, the present size, potential, number, and geographical distribution, 2) the actual situation of Thai-Japan migration, 3) the problems and challenges that they face in Japan, and 4) political and social structures that deal with Thai migrant workers in Japan.

This part will proceed in the following order. First of all, the overview of the current situation of Thai migration to Japan will be discussed, along with various sets of statistics obtained in this research, focusing on new entrants, stayers, unofficial entries, estimation of undocumented workers, and geographical distribution. In this section, the changes and trends of Thai migration to Japan will be analyzed. Secondly, the findings of the 97 questionnaires in the field research will be described and analyzed in detail. This will cover a large range of important issues relevant to Thai migrant workers in Japan such as demographics, background in Thailand, reasons of migration, process of entry, recruitment, situation in Japan, (duration of stay, occupation, work condition, income, skills, expenditure, job turnover, and general life), remittance, problems, (problems at workplace and problems faced especially by female workers, sickness) and suggested solutions to problems. Although most of the issues will be discussed based on the data from the questionnaires, problems and suggested solutions to the problems, which the data from the questionnaires did not adequately provide, will be examined based on interviews with key informants. Thirdly, the political and social structures that impact on Thai migrant workers in Japan will be presented briefly as to how they are involved in and affect the Thai migration to Japan. The key institutions examined will include governmental institutions such as ministries, local governmental institutions, semi-governmental organizations such as training organizations, non-governmental organizations, and others such as medical clinics and volunteers. Lastly, conclusion will be drawn to argue for the importance of continuous interdisciplinary studies with emphasis on non-economic aspects of Thai migration to Japan.

Brief summary of research findings are as follows:

Key findings on the general migration trends from Thailand to Japan:

1. Almost all of Thai migrant workers to Japan have been undocumented and unskilled labor since the beginning.
2. Thai labor migration to Japan started to increase dramatically in the late 1980s and reached its peak in 1991 and 1992. However, it began to decline gradually in the mid 1990s and dropped to lowest level in 1998. This is the case in both flow and stock. This is assumed to be due to the revision of Japanese immigration regulations but also can be attributed to a combination of other complex, social and economic factors.
3. In 1998, the Japanese government estimated that at least 37,046 Thai nationals were over-stayers in Japan and they were involved in activities beyond what their visas specified. Almost all of them entered Japan with a short-term visa such as tourist visa, and the majority engaged in unskilled labor. Although the estimated number by the government is above, NGOs have estimated it to be around 40,000 to 50,000.
4. Although female migration predominated in the early phase of Thai labor migration to Japan, Thai

male workers have been rapidly catching up with female workers in number starting the mid 1990s.

5. Occupations of Thai female migrant workers in Japan became more diverse and shifted from working in the sex related industry to manufacturing and food processing industry.
6. Under the Japanese immigration law, all foreign residents in Japan are required to register themselves at the municipal office of the city, ward, town, or village in which they live. The number of Thai nationals in Japan who are registered with the Japanese local government, mostly with legal status, has risen recently to 23,562 in 1999. This is due to the increased marriage between Thai females and Japanese males, making many of them legal and long term residents in Japan.
7. Trainees are recently on the increase. Many of them are sent to Japan as de facto "legal unskilled laborers" through various channels and organizations. Many are "employed" in small and middle size businesses in the manufacturing and food processing industry. It is believed that they will be the major supply source for legal unskilled works in the future. Important findings on Thai trainees in Japan are reported in a paper prepared by Dr. Noriyuki Suzuki.
8. Despite such a large number of Thai migrant workers in Japan, there has been no comprehensive and interdisciplinary study on the topic prior to this research.

Key findings from the questionnaire survey:

1. 58 percent came to Japan between 1990 and 1993, which confirms the government statistics for the peak years of Thai migration to Japan and our research as representative.
2. 38 percent had new partners in Japan and 19 percent married in Japan. This has been an increasingly important issue, as more and more Thai workers, mostly undocumented, get married among Thais or to Japanese in Japan, and give birth, creating a variety of problems because of their legal status.
3. 64 percent finished high school or higher, while only 28 percent finished secondary school or lower. This confirms the literature reported previously that Thai migrants to Japan are not necessarily poorly educated individuals.
4. The mean amount of monthly income in Thailand was 18,000 baht. 25 percent earned as much as 20,000 baht or more a month in Thailand. In general, most respondents were earning above the national average in Thailand.
5. Prior to migration to Japan, 21 percent worked in Thailand in the service entertainment industry, including: restaurants, cafes, night clubs, bartenders, beauty salons, dancers and singers, laundry service, hotels; 14 percent as farmer; 14 percent as helper in a family or company, and 13 percent in services and sales, other than the entertainment sector.
6. 76 percent did not have any experience working abroad before coming to Japan. This is a fresh finding because it is usually believed that many of the Thai migrant workers to Japan are repeaters.
7. In a multiple reply question, the majority of the respondents attributed their migration to economic reasons, such as unsatisfactory earnings in Thailand. However, there were also some respondents who replied that the reason why they came to Japan was for adventure and for better social status. Also, some responded that they were motivated by others.
8. About one third of the respondents perceived themselves "little worse than the average" or "a lot worse than the average" when comparing themselves to other households where they came from in Thailand. Yet, actually, their incomes were not as low as they thought; some of these respondents earned over 20,000 Baht a month, belonging to the highest income group of the respondents. On the contrary, those who perceived themselves "litter better than the average" got lower incomes than

the others. Thus, how much they actually earned in Thailand has less effect on the migration motivation than how they perceived their economic situation.

9. 86 percent obtained their information on migration to Japan through their relatives and friends in Thailand or Japan as the primary source. This is a change from the past when most information came through recruitment agents and brokers.
10. Prior to migration, 76 percent expected to work in Japan for a short period of time, less than a year, but most ended up with working much longer. In fact, about 70 percent have stayed in Japan for over 5 years and 10 percent for over 10 years. This indicates that many migrants, without prior planning, are becoming settlers in Japan.
11. Approximately half the respondents arranged migration to Japan without or with little help from brokers or recruitment agencies. Reportedly, there has been an increasing number of Thai migrant workers to Japan of this sort in recent years. Those who depended on brokers and recruitment agencies paid an average of 180,000 baht for recruitment fees and 8 percent paid over 400,000 baht.
12. 55 percent entered Japan with a tourist visa. Despite the ever stricken immigration control by the Japanese immigration, 89 percent reported that they did not have any problem at the border control.
13. 35 percent worked in service sector, 30 percent in industry and manufacturing, and 23 percent in entertainment. In this survey, there were only few farmers and construction workers, which does not represent the true occupational distribution in Thailand.
14. The average amount of monthly income in Japan was 63,360 baht. Over half earned over 65,000 baht a month, including 10 percent over 80,000 baht and 4 percent over 100,000. 61 percent of the respondents who earned over 80,000 baht a month in Japan were undocumented workers. All respondents earned higher incomes than they earned in Thailand.
15. The average remittance amount was 120,000 baht per sending. 72 percent remitted at least once in 2 months. With the remitted money, many bought or remodeled their houses or bought land.
16. Despite the fact that many respondents engaged in unskilled labor and many criticize that skill transfer had not taken place in Thai-Japan labor migration, 88 percent in our research study admitted that they have acquired new skills in Japan.
17. Due to the overall positive perception of their migration experiences, 67 percent answered that they would encourage their friends to go to Japan.

Key findings from interviews with Japanese key informants:

1. A number of severe problems often occur among Thai migrant workers in Japan. For instance, 4,089 cases in 1993 alone were reported to the Thai Embassy in Japan. Several other government offices and NGOs received complaints from Thai workers in Japan.
2. Types of problems that Thai male migrant workers and female migrant workers face are different. Male workers tend to encounter problems regarding labor issues such as levy, dismissal, labor insurance, and unpaid wages. On the contrary, female workers tend to face troubles and issues that are more rooted in personal and social aspects of their life, such as man-woman relationship, marriage, divorce, parenting children, legalization of infants, and domestic violence. Nevertheless, abuses of human rights and violation of labor laws by employers such as fraud, unfair treatment, unreasonable dismissal exist regardless of gender.
3. Many Japanese NGOs and doctors warn about the current situation of HIV/AIDS prevalence among Thai migrant workers in Japan and urge that the problem could possibly develop into a major crisis in years to come. According to studies by the Japanese Ministry of Welfare, HIV/AIDS infection rate among random sample of Thai nationals at a obstetrics and gynecology clinic outside Tokyo

was 5.0 percent in 1993 and the number rose between 1989 and 1993.

4. According to NGOs and government officials, Thai migrants in Japan, in comparison to other migrants in Japan, tend to isolate themselves from the Japanese public and try to keep as low a profile as possible. Although this is natural for any nationality with undocumented status, Thai migrant workers, both male and female workers, show a strong tendency for such behavior.

Thai migrant workers in Japan in our research evaluated their overall migration experiences and outcomes quite positively. In short, the primary goal of many Thai migrant workers, earning better income, is met; most migrant workers are content with the fact that they migrated. This is mainly due to the fact that these respondents paid relatively low fees to the brokers, earned a high amount of income, succeeded in remitting large amounts, and built or renovated their houses on returned to Thailand. Such economic benefits would have occurred if they had stayed and worked in Thailand.

Although the economic benefits are indeed enormous, so are the problems and challenges that the Thai migrants face in Japan. This is the view expressed by many NGOs and should not be understated. As found in the research, concealed, but severe hardship persisted among many Thai migrants in Japan, ranging from failed marriages, to domestic violence, legalization of migrant's children, injuries and death resulting from accidents, housing, improper medical care, and serious illness including mental disorder and HIV/AIDS. As more and more Thai nationals, who were once migrant workers, started settling down in Japan, it will be crucial that the laws and welfare will be inclusive to all, not only the migrant workers.

Similarly, academicians in Japan point out that very few social science academic studies covered and paid adequate attention to the non-economic concerns of the Thai migrant workers in Japan. This research, therefore, can serve as a model of integrated interdisciplinary studies on Thai migrants in Japan. With adjustment to the changes of the current situation of the Thai workers, further in-depth research should be conducted to investigate specific issues; informal social network, language barrier and personal relationship, settlement of Thai women married to Japanese men, children of Thai migrant workers, family reunification, and accommodation of the Thai citizens to Japanese society. These problems are serious and complex, yet almost no serious studies have touched on them.

Data Collection, Implementation of Analysis, and Terminology

In the first phase of this research, the literature and other relevant sources on Thai migrant workers in Japan have been reviewed to be utilized as secondary data. It was found that in spite of a considerable number of Thai citizens migrating, working, and settling in Japan, both Thai and Japanese academic literature on the topic had been neglected until the late 1980s and early 1990s. The best available reports and data in the 1980s were mostly from non-academic writers, such as journalists and so-called concerned NGO activists. This is attributed to the fact that the majority of Thai migrants are undocumented and are difficult to access for formal academic research.

Today, although there is an increase in the academic literature, studies on Thai-Japan migration are not yet given serious attention or priority among the migration scholars. There have been few research studies published in books, but rather mostly in short articles, papers, and reports, in which Thai-Japan migration is often treated as a part of broader studies on in-migration to Japan. In addition, most of the publications were written, not by migration specialists, but by economists and sociologists whose interests are centered not around migration systems, but rather on specific issues such as females, labor, and medical

In the latter phase, primary data has been collected by using questionnaires in the field research in Japan. Andreas Germershausen and the research team at ARCM developed the questionnaires. Phannee Chunjitkaruna, with occasional participation by Dr. Noriyuki Suzuki and Dr. Supang Chantavanich who provided support, the undertook questionnaire interviews in the field in Japan. Because of the fact that most Thai workers in Japan are undocumented workers, it was not an easy task to reach them at all. However, with the great effort of Phannee Chunjitkaruna and good cooperation from the Thai workers, as many as 97 questionnaires were collected. The detail of the fieldwork is described in

the following parts.

As for data entries, Samarn Laodumrongchai and several assistants under his supervision at ARCM keyed the initial surveyed information of the questionnaires collected into SPSS. Chiaki Ito, with assistance from Akaphop Yanawimud who is knowledgeable in statistics and data analysis, was in charge of main frequencies, cross-tabulation, analysis, and composition of the texts.

In addition to the data from 97 questionnaires collected in the field, Chiaki Ito conducted interviews with a number of key informants and experts in November 1998 and in the spring and summer of 1999. All interviews were conducted in the Kanto area of Japan (See the first and second map) where the majority of our questionnaire respondents came from and where the majority of Thai migrant workers reside and work, according to information available. Interviews were carried out either face-to-face or over the telephone in the Japanese language, in dialogue approaches most of the times, though some core sets of questions were in the hands of the interviewer. The detail of information of those interviewed people and organizations are listed at Appendix.

The purpose of the expert interviews was to back up the data collected from the questionnaires to enhance the analysis, to obtain statistical information for a comprehensive overview of migration flow and stock, and to reveal the issues which are hard to obtain from the workers themselves. More specifically, it is conducted in order to investigate and explore the specific research objectives targeted in the project: namely, migration flows with regard to present scale, estimation on irregular migrants and its trend, and prospects in times of economic crisis in Thailand; the functioning of the recruitment of Thai citizens for labor markets and labor segments in Japan in both official and informal recruitment systems; and the prospects of Thai workers in the labor markets as the consequence of economic recession in the Southeast Asian region. In addition, information about other relevant concerns regarding Thai migrant workers in Japan brought up by the key informants was also obtained.

As mentioned above, due to the lack of serious academic literature on the topic, Japanese NGOs are considered the most knowledge institutions on the present situations on Thai migrants. Thus, their comments and views from the interviews were extensively cited. Also, it should be noted that there is a lot of valuable information obtained from Seminar on Thai Women in Japan, organized by the Royal Embassy of Thailand in Japan in October 1999 where about 120 participants from various NGOs discussed the problems of Thai female migrants in Japan.¹

There may need some explanations for terminologies used in this paper. For those who violate the Japanese immigration laws, Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Law or ICRRL, the phrase, "irregular migrant" or "undocumented migrant", instead of "illegal migrants", is used throughout the paper. This has been proposed by Prof. Hiroshi Komai, an eminent Japanese migration scholar, and is widely used in Japanese migration literature from the human rights perspective (Komai, 1997), in order to avoid the negative connotation which the word "illegal" carries with.

If a particular aspect of a migrant is highlighted, for instance, the labor aspect of a migrant, the individual is referred to as "migrant worker" or "migrant laborer", as "migrant worker" or "migrant laborer" is one type of "migrant". The term "migrant worker" or "migrant laborer" is, therefore, defined as "a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in remunerated activities in a State of which he or she is not a national" (Glossary of Refugee and Migration Terms, 1999: 35). Similarly, the phrase "labor trainee" is used in the discussion of training programs in particular. This refers to trainees who are working as *de facto* labor during the on-the-job-training period, often in the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP).

In another case, there are migrants whose initial and main intention was to come to Japan for work. Nevertheless, these migrants are no longer temporary visitors because they have been settled on Japanese soil for a considerable time. In this paper such people are described as "migrant residents" or

¹ The Seminar on Thai Women in Japan was held "to promote the cooperation and understanding among the Thai and Japanese government staff, NGOs and mass media on problems of Thai women in Japan, and to find solution to problems and creating a network for cooperation."

“migrant settlers”. This term particularly reflects Japanese migration situation where, for instance, Thai female migrants in Japan have migrated in the late 1980s and early 1990s, in order to work in the sex related business, later settled down as residents. This is often attributed to their marriage to Japanese husbands, Japanese born infants and children, or other reasons that motivated them to stay in Japan much longer than the length of the other average migrants who migrated just to work on a temporary basis. This type of Thai women may or may not have proper legal status, but they certainly participate more in various aspects of the Japanese society than that of other Thai migrants in Japan. Considering the particular nature of these people, they should not be labeled simply as female “migrant workers”.

Lastly, the term, *Gai Koku Jin*, which literally means “an outside person” in the Japanese language, is often translated into “foreigner” or “alien”. This word has been widely used by the general Japanese public and even appears in some English translations of Japanese literature. However, in this paper, foreigners who fit into the definition of migrant are referred to as “migrant”, because this study highlights the situation of persons who have migrated. According to that rule, when an interviewee spoke the word, *Gai Koku Jin* in Japanese in the key informant interviews, it was translated into “migrant”, instead of “foreigner” or “alien”.

Relevant Literature

As stated above, in spite of a considerable number of Thai citizens who had migrated, worked, and settled in Japan, both Thai and Japanese serious academic literature on the topic was neglected until the late 1980s and early 1990s. The best available reports and data in the 1980s were mostly from non-academic writers, such as journalists and so-called concerned NGOs activists. This is attributed to the fact that the majority of Thai migrants are undocumented and are difficult to access for formal academic research, but still the literature on this topic has to touch on the undocumented migrant workers.

Even today, though there has been an academic literature, studies on Thai-Japan migration are not yet given serious attention or priority among the migration scholars. There have been few research studies published in books, but rather mostly in short articles, papers, and reports, in which the topic is often treated as a part of a broader studies on in-migration to Japan. In addition, most of publications were written not by migration specialists but by economists and sociologists whose interests are centered not around migration systems but rather on specific issues such as females, labor, and medical health.

In response to the growing number of Thai female migrant workers in Japan in the late 1980s, a series of meetings by a group of concerned scholars and NGO activists were organized. Out of those discussions, “Migrant Workers and Their Human Rights”, edited by Takashi Ebashi, was published in 1990. It was a collection of articles on variety of issues including the Japanese immigration laws, trainees, discrimination against migrants, judicial cases, and NGOs supporting migrants. The emphasis was placed on the Thai commercial sex workers in Japan. Contributors included Ebashi Takashi, editor, Surichai Wun’Gaeo, Yuriko Saito, and several others who later became leading figures in the research on Thai migrant workers in Japan. Following publication of the book, a report on Thai migration system to Japan was published by Yauchibara and Yamagata in 1992. It offered an overview of the subject within the scope of international labor migration in Asia. It mainly examined the economic push and pull factors of Thai emigration in the early period and its shift of destination from the Middle East to Asia. In the following year, the first extensive Thai-Japan collaborative academic study was carried out by Yoshimura in Japan, in research partnership with Phongthada Woodikarn in Thailand. The article focused on only undocumented female migration to Japan, because so much attention at the time was still on trafficking and violation of human rights of Thai commercial sex workers in Japan. However, it gave an excellent overview of the topic, especially its migration process in the early Thai-Japan emigration phase. It also put the topic in a contemporary historical context and provide insight on the causes of migration from a sociological point of view. Interviews with key informants with a variety of Japanese officials and NGO activists were particularly valuable in understanding their usually unspoken points of view towards Thai migrant workers in Japan. In 1994, Noriyuki Suzuki and Hiroshi Komai also wrote a short overview, briefly examining key issues such as causes of migration in rural areas, recruitment structure, migration process, problems and difficulties, and repatriation. The piece was based on the case study of a male migrant worker from a village in Udon Thani province, who had experience in going to both the Middle East as well as Japan. They pointed out that penetration of commercialism in the rural areas of Thailand

was a background cause of Thai migration to Japan. In 1996, Toshikazu Nagayama similarly examined the topic in his workshop paper. Although no case study was presented, a number of statistics on migration flows and stock for Thai migrants to Japan in the late 80s to the early 90s, obtained from the Japanese Immigration Bureau, is a useful academic resource.

Tokyo Metropolitan Labor Research Institute has also produced a series of extensive reports for a research project on migrant workers' communication and their personnel relationships in Japan in 1997 and 1999. In their second report, two chapters written by Takaaki Ogata were devoted to Thai migrant workers in Japan. His in-depth examination of several case studies on Thai workers in Japan revealed not only a typical profile of Thai migrant workers, but also that of those whose occupation in Thailand was of a relatively higher status, such as an university professorship, than conventionally believed. This suggests that there may also be Thai migrant workers in Japan who do not fit in the types which other studies categorize. In fact, he identified five types of Thai migrants to Japan, in terms of their social and economic background prior to emigration, two of which are not found in any other studies, departing from conventional studies focusing only on commercial sex workers. Another merit of the study is the examination of the impact of remittances on the local communities in the Udon Thani province, not from the macro economy level point of view, but from the household level, which is an approach not found in other studies on migration to Japan, but is becoming more and more popular in general migration studies. The Institute also published the third report in 1999 which contains a case study of Thai female workers in Tokyo, examined in a comparative approach among female workers in Tokyo from four different countries.

In an often-referred encyclopedia on migrants in Japan edited by Komai, Suzuki wrote a short informative article examining Thai migration from an international relations point of view in a macro context in 1997. The scholar starts with the 70s as the origin of Thai overseas migration, describes the causes of migration in the 70s, 80s, and 90s, and discusses the much heated social reactions over time to the Thai migration to Japan. The author emphasizes the important idea that the labor emigration from Thailand to Japan should be understood not only from the destination point of view, but also from the origin of migration country's view point by positioning the phenomenon in a broader international and regional migration picture.

In 1997, Phannee Chunjitukaruna conducted a comprehensive research study and produced a quality report on the topic for her master thesis. Her both qualitative and quantitative research through the fieldwork and in-depth case studies throughout Japan are a valuable guide to understand the situation of Thai migrant workers in the early and mid 1990s. The thesis has covered a wide range of crucial migration issues, including causes and reasons for migration, problems encountered, and formation of Thai ethnic minority. In particular, the strengths of her study lie in its examination and analysis on irregular migrants from her extensive underground and informal observation who are considered extremely difficult to access for investigation. It also provided rich statistical information on flows, remittance, and Japanese born-infants.

In the most recent study in 2000, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) published a report on Thai female migration to Japan, based on participatory action research with 55 female returnees from Japan in the Chaing Rai and Phayao province by Therese Caouette and Yuriko Saito. The report touches on issues of an international trafficking network, working and living conditions, and returning, with the last chapter on advice for women who are thinking of going to Japan. In addition to its excellent in-depth research and discourses on the issue, examination of reintegration needs of Thai women in returned communities is of particular interest with regard to Thai scholars.

There have been also some reports and articles which place their emphasis on particular issues within Thai-Japanese migration. As mentioned, in 1993 Yoshimura wrote an extensive article on female migration and analysed issues in the mechanism of recruitment structure, such as trafficking routes, by drawing from two cases studies in Shinjyuku and Ibaraki. From the Thai side, Pasuk Pongpchaichit wrote on Thai female workers in Japan in 1996. Kamala Kempadoo and Jo Doezema (ed) also examined female migration in the sex industry in 1998. Phra Paisan Visalo examined the psychological problems of Thai migrant workers in Japan in 1996 and Nikun Jintai reviewed the recruiting mechanism of undocumented workers emphasizing the role of brokers in 1997. He illustrated some patterns of

recruitment and irregular entry for both male and female migrant workers to Japan and mentioned the amount of fees and commission that they paid to brokers. His article also gives a typical profile of undocumented workers in Japan of both genders. Sriwattananukulij Sakesin also contributed a report on the work life of Thai laborers in Japan. Because Thai migrant workers in Japan face exploitative treatment, human rights issues are often one of the popular topics, as in Komai's study in 1995 which examined the migrant worker's human rights in Japan and examined the situation of Thai migrant workers. There are also some reports from the studies on the prevalence of AIDS/HIV among the Thai migrant workers. Munakata discussed AIDS/HIV and prostitution. Other articles on the AIDS issues were written by Kihara in 1995, published in the Japanese Journal of Public Health, based on the AIDS/HIV surveillance studies of 1989-1993 and 1991-1992, conducted by the Japanese Ministry of Welfare. Two reports of Kihara pointed out that Thai female migrants which he surveyed had a high infection rate of AIDS/HIVS and Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) and warned that the number is on the rise.

As briefly mentioned above, it has been said that trainees are likely to be the major actors in Thai migration to Japan in the next decades because on the Japanese side many of them are *de facto* laborers to meet the labor shortage in Japan and on the Thai side, the Thai government seems interested in sending as legal migrant workers. Some of the reviews on trainees were conducted by Komai. He conducted research on six Japanese-Thai venture companies in the country of origin, Thailand, which send Thai trainees to Japan. The findings were based on his interviews with the executives or the representatives of the trainees sending companies. As the articles says, this study was conducted because the reality of the trainees in Japan has been very unclear. In 1992, Keomanotham Malee also reported on the trainees in her article, but it was a limited study in that the interviews were conducted with the trainees and in the country of destination, Japan. The report provides an overview of the training system and points out the problems which Thai trainees face in Japan. Case studies of the trainees at a heavy industry company reveal the reality of the Thai trainees in Japan, especially the friction in personnel relationships between Thai trainees and Japanese workers.

There have been also some useful research materials and references relevant to Thai-Japanese migration. Japan Immigration Association, administrative organization for the Immigration Bureau, annually publishes two types of governmental statistics reports on all foreigners entering Japan. One is migration flow to Japan, including unofficial entry of undocumented migrant workers, and another is on stock data, such as geographical distribution of legal residents. There is also an annual report on immigration entry procedures describing the Japanese immigration's complex regulations and procedures which are often revised. The Thai Ministry of Labor also releases statistical information, mainly the number of Thai migrant workers to Japan, by mode of help, such as recruitment agencies, labor office, and so forth. However, in general their flow number of Thai migrant workers to Japan is unreliable and does not reflect the reality because it does not clearly distinguish between regular and irregular migrants and does not cover the undocumented workers. HELP in 1998, an NGO assisting Thai female migrants in Japan, published a handbook for Thai workers in Japan. It is written in both Thai and Japanese language and is widely distributed to the undocumented Thai workers throughout Japan. The handbook is also useful for scholars and researchers who would need, for instance, the list of governmental and non-governmental organizations which are relevant to Thai migrant workers.

Background of Migration Flows from Thailand to Japan

Overseas labor migration became an outstanding national phenomenon for Thailand in the 1970s. At first, female migration to Europe, especially Germany, started to show an increase. Beginning in around 1975, male labor migration to oil rich countries in the Middle East began to emerge rapidly and soon replaced the female migration as the dominant emigration pattern of Thailand. At the same time, as Thailand was becoming more integrated into the global economy, the consumption patterns of people especially in rural areas began to change dramatically. Due to the strong penetration of commercialism in every part of the country, more and more villagers dreamed of earning a large sum of cash to purchase more expensive and luxurious items such as houses, automobiles, motorcycles, and so forth. Combined with a high unemployment rate in the Northeast region and the migration promotion policy by the Thai government, it is believed that more than 100,000 Thai nationals went to work in the Middle East annually from 1980 to 1985.

However, when the world's oil price dropped in 1985 and thus the jobs in the Middle East became less attractive for Thai workers, Thai workers began to return and shifted their favored destination to Asian countries such as Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. This change was further accelerated of the incident by a murder of Saudi Arabia diplomat in Bangkok and the Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. As a result, from the late 1980s to the mid 90s, Japan, with its strong currency, emerged as one of the largest destination countries for Thai migrant workers, matched also by the demands of Japanese economy and its severe labor shortage for unskilled workers in small and mid-size businesses because of the increasing unpopularity of so-called 3D (dirty, dangerous, and difficult) jobs.

Nevertheless, the Japanese government kept its tight immigration policy not to accept any unskilled migrant labor. This made most of the Thai migrant workers enter Japan with tourist visas, while some had student and pre-college visas. In any case many aimed to seek employment in Japan. Most were female workers in sex related industry, especially in the 1980s, but, later in the 1990s, the male labor population also increased. This trend changed around 1992. In 1991, immigration laws were revised, and strict controls became effective. Also, trafficking and exploitation of female migrants by brokers were well publicized. Employment opportunities for unskilled labor due to the collapse of the Japanese bubble economy decreased, while the legal channels open for unskilled Thai workers in Taiwan became more attractive.

Present Scale of Thai Migrants to and in Japan

New Entrants

According to the Japanese Immigration Bureau², Japan has received approximately between 2.5 and 3.6 million foreign nationals per year during last decade. Of those, roughly 2 millions are from Asian countries as of 1998. As shown below, these numbers are increasing, but are relatively steady for a period of time.

In contrast, the number of Thai new entrants has been very marked. While, in 1991 Thai new entrants exceeded over 100,000, the number sharply shrank by less than half in only 7 years. Such dramatic change in number is not observed in other nationalities (Statistics on Immigration Control, 1998: 14).

The Number of Thai, Asian, and All New Entrants to Japan

Year	Thai	Asian	% of Thai/ Asian	All New Entrants	% of Thai/ All
1988	41,994	1,387,050	3.02	2,414,447	1.73
1989	49,117	1,791,652	2.74	2,985,764	1.64
1990	69,477	2,164,373	3.21	3,504,470	1.98
1991	105,666	2,477,006	4.26	3,855,952	2.74
1992	89,080	2,012,551	4.42	3,251,753	2.73
1993	63,432	1,865,223	3.40	3,040,719	2.08
1994	53,830	1,905,173	2.82	3,091,581	1.74
1995	46,252	1,751,182	2.64	2,934,428	1.57
1996	56,505	2,062,783	2.73	3,410,026	1.65
1997	53,778	2,243,421	2.39	3,809,679	1.41
1998	40,174	1,966,720	2.04	3,667,813	1.09
1999	48,384	2,284,729	2.11	3,959,621	1.22
2000	56,011	2,481,660	2.25	4,256,403	1.13

Source: Statistics on Immigration Control, http://www.moj.go.jp/TOUKEI/t_n03.html

² Due to the accuracy of the statistics on Thai-Japanese migration activities, the figures are mostly from the Japanese government.

A large portion of the Thai new entrants into Japan has consisted of undocumented migrant workers. Looking at the breakdowns more carefully, we can identify the major reason for the declining number of Thai entrants, that is the declining number of short term purpose entries. In particular, the number of those who entered with sightseeing visas has sharply declined, compared to that of several years ago, leading to the overall decline in the number of Thai migrants.

What is the cause for this decline? Both Japanese migration experts and key informants interviewed in the research point out that this decline has to do with the changes in Japanese immigration policy in the early 90s. Responding to the massive flow of irregular migrant workers, the Japanese government imposed a strict policy on suspected migrant workers. Indeed, it is observed that fewer visas have been granted at the Japanese Embassy in Thailand and that the Japanese immigration control on the entry points became tightened.

On the other hand, the number of the Thai trainees is growing. As will be discussed in more detail in Dr. Suzuki's paper, the reason for this is the widened back-door channels for trainees, so-called "legal" but "de facto" unskilled migrant workers, encouraged through various measures taken by the Japanese government.

Stayers

What kind of people are the Thai migrants who are already in Japan? According to a Japanese police report, it is assumed that 96 percent of the Thai citizens who entered the country with tourist visas later become undocumented over-stayers, mostly unskilled workers (White Paper of Police, 1998: 265). Therefore, it is not a coincidence that a decline in the number of entries for Thai nationals who hold tourist visas matches the decline in the number of undocumented Thai migrants. From this, it can be said that the immigration statistics on the number of Thai nationals with tourist visas is a highly reliable source indicating the annual flow of Thai undocumented workers into Japan.

In 2000, the Japanese Immigration Bureau estimates 23,503 irregular Thai migrants in Japan, the lowest figure in nine years. Nevertheless, Thais are still among the top ethnic groups which tend to be undocumented migrants in Japan. As of July 1st, 1999, Thai irregular migrants have been ranked in 4th place, after Korean, Filipinos, and Chinese, among 268,421 irregular migrants in Japan (*Asahi Shimbun*, Sept. 26, 1999). In addition, migration experts point out that there are many overstaying irregular migrants, including Thai migrants, who are not found and, thus, do not appear in the statistics. It should be noted that the government statistics do not include people who entered Japan unlawfully or entered disguised as other nationalities. In fact, the key informants interviewed point out that unlawful entry and disguised entry are on an increase and one is alerted to the situation because those who entered, for example, with false passports, will have a difficulty to obtain legal identification such as passports and a CI (Certificate of Identification) to return finally to Thailand.

The Number of Overstayed Irregular Thai Migrants in Japan, by Gender, between 1990 and 2000

Year	The Number of Overstayed Irregular Thai Migrants in Japan		
	Male	Female	Total
1990 (July 12)	4,062	7,461	11,523
1991 (November)	13,780	18,971	32,751
1992 (November)	24,463	28,756	55,219
1993 (November)	24,759	29,086	53,845
1994 (November)	21,059	25,905	46,964
1995 (November)	19,866	24,928	43,014
1996 (May)	17,811	23,469	41,280
1997 (January)	16,839	22,674	39,513
1998 (January)	15,542	21,504	37,049
1999 (January)	13,522	16,513	30,035
2000 (January)	11,082	12,421	23,503

Source: Japanese Ministry of Justice, <http://www.moj.go.jp>

The Number of Reported Cases of Thai Irregular Workers, by Gender, and the Percentage of Reported Irregular Thai Migrant Workers in the Total Number of Overstaying Irregular Thai Migrants, between 1988 and 1998

Year	Male	Female	Total	The Percentage of Reported Irregular Thai Migrant Workers in the Total Number of Estimated Overstaying Irregular Thai Migrants
1988	369	1,019	1,388	N/A
1989	369	748	1,144	N/A
1990	661	789	1,450	7.94
1991	926	2,287	3,249	10.08
1992	2,408	5,111	7,519	7.34
1993	5,169	7,483	12,654	4.25
1994	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
1995	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
1996	2,568	2,993	5,561	7.42
1997	1,936	2,547	4,483	8.79
1998	1,579	2,025	3,604	10.28

Source: Yoshimura, 1993: 183, Murashita, 1994: 88, and Statistics on Immigration Control, page 51, Japan Immigration Association, 1998.

Under Japanese immigration law, migrants who stay in Japan for over 90 days must register with the local government authorities. Undocumented migrant workers could also register. However, very few do and the majority are those who hold valid visa and have legal status. As of 1998, there were 23,567 registered Thai migrants in Japan, consisting of 6,841 males and 16,721 females. A large portion of them are confirmed to reside in Kanto and Osaka area (Statistics on Foreigners in Japan, 1998). The number has jumped over the last 2 decades due to the increasing number of international marriages of Thai females commercial sex workers marrying Japanese males. 1994 statistics shows 9.6 percent among all international marriages are marriage of Thai and Japanese nationals; the marriages are between Thai females and Japanese males in most of the cases (Komai, 1997).

The Number of Registered Thai Migrants in Japan, in Selected Years.

Year	The Number of Registered Thai Migrants in Japan
1960	266
1970	721
1980	1,276
1985	2,642
1990	5,542
1999	23,562

Source: Japan Statistical Yearbook 1990, page 45, Management and Coordination Agency, Statistics Bureau, 1990, and Statistics on Foreigners in Japan, page 32, Japan Immigration Association 1998.

Estimates of Undocumented Migrants

Although Japanese governmental data is accurate to some extent, scholars and NGO workers point out that it often underestimates the number of irregular Thai migrant workers. They independently estimate the number of Thai irregular migrants in 1998 and 1999 as between 40,000 and 50,000. The estimates has dropped considerably from roughly 100,000 in 1995 according to a Thai scholar, (Singhanetra-Renard 1996: 51), but it is still higher than the Japanese government's calculation. It is fair to say that the non-governmental figures could be a little more accurate and reliable because non-governmental agencies are more familiar with the situation of unlawful as well as disguised entry. However, it should also be footnoted that because their estimate relies heavily on their personal observation but not on scientific research, the combination of governmental hard data and non-governmental experts' observations could give the best picture of undocumented migrants.

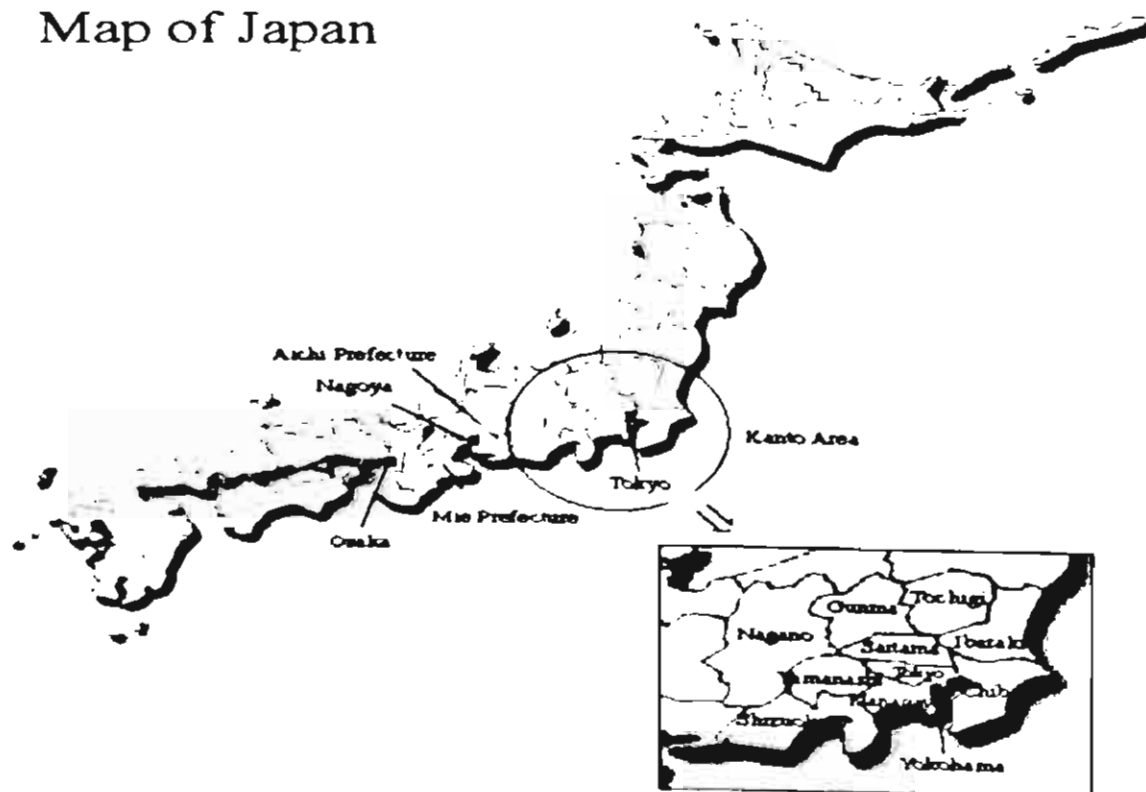
Geographical Distribution

Where do the Thai migrants reside and work? Undocumented Thai migrant workers are extremely difficult to locate in terms of their geographical distribution. In fact, there has been no official information on the distribution of a particular nationality group for irregular migrants. One of the reasons for this is the strict immigration control. It made the migrants hide and keep a low profile in a relatively small groups. For instance, before and during the time when Tokyo hosted the G7 Summit in 1993, the Japanese Ministry of Justice increased their pressure on undocumented migrants workers nationwide. As a result, many Thai migrant workers spread out into smaller groups in different cities and towns, fearing that they could be found and arrested easily if they stayed in large groups. Some NGO workers refer to this situation and in claiming that Thai migrants are becoming "invisible" in Japanese society. Needless to say, this situation made an already difficult situation for research more difficult.

Key informants stated that many Thai migrant workers, mostly undocumented, resided and worked in Nagano, Chiba, and Ibaraki prefectures. The number seems to have declined in comparison to the peak year, however, because of less job opportunities resulting from the worsening economic situation. Also, it is assumed that cities such as Numazu, Mishima, and Nagaoka in Shizuoka prefecture take in a great number of Thai irregular migrants. It is reported that there are a considerable number of Thai workers in fish processing factories in Choshi city in Chiba prefecture which is located near the Pacific Ocean and one of the largest commercial fishing ports in the Kanto area.

In short, the number of Thai migrant workers newly entering Japan has declined dramatically over the last years, but national statistics shows that it is not declining as fast as it should be if compared to other nationalities. Other sources indicate that there is still a quite number of their staying without legal status for a long period of time, particularly in Kanto area, as will be discussed later. Most enter with tourist visas and manage to work in unskilled jobs making them undocumented.

Map of Japan



Demographics: Data of the Respondents in the Survey

Who are the Thai migrant workers in our study? The following information will provide a basic description of our respondents who answered the questionnaires.

To start with, out of 97 valid questionnaires, it was found that 62 percent identified themselves as undocumented workers in Japan, while 38 percent claimed to be legal migrants. However, cross-tabulating the present legal status with the type of visa, as will be discussed later, when they entered Japan, 7 out of 37 respondents who claimed that they are legal at present (at the time of the interview) entered with tourist visas, which may be presumed to have expired at the time of this research. Thus, this leads to the assumption that 62 percent plus some percent, up to around 7 percent, of the respondents had unofficial status in Japan at the time of interview.

Legal Status in Japan

Status	Percent	Frequency
Undocumented	61.86	60
Documented	38.14	37
Total	100.00	97

N=97

23 percent of the interviews took place in Tokyo, including Shinjyuku and Fussa cities, followed by the prefecture of Shizuoka (20 percent), Aichi (15 percent), Mie (13 percent), and Chiba (9 percent). (See Maps)

Place of Interview

Prefecture in Japan	Percent	Frequency
Tokyo	22.68	22
Shizuoka	19.59	19
Aichi	15.46	15
Mie	13.40	13
Chiba	9.28	9
Osaka	7.22	7
Kanagawa	5.15	5
Nagano	3.09	3
Yamanashi	2.06	2
Ibaragi	1.03	1
Unknown	1.03	1
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Statistically this does not necessarily reflect the true geographical distribution of the Thai workers, because of the small size of sample in comparison to the entire population of Thai citizens in Japan. In fact, because of the undocumented status of some respondents, the survey has had to use a quasi-snowball sampling technique in the sampling method. In addition, summary of interviews with the key informants indicate that there are many more Thai migrants in Nagano and Chiba areas than the data shows. However, researchers were aware of the geographical distribution of Thai workers and had covered major sites in the Kanto area.

For gender distribution, 57 percent of the respondents are male and 43 percent are female.

Gender

Gender	Percent	Frequency
Male	56.70	55
Female	43.30	42
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Again, statistically speaking this ratio does not represent the reality of the gender ratio among Thai workers in Japan because of the small sample. However, it is worth mentioning here that the trend of the gender ratio of Thai workers in Japan has shifted from more females to fewer females and few males to not-so-few male. This is against our expectation because female migration is increasingly popular in East and Southeast Asia. According to the key informants, female migration has dominated Thai-Japanese migration in the past decades, while male workers and non-commercial sex female workers has increased in number in the late 1990s. This sampling tries to cover both genders in order to give more balanced information of both.

What is the age distribution of the respondents? At the time of interviews in 1998, the mean age of the respondents was 34 years old. The youngest respondent was 24 years old and the oldest was 50. 45 percent of the respondents were in their 30s, followed by 28 percent in their 20s and 24 percent in their 40s.

Age (at the time of interview)

Age	Percent	Frequency
20 – 29	27.84	27
30 – 39	45.36	44
40 – 49	23.71	23
50 and older	2.06	2
Did not reply	1.03	1
Total	100.00	97

N=97

The cross-tabulation of the age group with the duration of the stay of the respondents proved that at least 55 percent of the respondents went to Japan in their 20s. This is consistent with common knowledge that migrant workers in Japan are economically active and young.

The year of the arrival of Thai migrants generally corresponds with the Japanese immigration statistics shown earlier. Shown in the table, more than half came to Japan in 1990 and 1993. This means that many respondents came to Japan during or right after the bursting of Japanese economy. Despite that, our sample indicates most respondents could find a job relatively easily in Japan and did not suffer initially finding employment driving the depression in Japan. The impact of the economic crisis in Thailand is hard to measure due to the lag period and very few respondents who were in Thailand before the crisis in 1997.

Year of Arrival in Japan

Year	Percent	Frequency
1989 and before	15.46	15
1990- 1993	57.73	56
1994- 1996	22.68	22
1997- 1998	3.09	3
Did not reply	1.03	1
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Where have these migrants come from in Thailand? In terms of their birthplace and origin in Thailand, it is found that Thai workers in Japan come from a variety of areas in Thailand. In the regional distribution table, the data indicates that the Northern provinces are the primary birthplace of migrant workers to Japan.

Place of Birth and Origin in Thailand (by Province)

Province	Percent	Frequency
Central	43.30	42
Bangkok Metropolitan	16.49	16
Chonburi	5.15	5
Nonthaburi	4.12	4
Buriram	3.09	3
Nakhonnayok	3.09	3
Nakhonsawan	2.06	2
Samutprakarn	2.06	2
Saraburi	2.06	2
Singhburi	2.06	2
Rayong	1.03	1
Other	7.22	7
Northeast	22.68	22
Khon Khaen	7.22	7
Nakhonrachasima	4.12	4
Udonthani	4.12	4
Sakhonakhon	1.03	1
Sisaket	1.03	1
Mahasarakham	1.03	1
Roi Et	1.03	1
North	29.90	29
Chieng Rai	12.37	12
Chieng Mai	4.12	4
Lampang	3.09	3
Phayao	2.06	2
Phrae	2.06	2
Other	4.12	4
South	4.12	4
Trang	1.03	1
Pattalung	1.03	1
Songkhla	1.03	1
Nakhonsrithammarat	1.03	1
Total	100.00	97

N=97

The most popular point of origin of the respondents were Bangkok Metropolis (16 percent), followed by Chieng Rai (12 percent), Khon Kaen (7 percent), followed by Chonburi (5 percent), Udon Thani (4 percent), Nonthaburi (4 percent), and Chieng Mai (4 percent).

When the respondents were asked where they resided in Thailand prior to migration to Japan,

over a half answered in Central region.

Place of Residence in Thailand (by Region)

Region	Percent	Frequency
Central	57.73	56
North	24.74	24
Northeast	15.46	15
South	2.06	2
Total	100.00	97

N=97

In the breakdown, 44 percent answered the Bangkok Metropolitan area, followed by Chaing Rai (12 percent) and Khonkhen (4 percent) and Udon Thani (4 percent).

Place of residence in Thailand (by Province)

Province	Percent	Frequency
Bangkok Metropolitan	44.33	43
Chieng Rai	12.37	12
Khonkhen	5.15	5
Udon Thani	4.12	4
Samutprakhan	4.12	4
Nakhonrachasima	3.09	3
Lampang	3.09	3
Phayao	2.06	2
Nonthaburi	2.06	2
Saraburi	2.06	2
Phrae	2.06	2
Chieng Mai	2.06	2
Singhburi	2.06	2
Nakhonnayok	1.03	1
Sakonnakhon	1.03	1
Trang	1.03	1
Pisanulok	1.03	1
Burirum	1.03	1
Mahasarakham	1.03	1
Kampangpet	1.03	1
Songkhla	1.03	1
Lamphon	1.03	1
Nakhonprathom	1.03	1
Chainat	1.03	1
Total	100.00	97

N=97

The Central provinces, especially Bangkok Metropolitan, was the main residence of the Thai migrant workers to Japan.

It is quite interesting to look more carefully at the relationship between the data of birth origin and that of residence. Although only 14 percent of the respondents claimed that their birthplace was Bangkok, as many as 44 percent claimed that their residence prior to migration to Japan was Bangkok.

Relationship between Birth Place and Residence in Thailand

Birthplace	Residence				Total
	Central	North	Northeast	South	
Central	42 (75.00)	-	-	-	42 (43.30)
North	5 (8.93)	24 (100.00)	-	-	29 (29.90)
Northeast	7 (12.50)	-	15 (100.00)	-	22 (22.68)
South	2 (3.57)	-	-	2 (100.00)	4 (4.12)
Total	56 (100.00)	24 (100.00)	15 (100.00)	2 (100.00)	97 (100.00)

N=97

()=Percentage

From the above, we learn that some migrant workers to Japan moved to Bangkok from their birthplace, worked there for a period of time, and then migrated to Japan. In fact, migration experts argue that the domestic population mobility is a good indicator of dynamics of international migration. If this is the case, social and economic condition and network of the prospective migrant workers in Bangkok are also important factors affecting decision of workers to migrate.

Some questions asked in the questionnaire reveal the family situation of the respondents. About half of the respondents (51 percent) are married, a little over two thirds (68 percent) have children, and 39 percent claimed that they are the head of the household in the family. The mean number of the family members in the household of the respondents was 4.4 persons. Amazingly, 19 percent claimed that they got married in Japan and 26 percent live with their spouse there.

Marital Status

Status	Percent	Frequency
Married	50.52	49
Never married	30.93	30
Divorced	7.22	7
Separated	5.15	5
Cohabitation	4.12	4
Widow/ widower	1.03	1
Did not reply	1.03	1
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Number of Children

Number	Percent	Frequency
No child	17.91	12
1	34.32	23
2	25.37	17
3	10.29	7
4	10.29	7
5	1.49	1
Total	100.00	67

N=67 (Those who have a child or children)

Head of Household

Person	Percent	Frequency
Myself	39.18	38
My father	34.02	33
My mother	20.62	20
Husband	3.09	3
Father in law	1.03	1
Sister/brother	1.03	1
Spouse	1.03	1
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Marriage in Japan

Marriage	Percent	Frequency
Yes	18.56	18
No	46.39	45
Did not apply	35.05	34
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Residence with Spouse in Thailand

Residence with spouse in Japan	Percent	Frequency
Yes	25.77	25
No	40.21	39
Did not apply	34.02	33
Total	100.00	97

N=97

These findings support the statements made by informants interviewed that the settlement of once temporary Thai migrant workers is occurring in Japan. This will be discussed later.

What is the educational level of the respondents? Amazingly, 34 percent finished high school, followed by 21 percent college, 17 percent secondary school, 10 percent primary school, and 7 percent graduate level. People who have the lowest education received 4 years of education and those who have the highest 22 years. The mean year of education was 15 years.

Education

Education	Percent	Frequency
Primary school	10.31	10
Secondary school	17.53	17
High school	35.05	34
Undergraduate	21.65	21
Graduate and above	7.22	7
Did not reply	5.15	5
Did not specify	3.09	3
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Once again, it is surprising that close to 80 percent of the sample have more than 9 years of education in Thailand and 29 percent of the respondents have university level education. In fact, this is the contrary to the conventional belief and also the findings of Thai field research on migrant returnees.

Cross-tabulation of the educational level with the legal status, supports, though not strongly, a tendency that the higher the respondents' education is, the more likely it is that the respondents are legal workers. In fact, all respondents who had more than 18 years of education are legal workers. On the other hand, 75 percent of the respondents who had education below 9 years are irregular workers.

To explain the high educational level, it may be useful to refer to the previous study by Tokyo Metropolitan Labor Research Institute, as introduced in the literature review. Indeed, the study reports that some highly educated Thai citizens such as university professors abandoned their skilled jobs in Thailand and went to Japan to work as an unskilled laborer, though our research does not have such cases, it will be quite common.

Background in Thailand

What was the main occupation while the respondents were still in Thailand? Our data shows that 14 percent were working as farmers, followed by working in the service sector in restaurant, cafés, or night clubs (11 percent), in service sector but as salespersons, transport, or messengers (9 percent), industrial and manufacturing (8 percent), as company servant (7 percent) and as dancers and singers (6 percent).

Occupation in Thailand before Migration

Main occupation	Percent	Frequency
Service entertainment (Restaurant, Cafe, Night club, Bartender, Beauty Salon, Dancer and Singer, Laundry service, Hotel)	20.61	20
Farming	14.43	14
Helper in a family/ Company	14.42	14
Services and Sales (Sales, Tour Agency/guide, Taxi Driver, Deliver Goods, Interior Designer, Jeweler, and Customer Service)	13.39	13
Industry/ Manufacturing (Dressmaker, Plastic Maker, Boat Builder, Spare Parts, and Factory)	9.27	9
Government servant (Teacher, State enterprise, Bank)	7.21	7
Business	6.18	6
Other (Motorcycle Repairperson, Electrician, Boxing Teacher)	6.18	6
Did not apply or did not have experience in working in Thailand	4.12	4
Construction sector	2.06	2
Did not specify	2.06	2
Total	100.00	97

N=97

A relatively few respondents (14 percent) were engaged in farming in Thailand, contrary to the belief that most of the overseas Thai migrant workers were farmers in Thailand. Yet, in another question asking "Did you do farming?", 31 percent answered that they had farmed either on land owned by the respondents' family or on someone else's land. Thus, it can be concluded that some of the respondents had been farmers in their hometown, before they moved to Bangkok or other provincial cities, engaged in non-agricultural occupations, and then migrated to Japan.

Questions on the monthly income of the respondents in Thailand reveal the following income groups, indicated in the table. The lowest monthly income was 1,000 and the highest 100,000. The mean was around 18,000 baht.

Monthly Income in Thailand

Monthly income	Percent	Frequency
5,001 and less	11.3	11
5,001 – 10,000	17.5	17
10,001 – 15,000	18.6	18
15,001 – 20,000	14.4	14
20,000 and more	24.7	24
Did not answer	10.3	10
Did not have income	3.1	3
Total	100.00	97

N=97

This high level of the income confirms that the migrant workers who went to Japan were not necessarily economically poor.

How about their previous experience in working abroad? 78 percent of the respondents have not been abroad previously, while only 22 percent have.

Previous Experience in Working Abroad

Previous experience	Percent	Frequency
Yes	21.65	21
No	78.35	76
Total	100.00	97

N=97

For those who have been overseas, their destination countries were Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Only one person had been to Japan. This data do not support what has been conventionally believed that most of recent migrants to Japan tend to be migration repeaters. Conversely, it implies that newly members are recruited and incorporated into the Thai-Japanese migration system.

Determinants of Migration

What are the primary motivations to migrate to Japan? 64 out of 97 respondents responded in the multiple choice question that the main reason to go to Japan was economic, unsatisfactory earnings and hope for better earnings; 37 responded it was unsatisfactory work conditions; and 30 responded repaying debt. Interestingly, 28 respondents went to Japan because they wanted to go abroad as adventure; 17 did so because of better family status; and 11 because of a desire to get married abroad.

Reasons to Leave Thailand

Reasons	Frequency
Economic reason	
Unsatisfactory earnings	62
Unsatisfactory work conditions	37
Repay debt	30
Difficult employment	16
Social reason	
Adventure	28
Experience for better family status	17
Desire to marry abroad	11
Problems with personal relationship	10
Accompany or join other relative	10
Personal problem with employer or others at work	8
Divorce	6
Motivated by others	
Accompany or join relative	10
Prospective spouse waiting abroad	7
Solicited by agency	7
Accompany or join friend	4
Accompany or join spouse	2
Accompany or join employer	1
Other	
No more farm/ a drought	1
Desire to get away from big problems in around life	1
Finished study and desire to work	1
Multiple Answers	

This data indicates that despite strong and persistent economic motivation, non-economic motivations do exist among many migrant workers. This issue will also be analyzed later.

How did they perceive themselves in economic terms while they were in Thailand? In terms of self-description of their household, 35 out of 84 respondents ranked themselves a little below or a lot worse off than others when they were still in Thailand.

Cross Tabulation on Monthly Income in Thailand and Perceived Household Status in Comparison to Others

Monthly Income in Thailand	Perceived Status of Household to Others				Total
	Little better than average	Average	Little worse than average	A lot worse off than average	
5,001 and less	4 (50.00)	6 (14.63)	1 (3.03)	-	11
5,001 - 10,000	3 (37.50)	9 (21.95)	5 (15.15)	-	17
10,001 - 15,000	1 (12.50)	10 (24.39)	7 (21.21)	-	18
15,001 - 20,000	-	8 (19.51)	5 (15.15)	1 (50.00)	14
20,001 and more	-	8 (19.51)	15 (45.45)	1 (50.00)	24
Total	8	41	33	2	84

Those who answered the question with amount

Drawing from the above cross-tabulation, it was found that approximately 30 percent of the respondents who earned over 10,000 baht a month in Thailand claimed that they were a little worse or a lot worse in comparison to other households in the village.

In a remarkable case, one respondent whose monthly income was 50,000 baht claimed that the person's household was a lot worse off than other households. This implies that perception of oneself does not necessarily match the reality and this may be especially the case for the Thai workers going to Japan. This could suggest that the psychological feeling of relative deprivation, combined with the often exaggerated optimistic perception conveyed through the migration network by friends and relatives, is a significant factor which amplified motivation of migrants to go to Japan.

Where did the migrants receive information about Japan and employment? Did they have some idea about working in Japan prior to the migration? A substantial portion of our sampling (84 percent) mentioned that their relatives and friends either in Thailand or Japan mainly provided information about Japan and employment. 94 percent had some kind of idea about working in Japan.

Main Source of Information about Japan and Employment

Main information source	Percent	Frequency
Relatives/friends living in Thailand	49.48	48
Relatives/friends living in Japan	36.08	35
Newspapers or magazines	5.15	5
Labor recruiter or contractor	4.12	4
Employer	2.06	2
Television	1.03	1
Organization in Thailand that helps people who want to move	1.03	1
No information source	1.03	1
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Information about Work in Japan

Information about work	Percent	Frequency
Very good	3.09	3
Good	30.93	30
Had some idea	26.80	26
Okay	32.99	32
Hardly knew anything	6.19	6
Total	100.00	97

N=97

This data indicate that relatives and friends of the migrant workers provided information and, whether or not the information was accurate, the information they provided was an important factor influencing the expectation and decision making of prospective migrant workers.

When the respondents were in Thailand, over two thirds of them expected to work in Japan for a relatively short period of time, no more than one year. However, many of them actually ended up staying in Japan much longer than expected, according to the data on duration of stay.

Expected Length of Stay in Japan

Expected length of stay	Percent	Frequency
Longer than a year	22.68	22
At least half a year	24.74	24
Shorter than half a year	36.08	35
Very short, less than one month	15.46	15
Cannot say	1.03	1
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Was there any relationship between the economic crisis and the decision on migration? There were only 28 respondents who left Thailand before the economic crisis. Of those, 43 percent responded there was definitely an impact of the economic crisis on their decision to migrate.

Impact of Economic Crisis on Decision to Migrate

Impact of economic crisis	Percent	Frequency
Definitely yes	42.85	12
Yes	7.14	2
Not really	20.68	6
No	20.68	6
Cannot say/ no opinion	7.14	2
Total	100.00	28

N=97

In fact, as the data shows, 71 percent were not able to reply to the question because they left Thailand before the crisis took place. No key informants interviewed in Japan were able to provide detailed information regarding the relationship between the economic crisis in Thailand and migrant workers to Japan either, except that the economic crisis in Thailand had more of an effect on the Thai workers in Japan causing them to stay longer in the country than on the prospective workers in Thailand. As a matter of fact, the key Japanese informants pointed out the decreasing number of Thai migrant

workers entering to Japan in the last several years and concluded that the impact of the economic crisis in Thailand in 1997 was minimal or not yet evident at the time of research; all indicated that the economic depression in Japan was much larger factor affecting the Thai migration to Japan.

Process of Entry

Our data shows that there are more respondents (28 percent) who have arranged travel to Japan by themselves, than those (21 percent) who asked private recruitment agents and brokers to arrange such service.

Person Who Made Travel Arrangements to Japan

Person	Percent	Frequency
Myself	27.84	27
Private recruitment agent/ broker in Thailand	20.62	20
Relatives	13.40	13
Employer/ company in Japan	12.37	12
Friends	9.28	9
Broker (individual)	4.12	4
Spouse	3.09	3
Myself + relatives + friends	3.09	3
Employer/company in Thailand	2.06	2
Myself + private recruiter agent	2.06	2
Tour agency	1.03	1
Did not reply	1.03	1
Total	100.00	97

N=97

This data verifies the recent observation by the NGOs and migration scholars that so-called chain migration is rapidly emerging and, thus, independent self-arrangement is replacing the arrangement of brokers. In fact, many experts point out that the number of so-called "professional" brokers trafficking in Thai workers is diminishing. This may be because new migrants were well informed by relatives and friends who have worked in Japan and also because some of them themselves became brokers with the knowledge obtained from previous experience and lengthy stay in Japan.

However, obtaining visas tended to be mainly arranged by outsider brokers (44 percent) such as labor recruiters and contractors.

Person Helping to Obtain Visa

Person	Percent	Frequency
Labor recruiter or contractor in Thailand	42.27	41
Myself	12.37	12
Employer/company in Japan	11.34	11
Relatives	9.28	9
Friends	6.19	6
Government agency	5.15	5
My spouse(through marriage)	4.12	4
Employer/company in Thailand	3.09	3
Labor recruiter or contractor in Japan	2.06	2
Private company	2.06	2
Tour agency	1.03	1
Did not know	1.03	1
Total	100.00	97

N=97

This implies the division of specialization in migration arrangement; there is more than one person involved in different types of services for the migrants to go to Japan.

In getting to Japan, a majority (56 percent) had tourist visas. It is rather strange to see that 24 percent answered that they had no visa, yet were able to enter the country. In addition, 19 percent answered that they had temporary visas. It is not clear what they mean, and 9 percent said they had a border pass, which does not even exist. 9 percent entered with a marriage visa.

Kind of Visa at the Time of Entry into Japan

Kind of visa	Percent	Frequency
Tourist	55.67	54
Temporary residence	16.49	16
Student	10.31	10
Border pass	8.25	8
Resident (immigrant)	2.06	2
Business	2.06	2
Marriage	2.06	2
Trainee	2.06	2
Did not apply, because unofficially entered	1.03	1
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Although presumably immigration officials at entry points knew that some of the entries by tourist visa were disguised, 89 percent did not have any problem at entry points.

Problems Passing the Immigration Control

Problems passing the Immigration Control	Percent	Frequency
Yes	11.34	11
No	88.66	86
Total	100.00	97

N=97

According to the national statistics, in 1998, 358 Thai citizens were refused entry into Japan at the entry points, classified by the Immigration as refusal of landing. This number is considered very low because it is only less than 1 percent of the total number of Thai new entrants to Japan, 40,174, in the same year. Nevertheless, NGOs noted that there have been new types of methods and routes developed to sneak into Japan unlawfully. Consequently, the number of those who are not found by the Immigration has been increasing. Some of the recent popular unlawful routes are disguised entries from Malaysia and Shanghai, China, though details are not known. This is mainly because of the strict immigration control on conventional routes at the entry points and because of the fewer number of visas granted to Thai people. For instance, there have been some instances where Thai migrants obtained a visa from Latin American countries and applied for a transitional visa in Japan. Taking advantage such transitional visas, they were permitted to get out the airport for some days but never returned to the flights. In fact, such unlawful entry attempt by Thai citizens is increasing proportionally. In short, ways to enter Japan are becoming more varied and harder for Immigration to detect undocumented workers.

The Number of Persons Refused Landing, by Country, between 1992 and 1998

Country (Ranks Based on 1998)	Number of Persons						
	1998	1997	1996	1995	1994	1993	1992
South Korea	4,281	2,530	3,339	4,264	3,440	3,051	2,679
China	963	1,000	1,307	1,235	424	620	533
Sri Lanka	495	372	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Malaysia	478	671	1,635	1,768	721	2,279	2,262
Philippines	474	867	1,029	1,155	984	1,564	896
Thailand	358	564	1,061	1,388	747	2,735	5,161
India	353	296	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Peru	347	1,343	530	1,732	2,345	1,551	368
Pakistan	275	342	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Columbia	266	560	641	777	645	382	145

Source: Statistics on Immigration Control

The Number of Reported Thai Unlawful Entrants into Japan, by Means of Transportation, between 1994 and 1998.

Year	By Air	By Sea
1994	2,865	88
1995	1,811	21
1996	1,465	23
1997	1,457	30
1998	1,181	25

Source: Statistics on Immigration Control, page 54 and 55, Japan Immigration Association, 1998.

Recruitment

How soon did the Thai migrant workers obtain their first employment? A high percentage (80 percent) of the respondents obtained their first employment within a month after they arrived Japan.

Period to Obtain a Job in Japan

Time	Percent	Frequency
Immediately, because the job was arranged from Thailand	22.68	22
Immediately, but without prior job arrangement	17.53	17
1 week	1.03	1
Less than a month	39.18	38
Within 3 months	12.37	12
About 6 months	3.09	3
1 year	3.09	3
Did not specify	1.03	1
Total	100.00	97

N=97

50 percent claimed that they found their jobs through the relatives and friends, while only 5 percent did so through brokers in Japan.

Person Helping to Find Jobs

Person	Percent	Frequency
Friends/my friend's sister	28.87	28
Brother in Thailand	19.59	19
Relatives	11.34	11
Employer in destination country/tour company	11.34	11
Elder sister/ elder brother/ parents	8.25	8
Brother in destination country	5.15	5
Broker and friend	5.15	5
Does not apply	4.12	4
Nobody, I found the job by myself	3.09	3
I got a job before coming here	2.06	2
Spouse	1.03	1
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Against the background that they have never been to Japan before, and are looking for a job in a stagnated economy, much of this success in prompt employment is certainly due to the migration network between Thailand and Japan.

In fact, 83 percent had relatives and friends who have lived in Japan. Besides employment, 78 percent of the respondents claimed that they did get some assistance during the transitional phase of settling in, such as for housing, from their relatives and friends, who were in Japan prior to their arrival.

Relatives and Friends Who Have Lived in Japan before

Relative/friend lived in Japan	Percent	Frequency
Yes	79.38	77
No	20.62	20
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Help from the Relatives and Friends

Help from relative/friend	Percent	Frequency
Yes	75.26	73
No	7.22	7
Did not apply because there were no relatives/friends living in Japan	17.53	17
Total	100.00	97

N=97

These findings confirm that the prior existence of relatives and friends is crucial in Thai-Japanese migration system and migration between two countries does not suddenly occur, but rather is continuously developed around kinship and friendship ties over a considerable period of time. In some cases the network functions more efficiently than brokers in some of the crucial aspects of migrants' life such as recruitment in Japan.

An interview with a Japanese volunteer in near Tokyo backs up this point. According to this informant, through their informal network, Thai migrants are well informed as to where to look for a job and even as to the slightest difference in wage between companies. Other NGO workers similarly stated that some of the migrants who come to the NGO in Japan got to know about the organization back in the villages in Thailand, from those who were in Japan previously and came back to Thailand. However, not many experts know the details of the networks such as how their work, because the networks seem closed to Japanese outsiders and are relatively loosely organized. If migrants are so dependent on their networks, it is very important to analyze the system of the network as to how it works.

Despite the help from relatives and families to go to Japan described above, recruitment fees still exist. The amount of the recruitment fee varies largely, running from 6,000 to 1 million baht. The mean fee of our sample is about 180,000 baht. About 40 percent paid more than 100,000 baht.

Recruitment Fee

Amount (Baht)	Percent	Frequency
10,000 and less	2.06	2
10,001 - 25,000	14.43	14
25,001 - 50,000	17.53	17
50,001 - 100,000	8.25	8
100,001 - 200,000	13.40	13
200,001 - 300,000	11.34	11
300,001 - 400,000	5.15	5
400,001 and more	8.25	8
Did not answer or reply	19.59	19
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Needless to say, this cost is significantly higher for those migrating from rural areas where the amount could be some times higher than their annual household income. However, the amount is not as high as other studies indicate.

Situation in Japan

Duration of Stay

As the data shows below, many have been staying in Japan for a long period of time. Most respondents in our sampling have been staying for over 5 years. Surprisingly, 10 percent have been

staying in Japan for over 10 years.

Duration of Stay and Year of Arrival

Duration of Year/Year of Arrival	Percent	Frequency
1 or less/ 1997 or 98	3.09	3
2/ 1996	4.12	4
3/ 1995	14.43	14
4/ 1994	4.12	4
5/ 1993	16.49	16
6/ 1992	19.59	19
7/ 1991	12.37	12
8/ 1990	9.28	9
9/ 1989	5.15	5
10 or more/ 1988 or before	10.31	10
Did not answer	1.03	1
Total	100.00	97

N=97

From this, we learn that most respondents came to Japan in the early 90s and some in the late 80s.

This finding supports what the Japanese experts pointed out. That is, the length of stay of Thai migrant workers who are already in Japan has become longer in recent years. In fact, more and more Thai migrants in Japan are choosing not to go back to Thailand, but to remain as long as possible. There are reasons for that. First, there is a belief among the Thai migrant workers in Japan that even if they return to Thailand, they are unlikely to obtain a good job because of the economic situation in Thailand. Secondly, the Thai migrants realize that once they leave Japan, it will be very difficult to go back again, whether it is an attempt to enter as a disguised tourist or with a false passport, because of the strict control at entry points and in issuing visas. Lastly and most importantly, many Thai migrants, especially female migrants, are choosing to settle down in Japan for variety of reasons, other than just to work. This is not only true for those of Thai nationality, but also for other nationalities in Japan. These are people who were once just economically oriented migrant workers in the late 80s and the early 90s, but later became settled migrant residents in the late 90s. In fact, it is told that many of the Thai females who are currently staying in Japan have been there since the early 90s and many now have families or partners in Japan, as the number of marriages between Thai females and Japanese males, and, interestingly enough also, between Thai female and Thai males increases. As a result, a great portion of those already in Japan have good reason to stay longer, and, as a result, the number of Thai migrants to Japan, especially Thai females, is unlikely decline sharply in the years to come, according to the expert informants interviewed.

Occupation

What is the occupational type that the Thai migrant workers work in Japan? Our sample shows that 34 percent work in the service sector in restaurants, cafés, and nightclubs, 29 percent in manufacturing industry, and only 7 percent in the construction industry. 6 percent identify their job as dancer but did not classify themselves in the service sector.

Occupation in Japan

Occupation	Percent	Frequency
Services (Teaching Thai boxing, Teaching Thai traditional acting, Teaching cooking food, Teaching Thai language, Media, Airline ticket sales, Thai food sales, Sales in Thai shops, Tour guide, Beauty saloon, Jewelry, Translator, Hotel, Restaurant, Food delivery)	36.05	35
Industry/manufacturing (Food processing, Iron, General labor, Computer, Plastic, Fishery, Bakery, Spare Parts of motorcycle, etc)	28.84	29
Entertainment (Restaurant, Food delivery, Dancer, Singer)	22.66	22
Construction sector (Driver, Digging)	8.25	8
Farming	1.03	1
Domestic helper in a family	1.03	1
Others (Underground cable work)	1.03	1
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Since the beginning of Thai migration to Japan, most Thai female migrants have gone to Japan as commercial sex workers and worked in the service industry. However, recently the work of some female workers began to shift to manufacturing factories from the service industry, because of severe labor shortage in industry, according to interviews with various Japanese informants.

In fact, in-depth analysis of our data shows that approximately 10 percent of the respondents who worked in industry and the manufacturing sector are female. As for male workers, a smaller number of Thai workers is employed in the construction industry compared to a few years ago. Experts explain that this is because of diminishing job demands in construction industries, as most public spending is shrinking and infrastructure projects have halted. Instead, the most popular occupations are changing to manufacturing and food processing factories, where securing inexpensive labor is a life and death matter at present for small and mid-size Japanese enterprises. Interestingly, the supposedly most conservative areas of Japan are taking Thai workers for labor on farmland. Legal workers work in Thai restaurants as cooks or in schools as language teachers. All respondents working in the manufacturing/ industrial sector are undocumented.

Work Condition

The questions regarding the labor condition of Thai workers reveal that, in general, Thai workers work for long hours without taking many days off. In our sample, 40 percent work for over 12 hours a day, including 3 percent who work as many as 15 hours a day. Only 23 percent work standard working hours, 8 hours, a day. The mean is 10 hours a day.

Hours of Daily Work

Hours	Percent	Frequency
6	4.12	4
7	4.12	4
8	22.68	22
9	5.15	5
10	20.62	20
11	2.06	2
12	16.49	16
13	8.25	8
14	9.28	9
15	3.09	3
Did not specify	4.12	4
Total	100.00	97

N=97

According to the expert interviews, many Thai workers are willing to work longer hours than the companies ask, because of better over time wages and thus remittances, though increases in wages for overtime labor depends on the company.

It is not only the long hours, but also the long days that most workers work. The data shows that the workers tend to take minimum holidays. 24 percent took only 4 days off a month, followed by 8 holidays (19 percent) and 7 holidays (13 percent). Surprisingly, 8 percent work without any days off.

Days of Work Per Month

Days	Percent	Frequency
No answer	3.09	3
12-18	3.09	3
20	8.25	8
22	18.56	18
23	12.37	12
24	7.22	7
25	4.12	4
26	24.74	24
28	6.19	6
29	1.03	1
30	7.22	7
Does not specify	4.12	4
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Considering that there are quite many holidays in Japan besides regular Saturdays and Sundays off, one suspects that many Thai workers are working even on designated national holidays.

The data also show that the workers in industrial and manufacturing sectors and service sector tend to work long hours and take minimum days off.

How much do the workers earn each month in Japan? As a result of such long hours and days

of work, Thai workers in Japan earn a very high amount of income. Our sample indicates that the mean monthly earning per worker is approximately 65,000 baht per month. Looking at the data more closely, over half of the sample earned over 65,000 baht a month, including 10 percent over 80,000 baht and 4 percent over 100,000.

Monthly Income

Amount (Baht)	Percent	Frequency
25,000 and less	5.15	5
25,001 – 50,000	23.71	23
50,001 – 75,000	32.99	32
75,001 – 100,000	28.87	28
more than 100,000	4.12	4
Not specify	5.15	5
Total	100.00	97

N=97

It should be also noted here that 61 percent of the respondents who earn over 80,000 baht a month in Japan are undocumented workers.

Needless to say, this sum is many times higher than income earned in Thailand. As described earlier, the mean monthly income of the migrant workers in Thailand is around 18,000 baht. It is observed that in some instances the income is sometimes even higher than what the Japanese co-workers receive from the same kind of job because Thai workers tend to work longer hours.

In addition to salary, 26 percent of the sample gets a bonus which can be quite a large portion of one's income in Japan.

Types of Benefits Besides Salary

Type of benefits besides salary	Percent	Frequency
No benefits	49.48	48
Bonus	26.80	26
Did not specify	11.34	11
Not clear	8.25	8
Depending on the business success	3.09	3
Jewelry	1.03	1
Total	100.00	97

N=97

83 percent stated that they are content with the level of income they gain in Japan. Nevertheless, in a separate question, 39 percent claimed the low salary is the main complain about working in Japan. This should be interpreted as the workers expressing the wish to earn more income for the time they work. This may be because the base hourly wage is often discriminatory against the migrant workers. In fact, 50 percent feel that they are treated unequally vis-a-vis the local employees and 77 percent have not been promoted since they started working.

Content with Income

Content with income	Percent	Frequency
Yes, it is very high	3.09	3
Yes, it is good wage	45.36	44
It is okay	34.02	33
It is not so good	15.46	15
It is bad	2.06	2
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Main Complaint in Japan

Main complaint (multiple answer)	Percent	Frequency
Feeling homesick	53.61	52
Fear of police officer	41.24	40
Low salary	39.18	38
Insecure status as foreigner	29.90	29
Poor housing	16.49	16
Did not apply, no complaints	16.49	16
Lack of support from supervisors	9.28	9
I do not like to live in Japan	8.25	8
Difficulties getting along with colleagues	6.19	6
Lack of friends	5.15	5

Equal Treatment in Comparison to Local Employees

Equal treatment	Percent	Frequency
Yes	22.68	22
No	35.05	34
Does not apply because there are no local employees	26.80	26
Did not apply	14.43	14
Did not know or specify	1.03	1
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Promotion

Promoted since starting to work	Percent	Frequency
Yes	20.62	20
No	79.38	77
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Skills

Regarding the skills that the migrant workers learn in Japan, 88 percent of our sample told they obtained new skills since they came to Japan. 57 percent achieved new skills in on the job training or

from colleagues and supervisors. This could indicate that Thai workers in our research study are not only earning a high income, but also new skills.

New Skills

Learned new skills	Percent	Frequency
Yes	87.63	85
No	7.22	7
Not sure	5.15	5
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Expenditure

In terms of expenditure per month, the mean expenditure per month for food and rent combined together is 20,000 baht.

Monthly Expenditure

Monthly expenditure (Baht)	Percent	Frequency
20,000 and less	28.87	28
20,001 – 30,000	21.65	21
30,001 – 40,000	22.68	22
40,001 – 50,000	12.37	12
50,001 – 60,000	7.22	7
60,001 and more	4.12	4
Did not specify	3.09	3
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Considering the amount in the most expensive country in the world, the data indicates that the migrant workers are trying to spend as little as possible in order to maximize their remittances. Despite paying minimum rent, Thai migrants are satisfied with their place of living as 87 percent claimed it ok, good, or very good in evaluating where they lived.

Job Turnover

56 percent of the sample have changed their jobs more than once. This indicates that their labor mobility is not static. However, this also suggests that many workers may have to change jobs involuntarily, due to unreasonable dismissal. This could well be the case because Thai workers are in vulnerable positions due to their legal status, according to experts. In fact, a large number of the respondents (74 percent) are found to be working without labor contracts, despite the Japanese labor laws requiring all labor contracts in written form.

In such a situation, dismissal can be often unfair and creates problems, though most migrants (63 percent) claimed that they know the reasons which can bring about termination of the work contract.

Life in Japan

There are some interesting findings regarding life, non-labor activities, of Thai migrant workers in Japan.

When the respondents were asked what they would like to do during their spare time, 24

percent replied that they would like to go out for shopping and travel. This implies that they could not do so because they are afraid of being arrested by the immigration officers due to their undocumented status.

According to the sample, 91 percent understand the Japanese language, at least the minimum level.

Understanding of Japanese Language

Degree of understanding in Japanese language	Percent	Frequency
Very well	8.25	8
Well	24.74	24
Okay	63.92	62
Not so well	2.06	2
Not at all	1.03	1
Total	100.00	97

N=97

This may be because most of our respondents have been in Japan for a period of time. This level of language proficiency may also partly explain why 98 percent described that their relationship with the Japanese people is all right or good.

Relationship with Japanese

Relationship with Japanese	Percent	Frequency
Good	69.07	67
Okay	28.87	28
Not so good	1.03	1
Did not apply or no contact	1.03	1
Total	100.00	97

N=97

In contrast, according to the people interviewed in expert interviewed who help suffering Thai migrant workers, Thai people understand Japanese least among the migrant workers in Japan.

Although 68 percent live with someone and 39 percent have a new partner in Japan, 86 percent said that they feel lonely living in Japan. 78 percent talk on the phone to their family in Thailand one to four times per month.

Person whom the Migrant Worker Lives with

Person who the migrant worker lives with	Percent	Frequency
By myself	31.96	31
Colleagues	28.87	28
Spouse	24.74	24
Family	9.28	9
Relatives	4.12	4
Employer	1.03	1
Total	100.00	97

N=97

New Partner in Japan

	New partner in Japan	Percent	Frequency
Yes		39.18	38
No		60.82	59
	Total	100.00	97

N=97

Number of Times Talked to the Family in Thailand

	Number of times talked with family	Percent	Frequency
1		11.34	11
2		10.31	10
3		18.56	18
4		28.87	28
5		8.25	8
6		9.28	9
7		2.06	2
8		2.06	2
10		2.06	2
Did not know		5.15	5
Did not specify		2.06	2
	Total	100.00	97

N=97

This is understandable because for some migrants, the length since they left Thailand is very long and it makes them feel lonely.

Not many respondents (26 percent) have gone back to Thailand during their stay in Japan. This is apparently because of the strict Japanese immigration laws for the overstayers.

In terms of relationship with the family in Thailand, 65 percent of our sample responded that their relationship with the relatives in Thailand has not changed since they left the country. 20 percent claimed the relationship became even better and only 6 percent answered it was worse.

Relationship with Family in Thailand

	Relationship with family in Thailand	Percent	Frequency
Much better than when I was in Thailand		7.22	7
Better		20.62	20
Same as before		64.95	63
Worse		6.19	6
Did not answer		1.03	1
	Total	100.00	97

N=97

It has been said that the migrant relationship with their kin will deteriorate because of his or her absence as a family member. However, our sample do not support such tendency.

As to the future, there are some interesting findings. Only 35 percent stated that they would go abroad again. 7 percent plan to go to the United States and only 4 percent to Japan.

Despite many workers satisfied with migration outcomes such as incomes, not many expressed interest in going abroad for work again after they return to Thailand

However, when they are questioned if they would encourage their relatives or friends to go to Japan, 67 percent said that they would encourage or strongly encourage them to go, while only 15 percent would discourage or tell them not to go.

Encourage Friends to Go to Japan

Encourage friends to go to Japan	Percent	Frequency
I would encourage them strongly	19.59	19
I would encourage them	47.42	46
I would be neutral	16.49	16
I would discourage them or would tell them rather not to come.	14.43	14
I would strongly discourage them and would warn them.	2.06	2
Total	100.00	97

N=97

In terms of complaints of Thai workers, 30 percent responded that their main complaint is insecure status as foreigners in Japan; 41 percent said fear of policeman, and 53 percent feel homesick.

It is interesting that 8 percent of our sample said that they have the intention to become Japanese citizens. Although it is true that most Thai workers are temporary workers in Japan, some hope to obtain Japanese citizenship and settle in Japan.

Intention to Become a Citizen in Japan

Intention to become a citizen in Japan	Percent	Frequency
Yes	8.25	8
No	65.98	64
Not sure	4.12	4
Did not apply or want to return	21.65	21
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Remittance

Although it is not easy for Thai migrant workers to enter Japan and work in the country, it is understandable that many Thai people are attracted to go to Japan to make a fortune because of incomparable economic benefits.

Our sample indicates that 72 percent remit once at least every two months, with the mean amount each time approximately 120,000 baht.

Remittance (Frequency)

Frequency of remittance	Percent	Frequency
Every month	43.30	42
Every 2-3 months	28.87	28
Irregularly	15.46	15
Did not apply or did not send remittances	10.31	10
Every 6 months	2.06	2
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Remittance (Amount each time)

Amount each time (Baht)	Percent	Frequency
30,000 and less	24.74	24
30,001 - 60,000	30.93	30
60,001 - 90,000	16.49	16
90,001 - 120,000	4.12	4
120,001 and more	7.22	7
Did not specify	6.19	6
Did not apply or respondent did not send remittances	10.31	10
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Remittance (In the last 12 months)

Amount (Baht)	Percent	Frequency
100,000 and less	8.25	8
100,001 - 500,000	17.53	17
500,001 - 1,000,000	27.84	27
1,000,001 - 2,000,000	15.46	15
2,000,000 and more	10.31	10
Did not specify	10.31	10
Did not apply and did not send remittances	10.31	10
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Remarkably, the respondents have remitted the mean of around 1.2 million baht in the last 12 months. The mean amount may not accurately depict the sample group or represent the general Thai population in Japan because the highest amount sent by a single Thai worker was so far above all others, 9.4 million baht, pushing up the mean. Nevertheless, if we simply take the mean of our sample and multiply it by the number of estimated 50,000 Thai migrant workers in Japan, it will be 60 billion baht annually remitted to Thailand from Thai workers in Japan.

For the person to receive the remittance, it was previously assumed that most of the recipients are the spouses of migrants. However, our sample illustrates that 30 percent claimed that persons receiving are their parents, followed by parents and children (18 percent). Only 14 percent sent money to their spouses. Another surprising finding is that only 16 percent send remittances through agents other than regular banks.

The most important use of the remittance is to buy a house and land (34 percent), followed by savings (27 percent) and repaying debts (14 percent). The mean of 1.7 million baht of remitted money was spent to purchase houses and this may not have been possible without their income earned in Japan and the remittance.

Interestingly enough, 23 percent of the migrants' families or relatives are receiving remittances not only from the respondents in Japan, but also from others working in other countries. From this, it can be supposed that some families who send their members abroad tend to have migrants in more than one country.

Most Important Expenditure in Thailand

Most important expenditure	Percent	Frequency
House / Land	34.02	33
Saving	26.80	26
Repay debts	14.43	14
Did not apply and did not send remittances	9.28	9
Repair house	7.22	7
Invest in trade	4.12	4
Family expenditure	2.06	2
Education expenditure for children/younger brother, sister..	1.03	1
Did not reply	1.03	1
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Family and Relatives Receiving Remittances from Other Persons Working Abroad

Receiving from others abroad	Percent	Frequency
Yes	22.68	22
No	18.56	18
Did not apply because none are working outside of Thailand	58.76	57
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Price of the House Purchased by Remittance

House price (Baht)	Percent	Frequency
10,000	1.03	1
20,000	1.03	1
25,000	1.03	1
350,000	1.03	1
400,000	3.09	3
470,000	1.03	1
500,000	3.09	3
600,000	1.03	1
690,000	1.03	1
750,000	2.06	2
800,000	3.09	3
1,000,000	5.15	5
1,100,000	1.03	1
1,400,000	1.03	1
2,000,000	3.09	3
7,000,000	1.03	1
12,000,000	2.06	2
Did not specify	68.04	66
Total	100.00	97

N=97

Summary of Survey

Due to the difficulty in accessing undocumented sample, a fewer proportion of undocumented workers than were actually in Japan were interviewed; 62 percent were undocumented and 38 percent legal in 97 sample.

The gender ratio of 97 sample was 57 percent male and 43 percent female. At the time of the interviews, close to half the respondents were between the ages of 30 and 39. This was further analyzed and it was found out that at least 55 percent arrived in Japan in their 20s. 58 percent arrived in Japan between 1990 and 1993.

The interview locations were widespread, but were mostly conducted in Tokyo and its surrounding prefectures

Many respondents were born in the Central provinces, especially in the Bangkok area, followed by Northeastern and Northern provinces, and also many of their residences in Thailand prior to the migration were in Central provinces. Importantly, the relationship between the place of origin and that of residence revealed that some migrant workers in Japan moved to Bangkok from their birthplaces, worked there for a period of time, and then migrated to Japan.

The highlighted family situation of the respondents was as follows. 50 percent of the sample were married, 34 percent had one child, 39 percent were her/himself the head of the household, 19 percent got married in Japan, and 25 percent lived with a spouse in Japan.

The empirical data from the survey show that close to 80 percent of the sample had more than nine years of education in Thailand and 29 percent had university level education. Cross-tabulation of the educational level with the legal status, supports, though not strongly but at least a tendency that the higher

the respondents' education is, the more likely it is that the respondents are legal workers. In fact, all respondents who had more than 18 years of education are legal workers, while 75 percent of the respondents who had education below nine years are irregular workers.

As for the backgrounds of the respondents, our data shows that 14 percent were working as farmers in Thailand, followed by working in the service sector in restaurants, cafés, or night clubs (11 percent), in the service sector but as salespersons, transport, or messengers (9 percent), industrial and manufacturing (8 percent), as a company servant (7 percent) and as dancers and singers (6 percent). The number of farmers was far less than expected.

As for the monthly income of the respondents in Thailand, the lowest monthly income was 1,000 and the highest 100,000. The mean was around 18,000 baht. This high level of the income confirms that the workers migrating to Japan are not necessarily economically poor.

78 percent of the respondents have not been abroad previously, while only 22 percent have. For those who have been overseas, their destination countries were Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Only one person had been to Japan. This data does not support what has been conventionally believed that most of recent migrants to Japan tend to be migration repeaters. On the contrary, it implies that new members are recruited and incorporated into the Thai-Japanese migration system.

The relatives and friends of the migrant workers provided information and, whether or not the information was accurate, the information they provided was an important factor in affecting the expectation and decision making of prospective migrant workers.

When the respondents were in Thailand, over two thirds of them expected to work in Japan for a relatively short period of time, no more than one year. However, many of them actually ended up staying in Japan much longer than expected, according to the data on duration of stay.

There were only 28 respondents who left Thailand before the economic crisis, but, of those, 43 percent responded there was definitely an impact of the economic crisis on their decision to migrate to Japan.

About half the respondents when entering Japan hold tourist visa and the majority of the respondents answered that they did not have any problem with passing the immigration control, despite the fact that presumably officials at entry points knew that some of the tourist visa were misused.

After arriving in Japan, a high percentage (80 percent) of the respondents obtained their first employment within a month. They were mostly helped by friends in finding employment. In the settling down period, many received assistance from the relatives and friends in the country. This finding confirms that the prior existence of relatives and friends is crucial in the Thai-Japanese migration system, and migration between two countries is not a suddenly developed one.

Recruitment fees which a high portion of the respondents paid were 25,000 baht to 50,000 baht.

Many respondents have been staying in Japan for over 5 years.

The most popular occupations of the respondents in Japan were services, followed by industry/manufacturing and entertainment.

The average monthly income of the respondents was 65,000 baht. However, about half of the respondents did not have benefits besides salary. Overall, the data showed that the migrant workers are content with their income.

For the unsatisfactory aspects of their stay in Japan, 54 percent complained that they felt homesick and 41 percent said that they feared police officers.

Close to 90 percent people replied that they learned new skills from working in Japan.

The average expenditure in Japan per month for food and rent combined together is 20,000 baht.

Most respondents stated that their understanding of Japanese language is good and that their relationship with Japanese people was good.

40 percent said that they found new partners in Japan.

Regarding the relationship between the migrant workers in Japan and the family left in Thailand, it was found that most did not think the relationship between them was altered in any way.

When asked, if they would encourage their friends to go to Japan, over 60 percent said that they would do so.

According to the data, Thai workers sent a huge amount of remittances from Japan. 31 percent remitted between 30,001 baht and 60,000 baht each time they remitted money and 28 percent remitted between 500,001 baht and 1,000,000 baht for the last 12 months.

Problems that Thai Migrant Workers in Japan Face

As described, the questionnaire results show a relatively positive migration experience and do not highlight the problems and challenges that the Thai migrants face in Japan. However, based on other sources of information a number of problems and difficulties have emerged surrounding the legality of Thai migrants in Japan due to Japanese migration policy.

What are the problems that Thai migrants face in Japan? The types of problems that male migrants and female migrants face are different. Male migrants encounter problems regarding labor issues such as levies, dismissal, labor insurance, and unpaid wages. Female migrants face problems and issues that are grounded in the social, personal, and cultural aspects of their life, such as male-female relationships, marriage, divorce, parenting, legalization of infants, and domestic violence.

The Number of Thai Migrant Workers Encountering Problems in Japan Reported and Registered at Royal Embassy of Thailand in Japan, between 1983 and 1994

Year	Number of Thai Migrant Workers with Problems
1983	37
1984	76
1985	69
1986	99
1987	109
1988	278
1989	369
1990	631
1991	1,266
1992	2,605
1993	4,089
1994	3,763

Source: Chunjitkaruna, 1997: 43.

Nevertheless, abuses of human rights and the violation of labor laws by employers such as fraud, unfair treatment, unreasonable dismissal, and so forth exist regardless of gender. In fact, the White Paper on Police figures show that arrests of Japanese employers who violated the labor laws still occur. The number of such arrests, though declining recently, were 1,235 in 1993, 700 in 1994, 320 in 1995, 282 in 1996, and 375 in 1997 (White Paper on Police, 1998: 267).

The Number of Arrests of Japanese Employers Who Violated the Labor Laws Over Mishandling Thai Migrant Workers in the Workplace, between 1993 and 1997

Year	Number of Arrests of Japanese Employers
1993	1,235
1994	700
1997	375
1995	320
1996	282

Source: White Paper on Police, page 267, 1998.

Problems in the workplace:

In our research 56 percent of respondents (mostly male) claimed that they had problems in the workplace, although 78 percent answered good or very good in terms of their relationship with other Thai colleagues, and 79 percent answered ok or good about their relationship with local Japanese colleagues. From this data, it seems that the problems in the workplace are more with employers and other issues. In fact, the expert informants reported that many Thai migrant workers were deceived within the workplace by their Japanese employers.

Problems commonly reported to NGOs were that companies impose an unfair levy on salaries (usually 10 to 20 percent), fail to pay wages regularly or fully, and dismiss workers suddenly and without reason. According to experts this is because many Japanese employers do not consider migrant workers to be "human" but just as "labor" to be exploited. In addition, Thai workers are not well informed about basic information regarding their labor rights. For instance, according to an NGO, many Thai workers do not even know the address or contact details of the company they work for. When problems do occur, this makes it difficult for NGOs to trace and negotiate with the responsible companies. Even when the NGOs are successful in locating offending companies, compensation is rarely paid, as many companies are unable to make such payments due to heavy debts associated with the economic recession. Although handbooks on labor rights are distributed in Thai language by NGOs in Japan, Thai workers tend to remain poorly informed, according to experts.

Another major problem in the workplace is the inaccessibility of insurance, as key informants told. Most basic Japanese labor laws guarantee that all workers, regardless of nationality or legal status, are treated as equal. With regard to accident cover at work for instance, there is a requirement for labor accident insurance, called the Workmen's Accident Compensation Insurance Law. This is for compensation for any injury resulting from accidents occurring in the workplace. This applies, as other labor laws do, to all workers, including migrant workers regardless of their immigration status. Even if the employers fail to pay the coverage fees for their employees, the workers have the right to claim and receive the labor insurance when job related accidents occur. In general, workers should be paid 80 percent of their salary for the period they are off work, in addition to being fully covered for their medical expenses.

In spite of such laws, in our questionnaires 55 percent of respondents claimed that the medical care and insurance was not available to them and 29 percent believed that it existed, but was difficult to access. This could be because, when accidents occur, most irregular Thai workers and many of their employers do not report them to the Labor Standard Office, the office that processes such applications. This is because they fear that the office, while investigating the details of the accident, may discover that the employment is undocumented. In reality, however, it is unlikely (although possible) that the Labor Standard Office will report to the Immigration Bureau immediately, according to experts. The Ministry of Labor which supervises the Labor Standard Office, considers that reporting to the Immigration Bureau while workers are still in need of compensation is immoral and inhumane. The Labor Standard Offices also said in 1989 it will not report immediately to the Immigration Bureau, unless the cases involved seriously violated the labor laws (Tenmyou, 1991: 48).

In some cases both Japanese employers and Thai migrant workers are not well informed about labor laws and workers' rights. In general, migrant workers with irregular status are not regarded as

regular workers, and it is therefore believed that they do not have the same rights as Japanese workers. For instance, when a job related accident occurred with an irregular migrant worker, a police officer falsely told the employer that foreign nationals could not apply for labor insurance. This was the result of both the private sectors, such as employers who hire irregular migrants, and also government officers, such as police officers, being ignorant of labor laws.

There are also technical difficulties for irregular foreign migrants in gaining labor insurance. The application process and receiving compensation takes longer for migrant workers than it does for Japanese workers. The longer the period, the more chance there is for other problems to occur. As the worker is not legally staying in Japan, they run the risk of being arrested at any time by the Immigration Bureau, and of being deported. As the person often does not have a family to support them while they are off work, without proper compensation they have no livelihood. (Tenmyou, 1991)

As a result of these various difficulties, many Thai migrant workers are not covered by insurance. Some NGO workers see this as a particularly serious problem because a large number of Thai men are regularly injured and even die in job related accidents. This is due to the fact that these Thai workers tend to work in dangerous occupations and under difficult labor conditions.

It is worth noting however that there has been a new development among the migrant laborers in Japan recently in the formation of migrant labor organizations. This is the result of an increased realization by labor experts of the importance of the migrant workforce in Japan. Bright, the first major migrant labor union in Japan, was active in assisting with labor disputes between migrant workers and Japanese employers. Recently, Bright successfully helped a Thai male worker solve a labor dispute over his workplace accident case. Prior to joining Bright, the Thai migrant worker had struggled with the dispute for three years. After he joined the union, and with union intervention between the two sides, the dispute was reconciled in only three months. Having gained confidence from such success, Bright now hope more Thai migrants would join the union. In fact, the union has been active in this regard with the union director visiting Thailand on September 20 1999 (*Matichon*, September 21, 1999). The director met with the key members of the Thai labor committee and discussed matters concerning Thai migrants in Japan and advised that an information campaign be run to encourage Thai migrants to join Bright. This was a very important issue as far as the union was concerned, as Thai workers are difficult to reach compared to Filipinos and other nationalities³ due to their status and language barrier.

Without written labor contracts, information about labor rights, and minimum protection such as labor accident insurance, it is clear that Thai workers are in a vulnerable position in their workplace. Although well a developed migration network among Thai workers facilitate migration, whether such a network is functioning adequately in terms of providing information to cope with the problems with outspoken actions is doubtful.

Problems faced especially by female workers:

In general the difficulties that Thai female migrants faced in Japan were different to those faced by their male counterparts. This was the result of the reality that Thai female migrants tend to struggle with more complicated and often serious social difficulties than Thai male migrant workers. The common struggles of Thai women which various consultants at NGO and government offices identified included: male-female relationships; marriage; divorce; domestic violence; parenting; and legalization of immigration status.

NGOs pointed out that disputes over divorce cases between Thai female migrants and Japanese nationals had begun to increasingly appear. One presumed reason for this is that there has now been significant time passed since Thai female migrants who came to Japan in the late 1980s and early 1990s (some as forced sex workers) and married Japanese men. Given this time many marriages have failed, possibly as the result of communication and cultural difficulties among other things. Another reason given for the increasing divorce rate was domestic violence against Thai females by their Japanese

³ Views expressed by Mr. Toru Saito. International Legal Labor Union, Bright International, Tokyo, at Seminar on Thai Women in Japan, September 27, 1999

husbands/partners. In fact, some Thai females who came to NGOs for help were sheltered for protection from domestic violence. One active volunteer pointed out that nowadays there are an increasing number of complicated legal issues regarding the pregnancy of overstayed Thai women and their newborns. This is partly due to Japanese husbands/partners deserting woman and infants, leaving them without support. This resulted in many children of these Thai single mother migrants (who had overstayed) being without nationality. This becomes a particular problem when children reach school age. It is estimated that there are as many as 10,000 children of Thai female migrants that are without nationality.⁴

Government counseling offices also indicated that consultations sought by Thai female migrants on the above mentioned issues were on the rise. For instance, the government of Kofu city, which governs one of the most Thai migrant populous areas in Kanto, reported that in 1998 they dealt with twenty seven cases regarding Thai migrants, mostly female: three cases on welfare; one on employment; two on schooling; four on pregnancy; ten on divorce; one on marriage; three on alien registration; and three on other issues. Similarly, the International Exchange Association in Yokohama city, Kanagawa prefecture, said that consultations sought by Thai migrants were on issues regarding divorce, marriage and alien registration. In some cases Japanese men married to Thai nationals approached the offices to inquire about the procedures needed in order to marry or divorce Thai women. As one government counsellor expressed, this is considered a rather good case scenario as such inquiries indicate that these people are thinking seriously about the legal ramifications of their actions. Usually however, most of the calls or visitations take place when problems are well advanced, or after events have occurred. For instance, many Thai female migrants make contact long after their children are born to ask about how to obtain legal status for them. This type of situation lead both NGOs and government offices to assume that the Thai female migrants have very little knowledge about Japanese laws regarding the legal status of irregular migrants' infants.

Many informants, both NGO workers and government officials, have pointed to a distinct attitude of Thai migrants in Japan. They consistently commented that Thai migrants compared to other migrants in Japan tend to isolate themselves from the Japanese public (even from the NGOs) keeping a low profile as much as possible. In fact NGOs trying to assist Thai migrants in trouble often receive calls not from the Thai migrants themselves, but from Japanese friends/colleagues worried that their friends/colleagues required help. Even when some Thai migrants did come for help (about unfair labor treatment for example) they were reluctant to speak out about their problems. In the middle of a court case over a labor dispute and before any legal conclusion had been reached, one NGO worker experienced her Thai male migrant worker disappear without any explanation. Other NGOs reported similar incidents. The prevalence of such cases has led NGOs to wonder if this characteristic behavior can be attributed to Thai social culture, as migrants from the Philippines and Bangladesh behave differently in similar situations.

Some government statistics also suggest this point. For example in Numazu city in Shizuoka prefecture there were reportedly a large number of irregular Thai migrants. Despite the migrant consulting office in the city government being aware that Thai migrants experienced a lot of trouble in the area, they found that the number of consultations with Thai citizens was minimal. There were only 49 consultations with Thai people out of the total of about 2,000 cases from other migrants in 1998. The number of consultations with Thai people has been consistently around 50 per annum for the past several years. This suggests that Thai migrants in comparison to other migrant nationalities are not using the public services because of their attitude towards outside help.

Needless to say it is natural regardless of nationality that illegal migrants in Japan are reluctant to come forward for assistance out of fear that any public commotion or disturbance (especially with government offices) could lead to arrest and deportation. However according to experts interviewed, Thai migrants both male and female have a stronger tendency towards this type of behavior. There could be many possible reasons for this, such as the language barrier. Regardless, it is certain that Thai workers were not well informed about ways to deal with problems that arise in a foreign country and thus tended to withdraw when problems did occur. This characteristic behavior tended to result in negative

⁴ Views expressed by Mr. Isao Shiina, a Thai restaurant owner and active volunteer, Tochigi, at Seminar on Thai Women in Japan, September 27, 1999

consequences.

Sickness

Many Japanese NGOs and doctors expressed their concern about the spread of HIV/AIDS amongst the Thai population in Japan. They warned that the problem could develop into a major crisis in years to come because HIV/AIDS prevalence among Thai workers in Japan was seemingly on the rise according to studies.⁵ Consistent with this view many Thai-speaking NGO workers said that they have been contacted by the local hospitals to interpret between Japanese doctors and Thai patients who have been hospitalized due to HIV/AIDS.⁶

According to a recent HIV/AIDS survey on migrants in Japan conducted by the Japanese Ministry of Welfare in 1991 and 1992, the bulk of HIV infected Asian migrants were likely to be female, heterosexual, below 30 years old, and live outside Tokyo in the Kanto and Koushin areas. Importantly, it also claimed that the number infected was rapidly increasing (Japanese Journal of Public Health, No.8, Vol. 42, August 1995: 575). For Thai migrants, the survey indicated that the infection rate for female migrants was much higher than for male migrants, which corresponded with the gender ratio (female to male) of 5: 1 of HIV infection among Asian migrants generally (August 1995: 576).

Another prominent report also studied HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) among Thai migrants in Japan. This was based on the medical records of those who went to the obstetrics and gynecology clinic in Ibaraki between 1989 and 1993. Of the 1,902 migrants who went to the clinic 95 percent were Thai and the majority of them were female (August 1995: 580). According to the data on those tested, the HIV infection rate was 3.0 percent in 1990, 3.6 in 1991, 4.5 in 1992, and 5.0 in 1993. The Chlamydia infection rate was also high (August 1995: 581). This study indicates that the HIV/AIDS status of Thai migrants has been worsening, especially amongst the female population working as hostess and prostitutes (August 1995). Furthermore, the survey alerts that the number of those infected with HIV could increase if those who are undiagnosed seek an HIV/AIDS test.

The Percentage of Thai Female Migrants, Tested, and Found HIV and Chlamydia Positive in Obstetrics and Gynecology Clinics in Ibaraki Prefecture, between 1989 and 1990

Year	The Number of Tested Thai Female Migrants	The Percentage of HIV Positives	The Percentage of Chlamydia Positives
1989	11	0.0	66.7
1990	70	3.0	30.6
1991	538	3.6	32.3
1992	569	4.5	28.3
1993	242	5.0	21.7

Source: "Prevalence of HIV and STD infection among foreign STD clinic attendants in Ibaraki Prefecture, Japan" Japanese Journal of Public Health, No.8, Vol. 42, page 581, August 1995.

In addition to HIV/AIDS and STDs, there are seemingly a number of Thai migrants in Japan who are dying or suffering from other sickness such as traffic accidents and labor related accidents, as briefly discussed earlier. There were also reports that many Thai female migrants (though not as many as before) had gone through extreme situations and were suffering from mental health problems. For instance, a Thai female was sheltered at an NGO for protection due to a psychogenesis reaction (Saalaa Newsletter, No. 43, 1999). Some NGO workers were apprehensive about the situation and called for a study into the problem as well as extensive treatment for these patients. Other opinions by concerned doctors who lend assistance to migrant workers raised the problem of some Japanese doctors and hospitals refusing to see or to admit migrant patients to their medical institutions.⁷ The Japanese Ministry of Welfare also reported that the infant mortality rate for Thai migrants was higher than the general population, at about ten percent.⁸

⁵ Views expressed by Dr. Yoshikazu Nemoto, at Seminar on Thai Women in Japan, September 27, 1999.

⁷ Views expressed by Dr. Takashi Sawada, Kanagawa Worker's Medical Cooperative, Yokohama city, Kanagawa, at Seminar on Thai Women in Japan, September 27, 1999.

⁸ Reported by Mr. Shunji Yamazaki, OASIS, Human Rights Network for Foreigners in Yamanashi, at Seminar on Thai Women in

One characteristic of the serious conditions discussed above was that they often befell Thai citizens who were not temporary migrant workers, but who had been staying in Japan for a considerable length of time, making their life there. In other words, the longer the length of stay, the more diverse and non-economic related the challenges were likely to be that emerged for the Thai migrant workers in Japan.

Suggested Solution for Thai Officials Regarding Migrant's Problems

What are the possible solutions to these problems and how is assistance being provided to Thai migrant workers? Before addressing these questions, it should be noted that despite a number of serious problems, most Thai workers do not get or seek adequate assistance. In fact, in our questionnaires 20 percent of people responded that they try to solve problems individually or feel that there is no solution. 67 percent of respondents claimed that they have never approached the Thai Embassy in Japan for assistance and 23 percent mentioned that they had been there only when they had to get papers. None indicated that they received any assistance from the Embassy to cope with their problems.

However, there is a demand among Thai workers for the Thai government or Embassy in Japan to take a more active role in helping to solve their problems. In the questionnaires 40 percent voiced the opinion that the Thai government or the Embassy should inform them more regularly of their rights; offer assistance to the problems they face in Japan; take a more active stand against officials in Japan; and do more to improve their legal status. They also insisted the Embassy should organize more social gatherings for them and inform them more regularly about happenings in Thailand.

On this point, some informants such as NGOs and Japanese government officers expressed their personal opinions and suggestions for what could be done to improve such difficult situations. At the Seminar on Thai Women in Japan, the issues that NGOs identified as most significant were: information campaigns; cooperation between NGOs and government offices; the Royal Embassy of Thailand in Japan taking a more active role; dealing with children without citizenship; dealing with serious sickness; and providing high quality interpreters.⁹ Some of these issues could also apply to the male workers.

It is not only the workers but also NGO workers who are dissatisfied with the current role of the Royal Embassy of Thailand in Japan. One interviewee of key informants mentioned that because the migrant workers in Japan are remitting a large amount of money to Thailand, the Thai government should be more serious about its workers abroad. In general, there is a feeling among NGO workers that the hardship of the Thai migrant workers in Japan is not well understood by policy makers in the Thai government. According to one interviewee, they suspect the educated policy makers of the central government are prejudiced or discriminate against less educated migrants. What many key informants agreed was that Thai migrant workers in Japan should be treated as individuals and integrated into Japanese society so they are protected adequately. Many argued that they should not be regarded just as labor that serves for the benefit of the Japanese economy.

Political and Social Structure that Deal with Thai Migrant Workers in Japan

In the previous sections, I have discussed the macro trend of migratory movements and the actual situation of Thai migrant workers in Japan. How are the Japanese institutions and individuals around the Thai migrant workers related to them? What are their roles and what support is provided to the migrants? How do they affect Thai-Japanese migration?

Governmental Institution

National Government Ministry

Traditionally, Japanese migration policies and practices have been influenced largely by bureaucracy, ministries. Among all Japanese government agencies, the Ministry of Justice and its immigration division, the Immigration Bureau, are the most influential government bodies in Japanese migration policy. They have been monitoring and regulating the arrival and departure of all migrants, including Thai migrants, through use of the ICRRL, the Japanese immigration law. Other Ministries also have keen and complex bureaucratic interests, and lobby to influence the formulation and implementation of migration policy. They include: the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Construction, and the Ministry of Labor. Their positions vary largely based on their particular perception of migrants in Japanese society, given consideration of the costs and benefits to each ministry's specific areas of interest.

It is not easy to simplify and illustrate the complexity of ministerial stances on migrant labor issues, but in principle the Ministry of Justice is considered the strongest bureaucracy by far to oppose opening the door to migrants, especially unskilled migrant workers. One of the ministry's assumption is that there is an apparent link between rising number of the migrants and the rising crime rate (White Paper on Police, 1998). Similarly, the Ministry of Welfare traditionally takes a stance against opening the country to migrants, because it considers that migrants contribute to a large amount of social welfare and national insurance cost, pressuring its already tight budget. (Metropolitan Problems, No.2, Vol. 87, Feb. 1996: 37).

On the other hand, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is supportive of the presence of pro migrants in Japan. The Ministry sees migrants as a vital source of direct interaction between the Japanese and non-Japanese population, and considers that this has the potential to contribute to promote the "internationalization of Japan". This slogan is often espoused by the Japanese government to dispel the conventional image of Japan as a closed society, and also to adjust the country so as to be compatible with the so-called "global standard". Likewise, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) and the Ministry of Construction are also in favour of accepting more migrants, especially migrant workers. This is of course an obvious scheme by these ministries with economic interests, who hope that the migrant laborers will bring economic prosperity to Japan. More precisely, MITI's interests lie in substituting less costly migrant labor so that small and medium size companies (which have been hit so severely by the present recession) could reduce their labor costs, survive the recession, revitalize the economy, and become more competitive in the international market. Similarly, the Ministry of Construction argues for supplying migrant labor to construction industries where Japanese workers would not want to take up so-called "3D jobs".

The Ministry of Labor takes a slightly different view towards migrants from other government agencies. While it welcomes the migrant workers in principle, it never fails to make sure that they will never compete with Japanese workers in the same segment of the labor market. Their top priority in this issue is suppressing the rising unemployment rate, which currently stands at around five percent, a record high. They hope to prevent it rising further by preventing the importation of migrant workers into Japan.

In addition to the differences in interests among the Ministries, there are also within each ministry groups both for and against the current Japanese immigration policy. For instance, a commonly told story holds that the Ministry of Justice and the Immigration Bureau often clash over differences in interpreting and implementing immigration control and other minor bureaucratic procedures.¹⁰ In fact, understanding the bureaucratic interests of the various Ministries, departments, and sections which may conflict with each other may be one of the keys to understanding the development of Japanese migration policy and practices. However, policy debates have hardly been out of bureaucratic and political circles except for special committees such as *Gaikokujin Roudousha Mondai Kenkyuu Kai* or Research Committee on Foreign Labor Issues under the Ministry of Labor in 1987.

¹⁰ Information from Prof. Hiroshi Komai and an anonymous bureaucrat at Japanese Ministry of Justice

Local Government

Most local governments install so-called international or alien offices, usually at prefecture or city level. These offices are intended to provide public services to migrants and to promote international cooperation in their district or area of charge. With regards to migrants including Thai migrants, one of the main services is to issue migrants alien registration certificates for those who register. This is important because by law all migrants who stay in Japan for over 90 days must carry a certificate at all times during their stay. In return, the local officials collect information on the (mostly legal) migrants.

However, with regard to undocumented Thai migrant workers the local governments do not play a large role. This is because most Thai migrants in Japan are undocumented and in general they do not present themselves to the public services, although it is technically possible that migrants without legal status may register themselves and obtain the certificate. In addition, support and assistance to them are limited due to a lack of human and financial resources. Expert interviews with local governments reveal that they are not involved in solving the problems of migrants as extensively, deeply, and actively as the NGOs or individual volunteers are, though they do offer limited assistance. The assistance of government offices is largely limited to phone calls and consultation at their offices. In comparison, NGOs tend to pay direct visits to migrants and become deeply involved in the migrants' problems.

In Kanagawa prefecture, Ms. Okabe, a consultant for the International Exchange Association at International Exchange Lounge Center in Yokohama city told that she takes calls for consultations from migrants (mostly living in Yokohama city) but is not deeply involved in the cases. If she thinks the migrants who call are in need of further help with problems such as labor disputes, she directs them to relevant NGOs in Yokohama city who can give them more assistance. In fact the cases that she takes up are consultations on technical issues which need only verbal advice. At the Cultural and International Affairs Division of Planning Development at Chiba Prefecture Government in Chiba city (which has a large Thai migrant population) Ms. Takaoka, an officer in charge, and Ms. Aoki, a migrant adviser, told that the office deals with about 1,000 cases a year and this number has been recently increasing. Although Thai language consultation is not available at the office, there are frequent calls from both Thai migrants and Japanese who are concerned about their Thai friends or partners. However, their involvement in solving the problems is limited to these phone consultations.

However, in response to the increasing number of irregular migrant residents in Japan, recently many local governments have stepped further and set up additional offices with help counters and phone lines intended to help solve the difficulties that the (often undocumented) migrants encounter. As a matter of fact, as more and more Thai migrants who were once only workers but later became residents, become involved in Japanese society, the number of people who take advantage of such services is gradually increasing.

Overall, the role and support services of local governments are at present limited to Thai migrant workers because of insufficient human and financial resources. However, there is a general tendency and atmosphere among officials that the local government could and should take more action, starting with providing opportunities for the local people and the migrants. In fact, an increasing number of international events are being organized especially in Kawasaki and Yokohama city involving with NGOs and the local people. In fact, many Japanese became aware of the problems that migrant workers face in Japan through such events. They may not reach the undocumented migrant workers who are hesitant to come out and deal with bureaucracy, but it is an important action to increase public attention on the problems that migrant workers face. As one local government informant said in an interview, the ignorance of most Japanese to migrants around them is the worst problem.

Non Governmental Organization and Others

Japanese Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have been playing an important role in many aspects of Thai migration to Japan. They are deeply involved in day-to-day life of the migrant workers and provide devoted assistance to those who face problems and need help. Due to the fact that the bulk of Thai migrants are irregulars who generally lack knowledge and information on how to live and solve their problems in a foreign country, they often turn to NGOs for assistance, instead of the governmental organizations. This is because these illegal migrants think that government organizations