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Farming by the Older Generation: The Exodus of Young Labor in Yasothon Province, Thailand

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I Introduction

Thailand has undergone rapid economic development in recent years, due in large part to the remarkable development of the industrial sector in and around Bangkok. This rapid economic development has given rise to a massive exodus of people from the countryside to the cities, unlike earlier migrations, which were between rural areas. The rural areas of Northeast Thailand that are the focus of this study are no exception to this.¹⁾

This paper looks broadly at the migration of labor in Yasothon Province in the Isan region of Northeast Thailand, and the attendant changes in agriculture and rural areas in that region.

One feature of the methodology of this study is that, unlike many earlier studies, it does not focus on just one village. Surveys were conducted in 97 villages randomly selected at the district (*amphoe*) level across the whole of Yasothon Province.²⁾ Consequently, the phenomena discussed here can be taken as indicative of province-wide trends.

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- 1) As has been pointed out by Hayao Fukui [1995], Hiroshi Tsujii [1982], Machiko Watanabe [1988], Akira Suehiro and Yasushi Yasuda [1987], surplus labor in the rural areas in the 1950s, and even during the rapid industrialization of the 1960s, was absorbed basically by the expansion of cultivated area through migration to rural areas (mass migration of peasants to open upland fields in the mountain forests). In the 1970s, together with rural-rural migration, rural-urban migration ceased to be negligible. From the 1980s, the Bangkok area developed rapidly as Thailand became a Newly Agro-Industrializing Country (NAIC), for example, through the development of an agro-industry, and the migration of peasants to work in the cities became commonplace. The migration of peasant labor from the Northeast has been the subject of studies by Atsushi Kitahara [1987; 1990] and Toshio Tasaka [1991]. The present study approaches the situation in terms of peasant lifestyle.
- 2) In the survey villages, I basically interviewed the headmen or, when they were away or otherwise unavailable, their deputies. When both were unavailable, I sought the cooperation of a neighboring village. In total I surveyed 97 villages, using the survey questionnaire for 52 of these. The remainder were free interviews, and are therefore excluded from the present statistics.

A second feature of this study is that an attempt was made to identify the changes in rural areas and agriculture that have been occasioned by rural-urban migration of labor. Particular attention was paid to the changes that have arisen in the form of cooperation among families and kin and in farming operations in response to a shortage of labor.

Thirdly, in parallel with the village surveys, the study covered households with members away working in urban areas and the individual workers concerned. In addition to the state of farming in these households, I asked about the destinations (workplaces) of the family members who were away working and visited them in their workplaces or lodgings to interview them in person.³⁾

I Changes in Villages

I-1. *Urban Migration of the Young*

In most villages of Yasothon Province, older people and young children are conspicuous, while it is rare to see young people.

Young people living in the villages have ceased to show an interest in farming, particularly wet-rice cultivation and upland cropping. Rather, they are attracted by the cities, particularly Bangkok, and working in a factory. They believe they will earn much higher income than they would by farming in the village, that they can lead the kind of stylish and coveted life-style portrayed on television, and that they can be successful and return home in glory.

Some of the villages of Yasothon Province do still have comparatively large numbers of young people. These are generally those villages where a special product is manufactured or sold within the village. For example, in the so-called gemstone villages, young men and women attach extremely small gemstones to iron rods and polish the stones on polishing machines. In these villages many young people can be seen working diligently beneath the raised floors of the stilted houses and in polishing sheds. In *kratip khao* village, men and women, young and old, sit beneath the raised floors weaving baskets (*kratip khao*) for glutinous rice, producing one after another with remarkable dexterity. Here, too, there are many young people. In villages making triangular pillows, individual villages undertake different parts of the manufacturing process, and differences are found between villages according to this division of labor, but in the village playing the central role, young people at work are evident everywhere. In a village selling water jars, piles of jars fill the house compounds. Pick-up trucks arrive and young people load them high with water jars, which they eventually cart away to sell.

3) The household survey covered several households recommended by the village heads. In addition to the household survey (57 cases) I asked the workplaces and addresses of family members who were away working in the city. I visited these places seeking to interview these workers, but it proved considerably difficult to locate them. To date, 11 interviews have been completed.

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Young people can be encountered everywhere in these villages, where they are involved in the making or sale of these speciality products and, at busy times in the agricultural year, they also help with the transplanting and harvesting of the rice fields. However, such villages are few in Yasothon Province. In most villages, young people go away to work in the cities, leaving behind their parents and the very young, and a village with little feeling of vitality.

Statistically, in the villages where population has migrated to the cities, an average of 130 villagers, or 24 percent of the population, departed an average of 18 years ago. Their destinations ranged from Bangkok and its environs to the industrial belt of the east and the fisheries of South Thailand, and overseas to such countries as Japan and Taiwan.⁴⁾ They engaged in a fairly wide range of occupations, with men tending to become construction laborers or taxi drivers, and women domestic maids, as can from the responses of village headmen in Tables 1 and 2. In addition to these tendencies, the interview survey I conducted in the villages and Bangkok showed that there has been an increase this year (1995) in the sale of cooked glutinous rice, which is proving to be a lucrative occupation.⁵⁾ Laborers are also numerous, but because many of them stay in the temporary quarters of their workplaces and often move around, it was difficult to confirm their whereabouts or learn of their real situation. The same tendency is prominent among taxi drivers.

Table 1 Most Common Jobs of Male Migrants, by Village
Yasothon (1994)

Job	Number	(%)
Laborer (including factory labor)	22	(42.1)
Taxi driver	13	(25.0)
Glutinous rice sale	7	(13.5)
Cafeteria	3	(5.8)
Tailor's shop (factory)	2	(3.8)
Gemstone polishing workshop	2	(3.8)
Lumber yard	1	(1.9)
Bicycle repair shop	1	(1.9)
Buddha image manufacture	1	(1.9)
Total	52	(100.0)

4) Destinations of workers other than Bangkok and its environs covered a wide area: Chon Buri, Samut Prakan, Chantaburi, Ratchaburi, Ayuthaya, Surat Thani, Songkhla, Udon, Ubon, Chiang Mai, and Mukdahan. Overseas destinations were also diverse, including Sweden, Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, and Brunei.

5) Glutinous rice selling refers to the sale from a street stall of cooked glutinous rice, together with papaya salad (*somtham*), grilled chicken (*kai yang*) and other Northeast Thai dishes.

Table 2 Most Common Jobs of Female Migrants, by Village
Yasothon (1994)

Job	Number	(%)
Maid	18	(34.7)
Glutinous rice sale	9	(17.3)
Tailor's shop (factory)	9	(17.3)
Gemstone polishing workshop	9	(17.3)
Cafeteria	3	(5.8)
Factory laborer	2	(3.8)
Building laborer	1	(1.9)
No answer	1	(1.9)
Total	52	(100.0)

According to villagers, people who leave the village to work (mostly going to Bangkok or other cities) are of two types. One consists of young single people (mostly men), who go to the city for fun. They are said to go because they want to find out what a big city is like. Consequently, they move from one kind of job to another. Even so, construction work is the most common. When women go to the city, they often do so to help their families.

The second type consists of young married couples. They go to the city to make money, and in many cases they sell cooked glutinous rice (*khao nyao*). When they return to the village they take rice away with them, but this is obviously not sufficient, so they buy from a rice carrier from their own village or from an urban market. The wife's sisters and parents remaining in the village help by cultivating the couple's rice fields. They call this system *baeng kan pai ha ngan*, literally, "making money separately." If those in the village need money, the young couple will bring or send it from the city. As the parents grow older, the young couple (particularly the youngest daughter and her spouse) will return to the village. The young couple's children will usually live with their grandparents in the village until they finish elementary school.

The sale of cooked glutinous rice in the city began after one villager had gone to the city and tried various things. When he succeeded with rice, he came to need a helper, and so a family member came to help with sales. Eventually, the newcomer started selling his own glutinous rice on part of the pitch. During this time, the newcomer lived with his relative and received financial assistance. When he was able to stand on his own feet, he found a good pitch for himself and became independent. This is exactly like the process in the village by which a newly married couple become independent with the help of a parental household. When a daughter's household works in her parents' rice fields and receives help from the parental household, this is called *het nam kan, kin nam kan* ("work

together, eat together"). Although details are still unclear, a very similar process of help can occasionally be seen between people who have gone to the city to work.

I-2. *Cooperation in Daily Life in the Village*

Households in the village consist predominantly of older couples living alone, older couples with grandchildren, and older couples with a daughter and grandchildren. The absence of a young couple, the mainstay of the household labor force, has given rise to new types of cooperative relationship.

The cooperative relationship between a parental household and a daughter's, or between the households of two daughters (sisters), is one form of traditional interhousehold relationship in Northeast Thailand, called *het nam kan*, *kin nam kan*, as noted above. Because in many cases one of the partners to this relationship, the daughter and her spouse, have left the village for the city, this relationship has become rare in the villages.

According to the survey, the coresidence of a newly married daughter and her spouse with her parents (called *het nam kan*, *kin nam kan*, *yu nam kan*; "work together, eat together, live together") can be found in 98.1 percent of villages, involving an average of 21.4 percent of village households (approximately 25 households). However, *het nam kan*, *kin nam kan* relationships between households of sisters who have become independent of the parental household (the separation being called *ok hien*) are found in only 26.9 percent of villages and, moreover, involve an average of no more than 1 percent of village households (2 households).

In villages where many young people go to the city to work, the village headmen report that the coresidence of newly married daughter's and parents' households is in decline, because young people tend to find marriage partners in the city, return to the village only for the wedding ceremony, and do not live in the village after marriage.

In place of *het nam kan*, *kin nam kan*, new cooperative relationships between parents' and daughters' households are emerging in the form of *lieng lan* ("taking care of grandchildren") and *lieng luk lan* ("taking care of daughter and grandchildren").

The *lieng lan* relationship arises when a couple leave their children in the care of the wife's parents and go to work in the city. Households are thus formed in the village comprising grandparents and grandchildren. Such households can be found in 90.7 percent of villages, accounting for an average of about 11 percent of households (12 households) in each village.

The *lieng luk lan* relationship arises when a young husband goes alone to the city, leaving his wife and children in the care of his wife's parents. Such households were found in 64.8 percent of villages, accounting for 6 percent of village households (7 households) on average. However, according to my interviews, the young wives felt uneasy about their husbands going alone to the city and wished to accompany them if possible, suggesting that such households might become fewer in future.

In some cases where an older couple's children have all gone to the city, the couple continue to farm alone, while in other cases they abandon agriculture and rent out their farmland. In more extreme cases, they leave their house in the village and accompany the young couple to the city. This tendency is marked in only a few villages, but if city work continues to exert a strong attraction, it may become general in the near future.

At present the *lieng lan* and *lieng luk lan* households, together with households with only the older couple, are becoming predominant in rural areas. Villages are emerging that lack the mainstay of the labor force. Here the older people remaining in the villages are linked to their children (young people) not by farming but by money. This is a new type of relationship, in which the households of aged parents living in the village are linked to those of their children (mainly daughters) living in the city by the children's cash remittances to their parents and by the parents' visits to the city (children) to collect money.

II Changes in Agriculture

II-1 . *Farming by the Older Generation*

While upland crops such as cassava, Eucalyptus and kenaf can be found in some villages, in most villages the main crop is wet rice. According to a questionnaire, the average holding of rice land was 1,649 *rai* (263.8 ha) per village and 15.7 *rai* (2.5 ha) per household. However, because of labor shortage, together with water shortage and flooding, the annual variations in planted areas and yields are extremely large.

In the past, glutinous rice was the main rice crop, while a small amount of nonglutinous rice was grown for festivals. This situation has changed greatly, however, and now almost equal areas of glutinous rice (Ko Kho 6 ; 49 percent) and nonglutinous rice (Mali 105 ; 51 percent) are planted, the former mainly for home consumption and the latter for the market. In addition, with the decline in home consumption due to decreasing household size and the increased popularity of glutinous rice in the cities, the sale of glutinous rice has tended to increase in recent years.

One particular household cultivated 18 *rai* (2.9 ha) of rice land, the labor provided by the older couple remaining in the village and hired labor. The previous year they had planted equal areas of glutinous and nonglutinous rice and harvested a total of 8 tons. They held back 1 ton of glutinous rice for home consumption and sold the remaining 7 tons. Having paid for the hired labor, power tiller rental and other expenses, they still had cash to spare.

Despite large annual fluctuations in yield, the questionnaire showed average yields for the 1993 crop year of 34 *thang/rai* (54.4 kg/ha) of glutinous rice and 37 *thang/rai* (59.2 kg/ha) of nonglutinous rice. According to villagers, these are high yields resulting from the input of chemical fertilizers. As evidenced by the farmer who achieved 75 *thang/rai* (120 kg/ha), yields can sometimes be raised startlingly by the application of

chemical fertilizers.

Even households of older people who had lost the mainstay of their labor force, therefore, continued to produce as much rice as they had in the past. If anything, the reduced household size allowed them to sell surplus rice. The other side to this coin, however, is labor shortage. Because formerly there was abundant labor and a range of traditional rice varieties with different maturing periods were planted, farming operations were spread out and a peak of demand for labor was avoided; but in recent years, together with the decline in household size, the varieties of both glutinous and nonglutinous rice planted have become uniform, with the result that farming operations tend to proceed simultaneously and the peak demand for labor has sharpened. The former abundance of labor is in the process of transformation into a shortage, which is particularly marked at harvest time. It is, moreover, the older people who have lost their main source of labor, who are having to cope with this.

II-2. Responses to Labor Shortage

A shortage of labor for farming operations began to emerge about a decade ago. *Het nam kan, kin nam kan* meant helping a married daughter's household until it became independent, and at the same time it guaranteed the parental household a source of labor. Once married daughters and their families started going to the cities and *het nam kan, kin nam kan* largely ceased to function, parental households had no choice but to do the farming themselves or to depend on hired labor.

One response to labor shortage has been an increase in mechanization, namely, the spread of the power tiller. Formerly people kept water buffaloes beneath the raised floors of their houses and used them for plowing the rice fields. In the mornings farmers went out to the fields with the water buffaloes, and in the evenings they returned home with them. Recently, however, the under-floor areas of the stilted houses have been floored with concrete and walled in with bricks, becoming human living space, while the number of households keeping water buffaloes and the number of animals kept have both declined.

I asked village headmen about the numbers of water buffaloes in the village 20 years ago, 10 years ago and now. Their responses showed a decline in the average number of water buffaloes from 352 20 years ago to 237 10 years ago and 113 at present. Even allowing for annual variations in the number of animals due to death by disease and for the fact that the figures cited by headmen for the past were rough estimates, it is highly significant that the number has fallen to about one third of that 20 years ago. There were two villages where the number of water buffaloes had hardly changed, but most had seen a large decline. The headmen also pointed out a rise in the number of households that have stopped keeping water buffaloes.

Power tillers can not only be used for plowing the rice fields but, with a trailer attached, they can also serve in place of a buffalo cart. Presently, they have spread to all

the survey villages, being owned by 15.1 percent of households (an average of 17 power tillers per village). The first power tiller arrived in one of the survey villages 12 years ago, while the average time of first arrival was 4 years 9 months ago. As anticipated by Seiichi Fukui [1985] and Teizo Higuchi [1990], the spread of power tillers in the Northeast has been rapid.

It can be said, then, that the farmers of Yasothon Province have rapidly introduced power tillers over the past 5 years while steadily reducing the number of water buffaloes over the past 20 years. In the household survey, all households stated that they plowed by power tiller rather than by water buffalo. Most of them used rented power tillers, and in almost all cases they paid the rental with a remittance from the city. This can only occur when a relationship of monetary cooperation is established between a parental household that asks for the rental for a power tiller from a young person living in the city and a child who sends money to his or her parents.

The exodus of young people to the cities has changed not only plowing practices but also the method of transplanting of rice seedlings. Formerly, in the transplanting season, the farmers would all wait for rain before uprooting seedlings from the nurseries, carrying them to the rice fields, and transplanting them. Also, if they had gone to the cities, they would normally return to the village for transplanting, and also for harvesting. Today, however, many people do not return for transplanting. Consequently, the number of households with insufficient labor for transplanting is said to have been increasing in the past three or four years. These households do not make nurseries or transplant, but broadcast seed directly on the rice fields. By this method they can cultivate their rice fields and secure enough rice for home consumption.

Two methods of broadcasting are adopted. One involves broadcasting seed onto the field and then plowing by power tiller; the other involves plowing first, followed by broadcasting slightly germinated seed. The latter is said to result in faster growth. Which method is employed is not fixed; people reportedly use different methods at different times.

People want to grow enough rice for home consumption even if they are short of labor. However, if they employ labor to cultivate rice, they need money. One farmer boasted that to transplant his fields using hired labor would take about one month and cost about 1,000 baht, whereas broadcasting is done in three or four days at a cost of 200 baht. He claimed, moreover, that although broadcasting gave a lower yield, he could make up the lost income by raising fish in his rice fields.

The third adaptation to the loss of manpower has been the use of hired labor. Parental households that have the major support of remittances from their young people in the city, namely, cash support, make frequent use of hired labor in their farming operations. The peaks of labor in the farming year are for transplanting and harvesting, and the use of hired labor for both operations is increasing rapidly. Households of older people that still practice transplanting generally employ labor for this.

Households depending on hired labor are characterized firstly by their ability to secure enough cash to pay for the labor, for example, through remittances from young people working in the city; by the fact that the labor force consists only of older people; and by a strong desire to finish their farming operations quickly.

Hired labor is also used for harvesting, but because most farmers plant the same varieties, these mature at the same time, with the result that laborers' wages have risen sharply and it has become difficult to secure labor. Daily wages for farm labor are normally 50-60 baht, but at the peak of the harvest season, 100 baht per day is not unusual. Even at 100 baht, it is sometimes impossible to secure labor. Recently, labor has become more important than money.

What has emerged against this background is the former custom of exchanging labor, known as *long khaek*. This is the custom by which two households in turn help each other with their farm work. Once apparently dying out in a period when cash income for labor was considered more important than the exchange of labor, this custom has now been revived. It is also practiced for transplanting, but it more common at harvest time, namely, for reaping and threshing. Farmers explain this by saying that while transplanting is a major task, it involves several stages, such as plowing, harrowing, removal of seedlings, and the actual transplanting, whereas harvesting is completed in one time, involving reaping and threshing.⁶⁾

Farmers have also devised other minor adaptations. For example, apart from renting out their rice fields, they cover the intensive labor needed for transplanting with a small labor force by extending the period of transplanting, or by leaving fallow their fields where conditions are comparatively poor.

III Case Studies

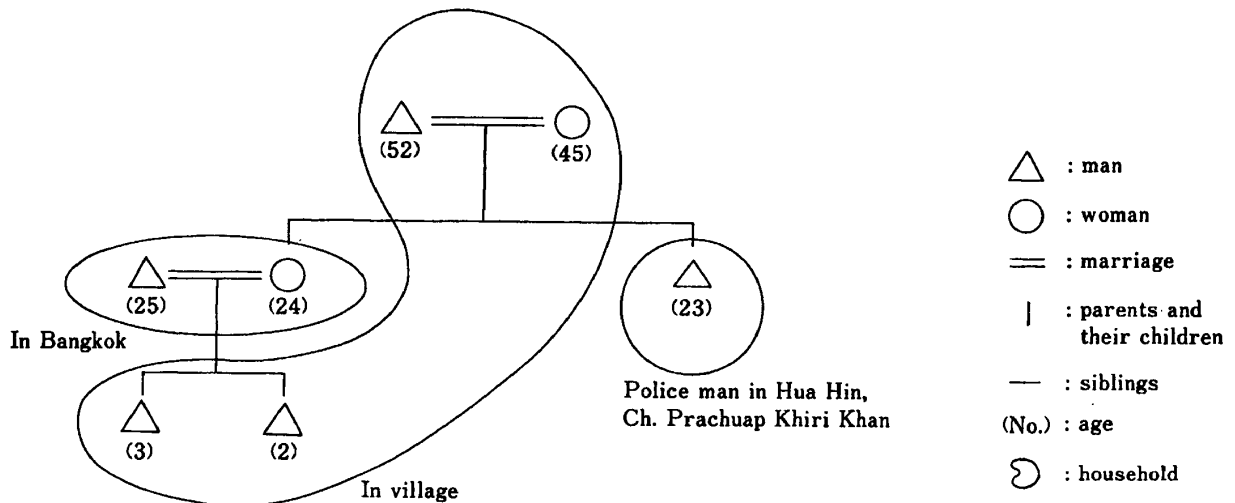
Rural households with a member in the city were interviewed about their farming and the destination of the member in the city. In the city, I sought out these family members at their workplaces to interview them about their work and life. Not all case studies are yet complete, but since I have finished interviewing those who were relatively easy to find, I shall report some of the cases. In the city many people were living in poor conditions, in semi-slum environments. However, unlike the quiet of the village, these places were lively and active.

III-1. Case 1

Case 1 involved three households. One was the parental household, consisting of the

6) In only one of the survey villages was *long khaek* being practiced both for transplanting and harvesting. The villagers stated proudly that they had overcome labor shortage in the village through the practice of *long khaek*.

Case 1



Owned area of rice land: 15 *rai*
 Owned area of upland: 4 *rai* (not cultivated)

parents (aged 52 and 45) and their daughter's two children; another, the household of the daughter and her spouse (aged 25 and 24), now in Bangkok; and third, that of a single son (aged 23), who worked as a policeman at Hua Hin. The parental household cultivated 15 *rai* (2.4 ha) of rice land in the village, and also owned 4 *rai* (0.64 ha) of upland, which they were not planting due to lack of labor. The daughter and her husband had lived with the parents and worked in the rice fields until the previous year, but this year the parents hired labor for transplanting. Their son-in-law gave them the money.

The daughter and son-in-law had gone to the city "in search of money" (*pai ha ngan*). The parents regarded this in the same way as their own and their own parents' traveling here and there in their young days "in search of good rice land" (*ha na di*). The parents were looking after their grandchildren (*lieng lan*).

The young couple had been in Bangkok for five months. They had married six years previously and been living, working and eating with the wife's parents (*het nam kan, kin nam kan, yu nam kan*). However, on the recommendation of the wife's friend from the village who was selling cooked glutinous rice in Bangkok, they also left for the city. They were renting one room in a building where about 10 households from the same village were living. Their monthly rent was 1,250 baht, including water and electricity. In the same place were glutinous rice sellers, construction laborers and factory workers. Many of their relatives were also there, and they felt as secure as they did in the village.

When the wife first came to Bangkok she had taken a job as a manual worker for a company, but the pay was poor and she soon quit and began selling glutinous rice with her

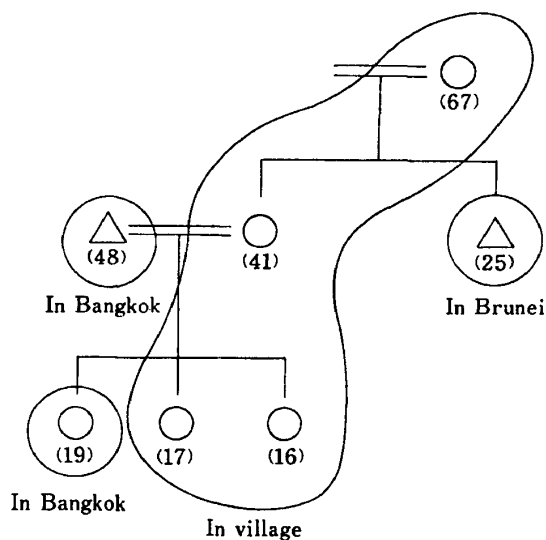
husband. They set up stall in front of a shop, paying 20 baht per day for the space. Sometimes her father would bring her bags of rice from the village, and sometimes her mother's brother would bring rice in his pick-up truck, but normally she would buy it at the market at 12 baht per kilogram. Having shopped for meat and other provisions at the market, she would start selling glutinous rice from about 3 o'clock and continue until 11 o'clock at night. Daily sales amounted to 400-500 baht, yielding a net profit of about 200 baht. She had left her children in the village because in Bangkok they would be alone in the evenings when she and her husband were out working. She and her husband intended to continue working in Bangkok until the children had graduated from primary school; and if the children should go on to further schooling, they would save money to open a shop rather than run a stall, and pay for the children's education in that way.

The father had come once from Yasothon to collect 10,000 baht with which to hire labor for transplanting. For harvesting, the daughter and her husband intended to return to the village, because it would probably be difficult for the parents to hire labor in the village at that time.

III-2. Case 2

This case involved four households. The parental household consisted of a mother (aged 67), her daughter (aged 41) and two children (aged 17 and 16). They owned 20 *rai* (3.2 ha) of rice land, but because of labor shortage, they cultivated only 8 *rai* (1.28 ha). The son-in-law (aged 48), who worked as a taxi driver in Bangkok, returned to do the farming. A 25-year-old son had gone to work in Brunei, but they had had no word from him. In

Case 2



Owned area of rice land: 20 *rai* (cultivated area: 8 *rai*)
 Owned area of upland: none

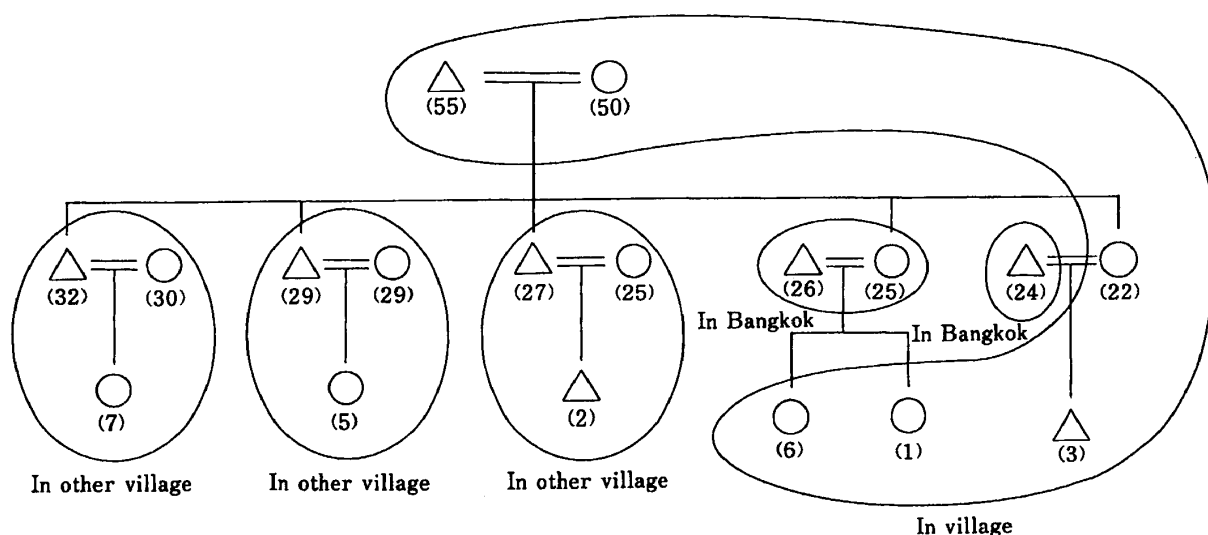
addition, a granddaughter (aged 19) was also in Bangkok, working in a factory as a seamstress.

The son-in-law had gone to Bangkok shortly after his marriage 16 years previously. At first he had worked at the airport as a driver for Thai Airways. Later he had gone to Saudi Arabia, but things had not gone well there, and he had returned after one year. Since then he had worked as a taxi driver. His monthly income was around 3,000 baht. During the peak farming time in the rainy season, he would return to the village either for an extended period or for frequent short visits, while in the dry season he would return about once every two months, making an extended stay only at harvest time. His reason for returning was to give money for living expenses to his family.

III-3. Case 3

The family in Case 3 was living in six households. The three sons (aged 32, 29 and 27) had married women from neighboring villages and left the village. The parental household comprised six people: the parents (aged 55 and 50), the elder daughter's two children (aged 6 and 1), the younger daughter (aged 22) and her child (aged 3). The elder daughter (aged 25) and her husband (aged 26) had separated from the parental household (*ok hien*) and gone to Bangkok, leaving her children with her parents (*lieng lan*). The younger daughter's husband (aged 24) had gone to Bangkok alone, leaving his wife and child with her parents (*lieng luk lan*).

Case 3



Owned area of rice land: 3 *rai*
 Rented-in area of rice land: 10 *rai*
 Owned area of upland: none

The parental household owned 3 *rai* (0.48 ha) of rice land, which was not enough for their needs, so every year they were renting in a further 10 *rai* (1.6 ha). This year the landowner had provided seedlings and fertilizer, while the family provided the labor, and it had been agreed to share the harvest equally. Even so, the family would not be self-sufficient in rice. Every year they had had to borrow rice from a neighbor. Neither of the parties in Bangkok was giving them much money: only about 1,000–2,000 baht every two or three months, which was far from enough.

The elder daughter and her husband worked in a sandal factory. They showed much keener interest in how they could make a lot of money quickly than they did in the village, their parents or their children. They did not reply when I asked them about their income, but asked how much they would earn if they worked in Japan, and how they could get to Japan.

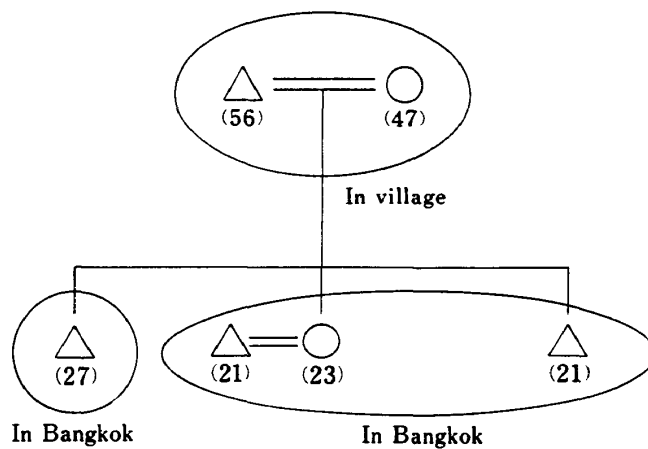
The younger daughter's husband was working in a suburban factory washing hides, but on the day I visited he was absent. People at the factory suggested he might have gone drinking, a possibility I had also heard about from his wife's parents.

III-4 . Case 4

This family comprised three households. With the children all in Bangkok, only the parents (aged 56 and 47) remained in the village, of which the father was headman. The older son (aged 27) lived alone, while the daughter and her husband (aged 21 and 23) lived with the younger son (aged 21), though their workplaces were different.

The father cultivated 10 *rai* (1.6 ha) of rice land, and the previous year had harvested 3 tons of rice, of which he sold 2 tons at 4 baht per kilogram. This income, however, did not cover his costs for fertilizer, hired labor, and power tiller rental. The children had not sent money from Bangkok, so he was borrowing from a bank.

Case 4



Owned area of rice land: 10 *rai*
 Owned area of upland: 19 *rai* (kenaf)

Of the children in Bangkok, I was able to meet only the oldest son. He had come to Bangkok 10 years previously. For the first 5 years he had worked at a textile factory for a daily wage of 160 baht. He came to want a motorbike, and having saved up the deposit he bought a bike costing 60,000 baht and began to operate a motorbike taxi. He was working from 7 o'clock in the morning till lunch time and from 5 o'clock to 10 o'clock in the evening, and making a net profit of about 200 baht. With a motorbike taxi, his time was his own, which suited him. He said he didn't often think about his parents, but he returned to the village twice a year, for New Year and the Songkran festival.

IV Conclusion

These four case studies give some indication of the situation of families with members working away from home. From these, certain general tendencies can be observed.

1. As has been noted in the past, on arrival in the cities people find it easier to secure a job in the informal sector.

2. They are helped to find a place to live and a job in the informal sector through the same kind of cooperative relationships that can be seen in the villages. This point requires more detailed investigation.

3. Many of the households left in the villages consist of grandparents and grandchildren or grandparents, a daughter and grandchildren. In these households, migration for employment has given rise to new cooperative relationships in the form of *lieng lan* and *lieng luk lan*.

4. Households remaining in village that have lost the mainstay of their labor force have maintained virtually the same scale of rice-cropping operations as in the past. As a result, because of the decrease in household size, the commercialization (sale) of rice has proceeded rapidly.

5. This has been made possible in large part by the application of fertilizers, the mechanization of plowing, the change to broadcast seeding, and the use of hired labor.

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