BANGKOK'S FOODSCAPE:
PUBLIC EATING, GENDER RELATIONS AND URBAN CHANGE

by

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ABSTRACT

This is an examination of public eating in urban Thai society. By advancing the concept of *foodscape* the recursive relationship between society and space is studied with respect to the habit of purchasing prepared food in Bangkok. The sale of prepared food, particularly at the level of small and micro-enterprises, is dominated by women. What is fascinating about the Thai case is the presence of women in this sector making them a firm part of the public sphere. By looking at the mutual interrelationship between food-systems, gender relations and urban spatial phenomena, I establish why and how public eating is gendered and how small *foodshop* (eating establishment) owners are adjusting to the rapidly changing environment of Bangkok. There are three specific questions addressed: i) how can we represent Bangkok's foodscape?; ii) how is this foodscape gendered?; and iii) what spaces are associated with the sale of prepared food in the city and how are these changing in light of rapid urbanization? The theoretical pivot is that urban space is gendered with respect to the Thai food system in unique ways which intersect with discourses of “public” and “private”.

Through recourse to relevant literature, statistics and my empirical research, I construct a portrait of Bangkok's foodscape. The methods used include participant-observation, formal and informal interviewing, and a quantitative survey of the Victory Monument Area in central Bangkok. The result is a hybrid between ethnography and more traditional approaches to urban geography. A self-reflexive use of fieldnotes and interview transcripts creates a grounded representation of place focussed on the field research encounter.

Conclusions identify the socio-economic, ideological and spatial factors which explain the public eating phenomenon and its gendering. It reflects on the heuristic considerations of an ethnographic *bricolage* and the advancement of the foodscape concept. The meaning of public/private spheres as evidenced in Bangkok's foodscape is clearly different from that of neighbouring South and East Asian societies. Recent changes in the Bangkok food-system point to the blurring of boundaries between home and work, formal and informal enterprises, as well as "tradition" and "modernity".
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Figure 6.5

Tip's Stall (photo by Gisèle Yasmeen)
Chapter One

PUBLIC EATING AND BANGKOK'S FOODSCAPE

*The appropriation and use of space are political acts.*
- Pratibha Parmar "Other Kinds of Dreams"

This dissertation is primarily about public eating in Bangkok, how this *foodscape* is gendered and the myriad ways in which the food-system is experiencing socio-spatial change as a result of rapid economic growth in Thailand. I therefore examine three interrelated topics and bodies of literature: Thai and Southeast Asian food-systems; sex-gender systems in the region; and studies of urban social relations in Bangkok. The primary problematic - to explain how and why public eating is gendered and how, specifically, large numbers of women come to use public space to sell and consume food - is situated at the conceptual interface of gender, food and spatial systems. Figure 1.1 is a model of my approach.

This chapter unearths the foundations of the research project. First, I provide a sketch of the subject matter to introduce the central questions which the dissertation addresses. I justify the study of food and foodways¹ and briefly comment on the bodies of literature which have conditioned my view of urban *foodscapes*, a concept introduced in this chapter. The theoretical "hook" of the thesis is outlined in greater detail in Chapter Two. Finally, the specific research questions and organization of the remainder of the dissertation are discussed.

¹ Foodways refers to the gamut of ideologies and practices which are both constitutive and the outcome of the set of activities related to all aspects of human nourishment (Wagner 1994).
A Model of Gender, Food & Place

Study of Bangkok's Gendered Foodscape
1.1 STUDYING URBAN FOOD HABITS

Food and foodways can be used as a “lens” to focus on many other aspects of human existence. Like the concept of landscape, which is a view of space from a certain perspective, a foodscape can be thought of as a point-of-view on a given place (Appadurai 1990; Cosgrove 1984; Daniels and Cosgrove 1993). It is therefore a type of representation, or “aid to vision” which pays particular attention to the spatial relations in the “food-system”. An ontological justification for this type of spatial representation, and the complementarity of a foodscape approach with food-systems analysis is detailed in Chapter Two where the terms are fully defined.

The study of eating habits interfaces with other social spheres such as agricultural systems, religious beliefs, kinship patterns and medical practices and is a solid province of anthropology and history (Arnott 1976; Barrau 1983; Camporesi 1993; Fenton and Owen 1981; Mennel 1985; Montanari 1994). Social hierarchies are often reinforced -- and contested -- by and through food praxis (Douglas 1984; Goody 1982; Van Esterik 1992; Walton 1989).

By studying eating habits from a geographical perspective, the role which food plays in the production of space and functioning of urban places becomes apparent (Sorre 1952). Despite many years of both direct and indirect study of food and food-systems by geographers, eating habits constitute one aspect of mainstream geography’s “taken for granted world” (Ley 1977) although this is quickly changing.² Several

² The January 1996 meeting of the Institute of British Geographers included a special session entitled, “New Geographies of Food” organized by Ian Cook, Sarah Whatmore and David Drakakis-Smith. In 1994, Stephen Bell and I organized a similar special session on “The Geography of Food” at the 1994 annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers.
geographers have studied food and eating habits, notably Simoons (1991, 1961), Drakakis-Smith (1990), Walton (1989), and Watts (1983). Carl Sauer in *Seeds, Spades, Hearths and Herds* (1963) and parts of other volumes (1952) presented a macrohistorical treatise on food and agricultural history.

There are two bodies of literature which this study resembles more substantively. The work of McGee and his colleagues spawned several studies of urban labour markets and petty-commodity production in the "Third World" and has paved the way for my own enquiries into the urban food-system (Guerrero 1975; McGee and Yeung 1977; MacLeod 1989; McGee et.al., 1988).3 Similarly, Tinker and her collaborators at the Equity Policy Centre conducted comparative research, from a feminist perspective, on streetfoods in various provincial towns in southern Thailand providing me with considerable comparative data (Chapman 1984; Cohen 1986; Tinker 1987).

Feminist geographers and others exploring "the geography of gender" have a particularly useful contribution to make to the exploration of foodscapes. A few have taken on the challenge as a subject worthy of study on its own or as part of enquiries into housing or community development initiatives and related social activism.4 As a gendered activity, the daily course of buying, preparing, selling and consuming food in many ways defines, distinguishes and modulates the life-worlds of women, men and

3 See also Chiong-Javier (1989).

4 The recent Vancouver conference on Food Security in the Greater Vancouver region which I attended in October 1995 was a forum to interact with many of these activists - many of whom are nutritionists/dieticians or nurses and most of whom are female. These women are involved in instituting community kitchens, farmers' markets and other community-based food initiatives and are part of a worldwide trend to reappropriate food from its displacement as a placeless industrial commodity to an integral part of local agricultural and commercial systems (see Vancouver Food Policy Coalition, 1995).
children (Bowlby 1988; Charles and Kerr 1988; Giard and Mayol 1980). The performance, or non-performance, of food-related work is also instrumental in defining culturally meaningful ideologies of femininity and masculinity.

The spatialization of motherhood and femininity in Southeast Asia, particularly Thailand, does not seem as "housebound" as traditional Western, South and East Asian formulae. Could this be somehow related to Thai relationships to food, as evidenced by the prevalence of public eating which indicates a more flexible cultural valuation of the "home cooked meal"? If one compares these practices with traditional Mediterranean or South Asian societies, this seems plausible. The thesis draws considerably from non-Thai examples, as well as from some non-Southeast Asian cases, to further explore these questions.

I examine "public" eating in Bangkok by studying the habit of selling and consuming prepared food outside the home. Streetfood vendors, outlets in foodcentres and catering networks serve urbanites meals for consumption in situ or as take-out or delivery to homes and offices. These small, usually family-based establishments comprise what I have labelled as Bangkok residents' everyday food strategies. Medium-scale and larger establishments which cater to the middle-classes and the wealthy serve a more exclusive clientèle. This élite foodscape is compared and contrasted to the mass-based everyday strategies. The boundary between the two systems is far from clear, the distinction between systems being an analytical choice rather than an empirical reality. Indeed, typologizing food establishments is fairly complex and is one of the objectives of the dissertation.
Although public eating has drastically increased in the past twenty years following Thailand's rapid industrial and urban development, many of these patterns have historical roots related to gender relations prevalent in the region. One of these is the longstanding presence of women in food vending and small scale commerce which is a wider Southeast Asian phenomenon (Manderson 1983, Van Esterik 1982; Tinker 1992). Rural markets and travelling merchants selling both raw and prepared food are an important part of Southeast Asian folklore and of the ethnographies of the region, many of which were produced by women anthropologists fascinated by the apparent power and autonomy of Southeast Asian women (Djamour 1959; Firth 1966; Geertz 1961). “These women (and their male colleagues) were struck by the participation of indigenous women in economic life, and the extent to which this afforded them autonomy, power and authority” (Manderson 1983, 2). A writer from the 1950s summarizes his perception of the high status of Thai women:

The social position of the Thai peasant woman is powerful: she has long had a voice in village governmental affairs; she often represents her household at village meetings when her husband cannot attend; she almost always does the buying and selling in the local markets. (It is so unusual for a Thai male to do this that it elicits comment if he does.) Through their marketing activities Thai farm women produce a sizeable portion of the family cash income, and they not only handle the household money, but usually act as the family treasurer and hold the purse strings (de Young 1955:24).

Women in many societies, including East and South Asia, manage family finances. Southeast Asian women add to this role by actually earning the money and often by doing so while occupying the public sphere.
Of additional importance in the case of Siamese society is the historical importance of "restaurant culture": a hybridized offspring, or *luuk kreung*, of the indigenous market-stall tradition and Chinese shop-house commerce (Skinner 1957). This is partially an outcome of the historical alliance between entrepreneurial Thai women and migrant Chinese labourer merchant men who met, married, reproduced and created a new cuisine and way-of-life in urban Thailand beginning in the late 19th century (Keyes 1987; Van Esterik 1992a, Skinner 1958).

To a certain extent, this hybridization resembles the development of *peranakan*, or mixed Chinese-Malay, culture in Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia (Hellwig 1994). Unlike the "pluralistic" society of colonial Malaya described by Furnivall (1939), Chinese immigrants to Siam are thought to have integrated somewhat more smoothly into mainstream Thai society, although this is now considered an exaggerated representation of their experience (Chan and Tong 1995; Szanton 1983). Bangkok is still a city with strong Chinese influences. The pivotal role of the Chinese and Sino-Thai in the Bangkok food-system shall be referred to throughout this thesis.

---

5 The term Siamese will sometimes be used interchangeably with Thai although, as Benedict Anderson explains, Siam was never as much of an ethnic designation as Thai. "Siam," used to refer to the Kingdom before 1949, was more all-encompassing and is sometimes preferred as a less nationalistic designation for the citizens of the country (Anderson 1985, 25-26).

6 This has been informed by recent discussions with Charles Keyes who argues that middle-class Thai culture is very Sino-Thai (see note below). *Luuk kreung*, literally "half breed" can refer to anyone or anything of mixed heritage but the term *luuk ciin* is preferred to identify descendants of Chinese immigrants, whether of mixed ancestry or not.

7 Sino-Thai is a an ambiguous term mainly because it is one of self-identification. Keyes defines Sino-Thai as those who identify mostly with Thai culture, practicing Theravada Buddhism and speaking standard Thai, but who continue to keep some Chinese customs (Keyes 1987, 20). I will use it to refer to persons of Thai nationality who are partly or mostly of Chinese ancestry.
Thai gender relations are central to the way urbanites have negotiated access to public space in order to sell and consume prepared food. In the case of rural ethnic Thais, particularly those from the North and Northeast, these relations are predicated on matrilineal kinship patterns, bi-lateral or cognatic inheritance systems and residence patterns often matrilocal or at least neo-local residence following marriage. Some of these rural social relations have been retained by urban dwellers and recent migrants in particular, many of whom are women from the North and Northeast and sell cooked-food.

Women entrepreneurs dominate the sale of cooked food and also play an important role as consumers. Men play key roles as food suppliers, customers and as co-owners/managers of the enterprises. In larger, more profitable restaurants, men account for nearly half of the employees. The food-system is undergoing many transitions in terms of gender relations and spatial organization as Bangkok continues to experience rapid socio-economic change. I examine some of these changes in reference to Thai urban society at large through a case study of a central neighbourhood in Bangkok.

Public eating is important for several reasons. First, it is an important branch of the urban life-support system by supplying a primary need - food - to the population. Small scale vendors and shop owners are part of an efficient inexpensive mechanism for distribution of commodities in the mega-cities of “developing” countries (McGee and Yeung 1977). For most urbanites, food must remain affordable, hygienic and

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8 I place the term “developing” in quotation marks because it, and the related term “Third World,” is rife with implications of colonial discourses as Escobar has recently argued so eloquently.
geographically accessible. Second, a widely used cooked-food retailing structure provides a source of employment for micro-entrepreneurs and their assistants. In Bangkok and other Thai cities, this represents a significant share of overall employment opportunities for women. An interrelated and more important result of convenient prepared food is that its spatial and economic accessibility lessens the burdens of domestic work related to shopping, cooking and clean-up. Although Thai men are known to participate in household duties, women tend to be ultimately responsible for food-related work in the home. Public eating is hence a convenience for the female consumer who is employed outside the home. Single men also benefit. Thirdly, there are a host of externalities to the consumption of food in public space. To begin with, an active street life creates a vibrant city, although this view is seldom shared by city authorities. A significant part of Bangkok's vibrant street scene is associated with its foodscape. People are found in public places cooking and purchasing prepared food for on-site consumption or "take-out" twenty-four hours a day. Related to this is the safety associated with having "eyes on the street" which provide an informal civic patrol (Jacobs 1961). When streets are populated by both women as well as men benefits include the actual and perceived security of women and children in public. Finally, the

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(1995). This dissertation is not situated within mainstream views of "development," or even the popular "gender and development" framework, although I will engage these discourses throughout the thesis. I would prefer to see this work situated within the discourse of sustainable community development. The dissertation ultimately remains an academic piece rather than a concrete set of policy recommendations.

9 There is some dispute in the literature about the extent to which Thai men cook. In the case of Central Thailand, the classic Cornell studies of Bang Chan village argue that men and women participate quite equally in food-related work (Hauck, Saovanee and Hanks 1958). A recent Master's thesis on the "culture of food" in Bangkok, written by a young urban Thai woman, argues that cooking is considered women's work (Bhavivarn 1993).
spaces of food consumption can also serve as informal community venues where information is exchanged and children cared for.

1.2 THE CULTURE OF PUBLIC EATING IN THAI SOCIETY

Most middlemen who control traffic in large expensive goods are male, while those who deal in local produce in daily markets are usually women, who are referred to as maeliang (mother-nurturer).

- C.F. Keyes  

Thailand: Buddhist Kingdom as Modern Nation-State

The origins of Thai public eating are evidently complex and shall be unpacked in this thesis as an economically, culturally and socially crucial aspect of the Thai urban lifestyle. "It was reported that in Bangkok, 90% of the population goes out a majority of the time for meals outside the home" (FAO 1989, 8 emphasis added). Recent household budget data indicate that 50.4% of monthly food expenditures are spent on prepared meals in the Greater Bangkok Metropolitan Area (NSO 1994, 43). This represents an increase of 5% compared to 1988 data (NSO 1994, 43-4). In 1962, only 30% of the food budget was spent on prepared food in Greater Bangkok (NSO 1963). Given that the extended metropolitan region of Bangkok has a population of nearly nine million, the prepared-food industry is clearly an important part of the local economy.

I begin by defining and describing the "culture of public eating" in Bangkok. The peculiarities of the Thai situation are, throughout the dissertation, compared to the

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10 The Greater Bangkok Metropolitan Area (GBMA) is defined by the National Statistical Office as the Bangkok Metropolitan Area plus the provinces of Nonthaburi, Pathum Thani, and Samut Prakan (see Figure 1.2).
Figure 1.2
Locating Bangkok within Thailand

Map courtesy of C. Greenberg and C. Griffiths. Greenberg (1994) proposed the Extended Bangkok Metropolitan Region (EBMR) which added ten surrounding provinces to the GBMA.
literature on other Southeast Asian cities, especially Singapore, where public eating has shifted to government and private "hawker centres", "eating houses" and other types of foodcentres. The "pure competition" associated with the less regulated environment of Bangkok is fruitfully contrasted with the formalized and hyper-regulated prepared food sector of the island state. The cleavage between the two, as well as the convergence, facilitates the discussion of key concepts of "formal and informal" or "traditional and modern" sectors in the food-system. These comparisons appear toward the end of the thesis.

The majority of cooked-food producers are women, forming 82% of small-scale vendors (Amin 1991). Unlike the situation found in much of Indonesia, a balance of male and female customers for both eat-in and take-out food is evident.11 Women and men roam much of Bangkok with relatively equal ease. This gendered access to urban space is a stark contrast to the traditional 'place' of women and men in other societies where it is or was common for women to be secluded in the home while men dominate(d) the "public" sphere. Engaging public/private sphere models and critiquing their relevance to Thai and Southeast Asian urban society is one of the theoretical objectives of this dissertation.

11 For the case of Indonesia, see Klopfer (1993) and Jellinek (1991).
1.2.1 Stalls, Restaurants and Foodcentres

Small restaurants, food-centres and larger more expensive establishments play a crucial role in Thai urban eating habits. Over the past twenty years, the typical “market stall” and floating market restaurant (see Figures 1.3 and 1.4) have been replaced by the curry and noodle shop. One can still buy kwaytiaw reua or “boat noodles” in the city where customers typically buy beef noodle soup from a shop in a boat on dry land (Pranom 1993, 37). This is a nostalgic reminder of a by-gone era in Central Thailand where “canal culture” once prevailed. Van Esterik explains the historical importance of market food in Thai cuisine.\(^{12}\)

Noodle dishes, snacks, and other market foods were very mobile in Bangkok. Market foods were brought directly to the homes of the wealthy as well as of the middle class and poor, by peddlers who sold their dishes up and down the lanes and canals of Bangkok. Push-cart vendors gathered near schools to sell meals and snacks to children. In the sixties, Thai department stores featured food pavilions where Thai and foreign foods could be purchased to take home or consume on the spot (Van Esterik 1992, 181).

Today, the canals have been paved for the most part but the selling and eating of prepared food continues to take place on streets, lanes or sois 24 hours a day and includes both mobile and stationary vendors. Increasingly, public eating is taking place in indoor or semi-indoor (covered) places such as office buildings, university cafeterias, vaguely Singaporian foodcentres and shopping plazas.\(^{13}\)

\(^{12}\) For no apparent reason, this passage is written in the past tense. The descriptions are all valid today and shall be explored in greater detail in Chapter Four.

\(^{13}\) The nature of foodcentres in Singapore will be introduced in the following chapter and discussed in greater detail in Chapter Seven.
Some "traditional" eating-establishments are in decline whereas others continue to attract business. The juxtaposition of "tradition" and "modernity" in the foodscape is illustrated by Figure 1.5. In this Honk Kong Bank advertisement, two wealthy Chinese men are seen sitting in a simple traditional foodshop. They are wealthy as evidenced by the Mercedes Benz parked in front of the restaurant and the way they are dressed. "Everything has changed except the relationship and the barbecued duck," says the ad. The photograph and message could be applied to many parts of urban Southeast Asia where the middle-classes are asserting their cultural origins and traditions, often through food habits. This is a direct remise en question of Westernization.

Defining "cooked-foodshops" (or simply "foodshops") versus restaurants is not a simple affair. The term "foodshop" is a direct translation of the Thai raan ahaan which refers to any stall or restaurant where prepared food can be obtained. The word is informal and used in everyday speech. Expensive eating establishments are often referred to as pattakarn; a more elegant expression which has a more literary use and is invoked to attract customers. There is a whole spectrum of eating establishments in Bangkok ranging from street stalls to the largest restaurant in the world. Both ends of the continuum can be conveniently referred to by the term "foodshop" in Thai. The only fixed criterion seems to be that the establishment should provide seating to qualify as a raan ahaan, whether these are small stools or lavish and expensive furnishings is immaterial though an expensive up-scale establishment can also safely be referred to as a pattakarn.
Figure 1.3 Photo of a Typical Market Stall

Photo taken from Thailand promotion brochure.

Figure 1.4 Floating Restaurant Selling Noodles in Damnoen Saduak

Photo by Gisèle Yasmeen, 1994, Ratchaburi Province.
Everything has changed. Except the relationship, and the barbecued duck.

In Asia, there are always new markets and new opportunities. And there are always new ideas, new products and new technologies. But there are also old ties and long relationships.

(The Economist 1996).
Historically, the only grand eating establishments in Bangkok were Chinese, hence the term implies a Chinese restaurant for some even today. The boundaries become even more blurred with foodcentres and other hybridized establishments. One of the objectives of this research is to negotiate through the fuzzy terrain associated with public eating. It is in the exploration of these positions and spaces that insights into the workings of the food-system can be gained.

There is a great deal of *convenience* for the consumer in this food-system. In Bangkok, prepared food is generally available at all times - particularly in areas where young single people live - resulting in a more active night life. Working women can be seen stopping at roadside and shopping centre foodshops on their way home to purchase food for the family. Curries and side-dishes are typically placed in plastic bags. The proverbial “plastic bag housewife” (Cf. Van Esterik 1992) who has made her appearance on the Thai urban stage in the past ten to fifteen years is a testimony to the contracting-out of domestic work to micro-entrepreneurs. Nurturing behaviour (Thai=liang) is commodified and displaced from the household to the public sphere and yet remains mostly a woman’s domain.

Thai society appears to be well organized when it comes to the “contracting-out” of food preparation. This initially attracted my attention to the Bangkok food system as a potentially liberating strategy in the sense described by Dolores Hayden with respect to community cooking and dining (Hayden 1981). It is now clear to me, however, that this system is possible due to the great divide between rich and poor in Thai society. Thai society is a highly hierarchial system; small-scale cooked-food sellers tend to be
carefully circumscribed within the food-system as subordinates. There are social, health and environmental costs associated with this inexpensive and convenient system, notably for the producers of prepared food. This thesis goes into detail about patterns of (self)exploitation in the prepared-food distribution system. The origins of Thai public eating are ensconced in patterns of socio-economic inequality which are dealt with in subsequent chapters. Nevertheless, neighbouring countries and regions with a similar level of poverty do not exhibit the same degree of public eating or, more specifically, their women do not participate in public eating to the same extent or in the same, visible, ways.¹⁴

1.3 FOOD HABITS AND URBANIZATION

*In Dublin's fair city*
*Where the girls are so pretty*
*It was there that I met my sweet Molly Malone*
*She wheeled her wheelbarrow*
*Through streets long and narrow*
*Singing "Cockels and Mussels Alive Alive O"*

- traditional folk song

Not so long ago, women "micro-entrepreneurs" could be found selling food in many cities of Europe and North America as the above folk song suggests (Bowlby 1988). Women clearly had a place on the streets as micro-entrepreneurs as well as consumers. It was at this time in North American history - the late 19th and early 20th centuries - that women in cities began to formally defend and demand their access to the public

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¹⁴ For example, in Pakistan where notions of *purdah* result in the spatial and social segregation of the sexes, women have one of the lowest labour force participation rates in the world at 15% (Donnan 1988).
sphere and ask for this access to extend to the formal political sphere (Ryan 1990). The turn of the century also witnessed the birth of the planning profession which significantly altered the previous use and design of public space. The concomitant and later activities of developers led to the massive construction of suburbs, the ultimate privatization of space and women (Mumford 1961; Hayden 1981, 1984).

A number of studies have touched upon some aspect of food habits in relation to economic and spatial transformation (Drakakis-Smith 1990; Konvitz 1987; Lam 1982; McGee and Yeung 1977). More generally, Engels observed in the 19th century that home-based production was gradually edged out of the market with the development of industrial capitalism and that this - along with the rise of private property - resulted in the economic and social marginalization of women (Engels 1972). Engels and his school have not been without their critics (see Bryson 1992). Mies (1986) in her discussion of "housewifization" challenges Engels by arguing that the nuclear family itself was a product of capitalist accumulation. The housewife, and the related creation of the private sphere, was an outcome of this development. Certainly this was the case in North America and Europe until economic restructuring in the past 20 years resulted in the emergence of new home-based businesses (many of them owned by women) and industrial home-working (MacKenzie 1987; MacLeod 1986).

Southeast Asia's rapid industrialization and urbanization have resulted in an explosion of small home-based enterprises selling prepared food. These businesses reduce the costs of reproducing labour, and serve the interests of large-scale industry by freeing up labour, especially that of women. The widespread availability of cheap food
both facilitates and is an outcome of this labour force participation and "subsidizes capital" by making low wages economically possible (Chua 1994). Combined with local cultural practices, this is a partial explanation of the preponderance of buying prepared food in Bangkok. Since the Southeast Asian industrial strategy is based on high rates of female labour force participation, it seems unlikely that Mies' housewifization is an inevitable outcome of economic change there (Cf. Bell 1992). This may be one step toward explaining the resilience of the Thai "public" sphere evidenced in the foodscape.

1.3.1 Thai and Southeast Asian Urbanization

Night stalls and eating outside the home are traditional aspects of Southeast Asian society. The growth of urbanization and industrialization have contributed to the rapid development of the prepared-food sector (Drakakis-Smith 1990; Lam 1982; McGee 1967; McGee and Yeung 1977). As Van Esterik and the references of early travellers to the Kingdom explains, the "market tradition" included many stalls selling prepared food and snacks for sale or barter (Van Esterik 1992). In the case of cities like Singapore and other colonial agglomerations, the importation of labourers from China and India fuelled the demand for prepared food sold by street hawkers. The workers who migrated to these entrepôt cities were mostly men who could not cook for themselves due to lack of knowledge and facilities. Male hawkers ended up responding to this need and women sometimes acted as business partners in family enterprises (Lim 1982). Bangkok, too, was the destination of many migrants, especially from China.
This resulted in the institution of a similar food-system albeit one that evolved differently (see Figure 1.6). In Thailand, the hybridization of Thai and Chinese ways fused to the point that the eating habits and cuisines transplanted by Chinese immigrants were assimilated into Thai urban culture along with the creation of a hybridized Sino-Thai identity and behaviour patterns (Skinner 1958, Keyes 1987).

As early as the 1940s, when Singapore was still a British Colony, efforts began to eradicate the "scourge" of streetfood vendors which was quite a typical municipal response at the time (McGee 1971). The island began to transform the spatial economy of food hawking by proposing to relocate mobile and stationary vendors in government operated hawker centres. By the 1980s, the process was complete and the last "real" street vendor was relocated. The Singapore case provides a fascinating contrast to Bangkok.

1.3.2 Studies of Eating Habits and Streetfoods

In addition to the IDRC street vending studies from the 1970s and EPOC's streetfoods project from the 1980s, there are interpretive studies of urban eating habits which touch on the issues addressed in this thesis. Prominent work has been conducted by anthropologists who have compared and contrasted society's engagement with food in "traditional" versus "modern" situations (Douglas 1984; Goody 1982; Mead 1964).

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15 As Chapter Seven explains, the only street restaurants that exist today in the city are in the gentrified areas of the city that try to recreate the ambience of "Old Singapore". They are expensive and poor imitations of the coolie stalls of the past and mostly serve middle-class consumers and tourists. These public eating institutions can be compared to restaurants in Vancouver's Gastown district or in "Old" Montreal.
Figure 1.6

A Chinese Hawker in Bangkok, Late 19th or Early 20th Century (courtesy National Archives of Thailand).
With a wider historical and geographical sweep, the *Annales* school has studied the breadth and depth of food habits (Forster and Ranum 1979), much of it with reference to the city and its spaces of consumption (Aron 1989; Leclant 1979). This work has usually been based on archival and/or ethnographic methods which interrogate the meanings and practices associated with food and foodways. Methodologically, the approach of these aforementioned authors is more closely related to my own which will be detailed in the following chapter. There is, however, a quantitative side to my approach which complements the qualitative data gathered through in-depth interviews and participant-observation.

Recent work which is relevant for this study treats the emergence of working-class eating *establishments* as well as those of urban élites (Amdur et al. 1992; Klopfer 1993; Rouffignat 1989; Shelton 1990; Valée 1989; Walker 1991; Walton 1989; Zukin 1991). This appears to be a novel development which focuses attention on the recursive relationship between foodways and place. Many studies are framed within a discussion of social hierarchies or economic restructuring. On a larger scale, the impact of industrialization and urbanization on the British food-system and associated gender roles is examined by Goodman and Redclift (1991). They examine the relationship between the changing roles of women - particularly increased labour force participation rates - and the ways and places in which food is prepared, distributed and consumed. Similar work has been conducted on the role of fast-food and the effects of "McDonaldization" on the family (Reiter 1991).

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16 See particularly Chapter 7: "Gentrification, Cuisine and the Critical Infrastructure: Power and Centrality Downtown."
The food consumed by the household has increasingly, in the past half-century, become processed and prepared outside the home, in the food manufacturing sector, service industries and, through a growing sophistication in household food preparation using new domestic technologies (Goodman and Redclift 1991, 7).

Women form the majority of employees in food processing and food services both in "post-industrial" and industrializing economies (Employment and Immigration Canada 1990). This is partly due to the gendering of certain skills and the stereotyping of women as "nurturers" as well as the flexibility, ease of entry, and low-pay associated with the industry. Similar reflections were made by Hartmann who critically examined the impact of industrialization on women's lives in the United States.

The sexual division of labour reappears in the labour market, where women work at women's jobs, often the very jobs they used to do only at home -- food preparation and service, cleaning of all kinds, caring for people, and so on. As these jobs are low-status and low-paying, patriarchal relations remain intact, though their material base shifts somewhat from the family to the wage differential, from family-based to industrially-based patriarchy. (Hartmann 1986, 25 emphasis added)

Another factor which explains this division of labour is that women are considered to be a disciplined, malleable and docile labour force. These are the same "qualities" that are associated with women workers in export-processing zones (Enloe 1989, Ong 1987, Wolf 1992). Although not "innate" feminine characteristics, employers believe these stereotypes and the success of their enterprises depends on the exploitation, consent and vulnerability of their employees. Another interpretation would be that women's traditional abilities, learned through gendered socialization, are marketable, money-earning skills.

There are parallels as well as differences between the food-system in Europe and
North America and the situation found in Bangkok. The "Western" food-system has undergone a transformation which involves capital intensification of food processing and displacement of formerly home-based activities into factories (staffed by women). Recent economic restructuring, however, includes the return of small-scale entrepreneurialism, much of it home-based and performed by women entrepreneurs (Better Meals 1995; Simple Salmon 1995). Alternative food-preferences and critiques of the "industrial palate" have materialized in Western cities in the form of food co-ops, natural foodshops and restaurants and the resurrection of local farmers markets (Belasco 1989; Farm Folk/City Folk 1995).

In contrast, the Thai system has been characterized by increased micro-entrepreneurship and the maintenance of a labour-intensive system although domestic and foreign capital already plays an important role in the food processing industry - largely for canned fruit and seafood, packaged noodles, snackfoods, drinks and some Thai foodstuffs for domestic consumption (curry pastes, sausages and poultry). There is also, similar to recent Western developments, a growing interest in pesticide-free organic foods and a return to lost Thai culinary traditions, as Chapter Four illustrates. This activity is largely fuelled by the educated Thai "new" middle-classes.

Like the Western situation, Thai domestic meal preparation is partly displaced

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17 I use the term "Western" throughout this thesis in a loose way to refer to North American and Western European societies. I am aware of the critique of this terminology and the reification of the so-called occident as opposed to the orient. The term is used for the sake of simplicity and to compare Southeast Asia, itself a spurious construction, with another part of the world.

18 Dolores Hayden chronologizes the development of household "labour saving devices" which actually increase the burdens on women by exacting higher cleaning standards and the maintenance requirements of appliances.
and is performed by micro-entrepreneurs who locate in public space (streets, lanes) or in privately-owned spaces with public access such as shopping centres, foodcentres, and office complexes. Could it be that the Thai cooked-food distribution system is a manifestation of service-based patriarchy in addition to one based on industrialization? Feminist authors have argued that women's integration into factory employment has, to a certain extent, marginalized them by subordinating female workers to paternalistic discipline (Ong 1989; Wolf 1992). The service sector, including the sale of prepared food, may appear to be liberating Thai women by granting them use of public space to earn income, but upon further scrutiny, may be (re)producing their subordination relative to more powerful social agents, including local state officials, property owners and other "patron groups." While remaining wary of highly criticized meta-concepts such as capitalism and patriarchy, this thesis attempts to address these questions.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This dissertation seeks to answer a set of three interrelated questions:

1. How can one represent and interpret Bangkok's food-system? What are its past, current and future trends?

2. How is Bangkok's foodscape gendered? Is it possible to typologize eating establishments vis-à-vis gender relations in urban Thailand? What are the different roles played by women and men in the culture of public eating? Are gender relations complementary, hierarchical or antagonistic?

4. What are the spaces associated with the sale of cooked food in Bangkok and how are these being affected by rapid urban development? How are foodshop owners adjusting to the socio-spatial changes? How is space conceptualized with respect to gender and food-systems in Thai society? Are private/public spheres relevant in the Bangkok case?
Chapter Two details my theoretical position, drawing from the work of Smith, de Certeau and recent cultural geography to advance the notion of foodscape and how it can be used to interrogate public/private sphere models. The third chapter introduces my methodological approach - ethnography broadly defined - and illustrates through the use of examples how I went about reaching conclusions and gathering data. The Victory Monument case study area is also presented. Chapter Four outlines the basic structure and function of the Thai food-system and couches it in wider Southeast Asian foodways. In Chapter Five I focus on Thai and Southeast Asian gender relations in the food-system and introduce my quantitative survey results. In Chapter Six, the principal informants of the study are introduced and their daily lives profiled; daily routines and operating budgets are presented and analyzed.

Chapter Seven, "Bangkok's Dynamic Foodscape" weaves together the factors which enable cooked-food sellers to open a business. The necessary and contingent relations present in different locational environments and the changing real-estate market and role of the local state are also explained. I conclude in Chapter Eight by reflecting on the interrelationship between gender, food and spatial systems in Bangkok's foodscape. Appropriation of selling areas is based on larger questions of "access," defined as the right or ability to approach and use space. Relations with the state and corporate capital, funding sources, family and kinship networks and "patron-client" relations are identified as critical factors. I distinguish between the ways men versus women are involved in Bangkok's foodscape, and summarize how femininity and masculinity are constructed and practiced in relation to public eating. Furthermore, I
explore the implications of the increasing number of privately-owned "public" spaces in office buildings, shopping centres and foodcentres which sell cooked food. I allude to Thai conceptualizations of public and private space to challenge Western sphere models. The contribution of a foodscape approach is evaluated along with suggestions for further research.
Chapter Two

PUBLIC/PRIVATE SPHERES AND THAI FOOD-SYSTEMS

This chapter begins by laying out the conceptual, historical, and most of all the geographical foundations of the inquiry into Bangkok's *foodscape*, an exploration which is framed within three themes: gendered access to space, women's work, and the impact of socio-economic transformation on eating habits. The research forms a building block in the exploration of the "politics of location", a deeply contested and complex cross-cultural terrain (Caplan 1994; Massey 1994). The sale and consumption of prepared food in the city's ubiquitous "foodshops" (*raan ahaan*) - or general restaurants - illustrates wider social processes.¹

I begin by discussing the cross-cultural differences in gendered use of public space and associated ideologies of femininity and masculinity. Following this a conceptual framework for the study of gender, food habits and place is advanced by developing the foodscape concept. Finally, I outline the theoretical foundations of my research by advancing Michel de Certeau and Dorothy Smith's approach to social research and critically assessing the literature on private/public sphere models.

¹ The very definition of restaurant in the Thai context is difficult and is the subject of section 5.2.1 in Chapter Five. The Thai terms, which are many, help distinguish types of "indigenous" eating establishments although the introduction of Western style (as well as Japanese and "new style" Chinese) restaurants complicates this process. However, the very idea of searching for "indigenous" or vernacular culture implies that Thai culture was somehow pristine or devoid of foreign contact which is not the case.
2.1 GENDER AND PUBLIC SPACE IN CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON

The wives of the people managing all the trade do enjoy a perfect liberty. Those of the nobles are very reserved, and stir not abroad but seldom, either upon some family visit or to go to the pagodes. But when they go out, they go with their face uncovered, even when they go on foot; and sometimes it is hard to distinguish them from the women-slaves which accompany them.

- Simon de la Loubère *The Kingdom of Siam*

It is often stated that Southeast Asia is a crossroads where South and East Asian influences mix with indigenous cultural traditions. In terms of gender ideologies and practices, a "bedrock" of typically Southeast Asian femininity persists in many rural areas today and is characterized for the most part by matrilineal descent systems, bilateral inheritance and the importance of pre-Buddhist and pre-Islamic feminine deities/spirits (Tambiah 1970; Potter 1976; Reid 1988; Sharp and Hanks 1978).

Women in this region traditionally have access to money, land and do not lose their kinship ties after marriage. Whereas on a regional scale of comparison it is true that women in Southeast Asia tend to follow the patterns described above, it is important to note the high degree of intra-regional variation. For example, Vietnam continuously stands out due to its Sinitic heritage whereby patrilineal descent and patrilocal residence after marriage are the norm. Yet, women there continue to dominate as food vendors in public places and are often exclusive custodians of food knowledge (Drummond 1993; Nguyen 1993). Similarly, societies which have embraced Islam - such as Malaysia and Indonesia - have customarily placed greater restrictions on women. An added

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2 Westerners tend to exaggerate the effect of Islamic revival on women's status in the Malay world. Perhaps it is due to the stark visible difference presented by the adoption of *hijab* (veiling) by Muslim women in Malaysia which has come into fashion in the last 15 years. In a number of Muslim regions in Southeast Asia, such as Kelantan, Minangkabau and southern Thailand, women dominate as food vendors in markets, on the streets and even in small restaurants (Chavivun 1985; Jamilah 1994;
complexity is the Chinese influence in the region which has been pervasive and highly
diverse as well as upland/lowland distinctions (see McKay 1994 and 1995 for the
upland Philippines).

Keyes (1996) argues that the roles of women in Theravada Buddhist societies
has been much more varied historically than in areas influenced by Islam or China
(such as Vietnam). Perhaps this is because lowland island Southeast Asia, except the
Philippines, was more thoroughly Hinduized prior to Islamicization. Within the
geographical space known as Thailand today there is also a great deal of variation in
gender ideology and practice according to region, class, urban/rural residence and so on.
Although the Tai (or T'ai) peoples who share a common linguistic heritage are difficult
to characterize given this high degree of regional and historical difference, Wyatt has
attempted to do so showing the regional distinctiveness of traditional gender relations:

They lived as nuclear families in small villages, among which there was
regular communication and some trade in such items as metal tools,
pottery and salt. Because the region was underpopulated, manpower was
highly valued and women enjoyed a relatively high social status, certainly
by contrast with the low social and economic status of Chinese and
Indian women... Women frequently were believed to have a special
power to mediate between mankind (sic) and the spirit world, and were
called upon to heal the sick or change unfavourable weather... Young
people customarily were allowed free choice of marriage partners and
were given wide sexual license in an annual spring festival (Wyatt 1984,
4-5).

Klopfer 1993)

Tai is a linguistic term. Over 80% of Thai citizens speak a Tai language. The Tai (or Daic) category also includes Lao, Shan (from Burma), and certain dialects of northern Vietnam and southern China. "Standard Thai" - that is, the national language taught in the schools, used on all official occasions, and employed, in written form, in almost all printed materials - is based on only one of the Tai languages spoken in the country, namely that of the Siamese or Central Thai. People who speak Siamese as their domestic language, that is, the language of the home, constitute only about a quarter of the total population or 30% of all Tai speakers in Thailand" (Keyes 1987, 15).
This partly explains why women in the region have traditionally been active in the public sphere where they play key roles in local politics and commerce in addition to the household (Atkinson and Errington 1990; Manderson 1983; Potter 1977; Van Esterik 1982).

The contemporary cosmopolitan society of Bangkok exhibits a far more complex system of gender relations than those summarized for "traditional" Tai ethno-cultural groups. First, the nobility has adopted Brahminic traditions to a far greater extent than commoners in the provinces. Secondly, Chinese immigrants to the Kingdom - themselves a mixed group - have mostly settled in Bangkok and influenced the local culture. Both Brahminic and Chinese traditions, for the most part, are detrimental to women's equality. The Chinese generally practice patrilocal residence, pass on property to sons and restrict the movement of women and girls. The same can be said for most of South Asia. Brahminic influences originating from India, like Theravada Buddhism which made a circuitous route through Sri Lanka, have had profound influences on Thai society influencing rituals, mythology and other aspects of life.

Patriarchal notions imported from India and China are partially responsible for the erosion, among some élites and members of the middle classes, of relative gender symmetry in Southeast Asia in terms of granting women access to the public sphere (Bencha 1992). These traditions associate the proper conduct of women with being spatially bound to the home sphere. Aspects of these influences can be detected in contemporary Bangkok although one cannot identify a simple straightforward pattern.

4 Sino-Thai, more influenced by local kinship practices, tend to opt for neo-local residence after marriage (Skinner 1957; Keyes 1996).
Migrant women from rural areas may be found boldly selling food on the streets but may be subordinated to their socio-economic superiors. Educated middle-class women might be home-bound but more comfortable than vendors among government officials.

2.1.1 Gender in East and South Asia: Implications for Thailand

The gender ideologies borrowed from China and India resemble one another by ideally secluding women. These ideas pertain to the appropriateness of spatially secluding women to a greater extent than men to "protect" them and preserve family "honour".

The core of these practices find their rationale in patrilineal descent and inheritance systems where the identity of the father is a crucial factor in order to pass property from father to son. Traditionally, female and male children both inherit property in most of Southeast Asia except among the unassimilated Chinese minorities and in Vietnam.

The form that this inheritance takes, though, is varied. In Lao-speaking areas and Northern Thailand, the youngest daughter usually inherits the family home and is expected to care for aging parents in return (Keyes 1996; Potter 1977).

Confucian ideas of femininity, for example, revolve around the concept of the "three obediences" whereby a girl first obeys her father until marriage. After marriage, she must obey her husband and - in the case of widowhood - obeys her son (Salaff 1984, Wei 1989). More specifically in terms of access to the public sphere, the idealized spatial segregation of women in old China is summarized by the proverb pau

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5 In a recent discussion with a historian of China, essentializing representations of ostensibly Confucian Chinese society are empirical overgeneralizations (Lary 1996). There are plenty of Chinese women, both within and outside mainland China who do not and have not ever subscribed to the "three obediences".
to lo min⁶ - or “to uncover your head and show your face” in public - behaviour considered shameful for a woman. To step outside the family compound and interact with strangers is considered an unrespectable and dangerous activity (Lin 1995; Smart 1989).

Similarly, purdah, prevalent in Northern India and Pakistan, comprises a whole set of activities which aim to segregate women from the public as well as within the domestic sphere (Papanek and Minault 1982; Ward 1963). The essence of purdah is to impede the social and spatial proximity of women to men who are not their fathers, husbands, brothers or sons. Women are further segregated within the home from men when the “need” arises, for example, when male guests enter the home (Reddy 1994). Women and men consequently inhabit highly different social and spatial spheres. As Johanna Lessinger explained in great detail, these ideologies seriously hamper women’s abilities to independently operate small enterprises in urban public space (Lessinger 1989).⁷

This marginality of women vendors is particularly striking in comparison to Latin America, the Caribbean, West Africa and South-East Asia, where petty trading, and particularly the retailing of food, are viewed as an almost exclusively female preserve, as “women’s work” (Lessinger 1989, 104).

The imported ideology of seclusion explains why Thai noblewomen, who as part of the

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⁶ This phrase could also be transliterated with the Mandarin pronunciation as pau tuo lo mie.

⁷ There are exceptions to and variations of this tendency in South Asia. For example, Kerala is known to be matrilineal and a state where women have a great deal of financial independence and mobility. One explanation for this vastly different state of affairs is that Keralan men traditionally spent much time away from home sailing and conducting business leaving women in charge of agriculture and local business.
élite were more highly affected by Brahminic ways, were usually confined to the palace and sheltered within a sedan with a retinue of handmaids and eunuchs when venturing into public space (de la Loubère [1693] 1986). This is echoed in the contemporary middle-class role of housewife in urban Thailand:

urban women who remain in domestic roles often find themselves more estranged from their husbands than do rural women. Not only is an urban housewife cut off from her husband’s workplace, unlike in villages where men and women work in the fields together, but she rarely sees her husband in the latter’s public roles, again unlike in the villages where women witness much of what the men do in their meetings or ritual activities (Keyes 1987, 124 emphasis mine).

Exceptions can still be found in East and South Asian societies which contradict the model I am sketching above. Keyes (1996) notes that Taiwanese women still play an important role as vendors in the informal sector. I was also surprised to see so many Korean women selling goods, including prepared food, in the markets of Seoul in 1993. Though not a Sinitic society, Koreans have certainly been highly influenced by Confucianism and other Chinese traditions. As Smart (1989) explains for Hong Kong, women vendors in Chinese societies are looked down upon because they are forced through economic circumstances to earn their living in public space, thereby transgressing gender ideology.

But perhaps it is important to resist essentializing cultural factors and turn toward a more materialist explanation of the spatial segregation of women. Creation of the “housewife” role is not solely an imposition from neighbouring India and China,

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8 La Loubère presents contradictory information indicating that noble women went out in public quite freely then stating that some were required to venture forth into the city with an entourage and seat themselves in a sedan. This must reflect that both practices were common.
but, as in the West, a product of later industrial capitalism (Mies 1986).

"Housewifization" nevertheless draws on antecedent gender ideologies. Traditional Chinese and Indian ideas and practices are similar to the "honour/shame" complexes in Mediterranean societies and in Victorian England which gave rise to the concept of feminine domesticity and the housewife role (Hayden 1984; Sennett 1974).

The limitation of women's mobility, in terms both of identity and space, has been in some cultural contexts a crucial means of subordination... spatial control, whether enforced through the power of convention or symbolism, or through the straight-forward threat of violence, can be a fundamental element in the constitution of gender in its (highly varied) forms (Massey 1994, 180).

Although Thailand has been influenced by its neighbours it has never adopted the idea(l) of spatial segregation of the sexes in toto. Even élite women were known to have more spatial freedom than their counterparts in neighbouring regions and went about with their heads and faces uncovered. Foot-binding or complete seclusion were never adopted as techniques to hamper feminine mobility, except among ethnic minorities. This does not mean that Thai women are equal to men in theory or practice. Thai-style sexism and machismo are still present and part of women and men's lived realities. Spatial mobility and the visibility of women in public is no indication of equality or that women have roughly equal control of the "public sphere".

There are many debates in Thai studies about the status of women as either traditionally subordinated (Kirsch 1982; Khin 1980), or part of a complementary system (Atkinson and Errington 1990; Ong 1989). Despite generalized access to public space, women are presently excluded from the upper echelons of power and are involved in struggles to change their social, economic and legal positions (Cf. Darunee and Pandey 36
1991; Decade 1992). These realms are also part of what is usually thought of as the "public sphere". Even in terms of spatial access, "good" women, do not frequent certain insalubrious institutions such as private member clubs, "cafés" and bars (Mills 1990). Women's spatial mobility is conditioned by class, age, ethnic, and educational factors.

Symbolically, many argue that Thai women and femininity are subordinated to men and masculinity within an ascetic Theravada Buddhist value-system and its characteristic contemptus mundi (Khin 1980; Kirsch 1992). This point, however, is debated (Keyes 1984; Kirsch 1985). For example, Thai Muslim women, who are ethnically Malay for the most part, occupy similar positions in small business, notably as market women (Chavivun 1985). The same holds true for parts of Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines which do not confess to Theravada Buddhism. The public presence of women, as suggested earlier, is a wider Southeast Asian cultural phenomenon although Thailand appears to present the observer with the starkest example.

2.1.2 Thai Femininity and the Image of Motherhood

Maternal images have an important place in Thai iconography and point to the strong symbolic association between femininity and the giving of life and sustenance. Some argue that this points to the strong position afforded to femininity in the pre-Buddhist heritage. Feminist explorations of the study of emotionally charged concepts of home and motherhood are of direct relevance here because of the relationship between the constructions of femininity which are "built-in" to wider social processes. Doreeen
Massey describes one regionalization of British femininity, circa 1950, and its ideological spatialization:

The occasional idealizations of home by the working-class lads... often constructed that view around "Mum," not as herself a living person engaged in the toils and troubles and pleasures of life, not actively engaged in her own and others' history, but a stable symbolic centre - functioning as an anchor for others (Massey 1994, 180).

Thai society too has its idealizations of femininity which revolve around a central symbolic mother image (Keyes 1984). There is a sacred dimension to this association of all things nourishing and fertile, most notably food, with women. Linguistically, the mother prefix, or mae is used to refer to rivers (mae nam or "mother of waters") as well as women-dominated occupations, such as food vending (mae kha, literally "mother vendor"). Femininity is symbolically and practically aligned with nurturing activities ranging from tending rice fields to selling rice and curry in a food stall. This does not preclude men and boys from participating in similar activities. Chapter Four will explore the linkages between the ideology and practice of nurturing as it relates to the Thai food-system in general and urban public eating in particular.

Thai gender relations are complex and one cannot argue firmly one way or another that women and men are considered "equal" or contrastingly, that femininity is subordinated outright to masculinity. Rather, women and men occupy contradictory positions depending on the circumstances. It is from this point of departure - one that views Thai gender relations as a paradox - that I engage Bangkok's foodscape. What is unique about gender relations in Thailand - compared to most other parts of the world -

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9 As Keyes (1996) kindly informed me, mae does not always refer to feminine occupations or things female. An example is mae thap which means general.
is the relative spatial freedom enjoyed by women. Women and girls walk the streets unchaperoned by men, work in services as well as construction and are involved in entrepreneurialism which takes them outside the home: for example, as restaurant and food stall owners. There are, however, more spatial restrictions placed on women relative to men due to the Thai sexual double-standard. "Virtuous" women do not consume alcohol nor frequent places where there might be prostitutes. The infamous commercial sex industry in Bangkok further complicates discussions of Thai women "in public".

2.2 GENDER, FOOD AND PLACE: "YOU ARE WHERE YOU ATE" 10

Although the literature contains disparate references to the interweaving of place and food (Cf. Konvitz 1987; Zukin 1991) as well as gender and food (Bowlby 1988; Charles and Kerr 1988; Curtin and Heldke 1992; Goodman and Redclift 1991; Klopfer 1993), a concise articulation of the conceptual and theoretical relevance of studying gender, food and place together has yet to be clearly stated. French-speaking geographers have addressed food issues but not specifically in relation to sex/gender systems (Peltre and Thouvenot 1989). Feminist geographers and others sensitive to these issues have only recently begun to formulate a discourse around the spatialization of foodways with respect to gender. Bowlby (1988), for instance, has discussed the importance of women in food retailing in Britain. Cook (1995) pays explicit attention to the entanglement of gender, class, and ethnicity in discussions of foodways and place. The lack of concise

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10 The play on Brillat-Savarin's (1970) often quoted "you are what you eat" is borrowed from Lantos (1987).
attention to food is astounding given the enthusiasm with which feminists in the environmental disciplines have studied gender issues surrounding housing and urban design (Cf. Keller 1981; Klodawsky and Spector 1988; Peake and Moser 1987; Wekerle et al. 1980; Wekerle 1988).

We spend much of our lives growing food or 'winning our bread', or rice, through our labour and subsequently spend large amounts of time and energy shopping for, storing, preparing, serving and disposing of food. All these activities occur in space and recursively help constitute the places in which we live and work.

2.2.1 Eateries, Economics, Women and Men

In Switzerdeutsch and certain southern German dialects, the word wirtschaft has two separate meanings. The more widely known and standard German definition is that of 'economics'. A second connotation limited to the aforementioned dialects is an archaic usage meaning a pub or small restaurant. This is certainly not a coincidence. Inns and small eating establishments have been primary economic institutions since ancient times. The local innkeeper often acted as community banker, employer and local leader. The Stock Exchange of London is said to have begun in a coffee house (Kelly 1995).

Inns and taverns have historically been important commercial institutions throughout human history catering to the needs of merchants, travellers and adventurers by providing a meal, drink and a place to sleep. As places for social interaction, restaurants and other eating or drinking establishments contribute to the edification of
certain types of human relations be they related to gender, ethnicity or other aspects of group identity (Bell and Valentine 1995).

Important social and economic roles are played by cafés and bistros in Parisian society where drinks, light meals and socializing can take place - the preferred haunt of the flâneur (Sennett 1974; ref). Feminist critiques of the masculinist experience of the flâneur, especially as represented in literature, abound (Pollock 1988; Wolf 1990).

Statistics point to a swift transition in the French food-place matrix.

Before the First World War, cafés numbered more than half a million. But by 1980, there were just 80,000; and today there are fewer than 50,000 left, including 10,000 in Paris. In 1994, more than 1,500 cafés closed in Paris alone (The Weekend Sun 1995).11

These neighbourhood institutions, like the British pub, are in swift decline demographically as larger-scale international capital comes to dominate the food-system to the detriment of local entrepreneurs (The Economist 1994). Ironically, pubs, cafés and diners are important social and economic institutions for the urban working class in the early days of industrialization but lose their foothold with further economic "development" (Walton 1989).

Gendered identities are constructed and practised through and in specific places designed for the manifest purpose of consuming food and drink. Alcohol or other intoxicants seem to have a privileged cross-cultural relationship to institutions catering to men and include the business of prostitution. Urban Thai society houses plenty of such institutions - “cafés”, hostess bars and the newer “private member clubs” - where

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11 The article attributes the decline of the café to five factors: high taxes; expensive food and beverage prices; competition from fast food outlets and street vendors; the crusade against smoking and alcohol; and finally, American-style "cocooning" (staying home and watching television).
women employees are available for entertainment, conversation and "extra services" to a mostly male clientèle. Even seemingly innocent foodshops are sometimes fronts for brothels and "freelance" prostitution.\textsuperscript{12} The Thai case provides further evidence of the longstanding relationship between food places - such as restaurants - and the evolution of culturally specific sex-gender systems and the power relations imbricated within such aspects of social organization.\textsuperscript{13} I will comment on this in detail in Chapter Four.

"Eating and working are questions of survival, not taste" wrote Ginny Berson in "Slumming it in the middle-class" (1974). For those with more disposable income, however, matters of taste -- as Bourdieu well explained -- are central (Walker 1991). Contracts worth millions are often negotiated around the sharing of a meal; the choice of the restaurant, food and knowledge of table etiquette are all significant in the process (Visser 1991; Finkelstein 1989). Chinese business protocol requires one to partake a meal with potential partners: "It is here business begins and business is done. It is here silent language is read and a code of conduct is followed" (Wong 1995). Economic survival, by contrast, is the primary concern for the poorest strata of the population in matters of food provisioning and employment. Food gathering and preparation for

\textsuperscript{12} I first heard the term "freelance" applied to prostitution in Bangkok. It refers to sex workers who are not bonded to a brothel or massage parlour and consequently have a greater control over their income. Pimps, sometimes in the form of bar owners or even family members, often collect a portion of revenues.

\textsuperscript{13} Evidence from the Tang dynasty in China, to provide another example, points to the availability of 'exotic' female prostitutes for transient male customers on many of the Eurasian trade routes - many had light hair and blue eyes and were referred to as Western courtesans (Chang, 1977, 137). Hattox (1985) describes the construction of masculinity within Turkish coffee houses where men in the Ottoman empire gathered for leisure. Geisha and Kota houses have historically been institutions catering to men in Japan and South Asia respectively staffed largely by women and usually serving food and drink and, of course, various forms of "entertainment".
household subsistence has almost universally been defined as 'women's work' which points to the sexual division of labour, the gendering of knowledge and of spaces and places. Foodways of all types are simultaneously 'placed' and 'gendered'.

Women, as we have seen, dominate the retailing of foodstuffs in Southeast Asia as a whole. There are significant distinctions, however, between the patterns of gendered micro-entrepreneurialism in the food sector in different regions and societies. The operation of a warung or warteg in Jakarta sharply contrasts with managing a paeng loy in Bangkok. Both are types of foodstalls but encompass different spaces and gender relations. Men are involved in these businesses as owners/workers or customers and sometimes dominate certain types of enterprises albeit in varying ways. This is an outcome of the ways in which femininity and masculinity are constructed in each local context.

2.2.2 Food-systems and Foodscapes

The concept of food-system is a well-established research tool. A food-system is a heuristic device used to grapple with the complex sets of activities interrelated in the human quest for food:

A food system is a dynamic and complex unity consisting of all the purposive, patterned (institutionalized), and interdependent symbolic and instrumental activities carried out by people in order to procure, process, distribute, store, prepare, consume, metabolize, and waste food (LaBianca 1991, 222).14

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14 See Dyson-Hudson and Dyson-Hudson 1970; Pimentel and Pimentel 1979; Goody 1982; McGee 1971; McGee and Yeung 1977; MacLeod 1989, 1990. The food-systems concept may be part of a Western discourse (Ley 1993b). I argue that the food-system concept is simply a tool of value in many socio-cultural contexts. It enables the researcher to piece disparate parts of the food puzzle together.
A food-system is a type of representation which has definite cybernetic implications, like any "system" concept. By looking at inputs, agriculture produce, human labour, and capital for example, one can better understand processes at work which conclude with outputs of the food-system: that is, prepared meals, disposed food matter, proper nutrition and so on.

The traditional concept of "landscape" in geography has been questioned and reworked in light of theoretical developments in the social sciences (Duncan and Ley 1993). I have proposed the term "foodscape" to describe a complementary representation of foodways and place. It is also intended to be used as a heuristic device; one which implies spectacle - a "show" and also an "aid to vision", like landscape (Cf. Daniels and Cosgrove 1993). "Viewing" and visuality, should be referred to with caution as they have played a key role in marginalizing women and persons subjected to colonial rule and thus acted at times as a rather violent "scopic regime" (Escobar 1995, 191). "Scopophilia" has been criticized by feminists and post-colonial thinkers (Haraway 1988; Jay 1992; Mohanty 1991; Trinh 1989). My attempt to represent Bangkok's foodscape tries to remain aware of the non-visual, particularly by citing at length the informants interviewed and refusing to see them as victims without agency.

"Scape" words have become popular, no doubt due to the recognition of the cruciality of space and place in recent social theory and have an element of visual

\[^{15}\text{I am not the first to use this term. While reading through a thesis at the Department of Geography at the National University of Singapore, I discovered a chapter title using the word foodscape (Lee 1992) but the author did not develop the concept in her dissertation.}\]
display, or way of seeing connoting a text to be read (Lyotard 1989; Porteous 1990\textsuperscript{16}).

Appadurai (1990), for example, proposes a framework of ethnoscapes, mediascapes, and other “scapes” to convey the disjunctures in the flows of people, objects, capital and ideas in the contemporary global cultural economy.

I use terms with the common suffix scape to indicate first of all that these are not objectively given relations which look the same from every angle of vision, but rather that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected very much by the historical, linguistic and political situatedness of different sorts of actors (Appadurai 1990, 296 my emphasis).

To use “scape” is to imply that - like all abstraction - interpretation is a subjective process which comes necessarily from the viewer or author’s perspective.\textsuperscript{17} The neologism “foodscape” is used to refer to a process of selective viewing of spatial and spatializing phenomena - a lens through which to view and understand place. Like landscape, a foodscape is a representation created by the viewer. Geographers have examined the creation of the landscape concept and its relation to the emergence of Archimedean perspective in the visual arts (Cosgrove 1986). Too often we tend to reify landscape without fully realizing that it is the product of a certain era of geographical thought. Unlike traditional views of landscape, however, I want to focus specifically on the social relations which are contained within, and help (re)create, the built environment rather than present a de-humanized portrait of a place (Cosgrove 1986). The “social relations implicated in the creation of spatial forms have not been included

\textsuperscript{16} See in particular Porteous’ chapter on “smellscape”, an interesting concept which unfortunately does not get thoroughly explored.

\textsuperscript{17} The suffix “scape” comes from the Old Dutch skip meaning “to cut” (Hoad 1986; Shipley 1984). It therefore implies taking a “slice” of reality. Viewing should be seen as an active, rather than a passive process. Research in optics and human vision indicates that this is indeed the case (Sacks 1995).
in the research agenda" Ley explains in his discussion of the "moral landscape" of cooperative housing regarding mainstream studies of landscape (1993, 128-9).

By appealing to the techniques built into complimentary food-systems and foodscape concepts, I hope to present the reader with a coherent description, analysis and synthesis of public eating in Bangkok. This ties in with very recent discussions of "public culture" by Breckenridge, Appadurai and their colleagues.18

The representation I construct in this thesis borrows from other people's views and voices. Indeed, it is my position that all knowledge is necessarily representational and that recent work which criticizes the subject position and the ostensible death of "authority" should be taken as a cue to improve the ways in which we choose to represent other people, places, times and - of course - ourselves (Cf. Spivak 1988).

These critiques also pertain to the ways in which our academic canons are formed and refute the use of an "objective" authoritative voice by the researcher/writer. Non-representation is an ontological impossibility. This point, unfortunately, has been grossly misunderstood by those who, with the best intentions, wish to "let the sub-altern speak for themselves".19 The ways in which this dissertation experiments with feminist/post-colonial ethnographic practices is outlined in section 3.1. First, however, I

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18 See, for example, their journal entitled Public Culture, where Appadurai's aforementioned essay initially appeared. Breckenridge recently edited a collection of papers on "public culture" in South Asia (1995). One of the most interesting pieces in the book is Frank Conlon's chapter entitled "Dining Out in Bombay" which paints a foodscape of that city from a historian's perspective.

19 Gayatri Chakvorty Spivak's essay, "Can the Sub-Altern Speak?" (1988) may be one of the most widely misinterpreted pieces of the 1980s. Spivak was advancing that non-representation of the research object was impossible. She was not arguing for the researcher/ critic to be "transparent" and to let the "voices" of the oppressed speak for themselves. The essay has, ironically, been taken to mean just that, leading to intellectuals denying that they create representations when "allowing others to speak" thereby absolving themselves of responsibility.
briefly overview the concept of public and private spheres which is a highly debated model within social theory.

2.3 WAYS OF DOING AND THE PUBLIC-PRIVATE CONTINUUM

The theoretical orientation of this thesis draws from recent developments in cultural and social geography. Theory should not be divorced from practice and the dichotomy between the conceptual and the empirical is a spurious one. It appears as though higher levels of abstraction are given precedence over what Geertz describes as "thick description" although even detailed description rooted in space and time is an abstraction. I want to move between ideas which are close to "the ground" and those which may shed light on larger scale processes.

I find Dorothy Smith and Michel de Certeau's approaches to be the most engaging positions encountered (de Certeau 1990; Smith 1987). Smith's feminist position is the more radical but resembles de Certeau's body and space-centred approach to social theory. In *L'invention du quotidien, Tome 1: Arts de faire* 20, de Certeau explains the point of departure of his research: "The research concerned itself primarily with spatial practices, the ways in which places are inhabited, on the complex process of the culinary arts..."(my translation) 21

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20 An earlier edition of this volume was translated into English as The Practice of Everyday Life (1984).

21 "mais la recherche s'est surtout consacrée aux pratiques de l'espace, aux manières de fréquenter un lieu, aux procès complexes de l'art culinaire..."
De Certeau does not see human beings as "dupes" but as creative agents who make the best with what they have and employ various strategies, or ruses, to resist the forces of "the system". He deliberately rejects the "objective" stance of the Archimedean perspective, as do Smith and many feminist thinkers, and prefers to stay close to the ground where the optical illusion of the panopticon is less evident and the deeper meanings of action can be excavated.

If it is true that the grid of "surveillance" is spread and articulated everywhere, it is even more important to discern how an entire society does not submit to it... These "ways of doing" constitute the thousand practices whereby the agents reappropriate the space organized by the techniques of socio-cultural production for themselves... These procedures and consumers' ruses create, in the end, a network of anti-discipline... (my translation)(de Certeau 1990, xxxix-xl emphasis mine).22

Here, the author is clearly making reference to the work of Foucault and intends to balance his contemporary's project by focussing on human resistance to social control.

De Certeau and Foucault are often contrasted with one another offering complementary positions (Dubuis 1995). De Certeau, drawing from Lefebvre, employs a very geographical perspective by valorizing the small victories created by everyday activities and the diverse ways individuals appropriate space for their own ends (Lefebvre 1991).

Smith, from an explicitly feminist position, points to the importance of paying attention to the mundane exigencies of daily life: cooking, shopping and cleaning; tasks often performed by women and taken for granted by traditional male scholars. "The

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22 Si il est vrai que partout s'étend et se précise le quadrillage de la «surveillance», il est d'autant plus urgent de déceler comment une société entière ne s'y réduit pas... Ces «manières de faire» constituent les mille pratiques par lesquelles des utilisateurs se réapproprient l'espace organisé par les techniques de la production socioculturelle... Ces procédures et ruses de consommateurs composent à la limite, le réseau d'une antidiscipline...
everyday world is that world we experience directly. It is the world in which we are located physically and socially" (Smith 1987, 89). Our lived realities are necessarily local and historical, argues Smith. By extension, our lives are geographical. However, "it is essential that the everyday world be seen as organized by social relations not observable within it" (Smith 1987, 89, my emphasis). This is why a proper analysis of context and events not directly part of the research topic needs to be undertaken.

Smith's position challenges the oppressive nature of the "relations of ruling." These relations, in many societies, relegate women to the ranks of those who perform bodily maintenance and routine tasks such as cooking, childcare and office tasks. Not only are these activities taken for granted, ill paid and undervalorized, but their performance is necessary for those in ruling positions to maintain their discursive and material privilege (Smith 1987, 81-83). I will identify a few of the ruling relations, some related to gender, which frame the daily lives of cooked-food sellers in Bangkok.

This dissertation will - through the use of "blurred genres" - convey the nature of my everyday interaction with various "informants" and piece together a puzzle explaining one aspect of the Thai urban food-system. I refer to a vast array of source materials ranging from direct citations, paraphrasing, quotations from fieldnotes and references to other sources. The "ways of doing" employed by foodshop owners and employees, their everyday activities and uses/appropriations of space are summarized and interpreted in this portrait of Bangkok's foodscape.

23 The process of observation is problematized by both de Certeau and Smith. Some of these issues will be addressed in Chapter Three.
Following Smith and de Certeau, the upcoming pages are deliberately embodied, that is, firmly contextualized at the site of social interaction (or "data" collection). To stand "outside" the world of which I am writing risks the unwitting reproduction of oppressive representations (Smith 1987, 221). The conclusion of this thesis will identify the ideological and practical relations of ruling inherent in the gendering of public eating in Bangkok.

2.3.1 Private/Public Sphere Models

The often-discussed problem of "the invisibility of women" has to be viewed in conjunction with the kind of visibility that they have. Women are often literally invisible - absent or unseen - on certain occasions, or in particular places, in many societies... But elsewhere, and at special times, the visibility of women may be very marked.

- Shirley Ardener, "The Representation of Women in Academic Models."

The classification of urban space into the realms of "public" and "private" is by now a classic element of much social theory. Constructs of private and public spheres which model the nature of social life are attributed to the work of a host of theorists (Elshtain 1981; Habermas 1989; Sennett 1974). Feminist conceptualizations of public and private are often drawn from the more general social theorists who have dealt with the subject, particularly Habermas as advanced in The structural transformation of the public sphere (1989). However, as recent critics have remarked, Habermas'

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24 By public and private space I am not referring to the public versus private ownership of land (ie. state versus private property) but rather questions of access to various urban places. Access is defined as ability or permission to use and approach certain spaces. For example, a privately owned shopping centre may be accessible to the public, within limits, and is therefore a public place.

25 Gatens traces the public/private question in relation to gender to the debates between Rousseau, Wollstonecraft and others (Gatens 1991).
mediatized view of public and private may not be as useful as Arendt's more geographical depiction of private and public spaces (Benhabib 1992; Howell 1993).

Arendt (1957; 1960) and others (Gregory 1994; Rose 1990) see the ideological construction of separate spheres as a longer standing phenomenon - one going back to the ancient Greeks and present in many non-European civilizations. Here the public is the province of the *polis* and the "private" represents the deprived and secluded realm of women and slaves. The meaning and specific formulations of public/private distinctions, however, is historically and geographically differentiated and it is with caution that I refer to its use in Western historical scholarship.

It is only with the sustained feminist critique of this formulation that a more spatialized definition of public/private sphere models was introduced; first by Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere in *Woman, Culture and Society* (1974) and expanded by others (Davidoff 1995; Elshtain 1981) including geographers (Cf. Rose 1993). "Rosaldo, a cultural anthropologist, argued that women's status is lowest where women are most separated from public life" (Hayden 1984, 50). These initial feminist formulations have been refined and recent work discards a fixed, empirical and dichotomous vision of private and public realms bearing in mind the culturally and class specific experience on which these models are based. Scholars also interrogate how we define and mark "status" - highlighting the dangers of applying foreign criteria which

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26 The most pertinent member of the Frankfurt School - for the purpose of this project - is Plessner who concentrated on the changing weight of public and private and its relation to the character of the city (Sennett 1974, 32).
may not be appropriate to other regions, such as Southeast Asia (Atkinson and Errington 1990).

The public sphere has habitually been used to refer to the world of paid employment in the factories, offices and streets of the city whereas the private realm was that of the home, family compound or neighbourhood. This model suggests that, traditionally - but especially subsequent to industrialization - men were associated with and had greater access to the public sphere whereas women inhabited the private sphere, performing unpaid "reproductive" work in the confines of domesticity.

The public and private model of gendered urban space has been the subject of considerable debate with feminist revisionist historians offering plenty of examples of women's involvement in activities outside the home (Davidoff 1995; Hayden 1981; Ryan 1990). Other critiques emanating from a post-colonialist perspective assert that notions of public and private are based largely on the historical experiences of white, Western, middle-class society and the ideals which conditioned this experience (hooks 1984, 1990; Mohanty et. al. 1991). We need to distinguish between activities classified as either "public" or "private" and the spaces uncritically associated with these activities. Political organizing, for example, has often taken place in "private" kitchens, and nurturing activities, such as child-rearing, are often conducted in what are thought of as very public places (Staeheli 1996).

Further weaknesses in this model have been identified because of the recent experiences of gentrification and economic restructuring whereby the resurgence of cottage industries, home-working, and sweatshops results in the blurring of putative
"private" and "public" spaces (Mills 1989). Many authors have summarily dismissed the concept as a product of spurious dualistic thinking of little, if any, utility.

"Postmodern" and "poststructuralist" positions question the validity of all binary models and suggest that we ought to find conceptual replacements for these and other enlightenment categorizations which is a laudable and challenging goal (see Davidoff 1995; Nicholson 1990). However, aspects of such binary models may still be useful.

Public/private sphere models, as well as the productive/reproductive schisms need to be rejected empirically but not necessarily metaphorically (Moore-Milroy and Wismer 1994). In my opinion, as well as others', these dualisms need to be re-worked as ideological constructs of allegorical utility rather than categories of existence (Demerritt 1995). They are therefore, models literally-speaking. Public and private will be used in this sense throughout the dissertation to help categorize types of spaces encountered in Bangkok's foodscape.

Feminist geographers have long argued that associations between women/the home/consumption/the private sphere on the one hand, and between men/work/production/the public sphere on the other hand, are ideological constructs rather than empirical descriptions (Bondi 1992, 99 my emphasis).

Bondi describes how feminist geographers have sought to critique these stereotypes by describing the complexity of women and men's lives. She concludes by indicating that recent positions have examined and challenged the usefulness of these dichotomies "thereby disclosing more fully how our material and intellectual environments are gendered" (Bondi 1992, 99).
What is interesting about the case of Southeast Asia in general and Thailand in particular is the historical importance of women in what outsiders have defined as the public sphere. The stumbling block for foreigners has perhaps been the fact that gender markers and indicators of status are ascribed differently in Southeast Asia than in most Indo-European and East Asian societies (Atkinson and Errington 1990). Many have noticed the apparently more egalitarian relations between women and men in the putative "domestic" sphere. Certainly, it has been my experience that Thai men are very capable child-rearers and sometimes play a househusband role while their wives mind a business such as a hairdressing salon or foodshop.

It appears clear that Thai non-élite women occupy significant positions of power within their own socio-economic group (or class) due to their access to and use of material resources (ie. money, land, labour). However, these same women are often subordinated in the symbolic realm of Thai Buddhism and avenues to upward mobility are blocked. Women, as previously explained, are excluded from certain important positions of power which are mostly occupied by men in the bureaucratic, military, and religious spheres.27 These too are crucial aspects of the public sphere.

From the point of view of urban feminist geography however, Thai men and women as producers and consumers of prepared food appear to have largely equal access to the streets and lanes of the city moderated somewhat, however, by neighbourhood, time of day and the socio-economic background of the person in question. Indeed, women dominate the retailing of all types of food, raw and cooked.

27 I thank Charles Keyes for indicating to me that Thai women now serve in the military and some are even generals!
Selling cooked-food is a profitable occupation but it is also a refuge for people who do not have the credentials to work in more formal employment. It is often an occupation which is used to supplement household income. I address these issues throughout the thesis while making reference to the debates in Thai studies surrounding the question of nurturing (liang) as a gendered activity and larger questions of gender equality in the region.

In recent years, what was considered innovative and liberatory feminist research in the 1970s and 1980s has been criticized as ethnocentric and suffering from a middle-class bias. It is standard academic practice now to question the ontological and epistemological foundations of our endeavours as social scientists and we are encouraged to experiment with new forms of representation which do more justice to the subjects/objects of our scrutiny and engage in a self-reflexive stance. This dissertation will not address these basic issues which have more adequately been discussed elsewhere (Clifford 1988; Haraway 1991; Harding 1986). I have, instead, outlined the specific conceptual bases of my enquiry which revolve around the defined notion of foodscape and interrogate private and public sphere models. The following chapter explains my methodological program while conducting research in Southeast Asia: my recording techniques, organization and interpretation of data, and how I generated the conclusions offered in this thesis.
Chapter Three

FEMINIST ETHNOGRAPHY AND FIELD RESEARCH

This chapter introduces the ethnographic approach which has been the object of considerable scrutiny (Appadurai 1991; Marcus and Clifford 1986; Visweswaran 1994). I begin by interrogating the nature of "feminist ethnography" and the ways in which I have attempted to operationalise such a methodology. The following section describes the ways in which I organized the fieldwork and gathered the information. Specific attention is paid to my fieldwork diary, which I cite at length throughout the dissertation, interviews and transcripts, sketch maps and the quantitative survey. Finally, a justification of the case study site, the Victory Monument Area, forms the final part of the chapter.

It is difficult to ascertain exactly when research begins on such a project. Is travel to the place of interest the only valid way of gathering information? I became interested in this topic in 1990 when I initially proposed the research. My ideas at the time were based on experiences I had in Thailand while on a study tour in 1985. Through library research, coursework and discussions with colleagues, some of them Thai, I slowly began to refine my crude perceptions of life in Bangkok. Further opportunity was presented in the summer of 1992 when I studied intensive Thai, as well as a course on Thai society, at the Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute at the University of Washington. This was a precursor to formal fieldwork but was part of the...
same process as it enabled me to strategise on how best to glean information once in Southeast Asia. The organizational techniques were developed through discussions with my advisor, committee members and more experienced colleagues.

3.1 METHODOLOGY

A general ethnographic approach was deemed to be the most appropriate way to delve into the world of Thai urban "public" eating. During my two principal periods of fieldwork, I met and spoke with hundreds of people, some more or less formally than others. Everyday life experiences formed the basis of the dissertation and were recorded in detail in my diaries. This, combined with library research, reading of local publications and collection of statistics, gave me the needed background information to continue with phase two of the project.

In 1994 I returned to conduct tape-recorded in-depth interviews with cooked-food sellers and restaurant owners in the Victory Monument area and supplemented this qualitative data with a quantitative survey of most cooked-food sellers in the district, mapping of eating-establishments and interviews with government officials and consumers as well as general participant-observation. I also visited other Southeast Asian cities to compare foodscapes - particularly Singapore where I interviewed government officials and examined theses/research reports on the emergence of

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I conducted research from September 1992 to February 1993 while officially affiliated with the Asian Institute of Technology on a Canadian University Consortium travel grant. The second period of field work which began in July 1993 was truncated due to illness so I returned the following year in August and completed my work in December 1994. The second period of work was sponsored by the International Development Research Centre and I was hosted by the Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute.
foodcentres which now largely dominate quotidian "public" eating. I kept a detailed research diary of my observations and conversations with people during the second phase of fieldwork as well.

My role as a researcher principally revolved around the recording of details that others - including Thais - take for granted. As Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak remarked, one can see oneself as a type of bricoleuse - somewhere between a handyman and a craftswoman - in the creation and transmission of knowledge (see also Lévi-Strauss 1973).  

Interpretations reflected in this dissertation contribute to more abstract debates on urbanization, food-systems and gender relations in Southeast Asia and other parts of the world. By extension, policy can perhaps be influenced in the long run.

3.1.1 Feminist Ethnography

Several authors have asked whether feminist ethnography is indeed possible (Visweswaran 1994). It appears that many of these queries and, by extension, critiques of "traditional" academic enquiry including ethnography echo earlier attempts by feminists and others to reformulate the social sciences (Haraway 1991; Harding 1986; hooks 1984, 1990; Smith 1987).

There are three main points to be made regarding this vast body of literature. First, impartiality is an ontological impossibility and we should therefore - as much as possible - put our own views forward while aiming to be fair in our portrayal of others.

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2 The verb bricoler means to perform a variety of tasks with whatever materials are available. A bricoleur (masculine) or bricoleuse (feminine) is a person who - either out of interest or necessity - conducts a variety of "odd jobs" - especially of a household nature (Petit Robert, 1993). The closest equivalent to this term in English is to "putter". 

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Second, we need to revise our understanding of experience and subcategories such as work to include the types of activities performed by women. Much of the work historically performed by subordinated social groups has been either ignored or devalorized. This has distorted the ethnographic record. Many of these omissions concern the care of the body, including cooking; work which constitutes the everyday lives of many women (Smith 1987). The third and perhaps most important point relates to the ways in which we perceive ourselves and our informants. Feminists have been guilty of making inappropriate generalizations about "sexist oppression" worldwide and have reified the category "woman" while leaving the important differences among women in the background. We need to better situate ourselves in the research context and more concisely articulate the variegated relations of power - with respect to gender, age, ethnicity or "class" - which are at play in any social setting. Escobar reminds us that "the concept of woman as the subject of liberal humanism may not be appropriate to many Third World contexts, and the refusal to separate women and men in some Third World feminisms needs to be entertained" (1995, 189).³

In the case of Thailand, many women appear to see themselves as nodes in a set of social relations rather than as "individuals" in the Western sense. This, however, has never been an obstacle for having discussions with Thais of various social "classes" about the "status of women". I spent many evenings in foodshops discussing the cross-cultural gender relations with women from Isan - Thailand's poorest region in the

³ Even though Escobar's purpose is to attack and deconstruct the creation of the Third World as a category of Western thought and discourse, he continues to use the term throughout his work.
Northeast - who were from farming backgrounds and typically had no formal education past the age of twelve or thirteen.

The ethnographic encounter, especially in an obviously cross-cultural setting, has more often than not been framed within a set of neo-colonial economic relationships and delicate sensitivities to issues of power. This requires the ethnographer to probe deeply into her or his motivations, ideologies and perceptions; something I have tried to do in this present work.

My approach to feminist research combines a post-colonialist sensitivity to and critique of ethnocentrism and searches for empirical examples which challenge traditional Western conceptualization of foodways, gender and urban life. Theoretically, the research has a heuristic purpose, to propose a new model for the study of urban social life and gender relations by looking at the “public culture” associated with cooked-food retailing. Though my approach is primarily materialist, I am aware of the poststructuralist\(^4\) problematization of “experience” and sensitivity to questions of subjectivity, language and power and try to incorporate some of these concerns into my work (Butler 1990; Weedon 1987). The writers I tend to look toward for inspiration, however, desire to communicate to an audience beyond the academy and therefore keep their texts focused on questions of survival as well as identity and discourse (Cf. Afshar and Agarwal 1989; hooks 1984, 1990; Mohanty 1991; Trinh 1989). The newer

\(^4\) Poststructuralist approaches trace their genealogy to a number of French social theorists such as Foucault and Lacan with their feminist counterparts (or critics?), Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva. Ironically, there is no term used in French for “poststructuralism” except in works translated from English.
approaches to social theory sometimes lose sight of this. As bell hooks summarizes on the “new” feminism and ethnography:

Words like other and difference are replacing less fashionable terms such as oppression, exploitation and domination (hooks 1990, 51).

My feminist approach attempts to be “grounded” and stems from a desire to understand how everyday life is organized and experienced by individuals and groups of women and men. The feminist approach advocated in this thesis is one of understanding the foundations of everyday food habits in Bangkok including the subjectivities of those who play key roles in the system, that is, the cooked-food producers themselves.

3.2 FIELDNOTES, MAPS AND TRANSCRIPTS

What is known as the ethnographic method is actually a diverse set of data gathering techniques which pay attention to what is often taken for granted (Eyles 1988; Hammersley and Atkinson 1983; Smith 1988). There is debate, however, as to what aspect of and how everyday life should be paid attention to, recorded and finally presented in finished form.

There is disagreement as to whether ethnography’s distinctive feature is the elicitation of cultural knowledge (Spradley 1980), the detailed investigation of patterns of social interaction (Gumperz 1981), or holistic analysis of societies. Sometimes ethnography is portrayed as essentially descriptive, or perhaps as a form of story-telling (Walker 1981); occasionally, by contrast, great emphasis is laid on the development and testing of theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Denzin 1978) (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, 1).

Critics of ethnographic methodology and other interpretative approaches in the social sciences dismiss qualitative and “soft” data gathering techniques as not representative of
the population as a whole and, rather, idiosyncratic to the case under study. To this, advocates of interpretative paradigms critique positivist conception of knowledge and, instead, promote the development of grounded theory "generated by a grounding in the data collected instead of arising from a priori constructs, and refined in the ongoing interaction of data and theory" (Smith 1988, 264). Smith calls for theory informed case studies which is what this dissertation attempts to achieve. Smith's position resembles Haraway's now widely cited call for situated knowledge which was previously articulated by other prominent scholars (Geertz 1983; Haraway 1991; Ley and Samuels 1978; Smith 1987).

Ethnography involves observing what is around us (participant-observation), talking with people and asking them questions in formal or informal ways (interviewing) as well as more standard social science methods such as surveys and consulting secondary sources like reports, maps and statistics. I employed all these techniques in addition to drawing sketch maps of the study site.

While conducting my two principal field visits, I kept a research diary. This entailed detailing my everyday experiences by listing the names and affiliations of the people I met, summaries of our discussions and general observations made about the people, places and things I encountered. In the first few months, my life was completely research oriented and the diary reflected this. Gradually, it became difficult to separate my research proper from general everyday life and entries began to cover a range of topics encompassing my forays and foibles into Thai society at large. This led
me to revise my strategy for the second instalment of fieldwork by including only reports on topics of direct relevance to the dissertation or future work.

3.2.1 The Diary as Research Tool

The recording of my everyday life, impressions and interpretations was a first and crucial step in the research. Particularly during the first phase of fieldwork, I was a neophyte and took very little for granted. I recorded the way the food system appeared to work and - with time - was able to refine initial crude observations. Often, however, my interpretations were completely inaccurate and it was only with the later interviews that I was able to sort out key issues. This is obviously related to the fact that I was an outsider in Bangkok, a foreigner who was gradually trying to work her way "in".

The need to learn the culture of those we are studying is most obvious in the case of societies other than our own. Here, not only may we not know why people do what they do, often we do not even know what they are doing (Hammersly and Atkinson 1983, 7).

My being foreign was not a complete impediment. In fact, when explaining to Thais my choice of thesis topic the most common response was “that’s fascinating, I would have never thought of that!” As an outsider, I did not take certain things, like the food system, for granted whereas many natives of Bangkok, particularly the younger generation, are completely accustomed to public eating and do not find it unusual in the least. Nevertheless, it would take a lifetime for me to achieve the complete knowledge of Thai foodways of average Thai people. This is where reliance on Thai colleagues and long-time scholars became indispensable.
Since I did not appear as a typical farang or “Westerner” but rather a khaek, or a person of Middle Eastern or South Asian descent, my experience as a Western researcher was somewhat different than many other researchers from North America.\(^5\) First, nearly every day I was thought to be a native Bangkok resident. I was routinely addressed in Thai and my foreign accent confused my interlocutors. Some thought I was luuk kreung or half Thai and/or else one of the many Thai citizens who trace their origins from South Asia or Iran. This afforded me certain privileges and a number of disadvantages. When I dressed in a way typical of a Thai woman of my age, class and educational level I was able to visibly blend in like an “insider”. This disguise was illusory because of my lack of knowledge and experience in Thai society - a discrepancy which sometimes caused me problems due to the expectations of individual Thais encountered.

I was also looked upon with a certain fascination by Thais who were very flattered and keen to participate in the study. Some people confided in me, knowing that I was not “really” a member of the neighbourhood and therefore a safe confidante. I established friendships with some informants which can lead to difficult situations such as jealousy when eating at another foodshop or the owner insisting that I not pay

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\(^5\) Kh\(a\)ek is a term which has many meanings. It literally means “guest” and historically refers to some of the first foreigners in the Kingdom, namely, missionaries and emissaries from India as well as Arab merchants on Muslim trade routes. It is therefore used to refer to people who trace their origins as far away as Palestine and Lebanon (khaek khaaw or “white khaeks”) and as close as Bangladesh. I have even heard the term applied to Malays and sub-Saharan Africans. The appellation is a bit archaic although still widely used. In polite educated society, it is considered slightly derogatory.
Daeng, even accompanied me on a trip outside of the city:

**FIELDNOTES 3.1 OUT OF TOWN TRIP WITH DAENG**

Went on trip with Daeng. Noticed that she is very timid and unused to dealing with making arrangements for transportation etc. Perhaps this is because she knew I was paying. It was awkward at times. She also was unable to put up with heat as much as me which I found strange since I'm the one who lives in air-conditioning. I was described as jai ron at one point. We went to the floating market in Damnoen Saduak first. Daeng was quite talkative with the woman who rowed the boat... someone who makes less money than her and is of lower status... I assume this is why she felt comfortable talking. It seems as though at other times she was feeling displaced. She doesn't get out much and is not used to acting as the 'consumer-boss'.

(THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 22, 1994)

This was the only experience I had interacting with an informant while not on their "turf". It was only when Daeng was displaced from her usual context that I was able to observe certain elements of behaviour that had not been evident before. It made an immense difference to our interactions and what I observed between Daeng and others. I was required to re-evaluate my usual interpretation of Thai women as mobile, forthcoming and confident - a trait I had perhaps wrongly associated with small foodshop owners who are most often at the bottom of the Thai social hierarchy.

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6 Daeng and I corresponded by mail from 1993 to 1994. Contact with people in Thailand through letters, including the internet, has been a way to continue with fieldwork at a distance.

7 The expression jai ron is one of the many words using the root, jai or heart, which are difficult to translate. It literally means "hot hearted" and is taken to mean impatient or one who has difficulty controlling his or her emotional outbursts. Thais consider this behaviour rude and embarrassing. The ideal Thai state of mind is jai yen or "cool hearted".

8 Daeng had never been to a floating market and was quite thrilled at the prospect of participating in this formerly traditional activity which today is almost entirely staged for tourists.
My emotional responses to fieldwork have also helped me re-evaluate my own position on the Bangkok food system. For example, my position was influenced by a certain romanticism which depicts the foodscape as convenient, inexpensive as well as a source of employment for women.

FIELDNOTES 3.2 THE INCONVENIENCE OF PUBLIC EATING

UNLESS ONE HAS A RICE-COOKER IN ONE'S ROOM SO THAT NOODLES AND SIMPLE COOKING CAN BE DONE, THIS BANGKOK FOOD-SYSTEM IS A BIT OF A PAIN I'VE DECIDED. MOST PEOPLE HAVE RICE-COOKERS IN THEIR ROOMS AND THEREFORE HAVE THE OPTION OF STAYING HOME WHEN IT RAINS FOR EXAMPLE. I DON'T AND IT'S GETTING ON MY NERVES. ALSO, WHEN I WAS AT TARA APARTMENT THERE WAS A FOODSHOP AS PART OF THE COMPLEX AND ONE COULD PHONE DOWN AND GET IT DELIVERED. MUCH MORE PRACTICAL A SITUATION THAN WHAT I HAVE NOW. PERHAPS I'LL GET A RICE-COOKER. THE FAMILY SAID THAT I CAN USE THEIR "PANTREE"9 IF I WANT TO COOK SO MAYBE I'LL GET SOME PACKAGED INSTANT NOODLES. I BELIEVE THIS IS THE PRACTICE IN THESE TYPES OF PLACES... OR AT LEAST HERE. (SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 3, 1994)

Public eating has its disadvantages and inconveniences such as those described above. Kitchenless housing makes the occasional desire for simple home-cooked meals very difficult without at least a rice cooker. Eating on the street can also lead to serious cases of food poisoning. Recent studies have been devoted to the health risks associated with Thai streetfoods (Sunanthana and Sriparat 1993; Charinya 1994). I also had the habit of downplaying the extent to which cooking is still done at home in many suburban parts of the city; particularly where households are composed of extended families.

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9 Walker (1991, 1996) defines the Thai concept of a "pantree" which is a room adjacent to the kitchen where food is sometimes prepared and dishes are kept. It is not a storage space for food, like a Western pantry. She defines the pantree as a transitional space between the traditional Thai kitchen and a modern Western kitchen.
FIELDNOTES 3.3 SUPPER AT ANGKHANA'S HOUSE

KHUN ANGKHANA, A RESEARCH ASSISTANT IN THE OFFICE, INVITED ME TO HER HOUSE IN LADPRAO. WE TOOK A SPECIAL BUS FROM CHULA TO GET THERE... IT WASN'T AIR-CONDITIONED AND HAD A TELEVISION. THE TRIP TOOK ABOUT AN HOUR AND A HALF AND THEN WE WALKED. SHE LIVES ON LADPRAO SOI 56... YOU FOLLOW A VERY NARROW PEDESTRIAN PATH AND REACH A RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBOURHOOD FULL OF PRIVATE, SINGLE FAMILY HOUSES WITH GATES AND BROKEN GLASS ON THE TOPS OF THE SURROUNDING WALLS. WE HAD DINNER THERE... HER SISTER HAD MADE IT.. HARD-BOILED EGGS IN A SWEET SAUCE, ANGKANA STIR-FRIED SOME GREEN VEGGIES IN OYSTER SAUCE AND GARLIC.. TOM YUM PLAA AND RICE. IT WAS VERY GOOD... VERY DIFFERENT THAN RESTAURANT FOOD. (TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 6, 1994)

Foodshop fare can become tiresome in addition to the attendant health risks. Although some of the best quality food can be found in the humblest eating establishments in the city as the Shell Chuan Chim guide to eating out indicates, many people agree that home cooking by a family member or a hired employee is considered by many to be the best quality.

For the purpose of this dissertation, quotes from my research diary illustrate the concrete sites of knowledge acquisition and present my vision of events and contributions of others to my understanding of Thai society. It is impossible for me as a researcher to be invisible to the reader and to speak from a distanced, disembodied perspective. Fieldnotes were sifted through, indexed, used as a basis for further work and later re-evaluated in light of more formal research findings.

10 Shell Chuan Chim literally means "Shell invites you to taste" and is a system of restaurant endorsements sponsored by Shell Corporation. A guide, similar to the Michelin Guide is also published as a guide to the city's best eating spots.
3.2.2 Maps and Sketch Maps

When I established a case study area, my first priority was to obtain existing maps to glean useful information. The most relevant maps were those produced by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration at the scale of 1:1000. These were initially traced and then my own personal blueprints were obtained in order to design a map of the neighbourhood (Figure 3.1). Despite being slightly outdated, since maps were based on site surveys in the mid-1980s, these provided a foundation for my own sketchmapping of stalls and restaurant agglomerations (see Figure 3.2).

I ventured to the Victory Monument Area to map out the location of various types of food establishments, often with an assistant but sometimes solo. This was done at different points of the morning and afternoon due to the fact that mobile vendors and those without a fixed-pitch often work different shifts. The "nighttime" foodscape was not systematically surveyed, principally because this would be a thesis in itself because it includes may establishments connected to the sex industry. This reputation also made at least one of my potential assistants refuse to continue with employment! The data gathered are therefore relevant principally for daytime eating patterns.

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11 While conducting the final phase of fieldwork, I employed two assistants and a small group of casual assistants for help with the more labour intensive quantitative survey. For the first half of this period, I employed Kamolrat Sa-Ngeam (known as Morn), an anthropologist by training. After this time, Kamolrat was no longer available and I was fortunate to meet a nurse/dietician by the name of Arporn Somjit (known as Kapook) who assisted me full time from October until mid-December, 1994. They will be referred to by the first initials of their nicknames in the interview transcripts (M and K respectively). The assistants hired on a casual basis were already employed as research assistants at CUSRI or were students at a local teacher's college and helped conduct surveys on weekends.
Figure 3.1

Victory Monument Area, Bangkok
Location Map
Figure 3.2

Food stalls and Restaurants
Rajavitee Road
(northside between Soi 4 and Victory Monument)
September 1994

Legend

- stall
- restaurant

L.S. Kwan
Nevertheless, I was able to keep track of the different "nightscape" of the site through my own personal meandering, with the help of friends, colleagues and research assistants, or as part of a group of acquaintances on an outing. A total of 71 food-establishment owners or employees were formally interviewed in 1994. These informants were divided into two groups: those who were questioned as part of a quantitative survey numbering 58 individuals and thirteen interviewed in-depth. Members of the former group were generally unknown to me prior to the interview except occasionally through casual contact whereas the latter group was established based on networks in the neighbourhood and the building of trust.

3.2.3 The Quantitative Survey

Within the Victory Monument area a set of qualitative semi-directed interviews were conducted with a sample of cooked-food vendors, restaurant owners and foodcentre operators. A quantitative survey was conducted during the day with all types of cooked-food vendors in the area with the help of five assistants. Given the fact that most small foodshop owners work by themselves and have very little time, the survey form was kept quite short and required ten or fifteen minutes of their time. My role was that of supervisor and I rotated between the assistants to be certain that sections were not being skipped over. Indeed, quality control was a problem and some of the assistants omitted important parts of the questionnaire when I was not present.

The 58 informants formally questioned as part of the quantitative survey provide basic socio-economic information related to age, place of birth, type of food sold,
customer flows and data on assistants/employees. A total of 23 questions were asked on a variety of general subjects concerning the nature of activities in the shop (see Appendix 4).

Some potential informants - often the busiest "one-woman shops" refused to be questioned due to lack of time or suspicion and others declined answering certain parts of the survey. The results are therefore skewed by excluding the smallest micro-enterprises. The qualitative interviews described below were designed to fill these gaps and provide detailed information on the day to day lives of a range of foodshop owners.

The results of the quantitative survey were coded and entered into a data base with the help of my assistant Kamolrat Sa-Ngeam. I then uploaded the data base into SPSSx after returning to Canada and was able to perform calculations and generate statistical tables and diagrams. The original questionnaire forms sometimes had to be double checked to clarify answers. The results of the survey are presented and interpreted in Chapter Five.

3.2.4 Qualitative Interviews

In addition to the 58 informants formally interviewed as part of the quantitative survey, thirteen in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted with individuals from nine foodshops. The manager of a large foodcentre was briefly interviewed but refused to

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12 General information on Bangkok's foodscape was provided by hundreds of Bangkok residents (neighbours, students, academics, government officials etc.) that I talked to over the course of 1992-94.

13 The discrepancy between number of individuals questioned and total number of foodshops is because both members of a married couple were questioned in one case (Samrit and Lek) and both mother and daughter in another case were interviewed (Daeng and Ying). All names of informants
let us question shopkeepers in the centre. I have included some information on this foodcentre. For the qualitative interviews, I chose to engage the help of an assistant to help clarify meaning - mine and that of the respondents. We spent at least an hour with each informant collecting life trajectories, documenting the history of the foodshop, asking detailed questions about budgets (except for the larger businesses which were reticent to share this information) and inquired about employees, customers and relations with authorities. Particular attention was paid to how the selling space had been secured and what the future held for the area in terms of potential real estate development (and displacement) or changing state policies affecting the business.

The interview guide (Appendix 2) varied slightly from interview to interview. Responses ranged from simple "yes," "no" or "I don't know" to long beautifully detailed treatises.

FIELDNOTES 3.4 LUUNG'S INTERVIEW

WENT BACK TO THE KWAYTIAW PHET PLACE AND INTERVIEWED THE OWNER WHO ENDED UP INTERVIEWING US. HE STARTED MAKING A SPEECH ABOUT HOW LAZY THAI PEOPLE ARE BEFORE I COULD TURN ON THE TAPE RECORDER. A CUSTOMER WAS THERE THE WHOLE TIME AT ANOTHER TABLE AND PUT IN HIS TWO CENTS WORTH. (TUESDAY OCTOBER 4, 1996)

I decided to tape record interview sessions, despite warnings by two anthropologists stating that "Thais don't like to be tape recorded". I never had any problems and always explained that, as a foreigner who did not understand Thai like a native speaker, I needed to precisely record the words of interviewees. After each interview, my assistant and I would listen to the cassettes and simultaneously translate the responses of

been changed to protect privacy.

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informants directly into either English or French. As much as possible, translation was
word for word with the Thai phrases sometimes transliterated into the text. I chose to
deal with transcription in this manner rather than hire a local secretary or assistant to
transcribe the cassettes into English or French and then work from those documents. I
did not trust another individual to fully and accurately transcribe the words of
informants and since I read Thai very slowly and with some difficulty, I preferred to
listen to the cassettes with an assistant. Through this process I was able to gain a lot of
supplementary information from my assistants about why an informant had chosen one
mode of expression rather than another. Translation and transcription was an enriching
socio-cultural learning process.

After returning to Canada, I formatted the interview transcripts to be used with a
software program called "The Ethnograph" which allows the organization of qualitative
textual information by way of assigning rubrics, or coding schemes, to the text. I found
this immensely useful. This process forced me to pay close attention to each and every
part of the 201 pages of text and decide what types of themes and sub-themes best fit
the data rather than vice-versa.

While interviewing and conducting the survey I was asked many questions in
return and exchanged information with those informants who were interested in my
research. All identifying characteristics of respondents were changed. Others did not
appreciate me meddling into their affairs or asked me very pertinent questions such as

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14 My first assistant, Kamolrat Sa-Ngeam, spoke English whereas the second, Arporn Somjit,
was fluent in French. At the time of the interview I did not yet have the software enabling me to write
the Thai alphabet on my computer. I therefore wrote in phonetics which, in any case, was more
expedient.
"how will this information help us in Thailand?" The answer to this query is more difficult and will be dealt with toward the end of this dissertation.

3.3 THE VICTORY MONUMENT AREA

The Victory Monument Area (VMA) of Bangkok accents public eating and was selected for in-depth study using the above data gathering techniques. Many other parts of the city were visited regularly to initially decide which neighbourhood to select and later supplement information from the VMA. The site includes a range of eating establishments and is a mixed-income area with a variety of land-uses: commercial, residential and institutional (schools, hospitals, government offices). The area is a microcosm of the city as it includes nearly every type of commercial environment found in Bangkok. It is known for its abundance of stalls, restaurants and foodcentres due to a diversified population including many young people and migrant workers. The field site highlights many of the phenomena of interest.

I decided to live in the VMA to better facilitate the research and experience its day to day rhythms. My transportation requirements were minimized as a result; an absolute necessity in a traffic-jammed city (Robinson 1992). Having been a resident of the neighbourhood for both periods of fieldwork, I know the site very well and have built trust with many foodshop owners. Building these relationships enhanced the quality of the interview results. I was able to trace developments in the neighbourhood over a two year period and capture the texture of some informants' lives.
3.3.1 Historical Geographical Description

Although the VMA is quite central in relation to the expanse of contemporary Bangkok, thirty years ago it was an undeveloped suburb of the city. In the 1930s, the area was largely agricultural with rice paddies and guava orchards. The niece of the founders of one of the oldest Chinese restaurants in the city located in this area provides a description:

There were gardens... guava orchards... and rice paddies, small streets, only one main road, very small. Sometimes, a vehicle passed by. There were bicycles, and samlors. So, to go and buy food we had to go to Sampeng (Chinatown) by samlor.

Some families in the VMA have owned their parcels of land for a long time and have become quite wealthy as landlords of shophouses, and now apartment tenants. One informant, Wira, is a wealthy man who with his wife, Goy, manages family property containing shophouses, an apartment and a foodcentre. The land is in fact owned by Wira's mother. “My mother is the proprietor. We're the landowners in this neighbourhood... It's been our land for a long time,” he explained. The family purchased the land 34 years before.\textsuperscript{15}

3.3.2 The Victory Monument in the Mid-1990s

Today, the VMA is a hub of the city (Figure 3.3). It is a mixed-income area with mostly residential and commercial uses and is an important transfer point for many of

\textsuperscript{15} Wira reports that his maternal grandmother, who is now well into her 90s, had initially bought the property, totalling three \textit{rai} (approximately 0.5 hectares) when it was still agricultural land for a very low price (3000 baht). Wira described his grandmother as traditional by referring that, to this day, she refuses to wear shoes. She was clearly from a Thai farming background. She divided her property evenly among her three children, one of them being Wira's mother.
the bus routes in the city. The district is busy both day and night and there are several night markets in operation near the bus stops and along Rajavitee Road. These markets become quite crowded in the evening with people on the way home from work stopping to buy clothing, take-out food or stop by with friends to eat in a street restaurant.

The new above-ground rapid-transit train is currently being built on the Phaholyothin - Phayathai Road axis cutting through the VMA. The area is simultaneously under massive real-estate redevelopment as shophouses are razed to make way for higher density housing in the form of rental apartments and condominiums. As evident in Figures 3.4 which depicts two photographs of the same street corner taken at a one and a half year interval, the VMA is in a rapid state of spatial flux.

A major part of the study site has been under the process of redevelopment for quite some time and is depicted in Figure 3.5. The land, owned by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), contains demolished public housing rowhousing where - oddly enough - people continue to live and conduct business. Three food stall owners who operate their businesses on nearby streets live in the torn-down shophouses which even includes one foodshop! This site was meant to be transformed into a public park over a decade ago and the billboards continue to advertise this (Figure 3.6). The residents were financially compensated several years ago but some still refuse to move due to the stalling of redevelopment. "For rent" signs are sometimes seen in and around the area.
Figure 3.3

Bird's Eye View of the Victory Monument Area

Taken from the Phayathai Pedestrian Bridge, 1994 (photo by Gisèle Yasmeen)
Figure 3.4 The Victory Monument Area's Southeast Corner
1992 (above) and 1994 (below)

Photos by Gisèle Yasmeen
Figure 3.5 Site Under Redevelopment in the Victory Monument Area, 1993

Figure 3.6 Proposed Park in the Victory Monument Area, 1993
One rumour in the neighbourhood was that the proposed transit scheme might pass
through the area which explains the BMA’s reticence to move ahead with the park. The
light rail system is under construction but does not pass directly through the demolished
public housing area.

3.3.3 Omissions

The quantitative data omit the activities of many late-night food stalls and bars-cum-
restaurants which are important food and drink establishments in the area and all over
the city. The omission is justified by three reasons. First, nightstalls play a primarily
recreational function in Thai society rather than service the core dietary needs of
urbanites. Nighttime eating is a world of its own in Southeast Asia and would require
separate study. Second, some nighttime eating establishments are explicitly related to
the commercial sex industry which is not the main focus of this study.\(^{16}\) Third, my
mostly young women research assistants resisted the idea of conducting interviews at
night in these types of locations which sell alcohol and are associated with prostitution.

FIELDNOTES 3.5 PROSTITUTION ON RANGNAM ROAD

WHEN I MENTIONED TO GEI THAT I WANTED TO RESEARCH SOI RANGNAM,
SHE IMMEDIATELY MENTIONED THAT THERE ARE MANY PROSTITUTES
THERE AND THAT IT’S A "DIRTY" STREET... GEI EXPRESSED CONCERN
ABOUT WALKING AROUND RANGNAM AT NIGHT... SHE SAID IT CAN BE

\(^{16}\) When colleagues ask me where I am doing my research and I answer Thailand, the most
common query is “are you studying prostitution?” Though I recognize that it is of utmost importance to
understand this industry which is exploiting, and now killing, women and children (Foundation for
Women 1995), I feel as though some of this work by foreign scholars is a bit voyeuristic (see Cohen
1982). It also has the unfortunate effect of stereotyping Thai culture as being somehow uniquely
associated with the sex-industry. The problem is universal. I wanted to draw attention to another, perhaps
more positive, aspect of the Thai urban way of life.
DANGEROUS IF WE LOOK LIKE WE'RE DOING RESEARCH. SHE SAID
"DANGEROUS FOR A WOMAN LIKE ME"... RANGNAM IS WELL KNOWN FOR
ITS BARS, CAFÉS AND PRIVATE MEMBER CLUBS. (MONDAY SEPTEMBER 5,
1994)

A study of the foodscape at night would require different research methods. An effort
would have to be made to be less conspicuous. This methodological issue is an
indication of spatial perceptions and gendered barriers surrounding urban space. The
relationship between the sex industry and Bangkok's foodscape is a subject warranting
separate study.

This chapter has detailed the methodological approach used to conduct field
research and analyze results. Ethnography, especially in its feminist varieties, was
critically examined and I explained the ways in which this methodology was reworked
to study Bangkok's foodscape. The Victory Monument Area was introduced and
justified as the principal case study. The following chapters delve into the literature on
Thai food praxis as ensconced in gender relations and urban socio-spatial change and
then provide the reader with the empirical results of the research.
Chapter Four

THAI AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN FOOD SYSTEMS

Villagers in Thailand, as well as parts of Burma, Malaysia, Bali, and Vietnam, see themselves as physically and psychically made up of rice. The Christian God made man and woman in His own image; Southeast Asians think in the same general way, but their self-image is one of rice. For them, rice is literally 'the bones of the people'.

- Jeremy MacClancy Consuming Culture

This chapter begins by explaining the historical foundations of Thai and Southeast Asian food-systems and ends with a prospectus on the future of public eating. First (Section 4.1), the discussion focuses on the Thai diet and eating habits including the symbolic significance of food. Following this, Section 4.2 outlines how the food-system has been modified following the penetration of local and international capital into agricultural production and food processing. Attention is paid to patterns of food retailing in Bangkok, including the system of public markets, and the changes which have taken place in food distribution over the past 20 years. I also discuss the health and environmental consequences of changes in the food-system.

Part 4.3 identifies the various reasons for the emergence of public eating in Bangkok. Subsequently, I look at household budget data, secondary sources and informants' reports to build a compendium of "everyday food strategies and contrast these patterns with a detailed description of the city's elite foodscape (Section 4.4). The chapter concludes with thoughts on the future of streetfoods in urban Thailand and the recent trend to "museumify" public eating in larger-scale developments.
4.1 RICE, FISH AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN EATING

One of the defining characteristics of Southeast Asia as a region is the fact that its diverse societies share a few basic characteristics related to diet. The primary factor is dependence on rice as a staple. Most Southeast Asian languages equate the word for rice with food and or eating. Indeed the region is considered home to the domestication of rice and its wet-rice agricultural system has been looked on with fascination because of its efficiency (Bray 1986), complex irrigation systems (Lansing 1991) and the ability to support high population densities (Geertz 1963). Historically, there were hundreds of varieties of rice in Southeast Asia but much of that diversity has been lost in the past 100 years - likely due to “modernization” and the standardization of production (McGee 1992). Several varieties of glutinous rice (white, red and black) are still cultivated and used extensively in Northeastern food and in sweets. In general, upland rice tends to be more diverse in both its variety and methods of cultivation (McGee 1995).

4.1.1 The Thai Diet

Rice is so important to Southeast Asians that it is an almost sacred substance associated with life essence (Thai=khwan). As explained by Jane Hanks, femininity - specifically women's bodies - is associated with rice and with this essence (Hanks 1960).

Thus the khwan is sustained by, and its incarnation grows from, the physical nourishment of a woman's body. What is to sustain it after a woman's milk gives out? Rice, because rice, too, is nourishment from a

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1 In Thai, khwaaw means rice but also means to eat when combined with kin (kin khaaw, literally "eat rice").
maternal figure. "Every grain is part of the body of Mother Rice (Mae Posop) and contains a bit of her khwan." When weaning is to rice, there is no break in female nurture for body and khwan (Hanks 1960, 299).

Indeed, residual pre-Buddhist fertility rituals persist in the Thai countryside and principally involve women during rice planting. Based on research in central Thailand in the 1950s, Sharp and Hanks write: "In November, as the padi kernels begin to form, a woman goes into the fields with offerings for the Rice Mother. This deity is so beautiful in her pregnancy that a man, carried away by her charm, would frighten her with his advances. Consequently it must be a woman who brings the sour-tasting fruits that pregnant women prefer and invokes her..."(Sharp and Hanks 1978, 132). Aspects of these rituals are shared with neighbouring societies. Keyes has thus characterized the Southeast Asian region as subscribing to the cult of "women, earth and rice" (Keyes 1977, 132).²

Fish is also a substantial element in the Southeast Asian diet and a distinguishing characteristic of the region is the preparation of spicy fermented fish paste which is served as a condiment (Thai= namprík).³ The Thai dependence on fish and rice is represented in the often quoted "In the fields there is rice; in the water, fish" which is a stone inscription in Sukhothai attributed to the 14th century monarch, Ramkamhaeng (Van Esterik 1992; Walker 1991).

In addition to rice and fish in some form, the villagers of the region also eat a variety of vegetables, including cucumbers, squashes, certain types of aquatic

² Others have referred to this regional characteristic as the "rice soul".

³ In Malay and Bahasa Indonesia, this pounded mixture is known as sambal or belachan (McGee 1995). Fermented fish paste has a few basic ingredients but prepared differently by every cook.
plants, cabbages, cauliflower, beans, and some root vegetables such as yams (Keyes 1977, 127).

Thai cuisine also includes a great variety of vegetables, a number introduced by the Chinese, and the characteristic fragrant herbs and pungent spices. The familiar combination of fish sauce (a Chinese invention), garlic, lime juice and chilies introduced by the Portuguese in the 16th century is considered the essence of Thai flavour although tamarind (sweet and sour varieties), palm sugar, lemon grass and galangal also play a prominent role. Insects are not overlooked as sources of food, especially in the impoverished Northeast (Isan) but also in central Thailand although this is in decline (Desai and Prapimporn 1995). Middle class Thai find insect eating aesthetically repugnant and prefer to use the bottled essence of water beetle (maeng da) to flavour some dishes. This replaces the necessity of pounding the large pregnant female bug in a mortar and pestle (Walker 1991). Fastidious Thai cooks prefer the authentic method of preparation.

4.1.2 Traditional Retailing

Prior to the introduction of the automobile and other forms of land-based transport in central Thailand, food retailing most often took place on canals both for intra-urban distribution of food and to bring food from the rural areas to the city (Chira 1986, 9; McGee 1995). Upcountry markets were usually conducted on land (Keyes 1996). Floating markets (talad nam) were the dominant type of food market in the central plain and continue to operate today in parts of Thonburi and the more well known Damnoen Saduak in Ratchaburi province catering mostly to tourists. Land-based markets (talad
 selling fresh produce, meat and fish have replaced the quintessential central Thai form of retailing (Chira 1986, 9). Land-based markets are considered by many to be originally a Chinese commercial form; "in those days the Chinese were the pioneers of street-living hence the talad or food markets usually resembled the fresh food market pattern in China (Chira 1986, 9 citing Crawfurd). Skinner (1957), however, details the involvements of Chinese merchants from water-based living and selling places to the eventual preponderance of land-based shophouses.

Margaret Crawfurd identified and studied 203 fresh food (or “wet”) markets in Bangkok-Thonburi in the period from 1969-70 (Crawfurd 1977a and b). At the time, 160 of these were registered with the municipal government while some of the remainder were pending registration. Most vendors in the markets sold fresh vegetables, groceries, fish and meat and Table 4.1 provides a statistical breakdown of the sellers studied. Crawfurd demonstrated that three-quarters of the markets were used directly by households to provide the family with daily food as opposed to restaurants and other food businesses. Two-thirds of the markets had fewer than 100 sellers and served a local clientele. Her work criticized the envisioned planning at the time which favoured the development of automobile-oriented shopping centres as opposed to the existing efficient pedestrian neighbourhood markets (1977a, 61). In the late 1950s, an American consulting firm designed the 1960 plan which proposed U.S. style

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4 Until the early 1970s, part of the area now under the jurisdiction of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) was known as Bangkok-Thonburi. Thonburi is the community facing Bangkok on the west bank of the Chao Phraya river.
decentralized integrated shopping complexes. These recommendations were adopted by the Bangkok-Thonburi administration of the time.

Table 4.1

DISTRIBUTION OF GOODS SOLD IN FOOD MARKETS
Bangkok-Thonburi 1969-70

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of food sold</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fresh vegetables</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groceries (dry goods)</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh Fruit</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pork</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poultry</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Crawfurd 1977a, page 25. These data only pertain to sellers on paeng (selling platforms) and do not include those selling unofficially adjacent to markets.5

Twenty years later, Chira (1986) counted 218 public retail markets in Bangkok but apparently did not consider unregistered markets. Of these registered markets, 204 were privately owned and managed while 15 were run under the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA). As Chira and Crawfurd before him clearly explained, the local government is involved in the sanitary practices and design of privately owned markets. Inspections are conducted regularly. Again, most of the markets were located at the neighbourhood level and the author stated that at the time of data collection in 1982, "new supermarkets in the new department stores were not yet established" (Chira 1986,

5 Crawfurd did not consider the sale of flowers, cooked foods, desserts and sweets, restaurants and "others" (1977a, 25).
The number and diversity of food markets between 1969 and 1982 had proliferated due to Bangkok's rapidly growing population. Chira and his team identified the role of the private sector as crucial in providing Bangkok residents with locally produced inexpensive food. They also provide detailed socio-economic characteristics of market sellers.

Today, Bangkok continues to have the same basic system of public markets but - as the next section argues - élite shopping practices now include regular trips to North American style supermarkets. Walker's Food Consumption Survey (FCS, 1990) indicated that 88% of Bangkok residents had shopped at supermarkets with 80% and 82% stating that they had frequented local markets and stores respectively. The city has one large wholesale market (*pakklong talad*) which supplies many of the smaller neighbourhood *talad* with fresh fruit, vegetables and flowers (Warren and Lloyd 1989, 48-9). Fish and meat are obtained from government controlled marketing boards whereas poultry is less regulated by the state, creating a window of opportunity for agri-business conglomerates to supply chickens and ducks (see Section 4.2).

The following vignette of one of my experiences in a neighbourhood market describes the rhythm of transactions. I joined my informant, Daeng, who goes every morning to obtain supplies for the foodshop she operates with her aunt and adopted mother, Ying.

**FIELDNOTES 4.1: EARLY MORNING AT SAY YUT MARKET**

*Woke up at 4 am, everything was dark and I was exhausted. The street stall near my place still had customers at a few tables.*
Mostly men drinking whiskey with their food but also a few women. Made it to Daeng's shop at 5 am sharp. Her mother was already up and had prepared a shopping list which I obtained when we were through. There were a couple of men hanging around whom Daeng evidently knew. I asked about them and apparently they work as security guards in the apartment across the street. They help lift heavy loads and keep an eye on the shop at night.

The two of us walked with her blue shopping basket and when we arrived at the small market area many of the vendors had not come yet. We went to a vegetable stand which Daeng usually shops at and I took a picture. I asked the woman where she gets the veggies and she answered "Rangsit"...she also lives there. I asked her what time she wakes up in the morning - 1 a.m. was the answer! She asked if I'd ever been to Rangsit and was very friendly. I bought some small bananas from her. We then went and left Daeng's basket behind another stall... she leaves it there even when it's full of purchases... she says nobody will take anything. Daeng knows most of the vendors since she's been going there every morning for five years. We went to all her regular stops. For example, a husband and wife chicken vending team (man looks Chinese and woman looks like Khon Isan), a curry paste and coconut milk stall in a covered part of the market (two men), various fish places and another veggie stand. Also, a special stall that sells spices etc. I took about four pictures and felt ridiculous but always asked people's permission and they smiled and seemed amused. I promised to give them pictures. The monks started making their rounds around 6 am... usually interspersed - many with assistants who put the food in buckets. I wanted to take a picture but wasn't sure if it was proper. Daeng said "no problem" and offered to make an offering so I could take a picture more confidently. We both ended up making merit and a vendor took the picture. This specialized food vending woman sells "kits" which cost 15 baht containing one lotus flower, one package of incense, a curry and a soup (in plastic bags) and a little cup of rice which one empties into the rice bowl... as well as a mini bottle of drinking water. Quite an experience.

I was amazed at the number of men working in the market. I also noticed a lot of semi-prepared items such as curry pastes which I figured people like Daeng make themselves. Daeng buys Khawtom at the market every day for her niece's breakfast.

(Sunday September 11, 1994)

That morning, Ying had asked Daeng to purchase the following supplies:
Shopping List

1 maeng da (giant water beetle)
Frying chicken
3 kgs of fish for frying
10 pomfret (a small round fish)
10 baht worth of spices to make gaeng som
2 kgs of "ready to eat" fish (pla ré)
10 baht worth of small green eggplants
Vegetables to boil and make nam prik
Pork for nam tok
Sliced pork
Pork ribs
1.5 kgs of lotus stems
1.5 kgs of coconut
plastic bags, 6x11cm and 6x14cm
small bags for sauce
cauliflower, 1kg
tofu, 3 blocks
cinnamon, 2 packages
oil, 1kg

Daeng spent more than 1000 baht ($50) that morning at the market, not including the price of the hired tuk-tuk. Small foodshops operate on a cost-recovery basis, most daily earnings go toward the purchase of raw materials and the support of family members. Food and the education of younger siblings are expensive. Daily incomes are therefore quite high but do not necessarily result in the producers accumulating wealth for themselves. This corresponds to Tinker’s findings (1987). Detailed monthly budgets for Daeng and other food sellers are included in Chapter Six and Appendix Six.

The above vignette clearly illustrates that neighbourhood markets involve both male and female entrepreneurs who work in the middle of the night to get the food ready for dawn. Relations between market vendors and customers are based on regular

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6 Some items on the list did not specify quantity. Daeng knew through experience how much to buy for the day.
purchases and trust. The markets sell semi-prepared items such as curry pastes and coconut milk - labour saving devices for both housewives and foodshop owners. As the reference to the monks indicates, even making religious offerings has been commodified so that local residents can easily purchase “kits” to give alms and make merit. The creativity of Thai food micro-entrepreneurs incorporates traditional beliefs and religious practices.

4.1.3 Supply Linkages: Where the Food Comes From

Crawfurd paid considerable attention to the ways in which Bangkok food markets obtained their supplies and the sources of this food. She remarked on the decline of water-based transport in favour of trucking (1977b, 108). There were great divergences in the patterns of supply depending on the commodity being studied. Fish, for example, must be delivered as quickly as possible from ports on the eastern seaboard in order to maintain its freshness. Fruit came from points all over the country and was highly dependent on seasonality. Market gardening of vegetables on the urban periphery was also supplemented by produce grown in more distant parts of the country. Recently, this has taken on even greater importance as agricultural land is rapidly swallowed up by land developers (Greenberg 1994).

More recently, Korff described the supply linkages for Khlong Toey market which is in the city’s largest slum district near the port. The market is known for its cheap goods. Table 4.2 chronologically summarizes activities of this large market.
Many of the traders studied by Korff go to the central wholesale market (*pakklong talad*) between two and three in the morning to get fresh fruit and vegetables. They then sell these goods in the types of neighbourhood markets described in the previous section. Other suppliers make their deliveries by truck in the late evening after 9pm. The peak selling periods in this neighbourhood market, like most others in the city, is between 4 and 7 am and then late afternoon between 3 and 6pm. The city's poor tend to shop for their families in the afternoon because supplies are less expensive at this time. This is a generalized pattern. Korff adds that many vendors from Khlong Toey also go directly to the provinces (such as Nakorn Pathom) in the middle of the night to

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**Table 4.2**

**24 HOURS AT KHLONG TOEY MARKET**

Supply linkages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME OF DAY</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01:00</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02:00</td>
<td>Wholesale market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04:00</td>
<td>Retail market peak begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07:00</td>
<td>Retail market peak ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00</td>
<td>Retail market peak begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:00</td>
<td>Retail market peak ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20:00</td>
<td>Night foodstalls begin sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21:00</td>
<td>Trucks arrive with food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22:00</td>
<td>Unloading of truck contents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

obtain supplies (Korff 1989, 68). This is cheaper than going to the wholesale market because a system of intermediaries is bypassed.

4.2 THE (POST)INDUSTRIAL PALATE

The term "industrial palate" refers to the growing share of value-added (often mass-produced) food products in the diet of the average consumer (Salih et al. 1988, 4). Urbanites figure prominently in this shift from family-based food production to the commodification of "people's most basic requirement -- food -- from a part of their place to a placeless industrial commodity" (MacLeod 1989, 4).

Following Goody (1982), it is clear that as a society industrializes and urbanizes it becomes up-rooted from its agricultural way-of-life and food becomes a commodity purchased from the market. With the involvement of both women and men in the paid labour force, an opportunity for the sale of value-added (ie. processed) food arises. This demand can be fulfilled in several ways - for example, through neighbourhood catering networks or the hiring of a cook. However, it is in the interests of large-scale business to direct the consumer's spending to a standardized range of value-added goods, usually those manufactured and packaged in order to extend shelf-life. The classic theatre for the sale of these goods is the supermarket where highly processed foods are the most vigorously promoted due to their profitability.
4.2.1 **Social and Environmental Costs**

The shift in the composition of the consumer's shopping basket is closely integrated with the emergence of capital-intensive agriculture, agri-business and the edging out of the small farmer which results in lower overall production costs. It is said this also results in a decline in the quality of agricultural output, loss of species diversity and severe environmental damage (Cf. Santisuda 1990).

To increase yields, for example, farmers in the provinces have been using massive quantities of pesticides and herbicides on their horticultural produce which have detrimental consequences on human health and the environment (Santisuda 1990).

Suntaree Komin explains:

> Testing of pesticide residue in food has shown that in the vegetable samples tested, 40-90% of the sample contained detectable levels of pesticide. (Suntaree 1989, 113)

Vegetable farmers in the north have been experiencing severe health problems due to the excessive use of a myriad of chemical pesticides (Santisuda 1993). The insidious aspect of this is that most consumers of these vegetables and fruit are unaware of the health risks involved. Testing has revealed that a high percentage contain more than maximum recommended levels of chemicals (Shankar 1992). However, a small group of informed consumers have begun to protest by demanding organically-grown produce. The raison d'être of Tamada, an organic food store in Chiang Mai is an example of this.

> [M]ost customers are middle-class and well-educated people who are also concerned about the environment. They are willing to buy products that are a bit more expensive than those commonly sold in the market (Chanyaporn 1992).
The managers of the cooperatively-owned Tamada predict that prices will drop below those of non-organic produce in the long-run if the food is mass produced. This is due to the fact that pesticides are not used. Instead, nets are used to keep vermin at bay.

A more difficult problem to be dealt with concerns the issue of lead contamination of food due to exhaust fumes. Toxic emissions from vehicles in Bangkok make their way into the food chain. Babies in Bangkok are born with dangerously high levels of lead in their blood (Suntaree 1989, 108-9). This problem will not be resolved in the near future as Bangkok's development continues to be highly automobile-oriented. Local newspapers reported a few years ago that at least 900 new vehicles per day found their way onto Bangkok's roadways (Vespy 1993).

4.2.2 Profitable Palates: New Food Retailing

Due to its spectacular levels of economic and demographic growth, "the Asian food market could be worth over $450 billion a year by the end of the century" (The Economist 1993, 15). "Asians" are also seen as a profitable target population by large food multi-nationals because of their brand consciousness: "At the luxury end of the market, especially, Asian consumers seem to be more conscious of the snob value of brands than their Western counterparts."(The Economist 1993, 16).

The appearance and diffusion of supermarkets, related retail outlets such as convenience stores and the newest addition, the mega-wholesale outlet (e.g. Costco, Makro and/or Wal-Mart) is a burgeoning feature of the Asian urban landscape.

In Taiwan the number of convenience stores, supermarkets and hypermarkets rose from 2,000 in 1986 to over 3,000 in 1991 as thousands
of mom-and-pop noodle shops disappeared. Supermarkets are setting up in China too. Hong Kong's Dah Chong Hong has recently opened stores in southern China, as has Dairy Farm's Wellcome. As retailing is still in its infancy in much of Asia, space on many supermarket shelves is up for grabs. The food groups that capture it can flaunt their brands (*The Economist* 1993, 16).

The above remarks hold true for urban Thailand where convenience stores such as 7-11 have made impressive inroads in the past few years. It would be spurious, however, to associate these changes simply to the "convergence" of consumption habits or the infiltration of "Third World" economies by foreign, especially Western and Japanese, capital. More precisely in the case of Thailand, locally-owned conglomerates seem to control the largest share of the domestic industrial palate and have expanded their operations to China and other parts of Southeast Asia. The domination of local conglomerates is a general feature of the food industry in Asia (*Korea Newsreview* 1996; McGee 1995).

Take Thailand's Charoen Pokphand, Asia's biggest animal-feed supplier and the country's largest conglomerate, with sales of about $5 billion. Boasting that "from the farmyard to the dinner table it's Charoen Pokphand all the way", the company, which was set up by Chinese emigrants, produces feed for and then raises and processes broiler chickens. It also handles prawns and pigs. One of its greatest assets is a network of feedmills and poultry-processing plants sprinkled across China. These and Charoen Pokphand's fast-food joint ventures with America's Kentucky Fried Chicken should allow it to cash in on the country's culinary revolution (*The Economist* 1993, 17).

Charoen Pokphand (CP) not only owns the rights to most of the KFC's in Thailand, it also controls the 7-11's, numerous motorcycle and automobile manufacturing operations

---

7 Convergence refers to the "apparent gradual unification of global consumption norms towards an evolving global standard" (MacLeod 1989, 3).
and is the major shareholder of Telecom Asia. CP is one of the biggest foreign investors in China and is now apparently the biggest Asian multinational (Keyes 1996). Interestingly, however, it continues to supply small cooked-food vendors with ducks and chickens (see Chapter 6).

Convenience stores are new institutions which have multiplied rapidly in the last ten years. They are generally open 24 hours and sell household products, Western and Thai fast-food and fountain drinks. Customers include school children, the increasing number of people working late and commuters (The Nation 1992, B1-B3). The near grid-lock traffic situation in Bangkok has been identified as contributing to the success of convenience stores which are located on major routes. Managers of some of these stores (such as 7-11 and Central Mini-Mart) claim that their clientele includes lower-income groups as well as wealthier urbanites.8

The expansion of the wealthier classes and accompanying automobile culture has resulted in the proliferation of scores of large shopping centres throughout the Bangkok Metropolitan Region.

Last year, shopping centres posted Bt78 billion in revenue, representing about 30 per cent of the entire Bt264 billion retail industry.

Of the Bt78 billion, department stores and supermarkets dominated and accounted for Bt50 million, while small retail stores took Bt20 billion and fast-food outlets and restaurants about Bt8 billion. (The Nation, 1993, B16)

8 I was told by one of my informants of an incident concerning a 7-11 in the Victory Monument Area. Apparently, CP had threatened an entrepreneur in the neighbourhood who wanted to open up rival convenience store - "AM/PM" - which has a less expensive franchise and is cheaper to operate depending on the licensing agreements negotiated. The family in question was strong-armed into opening a 7-11 because otherwise CP would have opened in close proximity at its own expense to drive the competition out of business.
These new cathedrals of commerce are expected to erode traditional retailing businesses and ultimately carve out 50 per cent of market share according to a Siam Retail Development executive quoted in the above article. Table 4.3 lists the principal shopping plazas of Bangkok in the 1980s. Since that time, many mega-malls have appeared - especially on the urban periphery (Asia Magazine 1992).

FIELDNOTES 4.2 THE MALL, NONTHABURI

WENT TO "THE MALL" SHOPPING CENTRE IN NONTHABURI TO SEE THE FAO EXPO WHICH WAS SO THOROUGHLY ADVERTISED ON RADIO THAILAND. GOT THERE AFTER TWO BUSES AND MUCH WALKING AND WAS QUITE DISAPPOINTED. THERE WERE KIOSK-TYPE DISPLAYS, ALL IN THAI, BUT SEEMINGLY NO REPRESENTATIVES FROM FAO -- PATHETIC.

I WALKED THROUGH THIS GIGANTIC MALL (SIX OR SEVEN STORIES). THERE IS A HUGE AMUSEMENT PARK FOR CHILDREN ON THE VERY TOP FLOOR. THERE IS ALSO A WATERSLIDE PARK AND SWIMMING POOL ON THE TOP FLOOR. (SUNDAY OCTOBER 18, 1992)

Supaluck Umpujh, is Executive Vice-President of The Mall Group Co., Ltd. Her father began the company which is now the second largest department store operator in Thailand. There are eight locations in the city some spanning an area of 300,000 m². The ninth is currently being designed. All "The Mall" complexes include amusement parks, waterparks, and ice-skating rinks (Licuanan 1995, 47).

Some mega-malls, like the one described above, resemble the "West Edmonton Mall" which focus on leisure activities (Cf. Hopkins 1991a and b). Nearly all have extensive and elaborate foodcentres and food floors featuring a full range of Thai, Chinese and Western foods. To some, this may appear like a straight forward process of "Westernization". On closer examination, however, it seems as though Thai cultural
practices, including foodways, are being recontextualized and are far from being
"malled" out of existence. Rather, the context in which Thai and Sino-Thai foods have
habitually been sold, such as small foodshops, is facing intense competition from new
institutions such as foodcentres.

Table 4.3
SHOPPING CENTRES AND DEPARTMENT STORES
Bangkok 1970s and 1980s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of shopping centre/dep’t. store</th>
<th>Founded (year)</th>
<th>Size of estab. (m²)</th>
<th>Dep’t store / other main enterprise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pathumwan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amarin Plaza</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>14,300</td>
<td>Sogo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Bell</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>8,540</td>
<td>Big Bell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Chidlom</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>13,650</td>
<td>Central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galleries Lafayette</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Peninsula Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahboonkrong</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>Tokyu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peninsula Plaza</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Peninsula Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ploenchit Arcade</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Foodland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robinson Radamri</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>10,800</td>
<td>Robinson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siam Centre</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>28,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mall Radamri</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>18,888</td>
<td>The Mall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radamri Arcade</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>28,785</td>
<td>Thai Daimaru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phranakorn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangkok Co-op</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banglamphu Centre</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Burapha</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>2,677</td>
<td>Central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danh Hua Saeng</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garufa Plaza</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merry Kings</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>4,876</td>
<td>Merry Kings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New World</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>New World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nightingale</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratprasong Centre</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of shopping centre/dep't. store</td>
<td>Founded (year)</td>
<td>Size of estab. (m²)</td>
<td>Dep't store / other main enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phyathai</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Plaza</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>16,372</td>
<td>World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hollywood Mall</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Pata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indra</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>18,900</td>
<td>Indra Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merry Kings</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>Merry Kings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panthip Plaza</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1,823</td>
<td>Excel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robinson</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Robinson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>22,100</td>
<td>Metro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phrakanong</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia Phrakanong</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>3,887</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangkok Co-op</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Landmark</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robinson</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai Daimaru</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>3,312</td>
<td>Thai Daimaru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bang Rak</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Silom</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>11,311</td>
<td>Central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River City</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>20,804</td>
<td>Royal Orchid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robinson</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>Robinson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charn Issara</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samphanthawong</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathay Yaowarat</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>3,186</td>
<td>Cathay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daifha</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maeukham</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bang Kapi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Ramkamphaeng</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramkamphaeng Centre</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mall Ramkamphaeng</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>14,000</td>
<td>The Mall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangkok Noi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangkok Co-op</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pata Pingklao</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>Pata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klong San</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangkok Co-op</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Ladja</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>13,352</td>
<td>Central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bang Khen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Plaza</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>106,000</td>
<td>Central/Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thonburi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathay Wongwien</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Cathay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mall Wongwien</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>The Mall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Korff (1990, 222-23).
Much of Bangkok's retailing activity in the food-sector is clearly expanding from public places such as streets and streetfronts to privately owned and controlled indoor places, for example, shopping centres and new air-conditioned restaurants and in foodcentres and food floors. This reflects the tastes of the emerging well-heeled classes. The spatial shift in public eating - as street restaurants are forced to close to make way for more automobiles - has been bemoaned by one of the city's restaurant critics. He cites an example near Yaowaraj:

> it was one of the few parts of the city where a large number of people gathered spontaneously, met friends, and had a good time: the kind of thing that is always welcomed and cultivated by those who are administering a properly-run city, and that gives the city a good name among visitors. (Bangkok Post 1993)

Thai urban streetscapes are under threat by these developments. Public eating is increasingly taking place in privately-owned space which is more or less open to the public. On the other hand, shopping centre and department store owners argue that their food services are more hygienic and adhere to the labour code. Regarding food safety, recent articles have dismissed this claim, at least for "pre-prepared" food packages in supermarkets which are neatly presented on foam covered in plastic wrap (Matichon 1994). Information on the enforcement of labour standards is more difficult to obtain. Food-centre and shopping plaza managers reported that foodshop owners on their premises make their own arrangements for staffing and often hire family members. I would find it unlikely that family members were paid minimum wage or other benefits associated with the labour code.

Evidence in this thesis suggests that as the gap continually widens between the rich and poor in Bangkok, we are witnessing the emergence of a dual food-system
resembling trends identified in neighbouring Malaysia (Salih et al. 1988).\(^9\) The wealthy have a range of choices available to them in terms of eating arrangements. These consist of eating food prepared by servants at home, catering networks, neighbourhood foodshops and foodcentres, suburban ‘food gardens’ - large restaurants with a sala thai\(^{10}\) design - as well as expensive restaurants. The second system is for the poor, including those who actually transport, sell and prepare the food. Here, the range of eating establishments is limited. Their eating places include their humble living quarters and shops, streetfoods and, in some cases, meals provided by their employers. As summarized by Askew and Paritta:

> The shopping centres of the outer areas symbolize the development of a newer culture based on modern convenience, shopping and transportation by private motor vehicle. At the same time, the neighbourhood markets and the cheap street-side restaurants in the sois and more congested neighbourhoods point to the persistence of a less modernized life-style reflecting the continuing significance of public life in less formally regulated public spaces, especially for the urban poor (Askew and Paritta 1992, 164).

The inhabitants of these far from separate worlds often converge, not only because of transactions between vendor and customer or maid and employer but in the many intermediary eating venues which cater to a wide range of income groups. The above representation, then, requires some qualification.

The shift in retailing structure is intricately related with the growing availability of convenience and ready-to-eat foods. For Taiwan, this has been identified as related

\(^9\) Malaysia, however, has preserved and enhanced its streetfoods.

\(^{10}\) A sala thai is a traditional pavilion in which community activities customarily take place. Roofs are sloped in the manner of Thai architecture and the entire structure is usually made of wood.
to the high number of women in the workforce (Bangkok Post 1993, 20) and the same
certainly holds true for Thailand.

4.3 WHY EAT OUT?
The added contemporary impetus for buying prepared food in Thailand and Southeast
Asia comes from rapid urbanization and industrialization and concomitant changes in
family structure and the roles played by women. As Suntaree Komin explains, socio-
-economic change has completely altered the food-system:

The decline of family functions is clearly visible in Bangkok. As there is
an increase of women working outside households, this trend is almost
inevitable. Family functions have been taken over by various specialized
organizations. For example, working mothers leave their household
chores to the servants. Meals preparation (sic) are taken care of either by
servants, or by subscription to the meal-catering services (/pinto/),\(^1\) or by
buying those ready-made foods each day on the way home (Suntaree
1989, 86).

Suntaree is primarily describing middle-class food habits as the poor in Bangkok can ill
afford to hire servants. However, the general explanation for the growth of public
eating is sound, that is, the changing roles and occupations of women. Also, with large
numbers of men coming to the city to find employment - especially those who are
separated from their families - there is an increased demand for prepared food
emanating from the male population; a trend evidenced elsewhere (Klopfer 1993; Savara
and Everett 1991). There are several other inter-related explanations for the general

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\(^1\) *Pinto* is the Thai expression for a “tiffin” or tiered lunch kit which is commonly used throughout
Asia. It has an agricultural origin and is referred to by Hauck et al. (1958). They describe how lunch
was often transported to the fields in this three or four tiered metal container.
emergence of public eating in Bangkok, namely: the labour-intensivity of Thai cuisine; demographic change; kitchenless housing; and general "cultural" preferences.

**Labour-intensive cuisine:** The preparation of Thai food involves a lot of chopping, grinding, pounding and thus takes a lot of time and effort to prepare. It also involves the combination of many ingredients. Paradoxically, however, noodles are easy to prepare yet noodle shops are the most ubiquitous and highly frequented eating establishments in Thai society. This may be because they were originally part of the "coolie food-system" catering to migrant Chinese labourers. People rarely cook noodles at home except for the packaged type, which - except for "Mama's" brand - are not considered very tasty. Nevertheless, the labour-intensivity of Thai food preparation is a determinant in the development of Bangkok's food-system.

**Demographic Change in Bangkok:** Since World War II, migrant workers, students and others have come to Bangkok to earn a living or study. Many come on their own without their families. According to the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), a total of 892,000 people migrated to Bangkok or the five surrounding provinces of the Extended Bangkok Metropolitan Region between 1975 and 1990 (Table 4.4). Government figures grossly underestimate actual migration because temporary residents of Bangkok who return to their homes in the countryside for part of the year are not counted and number in the tens of thousands (Keyes 1996). These people either live in housing where it is impossible if not difficult to cook (see below) due to lack of space or find it inconvenient to cook for just one or two people. Most of these migrants are poor and in need of income which leads to the opening of a
small enterprise such as a foodshop. Vendors and their employees are willing to work long, hard hours for very little in the way of financial compensation.

Table 4.4

MIGRATION TO THE EXTENDED BANGKOK METROPOLITAN REGION
1975-1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>BMA</th>
<th>Five surrounding provincesa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1975-80</td>
<td>190,000</td>
<td>96,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-85</td>
<td>184,000</td>
<td>122,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-90</td>
<td>149,000</td>
<td>151,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Refers to Nonthaburi, Samut Prakan, Pathum Thani, Nakhon Pathom, and Samut Sakhon

Kitchenless housing: Dolores Hayden in *The Grand Domestic Revolution* (1981) described how 19th century American apartment buildings were often kitchenless with a central cafeteria or dining room frequented by tenants during mealtimes. A similar trend has emerged in late 20th century Bangkok with many apartment blocks typically providing one-room suites (see Figure 4.1) that do not contain cooking facilities. *In toto*, more than 20% of Bangkok's housing stock is kitchenless - this can be inferred from the fact that 23.4% of the city's housing stock consists of rooms; the majority of which do not have cooking facilities (NSO 1990). This is attributed to the ease of purchasing meals but also because cooking is prohibited in apartments to prevent odours and hygienic problems. At the same time, people do not have the space to entertain at home. Thais do not usually invite guests to their homes unless they have lavish
furnishings and a beautiful home (Walker 1991). Since nearly a quarter of Bangkok's housing stock is comprised of rooms and 12.6% is classified as "other", it is possible that nearly half the population of the city does not have access to a full kitchen.

Table 4.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF DWELLING (% OF HOUSING STOCK)</th>
<th>Greater Bangkok</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Detached House</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room or rooms</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Row house</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other types</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


"Luung (meaning "uncle")\(^{12}\), a 60 year old duck noodle shop owner, explains the relationship:

People like to eat out because they can't cook in the apartments. There are only bedrooms so they have to buy already-prepared food. Therefore, as I explained earlier, there are many foodshops and vendors. At the beginning of this soi until the end there are at least ten businesses.

Usually, a foodshop selling made-to-order food (ahaan tam sang) is located on the ground floor of the apartment building. Tenants can phone the shop to place orders - usually for noodles or fried rice - and sometimes can eat in the shop if it is large enough and provides tables and chairs. Typically however, the vendor and her or his family will live in the shop rather than use it as an eat-in establishment. It is more

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\(^{12}\) Uncle and Aunt are polite terms of address when referring to an older person in an informal context.
common for tenants to have their food delivered directly to their rooms after placing an order by phone. Many landlords design the suites without kitchen facilities to prevent residents from preparing food in their rooms. The pungent odors of Thai cooking are considered inappropriate in high density housing. Despite these regulations, rented-room dwellers often use rice-cookers to steam rice and make other simple dishes. A hot-plate or kettle can also be used to make packaged-noodle soup. The wealthier increasingly own microwaves. A conversation between Luung and one of his customers illustrates one perception of the phenomenon.

Customer: Now there are microwaves, people with money can buy them.

Luung: But, microwaves can only re-heat the food, isn't that right?

Customer: No, you can cook in that machine. When you put the food inside, it cooks! Ordinary people can't buy it because it's expensive. Only the rich can have it.

Here, it is evident that Luung and his customer are conscious of the income stratification of Thai society and the limits it imposes and privileges it grants. The microwave oven, if purchased by or made available to a large enough group of people could radically transform the Thai urban food-system by making small foodshops partially obsolete. Lunchtime customers could purchase their food in supermarkets and "cook" it at the office, or else, cook food at home and re-heat it elsewhere.

Consumerism: Thailand's rapid industrialization has led to growth in disposable income, especially in Bangkok. The society has moved from a subsistence to a cash economy in urban areas and to a certain extent in the rural parts of the country.

13 Traditionally, Thai kitchens are located out of doors for precisely this reason (Walker 1991).
Figure 4.1

Tara Apartment
(typical room)

Floor Plan of a Kitchenless Apartment
People now have to buy the things they need to survive; even prepared food. In addition, eating and related activities - such as shopping - are important parts of the leisure habits of Thai urbanites. The infamous nightlife of Bangkok - which often involves prostitution - mostly for local men - includes drinking alcohol and eating meals in "cafés". This ties in with patterns of Thai gendering.

"Cultural" preferences: Thais appear to be preoccupied with convenience and make great use of labour saving strategies and devices when they are affordable. For example, a maid I met from Isan would buy pineapple from the market for her employer to save him money but would purchase one already cut up for herself and her husband because it was more convenient. A Sino-Thai shopkeeper I met described the Thai preponderance for purchasing prepared food as evidence of a lack of "discipline". "They don't know how to budget their money," he remarked. Luung made similar comments.

Like other parts of Southeast Asia, Thailand is a snacking culture where several small meals per day are common rather than the "three square" requirement of Europeans. Perhaps this is the most logical eating pattern in a tropical environment. Thai are fond of repeating: khon thai kin khaaw talot wela, or "Thai people eat all the time"! It is a well-established cultural practice to eat out of doors which results in a lively street and soi life. Leisure habits of Thai urbanites focus very much around

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14 Cafés and other eating venues will be typologized in Chapter Five.

15 A German woman I met while in Bangkok complained that her Thai maids fed her two-year old "constantly" which irritated her and her Swiss husband. She insisted that they stop this practice in order to retain the discipline of three meals per day.
commensality in public places. "Have you eaten yet?" (*kin khaaw rue yang?*) is a typical greeting upon meeting friends and co-workers.¹⁶

According to Walker's *Food Consumption Survey*, 11% of Bangkokians never cook at all. NSO figures are even higher at 27% (NSO 1990). The figure is no doubt even more impressive if one includes people who limit their "cooking" to using a rice-cooker or hot-plate for steaming/boiling rice and noodles. True cooking "from scratch" is becoming a rare occurrence in Bangkok. Furthermore, a growing number of markets are selling "semi-prepared" food which can be "cooked" in a microwave and eaten immediately with no added labour. This further complicates definitions of cooking and food-preparation.

The following illustrates some of the arrangements made at the Asian Institute of Technology where I was affiliated for the first phase of my field work.

**FIELDNOTES 4.3: THE ASIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY'S STUDENT FOOD-SYSTEM**

**FOUND OUT THE SOUTH ASIAN STUDENTS HAVE A FOOD-SYSTEM OF THEIR OWN ON CAMPUS. MANY (MOST) HAVE THAI WOMEN HIRED AS COOKS - THESE WOMEN COOK INDIAN FOOD FOR THEM EITHER ON AN INDIVIDUAL HOUSEHOLD BASIS (FOR THOSE LIVING IN THE "VILLAGE" HOUSING COMPLEXES) OR ON A "MESS" BASIS. APPARENTLY THERE ARE SEVERAL MESSES WHICH ARE DIVIDED ON AN ETHNIC/REGION AND A GENDER BASIS. THE INDIAN STUDENTS REFER TO THEIR COOKS AS "THE KHUNS" AND REPORT THAT THEY MAKE DELICIOUS FOOD IN ALMOST ANY REGIONAL STYLE. I MET ONE OF THESE WOMEN AND ASKED HER WHERE SHE LEARNED TO COOK INDIAN FOOD... SHE SAID SHE JUST WATCHED SOMEONE AND LEARNED. SHE CLAIMED NOT TO LIKE THE FOOD HERSELF.**

¹⁶ Another factor which was sometimes mentioned by informants was the question of traffic jams. Since people no longer know how long it will take to get home, it seems as though they often eat immediately after leaving work in the evening.
Others have a "contract" with the Thai-Muslim manager of the little snack bar in the cafeteria. The snack bar provides subscribers with two meals per day (or whatever one arranges) for Bt 20 per meal. This includes a chicken or vegetable curry, one dahl, rice, dessert, yoghurt and a drink. Subscribers get served by the young Thai women at their tables or help themselves cafeteria-style. They pay in advance for the term. You can also get meals on an individual basis if there's enough. All these arrangements are in addition to the formal cafeterias and dining rooms of the university... (Wednesday September 30, 1992)

The practice of forming "messes" is quite common on a number of South Asian university campuses (Pendakur 1992). Students from China were known to do the same and to join a mess was to make a statement about one's ethnic allegiances. I am unsure to what extent the Thai students at AIT formed similar arrangements. The practice is no doubt less widespread due to the wide availability of Thai food and the fact that eating "a home-cooked meal" in a domestic setting does not appear to have the same cultural importance as it does in South Asia, or traditional Europe and North America.

4.3.1 Public Eating

Thailand boasts the highest female labour force participation rates (FLFPR) in Southeast Asia - a region already known for the high economic activity levels of women. The curve in Figure 4.2 representing Thai FLFPR is consistently the highest at 87% and demonstrates a "central peak" or plateau pattern indicating that women do not withdraw

17 Wang, a Chinese student at AIT, had been eating with the others in the cafeteria every day. He spoke a bit of Thai and was known to eat many types of food. When he no longer joined us, I inquired as to his whereabouts. "Wang joined a Chinese mess," lamented one of the Indian students. When I asked why she sounded disappointed, my acquaintance responded, "he was becoming very Thai".
from the labour force during their child-bearing/rearing years (Jones 1984, 28). This is characteristic of the Malay and T'ai cultural realms where women play an important economic role earning money for their families.

Figure 4.2 Source: International Labour Organisation, 1994.

Although the poorest urbanites continue to cook for themselves when possible (de Wandeler 1990), most women and men have no time to cook and have income available for prepared food. As indicated in Table 4.6, 48% of the monthly food budget in Greater Bangkok is spent on already-cooked comestibles. The trend of purchasing prepared food to take home and eat began in the post-World War II period and has
grown significantly in the last twenty years with large numbers of women entering the remunerated urban workforce (Van Esterik 1992).

Table 4.6

AVERAGE MONTHLY EXPENDITURES PER HOUSEHOLD BY TYPE OF FOOD CONSUMED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of food consumed</th>
<th>Whole Kingdom</th>
<th>Greater BKK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food prepared at home</td>
<td>1,494B (76%)</td>
<td>1,616B (52.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared food taken home</td>
<td>173B (8.8%)</td>
<td>457B (14.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food eaten away from home</td>
<td>300B (15.2%)</td>
<td>1,014B (32.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


1 Excludes alcoholic drinks away from home.

The 1990 Household Survey of Greater Bangkok found that in a seven-day period, take-home food consisted mostly of rice and curry (khaaw gaeng) and noodle dishes. Table 4.7 provides a breakdown of expenditures for this time period. Fried rice, "meals" (referring to catered tiffin food), snacks and other prepared food total up to the remaining 12% of weekly take-home prepared food expenditures. On average, 116.42 Baht (nearly $6 CDN) per week is spent on take-home food.
Table 4.7

AVERAGE WEEKLY EXPENDITURES FOR PREPARED FOOD TAKEN HOME

Greater Bangkok 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Food</th>
<th>Expenditure (Baht)</th>
<th>Percentage of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rice and Curry</td>
<td>85.93</td>
<td>73.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noodles</td>
<td>16.65</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fried Rice</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meals (pinto food)</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snacks</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other prep. food</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>116.42</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The following table (Table 4.8) shows that most meals - especially breakfast and supper - are still eaten at home rather than in stalls or restaurants. Although much of this food may be purchased from an outside source, the domestic setting remains the preferred locus of commensality. Eighty-seven percent of respondents to the Food Consumption survey indicated that they eat supper at home "everyday or most days" with 65% answering the same for breakfast. Only lunch appears to be the meal taken most frequently outside the home with less than half (46%) indicating that they eat lunch at home "everyday or most days".

115
Table 4.8

FREQUENCY OF EATING MEALS AT HOME
Greater Bangkok 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents' reply</th>
<th>Breakfast</th>
<th>Lunch</th>
<th>Supper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyday or most days</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally / rarely</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The household survey confirms Walker's data and found that 63% (163.04 Baht) of the total expenditure on prepared food consumed outside the home is spent on lunch with breakfast coming in second place at 16.2% (41.97 Baht). 13.4% (34.56 Baht) was spent on the evening meal. Table 4.9 provides information on other expense categories for food eaten away from home. Walker's data confirm this trend and show that most respondents ate out at lunch and breakfast and for snacks; 87% still reported eating supper at home “everyday or most days”. Concerns about the impact of eating away from home on family life need not be exaggerated because evenings are still reserved for family commensality. Prepared food is therefore a frequent substitute for home cooked meals whether or not the food is actually eaten at home or elsewhere. The following section defines and describes the various food strategies employed by Bangkok residents to obtain cooked-food outside the home.
Table 4.9

AVERAGE WEEKLY EXPENDITURES FOR PREPARED FOOD EATEN AWAY FROM HOME

Greater Bangkok 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense Category</th>
<th>Expenditure (Baht)</th>
<th>Percentage of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>41.97</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>163.04</td>
<td>63.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>34.56</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snacks</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcoholic Drinks</td>
<td>14.81</td>
<td>5.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Food and Bvg.</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>258.69</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


4.3.2 Everyday Food Strategies

A 'traditional' strategy common throughout Southeast Asia is the subscription to neighbourhood catering networks where food - normally one soup, one vegetable and one dish (often a curry) - is delivered at a regular time every day in a tiffin (pinto) (Figure 4.3). The tiffin-network strategy is seemingly being eclipsed by the small foodshop sector where food is available anywhere, anytime - an important attribute in a city where traffic is grid-locked during rush hours. Women are seen stopping at a
foodshop in the evenings on their way home from work to pick up dinner for the family—main courses are placed in small plastic bags; the accompanying rice being prepared easily at home in a rice cooker. More recently, foam containers have been introduced; it is now common to hear people request say foam or "put it in a foam box". Bangkok residents hence refer to mae baan tung plastic or 'plastic bag housewives' (Van Esterik, 1992). Obviously, women consumers are rarely "housewives" as most engage in remunerative employment. The arrival of this newcomer in the foodscape signals the blurring of boundaries between public and private space. Foodshops act as semi-private or semi-public spaces where urbanites meet their daily food needs. What traditionally took place mostly within the home is now contracted out to micro-entrepreneurs.

The owners of D'jit Pochana [Figure 4.4] - considered the first 'proper' Thai restaurant, started with a family-run tiffin network and later, a curry shop. This expensive establishment now has three locations in suburban parts of the city and is popular with military officers. D'jit Pochana is just one example of Bangkok's élite foodscape which includes both Thai and expensive "international" restaurants where businessmen, and a few businesswomen, woo customers (Cf. Walker 1991).

Bangkok's contemporary foodscape, where cooking and/or eating quite often takes place outside the home, is a reminder of the haphazard way in which ostensibly public and private activities and spaces are grouped together.
Figure 4.3
Menu From a Tiffin Catering Network in Bangkok

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>จุดหมาย</th>
<th>ประมาณ</th>
<th>หมายเหตุ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ที่ที่จัดส่ง</td>
<td>2536</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

รายการอาหารเดือน มิถุนายน 2536

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>เลข</th>
<th>รายการอาหาร</th>
<th>จำนวน</th>
<th>หมายเหตุ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>เล่นน้ำเชื่อม</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>เล่นน้ำข้าว</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>เล่นน้ำผัก</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>เล่นน้ำน้ำหนัก</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>เล่นน้ำน้ำหนัก</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>เล่นน้ำน้ำหนัก</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>เล่นน้ำน้ำหนัก</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>เล่นน้ำน้ำหนัก</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>เล่นน้ำน้ำหนัก</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>เล่นน้ำน้ำหนัก</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

หมายเหตุ: ราคาต่อสั่ง 2-3 ชั่วโมง ราคา 1,600 บาท ต่อสั่ง 4 ชั่วโมง ราคา 3,800 บาท ขั้นต่ำสั่ง 3 ชั่วโมง

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D'jit Pochana has kept the traditional taste of Thai food for more than 40 years.

We are concerned in the value of Thai cuisine which needs exquisite skillfulness; therefore, we have endeavoured to maintain the tradition of Thai cuisine for more than 40 years so as to make sure every dish will suit your palate. Besides, D'jit Pochana can offer you catering services for banquets and all other occasions both indoors and outdoors. And of course, our excellent and efficient services will ensure the comfort and convenience you most deserve.

Catering Service for any occasion
Select your favorite meals at any D'jit Pochana branch or call our catering service, able to serve 30–3,000 guests daily.

RUEN PANCHIT ROOM

TANTAWAN ROOM
A big air-conditioned room. Exotic luxury. Suitable for 600 guests.

MONK'S MEAL SETTING

Figure 4.4: D'jit Pochana - The First Proper Thai Restaurant
The following summary description of one of my acquaintances provides an example of upper middle-class eating habits.\(^1^8\)

Ajaan (Professor) Prinyathip teaches at a university in central Bangkok and is married to an engineer. She has no children and lives in a housing estate in a suburban area of the city. At lunch time, if she doesn't have time to go to the faculty cafeteria, she asks the janitor to bring lunch back to her office. Everyday, on her way home from work, she stops at a small roadside curry shop and picks up supper - usually a curry and a vegetable dish or a soup. Since she drives a car, she often frequents one of the shopping centres on the way home where she can park her car and purchase from a large selection of take-home food in small plastic bags - or foam containers - on the 'food floor'. When asked whether she ever sits down to eat in roadside foodshops or stalls she answers “Never, not with the heat, dust, and noise... it's so unpleasant”. If she's going to spend time eating out, Ajaan Prinyathip would rather go to a nice restaurant with air-conditioning and beautiful surroundings.

Eating in stalls is associated with unpleasant environmental conditions which can be avoided in an air-conditioned restaurant or a quiet middle-class home. For typically middle-class Bangkokians - particularly women who tend to be impeccably dressed - frequenting a cool, comfortable establishment is the most desirable option. Pollution and the noise of traffic makes the foodshop experience less aesthetically pleasing and a health hazard.

Middle class men - such as government workers on Friday evenings - enjoy "slumming" in stalls and outdoor restaurants where they can sit at long tables and drink vast quantities of whiskey. Working-class men (eg. tuk-tuk drivers) do the same but in less expensive venues. Since “proper” Thai women do not drink alcohol, they engage in a slightly different pattern. Their habit is to go out with a group of friends (women

\(^{1^8}\) Note that this passage is not from my fieldnotes.
or mixed) to a *suan ahaan*, or "food garden" such as "Bua" - a chain of open air restaurants.

Walker's Food Consumption Survey (FCS) (1990) clearly demonstrates that the ideal locus of everyday commensality is the home. Special occasions, however, merit an outing to a 'special' restaurant, funds permitting. The same holds true for entertaining guests as previously mentioned.

Table 4.10

**MOST HIGHLY PATRONIZED EATING ESTABLISHMENTS IN BANGKOK**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of establishment</th>
<th>Respondents (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noodle shops</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai restaurants</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden restaurants</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Thai restaurants</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese restaurants</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western fast-food</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western restaurants</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The urban masses have, for the most part, very low incomes and either cook for themselves and/or purchase food on the streets and *sois* from vendors both mobile and stationary, and small foodshops specializing in noodles, curried dishes or other fare (Cf.
Yasmeen 1992). The FCS confirms this observation - as indicated in Table 4.10 - by revealing that noodle shops and small Thai restaurants are the most highly patronized eating establishments in Bangkok with 91% and 84% of the 4198 respondents reporting that they frequent these places (Walker 1990, 6).

Small restaurants are actually quite diverse in terms of the food that is sold, their access to clientele, and the types of functions they perform in the city and cannot, therefore, be classified in the manner of many studies which focus on the so-called 'informal sector' or 'street foods' (Cf. Amin 1991, FAO 1988, McGee 1971, Napat and Szanton 1986, Tinker 1987). I will concentrate on the differences between small eating-establishments in terms of ethnicity, income-ranges of the clientele and, perhaps most importantly for this thesis, their various locational environments in the city.

The foodshop sector is now quite ethnically differentiated as result of migration from the provinces, especially from the Northeast (Isan) resulting in the emergence of various types of Isan food-vending establishments for migrant workers such as taxi drivers and construction workers (Cf. Van Esterik 1992). Considered the most 'macho' men of Thailand, male patrons of these places can be seen drinking whiskey and eating spicy dishes late into the night in various parts of the city where Isan men traditionally congregate, for example, the boxing stadium, gas stations and night-markets. Massive migration from the Northeast has resulted in most of the city having examples depicting this behaviour. For instance, between the hours of 6pm and 3am, a night-market (talat

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19 It is difficult to ascertain how economically viable this system of 'contracting out' is at the household budget level. Certainly, it is clear that individuals are trading potential monetary savings for convenience and time (which can presumably be used to earn extra income).
to rung) off Sam Sen road in Banglamphu hums with activity as Isan taxi and tuk-tuk drivers snack and drink at food-stalls and shops which are run for the most part by women micro-entrepreneurs. It appears as though Central Thai men are beginning to participate in these rituals in stark contrast to the past when things Isan were more thoroughly denigrated by mainstream Thai society. Details for the Victory Monument Areas are illustrated in Chapters Five and Six.

The majority of small foodshops are patronized by a wide range of income-groups and are therefore inexpensive. A number of extremely small restaurants in Bangkok are actually geared toward a wealthy consumer. An example of this is the 'one-woman' operation, Prik Yuak, where wholesome artistically presented Thai-food is served in a home-like setting (Puntana 1992). Small eating establishments can therefore be differentiated on the basis of the income-levels of entrepreneurs and their customers. Discussions of "foodshops with one to four employees" masks the fact that some may actually be expensive restaurants. Other examples are the small 'health food' restaurants in Bangkok and Chiang Mai which are beyond the budget of most Thais.

A more important remark, however, concerns the diverse locations or operating environments of small foodshops and the contractual opportunities to which these micro-entrepreneurs can have access (Cf. Naruemol and Oudin 1992). First, many foodshops are now located indoors where they are integrated in settings as diverse as privately owned luxury shopping plazas [Figure 4.5], educational institutions such as universities and, even the United Nations building on Rajdamnern Road. Hence, small shops - by obtaining exclusive contracts with business or government - become directly
involved with political-economic structures at national, regional and even international scales.

This is a clear example of what Gregory, following Giddens, has labelled as the 'local-global' dialectic (1990). It is considered "one of the most far-reaching consequences of modernity" and is defined as the simultaneous globalization of social life which is the result of "time-space" distanciation afforded by widespread travel, advances in communication and technology and the resulting disembedding of "traditional" life-worlds which were - for the most part - rooted in a restricted space.

The reverse side of the local-global dialectic is thus what Harvey calls time-space compression. He sees this as the compulsion to "annihilate space by time" under capitalism... For Harvey, "the foreboding generated out of the sense of social space imploding in on us is wired to a crisis of identity: "to what space/place do we belong?"(Harvey 1990, 427 cited by Gregory 1994, 121)

The most humble, simple and vernacular foodshops in Bangkok are part of the local-global dialectic, not only through their purchasing patterns and locations, but also through the routine flows of customers that come in and out of their shops. Bangkok is an extremely cosmopolitan city and even the most "Thai" of neighbourhoods - such as the Victory Monument Area - contain long-term and short-term foreign residents.

In Daeng's small shop, for example, I routinely encountered and interacted with people from all over the world. Whereas Daeng, her mother and their assistants (most of whom are relatives) had rarely ventured from Bangkok and their home province of Roi-Et, there were customers who came from Japan, Burma and Thais who had lived and travelled abroad.
Figure 4.5
Central Plaza Ladprao

Ground Floor

1st Floor

Supermarket

Parking

2nd Floor

Food Mart

Parking

3rd Floor

Food Centre

Parking

L.S. Kwan
The place was often filled with people from other parts of the world as the following vignette illustrates:

FIELDNOTES 4.4: THE "UNITED NATIONS" FOODSHOP

TONIGHT, THERE WAS AN INTERESTING JAPANESE COUPLE THERE EATING ISAN FOOD AND DRINKING WHISKEY. THE WOMAN (WHO DOESN'T SPEAK MUCH ENGLISH) HAS BEEN HERE FOUR OR FIVE MONTHS AND IS LEARNING THAI SO WE COMMUNICATED IN THAI... THE MAN HAS ONLY BEEN HERE FOR TWO WEEKS... HE SPEAKS ENGLISH. AT ONE POINT, AN OLDER (50ish) FARANG MAN CAME BY (TAKE-OUT) AND SPOKE THAI. AT ANOTHER POINT, A THAI LOOKING MAN CAME IN BUT DAENG SAID THAT HE WAS FROM INDIA (?). I SAID THAT THE FOODSHOP IS LIKE THE U.N.! (TUESDAY DECEMBER 15, 1992)

Clearly then, the Thai example of a mass-based daily strategy which relies extensively on the small foodshop is not a simple, standard phenomenon. The preceding discussion has attempted to elucidate the complexity of the system by pointing to the differences in the types of eating establishments frequented by most Thai urbanites every day. Terms such as 'streetfoods' and 'informal sector' are not appropriate for the description of this sector because many shops are no longer located on the street and do, in fact, comply with licensing regulations making them technically, 'formal'.

Bangkok houses many small ubiquitous foodshops which act as a life-support system for many urbanites. Small restaurants serve a number of latent social functions in addition to providing meals. For example, children are often cared for in these environments, young people spend time and 'help' thereby learning skills and meeting
others. Foodshops are also a source of information on local affairs for customers and helpers; some learn of jobs or read the newspaper in these spaces.\textsuperscript{20}

\textbf{FIELDNOTES 4.5 FOODSHOP-BASED CHILD CARE}

\textit{Went out to run errands. Lunch time approximately. Went into a poor residential neighbourhood with lower density housing, near my place between Rajvitee and Rangnam.\textsuperscript{21} Had fried rice in this woman's small stand which has a few tables and chairs. There were chickens and roosters all around me. I had fried rice with egg and veggies and a coke. Her daughter (or perhaps younger sister) was working there also. Her baby boy (or someone's baby) was scampering around the place and his grandfather was keeping an eye on him. Their house seemed to be attached. The grandpa would sometimes bring stuff from the house to the food stall. The food was good. I didn't chat - I will next time. (Sunday October 11, 1992)}

Unfortunately, there was no "next time". Upon my return a few weeks later, the stall was no longer there. Many of the families in this zone had moved following the awarding of a relocation allowance by the BMA. The row houses were in the process of being demolished to make way for a public park which has been "in process" for at least twelve years (Vespy 1994).

There are numerous other examples of children - from babies to school age youngsters - being cared for in foodshops. This is not only the case in small informal stalls of the type described above but also applies to more expensive, air-conditioned restaurants. Childcare in foodshops is an example of the multifunctionality of these spaces.

\textsuperscript{20} The distinction between children/young people "helping" and the delicate issue of child labour is often hard to distinguish.

\textsuperscript{21} The area being referred to is the zone of demolished housing. At the time of this journal entry in 1992 the houses were not yet torn down.
Small eating-establishments can be interpreted as realms of femininity where women are employed, and to a great degree, remain in control of their micro-enterprises. This topic requires further exploration. Small foodshops are unique 'everyday' spaces for the majority of urbanites whereas larger establishments cater to the 'occasion' and are, at times, idiosyncratic or else fit a pattern which can be more easily typologized.

The smallest food-establishments can be classified as semi-public/private spaces. Here, behaviour associated with the home is relocated to commercial spaces. Local residents are sometimes seen sitting in foodshops near their homes in their pyjamas having breakfast. This resembles the observations of de Certeau's students in Lyon, France (Giard and Mayol 1980). Housewives in the Croix-Rousses quarter were seen emerging into the neighbourhood bakeries in the early morning clad in housecoats, slippers and curling rods. The bakery was seen as an extension of the home and the private sphere and gendered patterns of activity were commensurate with this view. In many foodshops, regular customers sometimes prepare food themselves, wash their own dishes and even help serve the clientele. Regular customers are sometimes originally from the same village as the shop owner or may be kin. The foodshop, then, is both a private homespace and a public commercial place. These neighbourhood eateries blur the socio-spatial boundaries of public and private, and are extensions of the home sphere. This leads to the partial domestication of public space where home becomes part of the neighbourhood. Traditional cooking activities and kinship networks are recreated within a commercial establishment. Bangkok's small foodshops are
instrumental in establishing contemporary Thai public life similar to the roles played by pubs and coffee houses in industrializing Europe.

Habermas argues that...it was the growth of an urban culture - of meeting houses, concert halls, opera houses, press and publishing ventures, coffee houses, taverns and clubs, and the like - ... which represents the expansion of the public sphere (Howell 1993, 310).

Small foodshops are products of urbanization and industrialization and concomitant social change but, at the same time, reproduce traditional social relations. As such, they represent the simultaneous modernization and postmodernization of Thai urban society.

Similarly, foodshops which locate in "modern" environments such as shopping centre foodcourts, office buildings and educational institutions are instrumental in re-orchestrating spatial relations. Again, mostly women micro-entrepreneurs and small restaurant owners enter into a contract with larger scale commerce but often continue to rely on unpaid family labour and cook the same types of food. Differences with the informal pattern of organization revolve around price, payment arrangements, which sometimes involve the use of a coupon-system, and more formalized relations with customers who are not "regulars" making themselves "at home" as is the case in many soi-based foodshops. Eating in a food centre is a more expensive proposition than eating on the street and takes place in a highly controlled environment replete with security cameras, air-conditioning and music. Whereas street and soi-based foodshop owners are constrained by property owners and the police who condition access to space, those who locate in privately owned indoor environments are subject to the rules and regulations of the authorities who own the property. Both are operating in a competitive environment where market shifts play a decisive role. Micro-entrepreneurs
and small restaurant owners, much like their counterparts elsewhere, are relatively powerless actors compared to the agency exercised by state officials, property owners and large-scale commerce (Jellinek 1991). This is certainly not to imply that they are without power but that their agency is limited by the lack of economic and political resources.

Foodshop outlets in shopping centres represent a transitional space between the "mass-based" strategy associated with the small neighbourhood stall and larger formal restaurants which cater to the wealthier middle-classes. The next part of this chapter will profile élite eating establishments and contrast them with female dominated small foodshops.

4.3.3 *Bangkok’s Elite Foodscape*

Southeast Asia’s 'City of Angels'\(^{22}\) has an astounding array of unusual restaurants such as ‘Cabbages and Condoms’ (C&C) [Figure 4.6] - owned by the Population and Development Association - which has the mandate to promote condom use in the Kingdom.\(^{23}\) The restaurant is a well-known venue catering to Thai families as well as foreigners. A recent newspaper article indicates how “C&C” now has a branch in China.\(^{24}\) The founder of the Population and Development Association (PDA), Meechai

\(^{22}\) Bangkok’s appellation in Thai (in shortened form) is *Krungthepmahanakorn* which translates as ‘the great city of angels’. Most Thai refer to the capital simply as *Krungthep*.

\(^{23}\) This was initially for population control and more recently in response to the AIDS epidemic

\(^{24}\) The article states that the female waitresses are scantily-clad and that more than just food may be ‘served’. This is certainly not the way Cabbages and Condoms operates in Bangkok where a fun, family-friendly atmosphere is promoted.
Veeravaidya developed the idea of a restaurant as a fund-raising and educational venture and is a well-respected Thai politician and activist. The example of C&C points to the latent social function of the expensive, élite restaurant. A standard typology of expensive eating-establishments (as opposed to the ubiquitous foodshop) will simplify the complexity of this arm of the food-system.

In a personal communication, Thai economist Pasuk Pongpaichit recalled growing up in Bangkok in the late sixties when there were only a handful of ‘proper’ restaurants where families would dine on a special occasion. Most of these were Chinese and some, such as Somboon Pattakarn and See Faa remain successful in operation today.\textsuperscript{25} Van Esterik (1992) completes the picture by identifying the four or five hotels where the only ‘proper’ formal restaurants were found in the city until the mid-seventies. Since that time, formal establishments modelled on the Chinese and Western traditions of restaurants catering to special occasions have emerged and specialize in Thai cuisine as well as other culinary traditions.

As documented by Van Esterik and Walker there is the fairly recent development of hundreds of open-air mega-restaurants located in the suburbs referred to as "food gardens" (suan ahaan). These are often designed in a sala thai, or open pavilion style. The use of this style is reminiscent of Thai traditional architecture yet, as a recent invention, encloses “untraditional” activities. The world’s largest restaurant, \textit{Tum Nuk Thai} [Figure 4.7] which has a staff of 1000, many on roller-skates,

\textsuperscript{25} Somboon Pattakarn is a famous Chinese restaurant near the boxing stadium. \textit{See Faa} (meaning ‘light blue’) is now a chain with locations all over the city. It is famous for its \textit{bami} - “a thick Chinese noodle” (Van Esterik 1992). These restaurants are popular with university professors.
Figure 4.6
"Cabbages and Condoms": A Family Restaurant with a Family Planning Theme

ENJOY A VARIETY OF THAI DISHES IN A COMFORTABLE, RELAXED ATMOSPHERE.

WE CATER FOR ALL YOUR REQUIREMENTS.

(publicity materials)
Figure 4.7: "Tom Nuk Thai": The World's Largest Restaurant
is the most extreme example of Thai restaurant giantism. The restaurant grounds include khlongs, replete with fish which can be fed by customers who purchase bread from a vendor. Thai classical and folk dances are staged at regular intervals to taped music and there are souvenir shops located at the exit. Most food gardens are slightly less spectacular and cater to Thai middle-class families and groups rather than tourists. They are generally decorated with bright lights and many plants or trees. Fresh fish and seafood are on display in cases at the entrance for customers to examine and choose.

Discussions of postmodern architecture and design cite the use of vaguely traditional architectural and lifestyle references as a key element often resulting in the production of "depthless images", or simulacra (Baudrillard 1981; Jameson 1983; Dear 1993). Simulacra are fanciful "re-creations" of the past that never, really existed, much like "Main Street USA" in Disneyland or "Europa Boulevard" in the West Edmonton Mall (Warren 1994; Hopkins 1990). The postmodern experience is also framed by the use of pastiche or exaggerated representations which mock the original form being alluded to.

Postmodern design aims explicitly at expressing specific localities and their history and tradition... This use of past styles, which is simultaneous with a tendency to erase style as a consistent and distinctive set of features, incorporates a certain nostalgia and leads to a kind of pastiche, revealing, maybe, innovative and unexpected combinations... It goes without saying that all these aspects of postmodern design point to some different conception and experience of space on the part of its producers, while also calling its consumers to participate in this new experience“ (Lagopoulos 1993, 260).

Patrons of suburban garden restaurants are participating in a new experience of place inspired by traditional Thai spatial design. This phenomenon is reproduced elsewhere
as well. For example, a well-known housing development in central Bangkok, *Suan Parichat*, is designed in a "traditional" Thai style with all the modern conveniences of air-conditioning and indoor plumbing. The houses have sloping roofs and floors made of polished teakwood. Mini-canals are found throughout the walled and guarded compound for the aesthetic enjoyment of residents and guests but are not used for obtaining water, transportation, fishing or dumping waste, which are the practical uses of canals in Central Thailand. Traditional images, void of function and content, are therefore used to add symbolic capital to both restaurants and other new spaces in Thai society. The development of suburban mega-restaurants also closely parallels Bangkok's pattern of mega-urbanization - a theme which has drawn considerable attention over the last decade (McGee and Robinson 1995; Greenberg 1994).

Elite restaurants cater to the social and cultural needs of élites as well as their gastronomic preferences. The FCS indicated that 65% of respondents thought that "Eating out provides a more pleasant atmosphere" and 80% believed that the practice "gives you more variety". Other relevant responses are summarized in Table 4.11. It appears that eating out is a family activity, allowing one to spend more time with spouse and children, and that it is a suitable activity for special occasions.

Expensive restaurants, and other forms of conspicuous consumption, contribute to the construction of an élite identity (Walker 1990). These spaces are instrumental in the creation of a new Thai middle-class aesthetic and lifestyle. This identity revolves around the accumulation of wealth and status, worldliness and a reconstruction of Thainess which emphasizes the traditional arts such as cooking, classical dancing and
certain religious images, for example, spirit houses (cf. Askew 1994; Walker 1991).

This is part of the pluralistic value-system in Siamese society.

A Buddhist-based secular tolerance of what are considered to be matters of individual moral choice has contributed to the development of plural value-systems among the Thai. At one end of the spectrum, there is a subculture made up of those who have not internalized any of Buddhism's emphasis on temperate behaviour and who pursue the hedonistic pleasures of drink, drugs, and sex. At the opposite end of the spectrum is the subculture of those ascetic monks who have turned their backs on all worldly temptations. Of particular interest are those subcultures — found especially among the Sino-Thai, the Lao of northeastern Thailand, and perhaps among other groups as well — that emphasize tempering desires for immediate gratification in order to accumulate capital to be invested for a future goal." This latter view has been instrumental in promoting economic growth (Keyes 1987 P. 207-8).

The middle-classes - following rapid industrialization and resulting disposable income - engage in conspicuous consumption to purchase, partly, the gamut of "modern conveniences" which make life more comfortable and to display new wealth and status. A case in point are élite eating establishments.

There is a contradiction in the responses summarized in Table 4.11. On the one hand, it is considered 'better' to eat at home where food is higher quality. On the other hand, pleasant atmosphere, variety and special occasions are associated with eating out as well as convenience. For this set of questions, no distinction was made between the types of restaurants under scrutiny - foodshops (raan ahaan) or formal restaurants (pattakarn). Certainly, pleasant atmosphere and special occasions are to be associated with the grander establishments described in this section as opposed to the humble foodshop.
### Table 4.11

#### ATTITUDES TOWARDS EATING OUT

**All of Thailand**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Indifferent</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eating at home is better than eating out</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating out provides a more pleasant atmosphere</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating out allows me to spend more time with family</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating out gives you more variety</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home food is higher quality</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On special occasions, I like to eat out</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


One conclusion which can be drawn from these data is that élite restaurants are spaces where special events are marked, clients are entertained and guests are invited. Small foodshops and stalls, on the other hand, are associated with quotidian experiences of home and family. Many other restaurant types, however, are located somewhere between these two characterisations.

### 4.4 THE FUTURE OF STREETFOODS

*The worst thing that could happen in the future, in my opinion, would be the disappearance of working-class street food. The street stalls and tiny hole-in-the-wall restaurants that used to make noodles, won ton, pao, congee, stuffed dumplings, steamed meatballs, fried pastries, and thousands of other snack items could be at risk in the new, affluent world of the future. They are in no danger of disappearing, but they are becoming rarer and are being influenced by the big restaurants' corner-*
cutting and sodium loving ways. Much interest has belatedly been devoted to these wonderful foods, among the high points of Chinese cooking. Yet people seem less than aware of the foods in question. Chinese are apt to write them off as poverty food, and Westerners often are never introduced to them. Countless tourists have complained to me about the quality of food in the People's Republic; all of them, it turned out, had dutifully eaten only in the big West-oriented hotels and restaurants, which have altered their food to please the Western palate and which feed hundreds at a meal. I even heard that the old food stalls are gone and one can no longer get 'small eats' in China. But on my travels, I found that small eats existed in every form. Street pushcarts, small cafés, workers' dining halls, and snack bars sold them, as good as anything comparable in Hong Kong or Taiwan -- certainly the best food I ate in China outside a few private homes.

- E.N. Anderson The Food of China

Anderson wrote this alarming comment as a critique of the emerging industrial palate in 1980s Hong Kong. Nevertheless, there is a message of hope in the final two lines of the passages which provide evidence of the persistence of "hawker food". Bangkok's foodscape is being threatened in similar ways due to the emerging middle-class and its tastes. To aggravate the situation, the food served in more expensive Thai/Chinese restaurants is sometimes of much poorer quality than the comestibles in the humblest foodshop! However, I do not believe that the types of food sold on the streets and lanes of the city are under threat per se. Rather the informal context in which the food is usually sold is apparently being eclipsed by indoor food-centres and highly capitalized restaurants. The comfort and convenience associated with air-conditioned restaurants and food-centres is beginning to drive demand. For this trend to continue, however, the indoor formalized environments will be required to provide equal or better quality food than the road-side stalls and eating establishments. The continuum
between the informality and formality of eating establishments in the Victory Monument Area will be scrutinized in the following chapters.

In keeping with the final two lines of the opening quote, there appears to be a renewed interest in streetfoods and the heritage of the hawker tradition. Scanning the local newspapers suggests that people have taken an interest in discovering streetfoods where up-scale hotels hold "streetfood festivals" in fully controlled situations. For example, the Stable Lodge Hotel on Sukhumvit Soi 8 holds a "traditional" Thai streetfood buffet every Saturday evening "but with the Stable's special flair (Bangkok Post n.d.). The Martino Coffee Lounge, located in The Mandarin Hotel, advertised its addition of "Authentic Thai coffee prepared from our coffee cart as you watch" (Bangkok Post 1992). Figure 4.8 reproduces the advertisement containing the "quaint" drawing of a traditional coffee cart. Ironically, Thais increasingly consume Nescafé as a status symbol following years of vigorous advertising. Gastronomes who pride themselves on their good taste, however, reject instant coffee and look to either Thai "traditional" filtered coffee or quality coffee from abroad.

The interest in streetfoods is also borne out by the recent publication of handbooks for foreigners such as Thai Hawker Food where "authentic" streetfood is the object of interest (Pranom 1993). The guidebook contains colourful drawings of the different types of streetvendors, their goods and Thai phrases designed to aid the foreigner through Bangkok's foodscape.

The concluding chapter of this dissertation further scrutinizes this question after unpacking the complex factors which influence the informants' ability to sell cooked
food. The following chapter delves in greater detail into the lives of urban cooked-food vendors in Thailand.
An "Authentic" Thai Coffee Cart

Martino Coffee Lounge has long been renowned for its wide selection of international coffees and teas, but now something new has been added. Authentic Thai coffee prepared from our coffee cart as you watch. Delightfully refreshing iced, or stimulating steaming hot. To further this authentic taste experience, try Thai custard on a steamed roll. Of course the tempting array of Thai and international snacks are awaiting you too.

Perk up your day at Martino Coffee Lounge.

Advertisement for the Martino Coffee Lounge of the Mandarin Hotel (Bangkok Post, November 11, 1992, p. 1).
Chapter Five

FOOD MICROENTREPRENEURS AND EATING ESTABLISHMENTS

The anthropological study of food in Thai society has resulted in fascinating theses (Cf. Bhavivarn 1993; Formoso 1989; Walker 1991), books (Krowolski and Simon-Barouh 1993) as well as scholarly articles (Van Esterik 1986, 1992). Those in the field of public health as well as the more traditionally situated "informal sector" studies have also begun to pay attention to the importance of public food distribution systems and the practices associated with the sale of prepared food (Naruemol and Oudin 1992; Napat and Szanton 1986; Sunanthana and Sriprat 1993). This complements what is a rather voluminous literature on similar themes in the rest of Southeast Asia (Guerrero 1975; Jellinek 1977 and 1991; Klopfer 1993; McGee and Yeung 1977; Murray 1991).

What do we know about Thai food-sellers and their regional counterparts? The stereotype of the self-employed woman does not apply in certain situations, even in Thailand. Men are involved as well. The complexity of both women's and men's positions in the food system as cooked-food vendors is conditioned by the ethnicity of entrepreneurs and their customers, the size and type of enterprise, class (or income group), and the nature of the goods sold. This chapter combines an examination of the existing literature on Thai food-sellers with my own quantitative survey of food-vendors and restaurant owners in the VMA. The socio-economic characteristics of this occupational group will be compared and contrasted with the situation found in other cities of the country and region. A typology of eating establishments is a necessary part
of the description of this income-earning activity. Last, and certainly not least, the
gendering of this type of (self) employment will be discussed with reference to the
emergence of new eating patterns in the city. A discussion of debates on Thai and
Southeast Asian sex/gender systems informs the entire chapter, particularly with respect
to the concept of nurturing (liang).

THREE THAI FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS

Daeng and Ying’s Shop

Aunt Ying is 49 years old and originally from Isan where her family is engaged in
farming. She never married but raised one of her nieces, Daeng, since babyhood. Ying
moved to Bangkok in her early twenties when she was recruited to work as a maid for a
Thai woman married to an Italian man. Then, she had various positions as a cook and
nanny for several other families, including a Thai aristocrat living on the prestigious Soi
Ratchakruu. It is through these occupations that she really learned how to cook a great
variety of dishes.

Soon, however, it became clear that she could no longer support her extended
family in the countryside with her meagre salary so she opened a pushcart on the soi
next to her employer’s house and quit her job with her patron’s blessing. Ying was
forced to relocate following complaints from her former employer’s daughter who saw
customers as having too great a view of the family property. Daeng, her adopted
daughter, began working as her assistant and they were fortunate to find a new location
in a newly constructed building on the same soi where they have been for the past five
years. She and Daeng operate a foodshop which sells curry and rice as well as stir-
fried and other made to order dishes on a soi in the VMA. Ying’s relatives and friends
who live nearby come to help on a regular basis. Daeng’s younger brother is enrolled
in a local business college and tends to spend his sister’s and aunt’s hard-earned money
in snooker halls rather than on his studies. Still, Ying continues to give him money
hoping he will use it for tuition as he always promises to do.

Daeng is now 30 years old, unmarried and lives with Ying in a small room
adjacent to the shop. The rent for their shop and sleeping room is very expensive
compared to competitors in the neighbourhood. Ying and Daeng may now be forced to
move because of the proposed redevelopment of their building into a highrise apartment
building. To make ends meet, Daeng has been working at a series of jobs as a cafeteria
cook and helps Ying, in the evenings. Most recently, she was employed at the
headquarters of the huge agri-food conglomerate, Charoen Pokphand. “I’m tired of
working and discouraged; Sometimes I sit down and cry,” Daeng confided. Her adoptive mother is having difficulty keeping up with the demands of the foodshop as she suffers from diabetes, hypertension and backaches. “Some days, I don't want to sell... it's difficult,” Ying laments, “I'm tired. After I wake up in the morning and open the shop I ask the security guards (from the apartment next door) to help me carry the cooker and the water.” Daeng, though often depressed, still has hope for the future. She likes cooking and would like to own a shophouse restaurant one day.

Luung's Restaurant

Luung, meaning “uncle”, is 60 years old and was born in Bangkok of Chinese parents. He spent many years as a travelling salesman in the provinces where he sold natural foods such as wild corn and nuts. His first wife died suddenly when their five children were still young so Luung decided to change occupations. Seventeen years ago he bought the restaurant where he still sells bami noodle and rice dishes with duck and Chinese-style red pork. He remarried and has a ten year old daughter. Most of the adult children have gone to the country’s most prestigious universities and studied fields such as engineering, sciences and medical technology. Four have good jobs and one adult daughter still lives at home in their leased three storey shop-house where the restaurant is located.

Luung’s small restaurant which can seat 20-25 customers was once very busy and successful. He had several young employees and was able to produce a greater variety of dishes. Ten years ago, Luung even appeared on television cooking shows to demonstrate his skills! Today, however, business is very slow. He wakes up to go to the market at six a.m. and closes at five p.m. “In the old days there weren’t any shopping centres,” where people now spend time shopping and eating, explains Luung. Labour is more expensive and he complains that young people these days don't want to work hard. Luung’s wife helps him at lunchtime which is the only busy part of the day. The shop closes before suppertime.

Luung considers himself to be quite poor. He doesn't keep a bank account. “I don't have enough money to deposit! I earn money and then it gets spent. I have many children. They have to be taken care of. Four have finished their studies. Expenses are very high and I only have a small business” he laments. At the age of sixty, Luung no longer enjoys his business and would like to retire.

Mister Donut

Although this internationally known franchise chain of doughnut shops is now Japanese-controlled, the Thai operations are owned and operated by the Central Pattana Group. This Sino-Thai family-controlled corporation owns the chain of Central department stores and has controlling interest in Thai Baskin-Robbins, half of the KFC outlets and Burger King. The first Mister Donut in Thailand was opened at Siam Square fifteen
years ago and the Victory Monument branch was the second and is thirteen years old. There are now close to forty branches all over the kingdom with 33 of these in the BMA.

Mister Donut sells sandwiches and pastries other than donuts as well as a wide selection of cold and hot beverages. Its main competitor is the "Dunkin Donuts" chain. Both companies are involved in extensive marketing campaigns on television, radio and in the print media.

The Victory Monument shop has recently been renovated and occupies two floors in a prime location on long-term lease near the main bus stop near the monument. It opens at 5:45 a.m. and closes at midnight. The renovated location seats close to 130 customers. The shop manager, Khun Wisanu, explained that employees are generally in their twenties and work full or part-time and receive the minimum wage. The VMA store has 14 employees, two of these part-time. The store is busy and receives approximately 600 customers per day including a large number of students (approximately one quarter of all customers by Wisanu's estimate).

Only the most successful Mister Donut locations have their own kitchens. Others, like the VMA branch, have their doughnuts delivered twice a day. The first delivery is at 4 a.m. and is received by the cleaning staff. The manager of the VMA store has a degree in Political Science from Ramkamhaeng University and is 29 years old. He has worked two years for the company but doesn't expect to be promoted to a high rank. "Here, the system is family-based. Thai people know about this!." Non-family members have difficulty making their way through the ranks of the Chiratiwat family's operations. "It's better to work as a government official", concludes Khun Wisanu.

5.1 THAI HAWKERS AND COOKED-FOOD SELLERS

The lone hawker, either itinerant or stationary, has long been the subject of fascination for researchers of Southeast Asian cities (Geertz 1963). Foreigners romantically delve into the world of the peddlar of cooked-food and label this type of entrepreneur as a proud, independent and quintessential inhabitant of the Southeast Asian city. Certainly, night markets are distinguishing features of life in urban Southeast Asia and the cooked-food seller finds a prominent place in this locale. Fixed-pitch stalls and small

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Our interview took place while the store was under renovation.
restaurants such as noodle houses and curry shops have also been looked at as "charming" features of everyday life in this part of the world. It is important, however, to try and sort out what the salient features of life as a cooked-food seller and small restauranteur are in historical and contemporary Southeast Asia before making generalizations about the profession in Thailand.

5.1.1 Typical Southeast Asian Food Entrepreneurs

Even though the region of Southeast Asia is often characterized as one where female entrepreneurialism far surpasses that of women in other parts of the world, particularly in cooked-food retailing, there is a great degree of variation with regard to the ways and degrees in which women versus men occupy public space. There is a stark contrast between the Chinese man selling yong tao-foo in Singapore and a woman from Minangkabau operating a warteg\(^2\) which sells Tegal style food in migrant kampung in Jakarta (Murray 1991, 58-9).

Studies of hawking, food vending and restaurants in Chinese societies, including Singapore and Malaysian cities have concluded that selling on the street is ideally a male occupation:

A possible cultural explanation is perhaps rooted in the Chinese aversion to letting their women into situations which involve frequent interaction with strangers... While this cultural aversion must have moderated greatly as increasing labour participation is being utilized in various capitalist

\(^2\) In Bahasa Indonesia, small food-stalls are normally known as warung (street stall). A warteg (actually a Tegal expression) is slightly larger than a warung and involves the rental of a room and employees (Murray 1991, 58). McGee and Yeung (1977, 23) defined a warung as “more like a store” and argued that, at least hawker stalls, were referred to as “kiosks”. This is similar to the Filipino sari-sari or “mixed” store (Laquian 1993).
enterprises, it remains true today that some jobs are less desirable than others because of this factor of what is known as (sic) *paau tau lo min* (showing one's face in public). Street hawking is considered an unsuitable vocation for women (Smart 1989, 25).

Women in Chinese societies still play an important role as cooked-food vendors and restaurant co-owners as part of family-run businesses. In Taiwan, for example, they still dominate informal markets (Keyes 1996). Their contributions are therefore difficult to generalize across the very diverse landscape of Chinese influence. Indeed, Anderson (1991) argues that it is essentialistic and empirically inaccurate to categorize a group of people as “Chinese”. Chineseness has very much been a construction developed by Westerners and others who do not trace their ancestry to mainland China.

In Vietnam, the situation is slightly different despite the common Confucian heritage. Nguyen Xuan Linh explains why even restaurant cooking is typically performed by women in Vietnamese restaurants:

> Vietnamese cuisine, be it within Vietnam or abroad, served at home or in a public place such as a restaurant, cannot be prepared without women who control the entire gastronomic heritage” (Nguyen 1993, 190 My translation).³

Men refuse to have anything to do with "women's work" which is denigrated. Women are the only ones who know how to cook. In the same volume, Krowolski demonstrates that men tend to be considered less financially responsible than women. Indeed, women's income tends to assure family survival (Krowolski 1993, 162). As Drummond's study clearly shows, since *doi moi*, much of this crucial income arises

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³ "L'alimentation vietnamienne, qu'elle soit à l'intérieur du pays ou à l'extérieur, servie au sein de la famille ou dans un lieu public comme le restaurant, ne peut se faire qu'avec les femmes, détentrices de tout le patrimoine gastronomique traditionnel."
from women's small enterprises - notably in the domain of prepared food (Drummond 1993).

In the indigenous societies of Southeast Asia - among the various Malay speakers, Tai-Lao groups, Khmer and Burmese for example - the idea pertaining to the seclusion of women has had far less currency, except among élites. Women play far greater roles as independent vendors. However, they often occupy specific niches in the local foodscape.

Jakarta's restaurant culture provides interesting examples of the specialization of roles in prepared food vending according to gender. Warteg are often run by women, but also by men, and are typically frequented by male migrant workers in larger Indonesian cities; "women are almost never seen sitting in them" but are important take-out customers (Murray 1991, 59). In addition, Murray remarks that kampung stalls are a women's domain whereas those on main thoroughfares tend to be male owned and operated.

The mix of factors which lead to specific types of micro-entrepreneurialism in the prepared-food sector are based on a mix of cultural, class, and gender relations of the locality being studied. Age and the family-situation of individual sellers are also of consequence as they indicate prior business experience and access to labour.

5.1.2 Thai Food Sellers

The socio-economic attributes of Thai food-sellers vary somewhat depending on the type and size of establishment in question and the nature of the food sold. This section
constructs a typology of prepared food sellers ranging from the mobile hab re (shoulder pole vendors) and paeng loy (street stall) entrepreneurs to eating establishments with a fixed-pitch. Studies conducted outside of Greater Bangkok will be summarized. The city's raan ahaan or "foodshops" are dealt with in greater detail in section 5.2.

Most recently Renu's (1994) thesis dealt with women hab re and paeng loy vendors in Bangkok. Her principal conclusion was that 84% of the women studied were earning money for the needs of their children or parents. Renu found that nearly 47% of those engaged in this occupation were originally from the Northeast (Isan) and were from farming backgrounds. Most of the operations surveyed (62%) were managed by one or two people.

The recent study of sanitation conditions of streetfoods in Prabuddha-bath municipality actually provides much broader information than the main objective of the research (Sunanthana and Sriprat 1993). The researchers discovered that 88% of the enterprises selling cooked-food surveyed were owned and operated by women who earn (often extra) income for the family. Owner's husbands tend to be employed in permanent white or blue collar occupations. The average age of the vendor's studied was 43 with 75% between the ages of 30 and 60. Nearly half of the informants had received formal education up to Prathom (primary) Four. Most of the food-sellers came

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4 Prabuddha-bath municipality is a town in Central Thailand north of Bangkok. The study had shocking conclusions. Water and ice showed high bacterial contamination levels 80% of the time. Nearly all utensils were similarly contaminated (99%). 96.2% of vendor's hands were contaminated with 100 bacterial colonies per square centimeter. In a Bangkok study conducted by the Medical Science Department and the Ministry of Public Health, unacceptably high incidences of e-coli and salmonella were found in food containing raw fish or seafood such as somtam lao - a salad made of green papaya, vegetables and small raw crabs - as well as other fresh and cooked foods (Bangkok Post, 1994).
from outside the municipality with the majority (78%) from the North. 43% reported
being in the business less than five years and 36% for more than 10.

An important piece of research for the objectives of this dissertation is the EPOC
and CUSRI sponsored study of streetfoods in the once provincial town of Chonburi\(^5\)
(Napat and Szanton 1986). This survey of “traditional fast foods” portrayed the
gendered nature of production and consumption of streetfoods. The research team
found that, consistent with the studies summarized above, around 80% of the vendors
selling processed (ie. cooked) food were women. Men specialized in the selling of
traditional Chinese snacks or light meals (moo daeng, kha moo, khaaw man gai see
section 5.3.4) and were themselves of Chinese background. Ethnically Thai men were
“almost completely absent”(Napat and Szanton 1986, 23). 64% of the female vendors
were between the ages of 26 and 45, some younger women sold sweets and the male
vendors were often older than the women. “Over 20% of all women were the main
household supporters at the time, another 21% were unmarried and earning their own
subsistence or sustaining older parents and young siblings” (Napat and Szanton 1986,
23). This income earning role and sense of responsibility for the family’s well-being
appears to be one of the critical factors explaining Thai women’s high level of micro-
entrepreneurialism in the prepared-food system. This phenomenon is examined in
greater detail in the next section.

\(^5\) Chonburi is a town on the rapidly developing (or developed?) Eastern Seaboard which is certainly
part of the Extended Bangkok Metropolitan Region described by Greenberg (1994). At the time of the
CUSRI study, however, it still had a provincial quality. I suspect that the food-system found there now
resembles the situation I will describe for Bangkok.
5.1.3 Food Vending and Thai Women's Sense of Responsibility

Thai women have long played an important income-generating role in the family and have a history of micro-entrepreneurialism. This trend is shared with other societies of the region. The selling of raw and prepared food by market women is a long standing tradition in Southeast Asia and is particularly highlighted in Thailand. Women in Kelantan (Jamilah 1994), parts of Indonesia (Manderson 1983) and Burma (Spiro 1977) also exhibit this pattern of activity. This behaviour has typically been interpreted by foreigners as a sign of Thai women's strength and independence and that of Southeast Asian women generally. It is often cited alongside an impressive list of other factors which lead one to believe in the equality of the sexes in this region:

Chiangmai women are impressive. They have the strength of character, independence, and self-assurance of women who live in a society where they are in a strong position. Residence here is matrilocal. The daughters stay at home and their husbands come in to live with them. Inheritance is bilateral, and the women share equally with the men; daughters inherit the parental home and matrilineal ancestors. In case of divorce, it is the man who leaves and the woman who stays home. Women work in the fields, rear the children, keep house; they are also the merchants who earn money for the family selling in the markets. They are the ones who keep the money, for fear that their men will waste it on gambling or drinking, or on other women. There are many strong men in Chiangmai village, but what impresses a Western outsider is the strength of the women.” (Potter 1976, 24 my emphasis)

In this quote, we see that Thai women are considered more financially responsible than men. They are trusted with the family wealth. This a stereotype and there are plenty of examples, including some drawn from my field research, which challenge this gender ideology. It is generally true, however, that women tend to earn and keep money for the family, especially for food and school fees. A married man is expected to provide the house. Men, particularly in their younger years, tend to squander money for
recreational purposes: examples being gambling, drinking, and prostitutes (including mistresses for the more powerful). Sometimes women are well aware of this problem but continue to provide sons and husbands with money, hoping they will spend it responsibly. However, as I evaluate toward the end of this dissertation following presentation of research results, this general situation may be changing for both women and men.

Foreigners may have exaggerated and misinterpreted the meaning associated with the income earning abilities and public presence of Thai women. Kirsch, for example, argues that in the Thai Buddhist ascetic value system, the handling of money and other "worldly" occupations are denigrated. Westerners tend to equate economic prowess with social power which is an erroneous assumption in several cultural contexts. Thai writers tend to be more sober when commenting on the position of women in their society. Pasuk Pongpaichit, a well-respected woman economist, observed:

the easiest way to describe the Thai rural household is as a corporation of kinswomen who induct males through marriage. The rural family is built around its women, and this central role imposes rights and duties. Women traditionally manage the finances of the household, take (or help take) many of the most important decisions about household expenditures, and have a great degree of personal responsibility for managing and maintaining the family's wealth. As we have noted above, it is that sense of responsibility to the family which propels many of the girls to migrate in search of income (Pasuk 1984, 256 my emphasis).

It is this social structure and female responsibility that drives women to Bangkok to sell prepared food. The gender relations present in the urban milieu with which these rural migrants are faced presents a sharp contrast to their home environments:

Within this urban culture men have many more privileges and pre-emptive rights, often at the expense of women. Taking courtesans or
minor wives or simply just going out on the town is not only legitimate but somehow rather admirable - a mark of status. The ability to dominate women, many women, becomes inextricably bound up with concepts of commercial and political power and success. (Pasuk 1984, 256)

There is therefore a significant urban/rural divide which distinguishes the ways in which femininity and masculinity are constructed and practiced. This hinges on issues of responsibility towards one's family and the ways in which power is used to dominate others as illustrated in the case of urban men displaying status through philandering. Thai urban women are certainly not socially nor economically equal to urban men. One conclusion that can be made is that both femininity and masculinity are differentiated in rural and urban areas with the "modernized" city centres actually showcasing regressive gender relations. The traditional Thai sex-gender system which persists in rural areas is more or less complementary whereas the urban situation is more hierarchical.

Keyes (1987) attributes the predominance of women in "care-giving" activities such as cooking, working as market-women (and, by extension, food vendors) as a result of the symbolic association between femininity and nurturing (liang). Indeed, he argues that the essence of femaleness in Thai society is nurturing whereas the essence of masculinity is "potency" (Keyes 1987, 123). He qualifies this by referring to the various images in Thai and Buddhist folklore which typologize women as nurturers, ideally, while also symbolizing "foil" - or opposite - characters such as the "passionate/suffering woman" and the "demanding mistress" (Keyes 1984). This indicates there are indeed a range of options in Thai culture for definitions of and practices associated with femininity (see also Keyes 1987, 124; Van Esterik 1994).
Certainly, the Thai language, folktales and epics abound with images of "mother nurturers" and include metaphorical uses of the term to refer to water, rice, fertility and elements in the natural world. I have difficulty, however, with attempts to discover "essences" of femininity and masculinity in any society. Gender systems are in a constant state of negotiation and redefinition and essentialistic approaches - like those toward "culture" or "race" - are heavily criticized (Fuss 1992; hooks 1990). Searching out stereotypes and archetypes has metaphorical utility nevertheless.

"Nurturing" does not seem to be exclusively female. Van Esterik (1992) clearly explains the gender neutral use of the term and plenty of examples of men engaging in behaviour where the term liang is used. The term has a wide range of meanings besides the literal connotation, "to feed" and cannot be associated with the English term "nurture" with its attendant notions of femininity, duty and domesticity (Mies 1986). In Thai, liang also means "to treat" (invite guests for a meal or sponsor a banquet) and to "foster"; such as when adopting a child. One can liang orchids, for example, whether male or female.

Liang carries a sense of power; those who want to be influential treat others to build debts of gratitude. Powerful politicians and officials, for example, guarantee the loyalty of their entourage by hosting elaborate meals/festivities. To raise a child (liang luuk, liang dek) - and by extension feed it - involves reciprocity as part of the bargain whereby a child owes something to its parents: particularly its mother. Hence the Thai practice of the bridegroom paying "milk money" (what anthropologists have called
"bride price") is meant to compensate a bride's mother for breastfeeding the daughter during infancy (Sharp and Hanks 1978).

Thai men - like their counterparts in the rest of the region - participate a great deal in child-rearing (Cf. Van Esterik 1992). Men are often good cooks and participate in food-preparation tasks, even those from Isan who are considered the most "macho" of Thailand. The cooking of meat outdoors, in keeping with what appears to be a world wide trend, is defined as men's work (Keyes 1996). When describing cooking as women's work, Formoso qualifies the extent of the gender division of labour in the kitchen:

However, among the Isan, these types of activities are not exclusively part of the feminine sphere and it is admitted that men can take over the daily tasks of preparing rice and side dishes whenever the female labour force is insufficient or temporarily absent. (Formoso 1993, 109 My translation).6

In addition to the activities listed above, there is certainly a case to be made for the presence of nurturing men and boys as evidenced in the following chapters. Van Esterik lists the many symbolic images of masculine nurturers, notably the King who is a supreme example of the pau liang archetype (Cf. Wijeyewardena 1971).

We cannot turn to Theravada Buddhism to explain the fundamentals of the Thai sex-gender system; in some ways the patterns resemble those found in the region as a whole, including among Thai Muslims in the South (Chavivun 1986) and in Malay society (Firth 1966). The importance of religion has been a "stumbling block" for those

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6 "Cependant, chez les Isan ce type d'activités ne relève pas exclusivement de la sphère féminine et il est admis que les hommes prennent en charge dans la vie courante la cuisson du riz ou la confection de plats d'accompagnement, dès lors que la main d'œuvre féminine est insuffisante ou temporairement absente."
studying women in Southeast Asia (Manderson 1983, 3). Manderson states that scholars assume the regions "have adopted foreign religions wholesale" and this "ignores how religion has been integrated with local beliefs". She suggests that the predominance of matrilineality in Southeast Asia is a more powerful explanatory factor than official religion. I do not think we can or should be looking for the 'one great cause' to explain gender relations in the region.

My position is that Thai gender-relations on a mainstream, basic level, tend to be idealized and practiced dichotomously in Thailand with femininity quite sharply distinguished from masculinity. Here, appearances and "surfaces" seem to be of greater importance than "essences". For example, in same-sex relationships which are well tolerated in Thailand, one partner always cross-dresses. Keyes reports even attending a lesbian wedding in rural Thailand where this was the case and Buddhist monks officiated at the ceremony (Keyes 1992)! There are, however plenty of other options which allow an individual to be "butch", "feminine" or adopt a range of identities in-between.

Femininity is considered inferior to masculinity in general prohibiting women from achieving significant power on the national scale (Vitit 1985). Erosions of traditional female equality began hundreds of years ago. Vitit argues that, in the Sukhothai period, women's status was quite high compared to the subsequent Ayutthayan period (14th-17th century a.d.) where a series of laws were introduced which eroded women's rights (for example, allowing polygamy and permitting beating of wives). Thai women today certainly do not see themselves as "equal" to men in
their own society and are organized in a struggle to change their material and legal positions (Decade 1992).

In sum, women's income earning responsibilities toward their families, in addition to the fact that they are more trusted with money, combined with women's childrearing responsibilities and a huge demand for prepared food leads many Thai women to open foodshops.

5.2 FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS IN BANGKOK

In a recent thesis, Bhavivarn (1993) describes the small businesses selling cooked food in the distinctive riverside market at Tha Prachan (Moon Pier) near Thammasat university. She notes that places selling Thai food were generally run by women whom she viewed as knowledgeable and skilled agents specializing in the production of a range of ordinary as well as unusual Thai foods.\(^7\) Thais, she notes, traditionally view this type of occupation as women's work. Shopkeepers tended to be longstanding figures in the market culture of Tha Prachan. Hab re and Paeng loy vendors tend to come from outside the district and do not consider themselves part of the community. She also describes how made-to-order and take-out food is now in greater demand for nearby university employees and students.

As far as foodshops are concerned, daughters and sons of vendors are not interested in taking over their mother's (and sometimes father's) businesses (Bhavivarn 1993, 125). This is a serious problem and will likely lead to the decline of small

\(^7\) Indeed, Tha Prachan is known as an area where authentically prepared traditional foods which have largely disappeared in mainstream Thai society are available.
foodshops in *Tha Prachan.* Bhavivarn noted the recent encroachment of Thai-owned fast-food chains and convenience stores such as 7-11 as well as foreign food.

Naruemol and Oudin's study of "restaurants" as part of a larger study of the informal sector in Bangkok provides detailed information about the operations, income-levels and concerns of small foodshop owners. They found that three quarters of the "restaurant" owners surveyed were women. Their average age was 39 years old; relatively older than the entrepreneurs in other domains of the "informal sector". The average number of employees in restaurants was 0.9 - in other words- entrepreneurs tended to be self-employed and worked on their own or with one other person. Only 16% of businesses selling food had employees.

### 5.2.1 Typology of Eating Places

Eating establishments in Bangkok can be distinguished on the basis of size (floor area or number of seating places), number of employees, type of food sold or according to the linguistic categories used by Thais to speak of foodshops and restaurants. I prefer the latter method but also deal with the other criteria in this section and the following parts of the chapter.

It is clear when examining Table 5.1 that small foodshops with one to four employees form the majority of cooked-food enterprises in the whole kingdom. They form 70% of all establishments in the country and 67% in the Bangkok metropolis.

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8 Restaurants were defined as places preparing full meals. The nature of the "informality" of establishments surveyed was based on the non-registration of activities, the use (but not exclusive) of unpaid (usually family) labour. The study focused on small-scale enterprises (less than 20 employees) for all three sectors surveyed (garments, metal work and restaurants).
Table 5.1

NUMBER OF EATING AND DRINKING ESTABLISHMENTS
ACCORDING TO LOCATION AND NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES
Thailand 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Employees</th>
<th>Bangkok Metropolis</th>
<th>5 Provinces around Bangkok</th>
<th>Whole Kingdom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>4387</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>11 808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>930</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>2 648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1 417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-49</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-99</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-299</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300-499</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All establishments</td>
<td>6 524</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>16 895</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The second largest category of restaurants - those with 5-9 employees - form only 16% and 14% of all establishments in the Kingdom and Greater Bangkok respectively. At the other end of the spectrum, mega-restaurants with more than 300 employees are limited to the primate city, Bangkok, where there were only four as of the early 1990s. The number of mega-restaurants has certainly increased since then.

The smallest and most ubiquitous food establishments of Bangkok and the rest of Thailand are by no means uniform as argued previously. In addition to the locational, ethnic and economic differentiations previously identified, the Thai language can be a tool for defining how Thais themselves typologize foodshops.
Stalls, known in Thai as *paeng loy*, are defined as eating establishments located outside a fixed building, such as on a sidewalk or in a lane. A stall usually has tables and chairs which are set up at the beginning of the selling period and taken down and put away at night. Quite often, a stall will include a pushcart - in addition to tables, chairs and other furniture - as part of its basic equipment.

Pushcarts, or *rot khen*, are a crucial piece of equipment which are either part of a stall or exist independently to serve take-out customers only. Pushcarts are at times itinerant but, more often, set up at a fixed location every day. Sometimes, a number of stalls will group together in one place and share tables and chairs creating an outdoor, informal food-centre. McGee referred to this as a bazaar type agglomeration, a variation of which is the night market (McGee 1973, 84-85). Smart writes:

> Of all the different types of hawking agglomerations, the night markets or night bazaars are the most colourful. There is always an air of festivity at these night markets, also known as the 'poor man's nightclub' (ping mun ye jung wooi in Cantonese. (Smart 1989, 49)

There are several lively night markets in the VMA where the sale of prepared food in street restaurants plays a dominant role (see Figure 5.1). When a pushcart has tables and chairs it becomes a stall and can therefore be considered a small foodshop.

Likewise, *pheung*, is a term referring to an awning-covered or loosely built semi-permanent structure. It is a type of stall with a distinctive design, sometimes including features of other establishments such as a pushcart. *Pheung* are most often located on vacant lots where they are not required to completely set up and set down the foodshop every day or night.
Figure 5.1

Victory Monument Area, Bangkok
Location of Night Markets Map

Legend
- Night markets
- Robinson's Department Store
- Happy Home Cafe

Study Area
As such, they usually squat on someone else’s property with or without the owners consent. Establishments such as this were referred to by one scholar as “interim land-use restaurants” (Archer 1992).

**Shophouses** *(deuk taow)* are distinctive features of cities with a strong Chinese influence such as Bangkok. These two to five storey structures typically have a business located on the ground floor and housing for the merchants on the upper levels. There are many variations on the use of floor space, however. Many older restaurants in Bangkok are located in shophouses. These structures are, for the most part, about 50-60 years old in the VMA. Many are being cleared for the construction of higher density office or residential buildings. In Singapore, however, many old shophouses have been renovated in the past 10 years as part of inner-city revitalization schemes; a type of Asian gentrification. This renovation trend may be forthcoming in Bangkok but is not yet evident in my study site.

Foodshops in apartment buildings or in foodcentres are examples of the newer additions to Bangkok’s foodscape as previously outlined. Shops either have facilities for customers to eat inside the restaurant, or outside “café style,” while the vendors sleep inside the premises, or the “restaurant” may be strictly for take-out or phone in/delivery. As explained in Chapter Four, most rental apartments, rooms for the most part, lack proper cooking facilities stimulating demand for prepared food. Figures 5.2 and 5.3 reproduce a floor plan and menu from an apartment foodshop.

A **franchise**, is an enterprise with a recognized brand name such as KFC or the local "Isan Classic". Strictly speaking, a franchise is an operation whereby the owner
pays for the rights to use a trade name and agrees to employ standardized production techniques. I use the term to refer to established chain restaurants regardless whether the individual operation is a franchise outlet or a part of a centrally-owned chain. In the case of KFC, some locations are franchised to a third party whereas others are owned directly by either Central group or Charoen Pokhpand which divide up the franchise rights.

Finally, pattakarn, are expensive restaurants with formal menus, full service and decorated, comfortable surroundings. The term refers to establishments which specialize in catering to "grander occasions". Many of these places have conveniences such as air-conditioning, a large staff, and a division of labour for employees. Examples of pattakarn are discussed in the following section. It is not linguistically improper to refer to grand establishments as raan ahaan but, for the sake of clarity, I will call them pattakarn.

The typology described is by no means exhaustive and categories used are certainly not discrete. There is often overlap and confusion when it comes to defining the nature of a specific enterprise. These categories are used in the quantitative survey analysed in Section 5.3 and are presented in order to clarify the meaning of terms rather than present the entire range of eating establishments available in Thai society.
Figure 5.2
Tara Apartment
Ground floor of 12 storey building
February 1993 (not to scale)
Figure 5.3

MENU FROM AN APARTMENT FOODSHOP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Breakfast</th>
<th>Price in Baht</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coffee, Soft boiled egg</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set breakfast (coffee, fried egg, bread)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large breakfast (coffee, fried egg, sausage, jam)</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread, Canned orange juice</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice porridge with chicken or pork</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice porridge with prawns or squid</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chok moo with egg</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One dish meals</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fried rice with salty beef and fried egg</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice with scrambled egg and chopped pork</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice <em>khluapii</em></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fried rice with <em>nampri kap langrea</em></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fried rice with pork or chicken</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fried rice with catfish</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khun Siang's fried rice</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fried rice with <em>naem</em> sausage</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fried rice with basil and chicken, pork or beef</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fried rice with basil with prawn or squid</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fried rice <em>poh kaek</em></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spicy stir fry <em>pa laaw</em> with rice</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spicy fried rice with fresh pork, chicken or beef</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice with rad beef and oyster sauce</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fried Rice with crab or prawn</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B. Translated by Gisèle Yasmeen. This only represents half the menu, the other half consists of soups, salads, fried fish and chicken and some curries and *Isan* dishes ranging in price from 25-60 Baht. Most apartment foodshops have far simpler menus serving only noodles and fried rice.
5.2.2 Large Versus Small Establishments

Department of Labour statistics indicate that as an eating establishment - or restaurant - becomes larger and more lucrative, men get involved in greater proportions (Table 5.2).\(^9\) In the smallest foodshops with one to four employees, women account for 83% of employees whereas in those with more than 10 employees, women account for only 51-58% of all workers.

A closer examination reveals that a gender division-of-labour emerges in the larger establishments whereby men or boys, and sometimes girls, work as waiters and women work as cooks, or, in expensive establishments as hostesses and entertainers. Two good examples are *Bussaracum* [Figure 5.4]\(^10\) and *Than Ying*, located in the new World Trade Center. Note that these restaurants specialize in Thai cuisine. Large expensive Chinese restaurants, like their smaller and more humble counterparts, tend to employ men as chefs and cooks.

An extreme example of the specialized role of women in food-establishments are the 'no hands' restaurants where young women employees spoon and hand-feed adult male-customers. This introduces the relationship between the commercial sex industry and Bangkok’s restaurant sector.

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\(^9\) A question which needs to be addressed is the reliability of Thai government statistics, particularly those collected by the Department of Labour. First, the household surveys I believe are quite reliable as they are based on a weighted sample of a cross-section of the population. The Labour Force Survey, however, suffers from underenumeration. I suspect that surveyers did not count the stalls and shops in the sois and/or, neglected to account for stalls which open only in the evening.

\(^10\) *Bussaracum* markets itself as a venue serving authentic Thai food prepared in the royal style. Marilyn Walker's (1991) thesis outlines the debates surrounding this claim. She concludes that the restaurant is primarily geared towards a Western clientele because the menu breaks with the conventions of Thai gastronomy.
Figure 5.4

Bussaracum Restaurant Serves Thai food in the "Royal Style" (promotional material)
"Respectable" Thai women (phuying dii, "good women") do not participate in "bar culture" and other activities associated with the consumption of alcohol as this is relegated to prostitutes (phuying mai dii, "bad women") (Cf. Mills 1990). I comment on these night time institutions based on information gleaned from discussions with Thai urbanites and instances of participant-observation. A first example is the contrast provided by lunchtime versus evening dining experiences in one of the Victory Monument's former Isan entertainment restaurants.\footnote{The restaurant operated until some time in late 1993 or early 1994 at which point it was converted into a bookstore cafe. Comparative photos of the site are found in Figure 3.4.}

FIELDNOTES 5.1 AN ISAN RESTAURANT ON RAJAVITEE ROAD

FRIDAY OCTOBER 9, 1992 - LUNCH

WE WENT TO AN AIR-CONDITIONED PLACE ACROSS THE STREET FROM ROBINSON'S. IT WAS A LARGE RESTAURANT WITH SPACE FOR A BAND. I THINK THE OWNERS ARE FROM ISAN BECAUSE THE FOOD IS NORTHEASTERN AND THE WAITRESSES ARE DRESSED IN A STYLE REMINISCENT OF THE REGION. IT WAS GOOD. A BIT MORE EXPENSIVE THAN ON THE STREET. THERE WAS A GROUP OF THAI MEN BEHIND US WHO WERE CONSUMING MASSIVE QUANTITIES OF BEER WITH THEIR MEAL. THEIR FACES WERE VERY RED! I'D LIKE TO RETURN THERE IN THE EVENING WHEN THERE'S MUSIC.

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 21, 1992 - Supper

JEAN, MEERA AND LEKHA ARRIVED AROUND 7PM. WE WENT TO EAT AT THE ISAN RESTAURANT ACROSS FROM ROBINSON'S. IT WAS NOISY. THERE WAS A BAND PLAYING HORRIBLE MUSIC AND THE DRUNKEN MALE CUSTOMERS WERE TALKING LOUDLY AND SINGING TERRIBLE KARAOKE. THE FOOD WASN'T EXTRAORDINARY.

This vignette describes encounters between our international group and a "modernized" provincial culture, replete with state-of-the art sound systems. We also entered a male space, one oriented towards consumption of whiskey and mind-numbingly loud
entertainment. The establishment was not the preferred haunt of "good" women but neither was it a place, such as a café, featuring young women entertaining male customers.

Rangnam Road (Figure 5.5), a part of the research site, is well known for its cafés - which for Thais is a specific type of establishment usually featuring young women singers dressed in flashy (usually gaudy) costumes. Women act as "hostesses" or "partners". These types of venues are the descendants of "hostess bars" which made their appearance in Thailand many decades ago.\(^\text{12}\)

Still another manifestation of the Thai way is found in cabaret life. In Singapore the Chinese have organized cabarets so that there is no dancing with the taxi dance-girls without tickets, and the whole procedure is well organized to give a steady financial profit to the management. Bangkok also has cabarets -- but no manager has succeeded in running one Singapore style. Each girl (sic) comes or does not come on a given night as she pleases; she may or may not require a guest to buy a dance ticket; and if she goes home with him afterward she may or may not be mercenary about it, depending on how she feels. A man from Singapore with some experience in cabaret management commented unfavorably to me on the casual way in which these things are done in Bangkok. Cabarets are, of course, an innovation in Bangkok from the West, but the permissive behaviour pattern of managers and the individual behavior of the girls are characteristically Thai. Even if the manager is Chinese or European he finds it necessary to adjust his management to the Thai way (Embree 1950, 8).

In a Thai-style "café", the customers give garlands of flowers pinned with money (Bt 500 and up) to the singers of their choice in return for their company after the solo.

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\(^{12}\) A series of debates ensued after Embree published this article on Thai society as a "loosely structured social system". The debates either refuted or asserted Embree's thesis of Thai society being "loosely structured". What critics sometimes failed to note was that Embree was making his comments about Thailand in contrast to Japanese society.
Figure 5.5

Foodstalls & Restaurants
Rangnam Road
September 1994

Legend
☐ stall or pushcart (most with tables and stools)
☐ shop in permanent building

N →

L.S. Kwan

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In transvestite cabarets and gay men's bars, "partners" are usually young men who may or may not cross-dress (see Fieldnotes 5.2). Hosts/hostesses are required to entertain (mostly Thai male) customers by providing them with pleasant conversation, singing and perhaps dancing. Mostly, their function is to encourage customers to buy expensive alcoholic drinks for themselves and the partners. Cafés are a fascinating aspect of Bangkok's foodscape and encompass very specific gender relations related to the city's commercial sex industry. I had the opportunity to frequent a café only twice. I did, nevertheless, collect as much information as possible about these establishments by talking to people about them.

FIELDNOTES 5.2 TWO CAFÉS IN BANGKOK

#1: WE DECIDED TO GO TO THE LITTLE DRAG CABARET ON RAJPRAROP ROAD. THE SHOWS WERE SCHEDULED TO START AT 11PM AND 1AM. WE ARRIVED ABOUT 10-15 MINUTES BEFORE THE 11 O'Clock PERFORMANCE. WE WERE THE ONLY NON-THAI IN THE AUDIENCE. A LARGE BOTTLE OF THAI BEER WAS 200 BAHT... VERY EXPENSIVE. 95% OF THE CUSTOMERS WERE YOUNG MEN. THERE WERE YOUNG MALE "WAITERS" [PARTNERS] WEARING RED JACKETS, SMALL BOW-TIES AND BLACK TROUSERS -- NORMALLY THEY SAT WITH THE CUSTOMERS (BUT NOT US). VERY SOON AFTER WE ENTERED A CROSSDRESSER WHO LOOKED LUUK KREUNG - VERY BEAUTIFUL AND NICE (SINCERE) - CAME TO SPEAK TO US IN ENGLISH (SHE SPOKE VERY WELL). IT APPEARS SHE WAS A CUSTOMER WHO KNEW THE STAFF. SHE SAID THAT WE COULD CALL ON HER IF WE NEEDED ANYTHING. SHE WAS DRESSED LIKE A CASUAL "CHIC" YOUNG WOMAN IN WHITE TROUSERS AND A BLOUSE... NOT TOO MUCH MAKE-UP EITHER.

13 "Johnny Walker Black Label" is the drink of choice among wealthy Thai men, or those who want to appear so. Second choice is Red Label and the masses drink Mekong or another brand of Thai whiskey.

14 A feature article from The Nation newspaper in Bangkok, describes this cabaret culture where male cross-dressers, or "women of the second type" (phuying praphet sorng, more often referred to as kathoey) perform.
THE SHOW WAS VERY GOOD - CHOREOGRAPHED WITH MANY PEOPLE (MOSTLY LIP-SYNC). EXCEPT THERE WAS ONE ACT CONSISTING OF TWO OVERWEIGHT GUYS DRESSED (MOCKINGLY) LIKE WOMEN FROM ISAN... IT WAS DISGUSTING. THEY WORE SKIRTS UNDER WHICH THEY HAD PINNED FAKE MALE GENITALS (FLASHED ON OCCASION)... IMPLYING THAT THE WOMEN THEY PORTRAYED WERE REALLY MEN. THEY HARASSED US IN VARIOUS WAYS AS THE "ODD TRIO" IN THE AUDIENCE.

APPARENTLY THERE WERE THREE DIFFERENT SHOWS. WE LEFT AFTER THE FIRST. DURING THE BREAK, THE "WAITER-BOYS" DANCED IN COUPLES - EACH DID THE SAME SLOW "JIVE" ROUTINE. (WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 14, 1992)

#2: WE DROVE AROUND AND WENT INTO THIS PLACE NEAR THE DEMOCRACY MONUMENT WHICH WE THOUGHT WAS CALLED "JAZZ CLUB" BUT IT WAS ACTUALLY "LOLITA'S". THERE WERE YOUNG THAI WOMEN SINGING POPULAR THAI SONGS WITH A BAND. PEOPLE WOULD GIVE THEM GARLANDS WITH TWO BT500 NOTES PINNED ON TO SHOW APPRECIATION. AJAAN P TOLD ME THAT THESE WERE MEN WHO WANTED THE SINGERS TO GO AND SIT WITH THEM AFTER. HE ALSO SAID THE THAI BARS HIRE YOUNG WOMEN - CALLED "PARTNERS" - TO CHAT WITH CUSTOMERS AND MAKE SURE THEY HAVE A GOOD TIME. THEY CHARGE BY THE HOUR AND THE CLIENT MUST BUY DRINKS AND FOOD FOR THE PARTNER...

APPEARENTLY, A COMEDY SHOW AND DRAG ACT WERE SCHEDULED FOR LATER ON (1AM) BUT WE COULDN'T STAY SO LATE. THE DRAG ACT WAS A LIP-SYNC AND A SPECIAL SHOW FROM PATTAYA WHERE THAT SORT OF ENTERTAINMENT IS VERY POPULAR. AJAAN P SAID THAT ALL SORTS OF PEOPLE GO TO SEE DRAG SHOWS - WOMEN, CHILDREN, COUPLES, ETC. IT'S A VERY POPULAR FORM OF ENTERTAINMENT IN THAILAND. ON THE WAY OUT WE NOTICED THAT THE LOUNGE UPSTAIRS HAD AN ELVIS IMPERSONATION SHOW THAT EVENING. (THURSDAY OCTOBER 29, 1992)

The first passage describing the transvestite cabaret gives yet another example of the subordination of khon Isan by mainstream Central Thai society. It is a type of 'symbolic violence,' drawing from Bourdieu, and a form of cultural imperialism (Chai-anan 1991). The moments described point to the socially constructed nature of gender as something which is, above all-else "performed" (Butler 1990). This is not specific to Thai society but is a generalized transcultural process. Rather than concluding, from
this passage, that masculinity is somehow "ambiguous" in Thai society, it alludes to the ambiguity of both masculinity and femininity ideologically and in practice (Keyes 1986).

The second passage puts forth examples of interaction between the sexes as feminized and masculinized individuals. Here, economic relations are interwoven with gender relations in that men buy the time of aestheticized women. The widespread existence of "partners" points to the sexual and spatial unavailability of mainstream Thai women to men; "respectable" women do not usually frequent the types of places described in the vignette for fear of being construed as bold, their reputations therefore sullied (Kamolrat 1994; Mills 1990). Food, but especially alcohol, sets the stage for the encounters and mediates the relationship. The first image of the drag cabaret gets replayed in the second scene where it becomes clear that cross-dressing, rather than being relegated to the margins of society, is something in which mainstream Thais participate, mostly as spectators. Male cross-dressers are known as "women of the second type" (Phuuying prapet song) (Bangkok Post 1994). In the West, drag cabaret is an underground phenomenon. Preoccupation with surface appearances and aesthetic images again comes to the fore in the representation and experiences of gender in Thai society.

It appears that women, in the larger establishments which serve a latent leisure function (as well as sites of the business lunch or dinner) are being more firmly recast as nurturers and pleasure-giving objects and that their historical capacity as entrepreneurs is being overlooked. However, there are a number of very prominent Thai women in the restaurant business, for example, Patara Sila-On, owner of the
successful "S&P" chain and also the wife of a prominent military general. A Thai-Philippina owns the chain "Little Home Bakery". Several others could be named. This is in keeping with the generally high proportion of Thai women in business, government and academe compared to their counterparts in other parts of the world including North America and Europe (cf. Licuanan 1992, 199).

Table 5.2

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES IN EATING/DRINKING ESTABLISHMENTS
BY SEX AND SIZE OF ESTABLISHMENT

Bangkok Metropolis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of establishment</th>
<th>Female employees</th>
<th>Male employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-4 employees</td>
<td>7 319 (83%)</td>
<td>1 542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 employees</td>
<td>3 858 (64%)</td>
<td>2 131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19 employees</td>
<td>4 741 (57%)</td>
<td>3 552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-49 employees</td>
<td>7 016 (58%)</td>
<td>5 159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-99 employees</td>
<td>3 676 (52%)</td>
<td>3 353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-299 employees</td>
<td>2 975 (51%)</td>
<td>2 916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300-499 employees</td>
<td>736 (56%)</td>
<td>586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>30 321 (61%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>19 239</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thailand Ministry of Labour. **Labour force survey 1990.**

It is difficult to make generalizations about women in the food-system owing to their complex posititons in the restaurant and foodshop sector. Women tend to dominate
micro, small and medium enterprises yet are not absent from the upper echelons of the restaurant industry where they often play leadership roles. Likewise, Thai men's greater involvement in the restaurant-sector, particularly in large, lucrative eating establishments might superficially appear to be a shift from the ascetic ideals of masculinity outlined by anthropologists Keyes (1984; 1986) and Kirsch (1982; 1985). Thai men, as opposed to Chinese or Sino-Thai men have not, until recently, played important roles in commerce presumably due to the low-status of such 'worldly' occupations in the Theravada Buddhist value-system (cf. Khin 1980). Keyes' recent position is that middle-class culture in Thailand is largely Sino-Thai in character (Keyes 1995); in other words, a cultural hybrid.

Further scrutiny suggests that the changing situation of masculinity can be interpreted as contradictory whereby the law of Karma stipulates that one is born into a higher station in subsequent lives following acts of merit and vice-versa. Theravada Buddhism's asceticism is not absolute and material wealth can even be admired in certain circumstances. Walker's thesis (1991) indicates clearly the desire of middle-class Thai to acquire the trappings of aristocracy and this could, in fact be related to a Buddhist influence rather than solely to 'materialism' and 'Westernization'. Kirsch's argument on the links between Buddhism and the Thai culture of gender may need to be revisited yet again.
5.2.3 Distribution of Eating Establishments

Table 5.1 indicates that small foodshops with one to four employees are the most ubiquitous eating establishments in Bangkok and the five surrounding provinces of the Extended Bangkok Metropolitan Region (EBMR) where they represent 65-67% of total restaurants. The statistics likely exclude the smallest and least formal foodshops which can easily escape government canvassers. Realistically, then, the proportion of small foodshops is certainly much higher than 65-67% of total eating establishments. Figures 5.6 and 5.7 are maps depicting the percent distribution of small foodshops with one to four employees within the EBMR. Concentrations of 80% or more are found in the districts of Bangkok Noi, Bangkok Yai, Min Buri, Lat Kra Bang, Phasi Charoen, Nong Khaem and Nong Chok. These are generally wealthier suburban areas of the city where middle-class housing estates have been constructed over the past 20 years. The findings run contrary to my assumptions which were that the oldest, central quarters of the city would have the highest proportion of small foodshops compared to larger establishments. For example, the infamous slum of Klong Toey located near the port has one of the lowest relative concentrations of small foodshops. As noted by de Wandeler (1990), it may be that the poorest families in Bangkok cannot afford to purchase prepared food and therefore do most of their cooking themselves. Older central parts of the city have a greater diversity of foodshop types, perhaps in keeping with the diverse landuse compared to large tracks of lands converted to standardized housing estates in the suburbs. The report of the 1990 Household Socio-Economic Survey indicates that 18.6% of all households in Greater Bangkok do not cook at home.
Figure 5.6

Percent of Eating Establishments with One to Four Employees  
Extended Bangkok Metropolitan Area

Legend

- No Data
- 50-59%
- 60-69%
- 70-79%
- 80-89%
- 90% and above

Figure 5.7

Percent of Eating Establishments with One to Four Employees II
Bangkok Inner City

Legend

40 - 49%
50 - 59%
60 - 69%
70 - 79%
80 - 89%

1 Bang Sue
2 Bang Plad
3 Bangkok Noi
4 Bangkok Yai
5 Thonburi
6 Khlong San
7 Bang Kolaem
8 Yan Nawa
9 Sathorn
10 Bangrak
11 Pathumwan
12 Ratchathevi
13 Phayathai
14 Dusit
15 Phranakorn
16 PomPrapSattruPhai
17 Samphan

Table 5.3

HOUSEHOLDS WHERE NO COOKING IS DONE
(% of total respondents in the Household Survey)

Greater Bangkok 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm Operators</th>
<th>Owning Land 5.8%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Renting Land --</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own-Account, Non-Farm</td>
<td>Entrepreneurs(a) 12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional(b) 55.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>Professional 10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Farm workers 1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General workers 39.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clerical 22.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Production workers 22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Inactive</td>
<td>Economically inactive 16.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(a\) This category is defined as "Entrepreneurs, Trade and Industry" and is the occupation of the household head (as defined by family members).

\(b\) "Own account" refers to those who operate enterprises on their own and hired no employees. Prefatory remarks in the survey explain (rather unclearly) that worker categories were divided into sub-classes. In the case of own account workers this resulted in three categories: professional, technical and administrative enterprises.


Table 5.3 indicates the percentage of total households that do not cook according to household type as revealed in the 1990 Household Socio-economic Survey.
Own-account entrepreneurs in trade and industry report not doing any cooking at all at an astounding rate of 55.6%. Employees in all categories are the second most highly represented occupational groups that do not cook. Even the "economically inactive" which includes "housewives," students and others report that 16.5% never cook at home. Finally, it is clear that the few farmers remaining within Greater Bangkok continue to cook at home with only 5.8% reporting that they do not cook for themselves.

5.3 RESULTS OF THE QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

The remainder of this chapter summarizes the results of the quantitative survey of 58 foodshops in the VMA. The findings echo other research on the prepared-food delivery system. The case study site therefore resembles the rest of Thailand with respect to the socio-economic characteristics of cooked-food vendors and restaurant owners.

5.3.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Consistent with results of other studies outlined earlier in this chapter, two-thirds of the cooked-food sellers in the study area are women. I suspect that my omission of night stalls and establishments specializing in the sale of alcohol excluded more male respondents. Likewise, most of the informants are individuals between the ages of 26 and 44 with an average age of 39 (median and modal age is 30) (see Figure 5.8). In

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15 One of the problems with Thai data is that women often refer to themselves as housewives even though they may own a small business such as a foodshop. This is particularly true in rural areas where, in addition, women are highly active in farming.
total, 69 percent of the informants reported being married and are assisted on a volunteer basis by immediate family members (38%) or, less frequently, by relatives from the extended family (21%). The remainder either have employees (41.4%) or report working alone. There is sometimes a combination of the two phenomena with both paid employees and volunteer helpers. Indeed the conceptual distinction between “helper” and “employee” is difficult to ascertain.

**Household income.** Half of respondents claimed to be the sole income earners in their households (52%), and performing solely this occupation (93%). Nineteen percent responded that another family member worked in trading as well (selling clothing, for example) and another group (21%) had households with another person working as a company employee or a civil servant.

**Length of time.** There are two patterns visible when considering the length of time an establishment has been open. First, there are the long standing cooked-food sellers and small restaurant owners who have been in business 10 or more years. The second group consists of those who have operated two years or less. Indeed, 9% of respondents reported opening less than half a year prior to the survey. One small foodshop owner was unable to answer our questions because we arrived for the survey on his opening day!

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16 Due to the overlapping of practices, totals do not add up to 100%.

17 Four respondents (7%) told us that they worked at other jobs. There was one housekeeper, a company employee, one worker for an electrical company and a civil servant. For this minority, selling prepared food was a part-time occupation.

18 We attempted to collect data on as many family/household members as possible. Unfortunately some of my assistants did not pursue this line of questioning thoroughly enough. Hence, the only reliable information concerns the occupation of the other main adult in the family/household.
Figure 5.8
Age Distribution of Food Sellers
Victory Monument Area

![Age Distribution Chart]

Source: Fieldwork, 1994

Figure 5.9
Education Levels of Food Sellers
Victory Monument Area

![Education Levels Chart]

Source: Fieldwork, 1994
The recent mushrooming of cooked-food enterprises appears to be related to the real estate boom in the area which has created opportunities for vendors and small restaurant owners. Higher density construction of kitchenless apartments for young, single people has resulted in a higher resident population and thus has accentuated the demand for prepared food. On the other hand - as the next chapter explains - small foodshop owners are, at the same time, being displaced by massive real estate development.

**Educational levels.** Figure 5.9 represents the educational level of respondents. The majority (53%) of cooked-food sellers have received some primary education. Nineteen percent attended secondary school with 21% of respondents having post-secondary training either at the college level or in a vocational program. This runs contrary to the findings of other studies. The main reason for the high level of education is due to my inclusion of indoor, "formal" restaurants such as KFC and the Noodle Garden complex. In these establishments, managers typically obtain a bachelor's degree or a diploma from a technical or business school. Results were also biased by family helpers, especially teenagers, who were sometimes interviewed. Generally speaking, the children of informants are better educated than their parents.

**Place of birth.** The majority of respondents were born in Bangkok (53.4%). Figure 5.10 is a map depicting the birth places of cooked-food sellers surveyed. In total, 34.2% were born in the provinces of the Northeast (Isan) with the remainder from

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19 The primary level is known as *prathom* and is composed today of levels one to six, the 7th level having been phased out. The secondary level (*mathayom*) also has six levels.
the Southern and Northern regions (6.9%). Like the migrant workers in other sectors of the economy such as construction, domestic employment and light industry, people from Isan migrate to the city in order to sell prepared food. People from Isan are the butt of ethnic jokes in Central Thailand and are stereotyped as stupid, unsophisticated and even lazy. A discussion between a food vendor (Daeng) from Roi-Et province in the Northeast, one of my assistants and myself illustrates these stereotypical views.

Daeng: Many people from Isan come to find jobs in Bangkok. People from Isan are looked down upon [we laugh amongst ourselves].
Morn: At first, many people think Isan people are lazy.
Daeng: Not lazy.
Mais: Not lazy at all.
Daeng: Northerners are lazy. They like comfort.
Daeng: Southerners are rich... good economic status. Southerners don't work very hard.

Although Daeng is a victim of prejudice against Northeasterners, she also perpetuates generalizations about Thais from other regions. People from Isan form Thailand's largest ethnic minority and are systematically discriminated against and negatively stereotyped by mainstream Thai society. They, and their region, are considered culturally and economically "backward" although their status is improving somewhat (Cohen 1991). Nevertheless, jokes are continually made about their supposedly "vulgar" ways, darker skin (considered unattractive) and "lesser intelligence". Khon Isan form the underclass in Bangkok society partly because of this prejudice.21

20 The remaining 5% of respondents did not declare their place of birth. Some interviewees simply stated they were from Isan rather than name their specific home province.

21 Thailand - like most parts of Asia, Africa and the world in general - is a racist and colour conscious society. Dark skin is considered unattractive, especially for women.
Figure 5.10

Birthplaces of Foodshop Owners
Victory Monument Area, Bangkok

Scale: 1: 10 000 000
Source: Field Survey 1994
5.3.3 *Shop Types and Food Specialties*

A breakdown of shop types is found in Table 5.4.22 The majority of respondents own or are employed in establishments located in a shophouse (*deuk taow*) (n=18), or own pushcarts (*rot khen*) (n=15), stalls (*paeng loy*) (n=8), foodshops located in apartments (n=6) or those located in foodcentres (n=5).23

"Other" types of shops include stalls using awnings (*pheung*) (n=3), one foodshop in a hotel, one expensive restaurant (*pattakarn*) and two franchises (KFC and Noodle Garden). Twelve percent (n=7) of the establishments studied have branches at other locations or the proprietor owns other restaurants. These branches are examples of medium-scale Thai businesses.

Distinctions between these types of enterprises are sometimes difficult to ascertain for a shophouse restaurant may actually contain a pushcart and a stall may also have a pushcart as part of its equipment. Classification involves deciding which feature is to be given precedence. Through consultations with Napat Sirisambhand-Gordon - author of a previous study on Thai food establishments - and research assistants, it was found that the above categories coincided with Thai categorizations of eating places.

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22 The categories used were borrowed for the most part by those employed in the Chonburi study of streetfoods (Napat and Szanton 1986) with the addition of the following categories: shophouses, expensive restaurants, hotel foodshops, franchises and establishments located in apartments and foodcentres.

23 Only one foodcentre in the area agreed to be studied and its name, like that of individual informants, shall remain anonymous. Another new centre owned by a large Thai company did not grant me permission to interview vendors. I did, however, sketch map the premises and counted the number of employees and customers. The manager was briefly and informally interviewed. These results will be discussed in the next two chapters.
Table 5.4
SHOP TYPES IN THE VICTORY MONUMENT AREA
Bangkok 1994

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shop Type</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shophouse</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushcart</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stall</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foodshop in apartment</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foodshop in foodcentre</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As seen in Figure 5.11, most enterprises specialize in the sale of certain types of food. The largest category is that of noodle shops (18 cases)\(^{24}\) which are either located in shophouses (n=8) or on the street in stalls (n=5) or sold in hotels, foodcentres or apartment foodshops (n=5). Noodles are especially popular at lunchtime with office workers and students. There are several varieties of noodle dishes both in soup and stir-fried. According to the survey, noodle shops are no longer the exclusive domain of the Sino-Thai. Many are run by people born in Isan who are ethnically Lao.

\(^{24}\) The number of cases will be abbreviated as "n".
Figure 5.11

Principal Type of Food Sold, Victory Monument Area

- Red Pork: 1.7%
- Pork/Chicken Rice: 6.9%
- Noodles: 31.0%
- Isan Food: 12.1%
- Made to order food: 25.9%
- Curry and Rice: 15.5%
- Others: 6.9%

Source: Fieldwork, 1994

Figure 5.12

Number of Customers per Day, Victory Monument Area

- Less than 50 customers: 10
- 50 - 100 customers: 50
- More than 100 customers: 31

Source: Fieldwork, 1994

Figure 5.13

Busy Food Selling Periods, Victory Monument

- 6-9:00: 72%
- 11-14:00: 9%
- 17-19:00: 7%
- 19-23:00: after 23:00

Source: Fieldwork, 1994
The second major group sell “made-to-order” food (ahaan tam sang) which includes specialties such as fried rice (khaaw pad), fried noodle dishes (pad si ieuw, kwatiauw rad naa), varieties of salads (yam), fried eggs and omelettes (khay dao, khay jieaw) and borrow highly popular additions to the Thai menu such as Thai-style sukiyaki. Food “made to order” is therefore prepared according to the specifications of the customer and served piping hot. According to some tam sang is becoming the preferred fast-food of the area.

Wira: Thai people don’t like food like this... they prefer fried dishes.
Wira and Goy: Very Hot.
GY: tam sang
Wira: We’ve lost a lot of customers because they go to the tam sang.

Wira and Goy - a husband and wife team managing a student residence and food centre - are commenting on the decline in popularity of lukewarm pre-prepared food such as curries, soups and vegetable dishes. According to Walker, however, Thais are not fussy about food temperature and are willing to eat lukewarm or even cold food. My observations coincide with Walker’s given the popularity of room-temperature curries. This is rooted in the ways in which meal taking is informal and less ritualized than in other cultural traditions:

Because a Thai cook knows that while the food may be ready at a certain time, not everybody will be there to eat it. The husband might be in the bathroom, the wife talking on the phone, the children watching television, unlike the Chinese who seat everybody at the table and then bring the

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25 Among the Chinese in Malaysia and Singapore this is known as “hot pot”.

26 Refer to pages 105-6, section entitled “Cold stews! Cold hot dogs! We don’t care!”. With the exception of Tom Yum Gung (a hot and sour prawn soup), most Thai food can and often is served at room temperature. Foreign food is also commonly served lukewarm if it has not been prepared immediately beforehand.
food... Thai food can be eaten whenever you're ready. (Walker 1991 citing informant "PN", 105)

Middle class Thais exhibit cultural traits borrowed from Chinese foodways. The more disciplined Chinese eating tradition leads to greater degrees of commensality. The general situation in Bangkok is flexible and families may or may not eat together at the same time depending on circumstances or family custom.\textsuperscript{27} The informal Thai meal system may be a factor explaining the popularity of purchasing prepared foods and is also related to the ways in which Thais perceive and use domestic space in a more flexible manner (see Walker 1995).

Curries and rice (\textit{khaaw gaeng}) are the third most important type of food sold in the VMA. Curry/Rice shopkeepers prepare dishes in the morning and place the curries, soups and vegetable dishes in big aluminum pots on a table for sale throughout the day. Customers look and see what is available and choose items. If they are friendly with the shop owner they may serve themselves. This is also the case with shops specializing in other types of food, such as made-to-order dishes. I would often enter Daeng's shop, make my own \textit{som tam}, serve it to myself in a dish, rinse the dish, and then place the money owed in the small basket on the counter. Daeng teasingly referred to this as "self-service"!

Food from Northeastern Thailand, or \textit{Isan}, is a very important type of food sold in the neighbourhood. 12.1\% of shops enumerated specialize in this type of food which includes green papaya salad (\textit{som tam}), various other types of salads with ground meat,\textsuperscript{27} Commensality promotes community and kinship bonds but also leads to the frustration of many women who are responsible for rounding up family members in addition to food preparation (Cf. Charles and Kerr 1988; Giard and Mayol 1980).
herbs and spices (lab), grilled chicken (gai yang) and the ubiquitous “sticky rice” (khaaw niew) of the Northeast and Laos. The range of establishments serving Isan food span from the mobile vendor with a shoulder pole and baskets (hab re) catering to construction workers and passers-by to the large restaurants on Rangnam Road. The latter are often decorated with small white lights and are open late at night serving whiskey to male office workers in the evening. The combination of meat, alcohol and male patrons lends a particularly ludic quality to these restaurants (Formoso 1993, 99). Perhaps this is because the food served, consisting of meat dishes for the most part, are symbolically related to both masculinity and festival foods (Keyes 1996). The last Friday of each month - immediately after pay day - is the most popular time for many Thai men to frequent restaurants as a group.

FIELDNOTES 5.3: ISAN “EVENING” RESTAURANTS

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 14, 1992: WE WENT FOR SUPPER IN A SUPER ISAN RESTAURANT ON RANGNAM ROAD, CLOSE TO MY PLACE. IT GOT VERY BUSY ABOUT AN HOUR AFTER WE ARRIVED... THERE WAS A SUPERB AMBIENCE. ON THAT END OF RANGNAM THERE ARE PLENTY OF INTERESTING FOODSHOPS/RESTAURANTS WHICH ARE FREQUENTED MOSTLY IN THE EVENING. THEY ARE “OPEN AIR” AND ARE DECORATED WITH STRINGS OF LITTLE WHITE LIGHTS. TYPICALLY, THE SERVING STAFF CONSISTS OF YOUNG WOMEN (MID TO LATE TEENS) DRESSED IN ISAN COSTUMES (THE BAGGY INDIGO PYJAMA-TYPE OUTFITS).

The behaviour of patrons exhibited in these establishments contrasts the sober, polite and soft-spoken middle class Thai male idealized in romantic movies, television shows and encountered routinely in Bangkok. Instead, male customers are drunk, loud, and lewd.

In 8.6 percent of cases surveyed, Chinese specialties such as chicken rice (khao man gai), pork leg and barbecued red pork (both with rice) are the house specialties. Other categories of food (6.9%) include foreign food, deep fried chicken, sweets, grilled meat or fish-ball brochettes (luuk chin ping) and stalls selling drinks only.

5.3.3 Clientèle and Daily Selling Patterns

Half of the respondents estimate receiving 50-100 customers per day and one-third (31%) serve more than 100 (see Figure 5.12). For the vast majority, customers come at lunchtime between 11:00 and 14:00 (72%) (Figure 5.13). By cross-tabulating food type and time of day (Figure 5.14), it is evident that noodles are the most popular lunchtime food. The majority of curry/rice shops and establishments selling food made-to-order also report 11am to 2pm as their peak selling time. In general, public eating is a lunchtime phenomenon though a study of night stalls and restaurants might reveal a different pattern. I am told, however, that Thais who have kitchens still tend to eat supper at home whenever possible.

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28 Chicken rice, as it is known in Malaysia and Singapore, is a delicious Hainanese specialty in which boiled chicken is served with rice cooked in chicken broth. Chicken bouillon is usually served as well. Condiments such as ginger sauce, thick soya and chili dip are included.
Figure 5.14
Food Type Sold According to Peak Selling Time

![Bar chart showing food type sold according to peak serving time.]

Source: Field Survey 1994
Note: One respondent reported two peak periods; another reported the peak period to be between 8 and 9 p.m.

Figure 5.15
Gender of Foodshop Owner According to Selling Location

![Bar chart showing gender of foodshop owner by selling location.]

Source: Field Survey 1994
5.3.6 Locational Patterns

It has been observed by others studying hawkers and shophouse restaurant owners that people in these occupations tend to live close to their place of work. Indeed, 48% of my interviewees live adjacent to their shops. In some cases, cooked-food sellers actually live in their shops and simply roll out a mat for sleeping in the evening. Other small shop-keepers, such as hairdressers, often do the same. Most of those who live adjacent to their businesses dwell in shophouses (n=14). Seven stall and pushcart owners live near their shops and all of the apartment foodshop owners reside in their place of work. Three respondents from a hotel, foodcentre and expensive restaurant also live adjacent to their workplaces. Many stall owners also (n=6) dwell in the VMA and therefore walk to their place of work avoiding the city's legendary traffic jams. The inexpensive area of Asoke-Din Daeng-Huay Kwang, which is a short bus or tuk-tuk ride to the VMA was the second most popular place of residence for micro-entrepreneurs. The others travel fairly long distances to reach their businesses. They either use motorcycle or public transit to reach their shops.

The contiguousness of home and workplace has been remarked as something beneficial as it enables people to work more efficiently and combine domestic tasks with income earning activities. On the other hand, as explored in Chapter Six, the integration of home and workplace can also make some people feel trapped, especially women who tend to have greater domestic responsibilities.

Initially, I speculated that women micro-entrepreneurs in the prepared-food sector are ghettoized in the lanes or sois in small home-based foodshops as opposed to
the main thoroughfares where men would supposedly have a greater presence. This is the case in certain Indonesian cities (Klopfner 1993, 301; Murray 1991, 39). After having cross-tabulated sex of informant with location, however, this does not appear to be the situation in my study site (Figure 5.15).

Women are the majority of business owners at all locations (main streets, minor streets, lanes and a housing project under re-development). Proportionately, women consistently accounted for between 58 to 77% of entrepreneurs in all locations. Since I suspect that the Labour Force Survey underenumerated the number of foodshops in the sois which are nearly always owned/operated by women, the proportion of women micro-entrepreneurs (82%) should likely be even higher in the government data.

On the formal/informal axis, women dominate all types of enterprises - even at the helm of larger more formalized establishments in the VMA. Women are the majority of managers (or "head of food sector") as well as renters of spaces in the Rattana Foodcentre. Women employees and family helpers also outnumber their male counterparts.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter reviewed the literature on Thai and Southeast Asian cooked-food entrepreneurs and small restaurant owners and related it to my research. It is argued that Thai women's sense of responsibility for the economic well-being of their families pushes them to open businesses such as foodshops. This sense of responsibility is enmeshed within wider associations between femininity and nurturing and is also related
to perceptions of men being less capable of handling money and household budgets. To characterize Thai men as "irresponsible," however, is inaccurate and examples of masculine nurturing archetypes were illustrated.

The significance of the urban/rural divide for gender relations was also elaborated. Rural gender relations reflect more egalitarian traditions where femininity and masculinity are generally complementary. Urban Thailand, unfortunately, is associated with asymmetrical gender relations where women are more subordinated. This is reflected in the practice of urban men taking "minor wives", frequenting prostitutes, drinking and spending money irresponsibly. Thai urban middle class women, in some ways, are more subordinated than their rural sisters due to the male behaviour described above and the more conservative gender ideologies borrowed from India and China which seclude women in the home.

The combinations and permutations of gender according to domicile (urban or rural), class, ethnicity, education and age result in a rather contradictory position for women in Thai society where they are both independent, mobile money-earners and subordinated within the social system. These characterizations are, nevertheless, abstractions and Thai women and men in reality are presented with a range of ideological and practical options for their identities and behaviours.

The results of the quantitative survey in the VMA resemble the findings of other researchers with respect to the socio-economic characteristics of cooked-food sellers. One exception, however, is the high level of education of small-scale food vendors due to the inclusion of formalized eating establishments. Another interesting contribution of
the survey is the flexible ethnic differentiation of microentrepreneurs with respect to food type, particularly noodles. Whereas noodle shops were traditionally a Chinese domain, many of the noodle vendors in the VMA are originally from Isan and ethnically Lao.

The next chapter explores the daily lives and spaces of the qualitatively interviewed informants. The voices of informants interviewed in-depth provides the detail necessary to contextualize the more statistical profile presented in this chapter. Operating budgets for a sample of foodshop owners frame part of the discussion and shed light on the crucial economic dimension of micro versus meso and macro-entrepreneurialism in the food-system.
Chapter Six

LIVES AND VOICES OF FOODSHOP OWNERS

This chapter traces the life histories and daily activities of foodshop owners interviewed in-depth. Self-employed microentrepreneurs are compared and contrasted with managers/owners and employees of larger-scale establishments. I begin by profiling the 13 informants interviewed at nine separate establishments. Observations were also made for a tenth business - a foodcentre - where official permission to study the premises was denied, though the manager was briefly interviewed.

6.1 PROFILES OF KEY INFORMANTS

The qualitatively interviewed informants fall loosely into two categories based on the nature of the business: microentrepreneurs and owners or managers of more "formal" establishments. A firm definition of "formal and informal" is difficult and resembles the problems associated with identifying "traditional" and "modern" economic sectors.

As a model, the "two-circuit" system is conceptualized as a continuum with informal or traditional enterprises and formal sector activities at opposite ends and helps sort out the types of eating establishments found in the Thai food-system.

The conceptual divide between putative formal and informal sectors has been sharply criticized as a spurious dichotomy based on Western systems of national accounts (Laquian 1993). Many activities do not conform to the two "sectors."
boundaries are fuzzy and examples of semi-formal or informal activities abound.

Furthermore, there are links between the two circuits (Salih et al., 1988).

Like the public/private sphere framework, the informal/formal distinction is a useful conceptual tool for the purposes of grouping the types of foodshops and restaurants under study. I use this division metaphorically - as a type of shorthand - because of general distinctions between the two types of food enterprises. The purpose of using this conceptual framework is to point out the many examples of businesses which are not only roughly formal or informal but rather at some point between the two poles of the continuum. McGee and Yeung proposed semi-formal/informal enterprises as a salient feature of the Southeast Asian urban "bazaar" economy in the 1970s.

Between these two polar types many Southeast Asian cities have intermediate forms of economic organization that are owned and operated largely by local Chinese or Indians (McGee and Yeung 1977, 20).

One of their conclusions was that the "traditional and modern sectors make conflicting demands on urban space" (McGee and Yeung 1977, 20). The study did not focus, however, on the types of spatial demands made by the hybrid enterprises. My discussion of foodcentres and other intermediate forms of eating establishments contributes something to the discussion.

Micro-enterprise refers to a business generally operated by one or two people where owners/operators fall into the category of the self-employed. Micro-enterprises are generally "informal" as they are more often than not unregistered and do not pay taxes or follow regulations specified by the local state. Many also depend to a great extent on unpaid family labour. Sethuraman provides the standard definition of the
informal sector characterized by ease of entry, small-enterprises, status not recognized by the state and dependence on family labour among other factors (Sethuraman 1981).¹

"Formal" eating-establishments tend to be located within a proper building and comply with some of the licensing and inspection regulations of the local municipality. They are larger in scale and may have several paid employees. A more complex division of labour appears in these types of establishments. An interesting hybrid, though, is the apparition of the foodcentre in which "semi-informal" shops are located within more formalized structures such as shopping centres, educational institutions or office buildings. They are semi-formal as they are registered with local authorities yet continue to rely on unpaid family labour and sometimes prepare food at home for later sale. This blurs the boundaries between "informal" versus "formal," "private" and "public". The following passage describes Central Plaza Lardprao where I interviewed both the director of the centre and property manager.

FIELDNOTES 6.1: CENTRAL PLAZA LARDPRAO'S FOOD PARK & FOODCENTRE

WE HAD A DRINK IN THE "FOOD PARK" WHICH ONLY HAS ELEVEN SHOPS - ALL INDEPENDENTLY OWNED. MAIN DISHES ARE PRICED FROM 20-25 BAHT. THE COUPON SYSTEM IS IN OPERATION WHEREBY CENTRAL PLAZA RETAINS 30% OF ALL SALES FOR USE OF DISHES, SERVICE AND RENT. APPARENTLY THE MALL HAS A TEAM WHICH DOES MARKET RESEARCH TO MONITOR THE TASTES OF POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS AND DECIDES, BASED ON THAT INFORMATION, WHAT TYPES OF SHOPS THEY SHOULD HAVE. THEY THEN SEND AGENTS TO VARIOUS CITIES IN THAILAND TO SAMPLE (TRADITIONAL) INDIGENOUS FOODSHOPS AND, IF THEY ARE GOOD, INVITE THEM TO SET UP A STALL IN THE FOOD PARK OR FOODCENTRE. KHUN

¹ Other factors listed by the International Labour Organization (ILO) include: i) family ownership; ii) reliance on indigenous resources; iii) labour intensive and adapted technology; iv) skills acquired outside formal system; and finally v) unregulated competitive markets (McGee and Yeung 1977, 21).
Pornchalee, the first person I interviewed, said the stalls are owned, operated and staffed mostly by women and usually have 3-5 employees. One "famous" noodle vendor from Khon Kaen set up her stall in the Food Park. Several places have the Shell Chuan Chim endorsement. I didn't count the number of food shops in the larger Food Centre but there were approximately 30. Pornchalee pointed out the great number of "traditional" dessert vendors in the Food Centre. A shoulder pole with baskets (hab re) was one of the props used to market the sweets.

The manager of Central Plaza stipulates that the foodshops must adhere to regulations of the state, such as cleanliness standards and the labour code (Chongrak 1993). It is claimed that Central Plaza Lardprao's Foodcentre was the first of its kind in Bangkok, but this is disputed by other shopping plazas such as the gigantic Mah Boon Krong (MBK) complex. Opening the foodcentre was risky because Thais were unaccustomed to the concept of self-service and preferred to be served by waiters. Chongrak Tripakvasin, the manager of the Plaza, explains that Central Plaza's foodcentre is a success because many of the comestibles are on display - encouraging customers to "take a look" and try the food. The foodcentre has shops representing all the culinary traditions of the kingdom, including Muslim (halal) and vegetarian counters. Chongrak asserted that other foodcentres in the city have copied the prototype of Central Plaza. Design of foodcentres is jealously guarded and taking pictures is strictly prohibited.

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2 MBK is a seven storey labyrinth filled mostly with small shops and vendors but also including the giant Tokyu department store. It is truly a sight to behold, a rather daunting labyrinth, and I have never come across anything like it elsewhere.

3 Many foodcentres in Kuala Lumpur continue to have service at the table and have avoided or else abandoned the use of coupons.

4 See Walker 1991 for a discussion of the importance of food appearances and display.
(Pitch 1994). Some even include a pictogram interdicting photography in the shopping
plaza and foodcentre.

THREE MORE THAI FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS

Samrit and Lek's Chicken Noodle Soup Business

Samrit and Lek, a young married couple, operate a stall selling chicken noodle soup on
a busy street in the Victory Monument Area. At the time of the interview in late 1994,
they had been operating the stall for a year already. Lek and her husband had tried
operating a restaurant before, though unsuccessfully. They rented a shop in Bang Pho
for 4000 Baht per month but eventually gave up because they were not selling to
enough customers. At the time, they sold noodles and had invested quite a bit of money
in a pushcart, dishes, tables and chairs... a total of approximately 15-16 thousand baht
which they obtained from their savings. "I lost more than 20 000 baht," lamented
Samrit. "We couldn't sell, we were losing money. We changed our selling location just
on time," he explained. Now, their sales are enough to build up their savings again.

Previously Lek worked as a seamstress for three years in a factory in Din Daeng
that fabricated clothing for export. Prior to that, she worked at various jobs including
having to return to her home in Kalasin province (Isan) to help her parents on the
family farm. Lek and Samrit met as children since they were neighbours. After
completing his military service, they got married and Samrit worked as a tuk-tuk driver
but was having difficulty making ends meet due to the constant traffic jams. His friend
was doing well in the foodshop business so Samrit decided to change occupations. He
worked as an apprentice for a while to learn how to manage a similar operation.
Despite the misfortune in the earlier foodshop venture, Samrit remained motivated to
earn money to send his children to school. Their daughter was born in 1991, and at the
time of the interview they had a four-month old son. Their mothers take turns coming
to Bangkok to help take care of the children.

Samrit and Lek keep a bank account but their funds have depleted after
experiencing financial trouble and because of their families' debts in the countryside.
They lend family members and friends money when it is available. They also give free
meals to beggars and those who are too poor to buy food. The two do not participate in
rotating credit circles (len share). "Others can leave with your money... it's enough to
drive you crazy. I don't want to have to think about such things," said Samrit. Both
are interested in locating in a foodcentre or bidding for a contract in a school or other
institution but missed at least one opportunity due to the timing of their son's birth.
Their long term goal, though, is to eventually own a shophouse with a restaurant on the
ground floor. A more immediate concern in late 1994, however, was to find a new
place to live as the house where they rented a room was scheduled for demolition some
time in 1995 to make room for a high-rise apartment building.
Tip's Stall

Tip is originally from Chiang Mai province where her family used to farm. She lived there until 1972 at which point she moved to Bangkok. She is in her mid-forties and finished her schooling in grade four. After moving to Bangkok, she stayed with an Aunt and Uncle in a small hotel and got a job in a foodshop on the premises. This is where she learned about the business and learned to cook. Her family eventually sold the farm and Tip's widowed mother came to live with her. She is married and has one daughter who was 13 at the time of the interview. Her husband and daughter help her with the business along with one paid employee, Oy. Once in a while, a nephew who was attending Ramkamhaeng university at the time, would come to lend a hand.

Tip's shop sells all types of “made to order” food such as rad naa, pad si iew, tom yum, fried rice dishes, macaroni and several types of soup. Most dishes are 15 baht each. She has extended credit in the past but discourages the practice. “One person who lives in a nearby apartment borrowed money from me then moved away,” she warned. Tip does not play len share (rotating credit) because she cannot afford to contribute regularly. Instead, her daughter deposits savings in a bank account. She has eight brothers and sisters who still live in Chiang Mai: “My younger sister is married and stays with her husband, my younger brother works and one brother is unemployed. Another sibling is still single,” she explained. The unemployed brother is disabled so Tip provides him with 300 Baht per month. “He can't use his legs because of a car accident. He stays in a government nursing home.”

Tip is interested in bidding on a contract in an institution. “I've never been but my younger sister-in-law offered to take me to a school to ask for information about cooking food there. But I found out that the bidding was over so I couldn't get the space.” She’s never thought about locating in a foodcentre. Her goal, like Samrit and Lek, would be to own a shophouse with a foodshop on the ground floor. “Shortly, this place will be torn down,” she told us pointing to a more pressing concern. “If the owner is offered 25 million baht he will sell.”

Fong Kee

Fong Kee is one of the oldest restaurants in Bangkok and is already 60 years old. The present location is its fourth. The original owner came from Hainan province and his children operate the establishment today. Chinese food in the Hainanese style is the specialty of the house. “Hainanese food resembles Thai food because Hainan is quite close, in Southern China... it's a strong taste,” explained Viwan with the clear pronunciation of a school teacher. She is the niece of the original owner and studied languages in university. Viwan has been involved with the restaurant since her childhood but worked elsewhere for ten years after finishing her studies. After her father died she quit her job and went to work at Fong Kee. That was in the year 2518 B.E. (1975 a.d.).
The first location of Fong Kee 60 years ago was in a medical school for the military. After six or seven years they were forced to change location when the hospital decided to expand. The second location lasted only five or six years due to the construction of the Victory Monument which displaced the restaurant. Finally, a third location was secured for the next forty years next door to their present location. Viwan's aunt, the wife of the original owner, suggested a final change of location after consulting a geomancer. Their fourth and present location is intended to be the permanent home of the restaurant. The family owns the property outright.

In the old days, Fong Kee was surrounded by guava orchards, some rice paddies and many royal palaces. The clientele consisted mainly of military officers and government officials, men for the most part. Today, it is a family restaurant for middle-class Thais and is a preferred venue for small wedding banquets of 50-80 people. Those who work nearby continue to frequent the restaurant at lunch. There are 20 full-time employees and family members who work in the restaurant receive a salary. "Regular" employees are provided with housing, transportation, three meals a day and a uniform. The two chefs are Sino-Thai men. Operations in the kitchen are very modernized and include a dishwasher and dryer. Fong Kee is a legally formalized operation which has obtained all necessary permits from the district office, gets regular inspections and has the mandatory "grease trap" to prevent sewage water pollution.

6.1.1 Microentrepreneurs

The owners and operators of the smallest food-shops studied opened their businesses in order to earn the principal source of household income. They not only support their immediate families but also contribute to the welfare of parents, siblings and more distant relatives. The microentrepreneurs engage in two types of nurturing, or liang, behaviour: first, they are literally feeding urbanites through a transactional medium; second, they are nurturing their own families financially - nuclear and extended - and contributing economically to the poorest regions of the country, particularly the Northeast.

Selling prepared-food is the most feasible way for vendors to earn daily revenue. "I came [to Bangkok] to help care for my family" explains Ying. She worked as a cook
and maid for nearly 17 years before finally opening her first micro-enterprise. "My employer said to me, 'If you want to open a shop here I don't mind. If you stay with me your salary will not be as high'," Ying revealed. She explains that her salary as a domestic employee was not high enough to support her family any longer. Daeng adds, "It's an independent occupation. Also, you can get money everyday." Ying's first push-cart operation was forced to close because of a conflict with the adjacent landowner. She then opened a bigger foodshop with her niece. For Ying and Daeng, however, what used to be a successful micro-enterprise is now suffering due to increased competition from new neighbouring shops and what they perceive to be a poor economic situation.

Another small vendor, Noo, operates a pork noodle stall with her father (Figure 6.1). Slightly wealthier than Ying and Daeng, they own a small dry goods store - managed by Noo's mother and siblings - in a market town in Isan. Noo and her father came to Bangkok for the youngest sister to get a better education. Noo, aided by her father, looks after her sister and sends money home regularly.

### 6.1.2 Formal Establishments

The formal establishments studied indicate a range of reasons why the shops were initially opened.

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5 A contrasting example was provided by 30 year old Lamun from Isan who formerly operated a pushcart selling luuk chin (a type of meatball brochette). She gave up this work because it was so physically demanding. Lamun was presented with an opportunity to work for a foreign professional who lived alone in a large comfortable home and took it up immediately.
Figure 6.1

Noo's Pork Noodle Stall (photo by Gisèle Yasmeen)
Fong Kee - a very old and respected establishment - began as a small foodshop in a medical school for the military. It is now a large formal restaurant. The cashier explained how her Hainan-born uncle decided to open a small restaurant.

GY: Why did the owner open a restaurant?

Viwan: I think that in the old days, for the Chinese who came to Thailand, it was the easiest thing to do...cook. They had the knowledge.

According to G.W. Skinner, the Hainanese were at the bottom of the hierarchy among the Chinese in old Siam. The most successful and powerful speech groups were the Teochius followed by the Cantonese and then the Hakka and Hainanese who worked as manual labourers and hawkers (Skinner 1957). The Teochiu-speakers came to own prosperous rice-mills and controlled the rice export trade in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Pannee 1995). Siam's wealthiest families who developed and still control transnational corporations such as Central Pattana Group and Charoen Pokphand are of Sino-Thai, Teochiu origin. In fact, Teochiu is still one of the important business languages in the Kingdom.

Hakkas and Hainanese, on the other hand, were almost entirely unrepresented in the occupations of higher standing. Hakkas in particular were the petty tradesmen, especially those dealing in sundry goods; the lesser artisans, including silversmiths, leatherworkers, and tailors; manual laborers, hawkers, and barbers. Hainanese were the hand sawyers, market gardeners, fishermen, domestic servants, waiters, tea-shop operators, and, not infrequently, "coolies," miners, and peddlers. They were the poorest of all the speech groups, and their general low social standing was undisputed (Skinner 1957, 136 emphasis mine).

Skinner explains that Hainanese were sometimes hotel and coffee-shop proprietors and employees. The owners of Fong Kee were examples of these types of entrepreneurs when their small foodshop opened 60 years ago. They now operate one of the most
well-known restaurants in the city. Fong Kee's owners have, within a few generations, experienced a great deal of upward mobility. Though the owners readily admit they are of Chinese ancestry, they see themselves as Thai.

Viwan: We trained the chefs. They are the grandsons of the first chef, luuk ciin, children of Chinese. They were born here.

GY: You don't have any Thai chefs? I mean, a chef that only looks after the Thai dishes?

Viwan: They are both Thai. Both are men.6

Thailand is often characterized as a country where the Chinese rapidly assimilated into mainstream society partly by force, but mostly due to the fact that the country was not colonized. Pannee, citing a study from the 1970s explains the dynamics of Chinese assimilation in Thailand:

It is the characteristic of the Chinese in non-colonial Thailand to look up to and not down on the "foreigners" among whom they live in contrast to the behaviour of their congeners in colonial Southeast Asia. In Thailand the Chinese have been attracted to their hosts who being masters in their own house, have not laboured under the disadvantages of Malays or Indonesians as subject peoples (Freedman 1978, 48 cited by Pannee 1995, 35).

Compared to neighbouring "plural" societies, Chinese immigrants in Thailand practiced a great deal of intermarriage and adopted the Thai language and Theravada Buddhism. Nonetheless, a strong Thai-Chinese identity conditioned by speech-group affiliation and

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6 Here, Viwan misunderstood my question which was not very well phrased to begin with. In other restaurants, such as the Professor's Pub, there is a chef who looks after the Chinese food - usually a man of Chinese background - and a chef who is responsible for Thai dishes - often a woman who is ethnically Thai. At Fong Kee, the two Sino-Thai male chefs are responsible for all types of food prepared.
income grouping, persists and is being resurrected in 1990s Bangkok. G.W. Skinner's classic position on the Chinese in Thailand (and Sino-Thai) has been critiqued and refined by more recent scholars on the subject (Chan and Tong 1995; Szanton 1983).

Fong Kee serves Hainanese specialties as well as Thai food. It is frequented by government officials - as in the old days - and physicians from the nearby hospitals at lunchtime and families in the evening. Retired functionaries are another main group of customers. Because the elderly patrons represent an earlier generation of government officials, these customers are mostly men. Viwan nuances the composition of the clientèle:

Viwan: In the old days, there weren't many women. Now, we have all types. At lunch, it's workers and in the evening primarily families. On weekends, there are many families. Nowadays, toward the end of the afternoon, we get young teenagers who eat while waiting for their parents in order to go home with them.

Fong Kee now caters to a wide range of middle-class Bangkok residents. It is, for the most part, a family restaurant which is a safe space for women and children.

An example which provides a contrast to Fong Kee is the Professor's Pub. The owners are of Sino-Thai background. Professor Chaichana and his young wife Vipawan - as interior designers - decided to start a restaurant as an experiment in aesthetics.

Vipawan: First time, we never thought about the investment but we want to do our own restaurant because I design many restaurant for my

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7 For example, a number of serial dramas on Thai television have begun to explore the Sino-Thai heritage. One program was written up as a three or four volume set of books which are best-sellers in the Kingdom. My assistant, Arporn Somjit, explained that many Thais believed that the books contain an esoteric message which, if discovered and understood, lead the reader to greater material prosperity. Another example of the Sino-Thai renaissance is the exponential growth of the annual Chinese New Year parade which was a low-key event several years ago but is now one of the biggest events in the city.
customers but sometime I want to design this, this, this but by customer "no, no" so we want to do our own.\(^8\)

The restaurant is meant to be in a style reminiscent of an English pub although its bright tidy interior fails to meet the objective! The restaurant has won numerous design awards and has been featured in a number of Thai home decorating and women's magazines. A home-like decor is evident with the restaurant cabinets displaying personal curios and family photos (see Figure 6.2). The couple, their children and some of their employees live upstairs in the five-storey shop-house. Their children are often cared for by restaurant staff. An informality pervades the restaurant when it is not too busy where the two young boys play in the dining room.

"Our parents are rich" explained Vipawan - the professor's wife and former student. No need ever existed for this couple to worry about providing for their parents, themselves or their two young sons. Professional and artistic interest dominated the reasons for launching the business. Vipawan herself has appeared on television to demonstrate cooking techniques. Specialties of the house are of Thai and Chinese origin. Service is polished and professional and prices are expensive by Thai standards. The ambience resembles that of a Western formal restaurant.

\(^8\) Vipawan and her husband were interviewed together. This was the only interview which was conducted in English. All citations from these two informants are direct quotes.
The Professor's Pub (photos by Gisèle Yasmeen)
The large-scale, multi-million dollar chain operation like Mister Donut is controlled by
the Chirathivat family who own the Central Pattana Group. These operate under a
paternalistic "family-system" which is considered typical of overseas Chinese
conglomerates (Hamilton 1996; Redding 1995). It is difficult to ascertain if this family
dominated business system is distinctive to the overseas Chinese. Canada's McCain and
Bronfman families can be argued to manage their corporations in a similar fashion.

The small "Rattana Foodcentre" located on a narrow soi further straddles the
"traditional/modern" or "formal/informal" division. It is managed by Wira and Goy, a
married couple in their 30s. The centre was created following the renovation of old
shophouses which were redesigned as student residences. The small foodcentre houses
eight independent foodshops which used to sell in the shophouses prior to renovation.
"We're like a family," Wira explained when describing the management practices of the
foodcentre which include paying medical expenses for employees and hiring members
of the same family. Young people are hired to clear tables, clean up and sell cold
drinks. This centre is explored in greater detail later in this and the following chapter.

6.2 EVERYDAY LIVES AND SPACES
The quintessential "one-woman-shop" selling prepared food occupies a vastly different
social space than the person owning/managing or employed in a more formal eating
establishment. The cooked-food micro-enterprise involves the hard, strenuous work of
one or two people. Even more formal establishments demand 12 hour shifts of
employees with few, if any, days off. This pace makes it difficult for small and
medium-sized foodshop owners to find employees who are willing to work hard. In the past, the limited economic opportunities made finding employees easier. Times have changed considerably as remarked by Luung, a Sino-Thai foodshop owner of 60.

Luung: Before, I cooked a lot of things. For example, salapao, khanom jeep, kha po paa, (steamed buns, Chinese dumplings and fish stomach), I made a lot of things. I had many assistants. Now, I don't have any assistants. Young people don't like working that way. They prefer a more comfortable job; in a factory where you get a day off. So, they get a day to go out. Here, there wasn't any.

In the old days, Luung's employees lived with him on the premises of his shophouse restaurant (Figure 6.3). "The salaries were very low" he explains. If he sold well, he was able to hire four or five people. "But today I can't find any. Even if I could find some they wouldn't want to work", he concludes. It is ironic that factory work is considered by Luung to be an easier way-of-life given recent depictions of highly disciplined industrial labour, especially by feminist authors (Enloe 1989; Heyzer 1986; Ong 1987; Wolf 1992). Again, the typical scholarly response to the booming economy of Southeast Asia is to focus on industrial labour at the expense of the service sector.

As Peter Bell argues, the two sectors are intimately related and depend on low-paid female labour.

In 1988 14.3 percent of women in Thailand worked in services, and another 14.5 percent in commerce. "Women's work" includes employment as maids, secretaries, nurses, school teachers, waitresses, shop assistants, and street peddlers. Also much of the subsistence work of poor women consists of this type of "women's work" as it is essential to subsidize low wages paid in factories (Bell 1992, 66).
Figure 6.3

Floorplan of Luung's shop

- Storage cabinet
- "Roll down" doorway
- Prep Table
- "Roll down" doorway
- Main Road
- Pushcart

L.S. Kwan
Despite Luung's comments implying that working in a factory is an "easy living", service sector employment (and self-employment) may be a greater site of exploitation than industrial factory employment. The image of Dicken's Bob Cratchett comes to mind as an example of service-sector drudgery (Ley 1996).

For other small foodshops, where gratuitous family labour is unavailable, finding and paying for employees is difficult. The smallest stalls cannot possibly afford to pay the legal minimum wage of 135 baht per day and instead provide their employees with room and board or other payments in kind. Wealthier establishments are able to hire many employees who are often tied to the firm through bonds of patron-client. Fast-food restaurants tend to hire teenagers for low wages, keeping in line with the Western practice. The question of employees and helpers and patron-client relations are dealt with in detail in the next chapter.

6.2.1 Daily Routines

In order to prepare fresh food in the morning, someone must go to the market between five and six a.m. Usually, the owner of the shop will go and must wake up between 4 and 4:30 am to have time for bathing, dressing and walking to the local market. The daily routines of Daeng/Ying, Tip, Noo and her father, Luung, Samrit and Lek are summarized in Figure 6.4. Those who wake up later than six usually have someone else go to the market or own foodshops that sell simple meals such as noodles which require fewer fresh ingredients.
### Daily Activities in Five Small Foodshops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Daeng/Ying</th>
<th>Luung</th>
<th>Samrit/Lek</th>
<th>Tip</th>
<th>Nong and her father</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 a.m.</td>
<td>Wake up</td>
<td>Wake up</td>
<td>Wake up</td>
<td>Wake up</td>
<td>Wake up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Wake up</td>
<td>Market</td>
<td>Market</td>
<td>Market</td>
<td>Father wakes up at 6, goes to market til 7. Nong wakes up at 7.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Market</td>
<td>Preparation of food (goes on all day, with Mother Ying)</td>
<td>Preparation of food (ongoing through day)</td>
<td>Preparation of food</td>
<td>Preparation of food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Preparation of food (ongoing through day)</td>
<td>Opening of shop</td>
<td>Opening of shop</td>
<td>Opening of shop (daughter helps)</td>
<td>Opening of shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Opening of shop</td>
<td>Shop closing</td>
<td>Shop closing</td>
<td>Set down and cleanup</td>
<td>Shop closing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Set down and cleanup</td>
<td>Shop closing</td>
<td>Shop closing</td>
<td>Supper, put children to sleep</td>
<td>Set down and cleanup. Has supper too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Shop closing</td>
<td>Supper, put children to sleep</td>
<td>Supper, put children to sleep</td>
<td>Bedtime</td>
<td>Bedtime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Shop closing</td>
<td>Set down and cleanup</td>
<td>Bedtime</td>
<td>Bedtime</td>
<td>Bedtime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 noon</td>
<td>Shop closing</td>
<td>Bedtime</td>
<td>Bedtime</td>
<td>Bedtime</td>
<td>Bedtime</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

L.S. Kwan
The formal restaurants delegate the task of going to the market to a specific employee. Some - such as Fong Kee - have modified the practice by faxing in orders to Yaowaraj (Chinatown) and having their assembled order picked-up. One of the oldest restaurants in the country has entered the era of high-speed communication and enjoys the conveniences of space-time altering devices such as fax machines.

Viwan: We order by fax at night. Afterward, we go and pick it up. The drivers check the list to make sure if it is correct or not. After, we have another person who verifies again at the restaurant.

Professor Chaichana and his wife Vipawan provide another example of the reformulation of relations between the restaurant owner and the places selling food supplies. They shop at a mega-store called Makro, the Thai equivalent to Costco or Price Club.

GY: So, can you please explain where you get your dry goods like rice, oil and all those things you don't need everyday.

Vipawan: Some at the market and some Makro.

GY: Oh, you go to Makro? But that's a new store isn't it? So before that you went to another wholesaler?

Vipawan: Yeah.

Chaichana: First [before] we go to Yaowaraj.

Makro is a self-serve wholesaling warehouse in the suburbs serving a growing clientele. It is owned by the mammoth Charoen Pokphand (CP) conglomerate. The "Wal-Mart" phenomenon is happening to the detriment of older traditional wholesalers - many of whom are in Chinatown (Yaowaraj). The interior design couple send their employees to
a well-known, but expensive, food-market near Chulalongkorn University daily for fresh produce, meat and fish.

The preparation of ingredients is a time-consuming task in every business studied. It involves chopping meat and vegetables and preparing items which are on sale throughout the day such as curries, fried fish and deep-fried chicken. Much of the work is done before the shop opens although it may be conducted on and off whenever there is a spare moment. Tip explains how her daughter helps the occasional customer first thing in the morning before going to school while Tip is preparing ingredients.

Tip: Usually I open at 8:30 a.m. but people come as early as 7 to buy food and my daughter sells. Phi Oy comes to help but I'm still preparing in the house.

Mom: So, really your shop opens earlier than 8:30. Your daughter is really great, she can do it.

Tip: She can do it.

Similar to the quantitative survey data presented in Chapter Five, informants report experiencing peak periods at lunch and supper times. Many state that their primary customers are women who work at night time. Daeng was too polite to bring up the issue directly but her implication is clear when she states: “I don’t know what they do but they work at night [giggles]”. Thai-style cafés and bars are popular in the area and are places where many young women work as “entertainers” or “hostesses”. Many are no doubt involved in the sex industry and/or are mia noi (minor-wives or mistresses) for wealthier men who pay for their apartments and living expenses. There was much gossip in the neighbourhood and among food vendors about the extent to which certain women were subsidized by their lovers or customers.
Closing time for the establishments vary from Luung's duck noodle shop which closes early at 5pm to those who wait until the supper rush is over and put away their materials starting at 9pm. Sometimes, set-down can take one or two hours. Tip explains that she begins to put everything away at 9pm but sometimes is not finished until 11 when she promptly goes to bed. Many of the microentrepreneurs interviewed sleep four to five hours per night. Daeng is exhausted as a result of chronic sleep deprivation. Most do not complain but are clearly suffering physically from the pace of their schedules. The long-term health of small foodshop owners due to lack of sleep combined with the effects of air-pollution and other environmental factors are a matter for concern.

The pace for managers of more formalized establishments is less strenuous than that of microentrepreneurs. Viwan of Fong Kee works a set shift and only does overtime when the restaurant is very busy. The same can be said for the manager of Mister Donut. Professor Chaichana and Vipawan work long hours because they not only manage a restaurant in their shophouse, but also have a consulting business and a furniture factory in the suburbs. This, along with the raising of two children, is a result of ambition rather than economic necessity. In the case of formal establishments it is the employees who put in the longest shifts by going to the early morning markets, receiving deliveries before dawn and closing the restaurants in the evenings.

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9 Her employee, Phi Oy, contradicted this and said that set-down begins at 6pm and sometimes does not finish until 9pm.

10 At Mister Donut for example, the janitors receive the first delivery of doughnuts at 4:45 am. The shop closes at midnight. Cashing out in the evening, however, is a crucial function requiring management supervision.

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6.2.2 Operating Budgets

The microentrepreneurs - being principally responsible for most of the operations of the business - know exactly how much is spent for supplies on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. The larger enterprises work differently and owners/managers are more secretive about revenue and expenditures. When interviewing the owners or managers about regular expenses, typical answers only generalized total figures. They were also less willing to provide financial data so these questions were not asked of them in detail.

This section begins by profiling the monthly budgets provided by two microentrepreneurs. The remaining budgets collected are in the Appendix. The first foodshop is a street-stall and the second is located in a building. I conclude by making general comparisons with the limited budget information provided by larger scale restaurants.

Tip, has a *paeng loy* in a lane near her rented room where she lives with her husband, mother and teenaged daughter (see Figure 6.5). The stall includes a push-cart, a table and a parasol in the area where food is prepared and sold to take-out customers. The seating area is a small walk-way between two buildings and is covered by an awning. The tables are kept very clean and the service is professional. This is attributed to Tip's 15 year experience working as a waitress and later a cook in a local small hotel.\footnote{Tip worked in a hotel which is walking distance from her present home and business. It is a traditional Chinese hotel catering to a local clientèle for the most part. The hotel is also a "temporary" hotel associated with Thai-oriented prostitution. These types of establishments can be identified by the draped car-parks which protect the identities of customers by shielding their license plates. The sheltered parking spaces can also be rented for short periods of time, like the hotel rooms.}
Figure 6.5

Tip's Stall (photo by Gisèle Yasmeen)
Tip’s expenses are representative of the lowest costs associated with running a stall because no rent is paid for her place of business. In addition, the rent for the room where she stays with her family is only 1500 baht (75 Canadian dollars) per month because she has lived there for 16 years and knows the landlady very well. Like the other vendors on the soi, Tip has never had to pay fines or bribes to the municipal police. The relationship between foodshop owners and the local state is explored in greater detail in Chapter 7.

Table 6.1 details expenses for all the supplies needed to run Tip’s shop. Her total outlays per month, including the rent of her room, are 41,000 baht (or 2000 Canadian dollars). The highest expense category is meat for which approximately 700 baht (35 dollars) per day is disbursed resulting in 21,000 baht monthly (over 1000 dollars). Vegetables only account for 6000 baht per month followed by spices, seasonings and curry pastes (altogether 4500/month). Soft drinks and rice are also large budgetary items accounting for 2576 and 1650 baht respectively. Fuel in the form of gas and charcoal was reported as costing a little over 1300 baht monthly. A crucial additional expense incurred by Tip is the 2,100 baht per month salary of one employee, Oy. Tip estimates receiving 60-80 customers per day. Most spend about 21 baht each, the cost of a meal and softdrink.
Table 6.1
TIP
MONTHLY EXPENSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>PRICE</th>
<th>TIMES/MONTH</th>
<th>FROM WHERE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rent</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>For housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary (Oy)</td>
<td>2100</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- water</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- electricity</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- telephone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- garbage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- gas</td>
<td>161/tank</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>delivered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- charcoal</td>
<td>110/bag</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>5kg/day 11b/kg</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>pushcart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noodles</td>
<td>2kg/day 8b/kg</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Say Yut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oil/fat</td>
<td>300bt/vat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>delivered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat/fish</td>
<td>700bt/day</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Say Yut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spices/seasoning/curry paste</td>
<td>150bt/day</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>200bt/day</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Say Yut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- papaya (st)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice</td>
<td>25/sack..2/day</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>delivered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinks (water)</td>
<td>.7jugs/wk 12b/j</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>delivered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- soft drinks</td>
<td>7dz/day.92bt</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>delivered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other? Eggs</td>
<td>450bt/week</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>delivered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Soon after the interview with Tip, Oy decided to quit. She found a job working in the cafeteria of the American University Alumnae bussing tables where, as far as I know, she is still employed. At the same time, Daeng obtained a job there as well working as a cook. She could not tolerate the horrid working conditions and later shifted to the cafeteria at Charoen Pokphand headquarters. These changes are elaborated upon in the
following chapter. Oy was formerly employed by Daeng whose budget will be described next.

Daeng's financial situation is much more precarious than the one described for Tip (see Table 6.2). Daeng and her mother operate the shop together and rent the shop and the room behind it from the land-lady who lives next door. The rent for both is a hefty 5000 baht per month (250 Canadian dollars) not including utilities.

Like Tip, Daeng's largest expense category is for meat and fish. She purchases chicken, pork, squid, prawns, and fish for approximately 18,000 baht/month. Beef is not sold because of her mother's religious devotion to the Goddess of Mercy. The Goddess of Mercy is known in Thailand as Chao Mae Guan Im (Holy Mother Guan Im) and in Mandarin as Guan Yin. Thais think of Guan Im as a Chinese princess who became a devout Buddhist and vegetarian. Those who respect her either become vegan (excluding eggs and dairy as well as meat/fish) or - more commonly - exclude beef, lamb and goat from their diet.12

Vegetables generally account for 4,500 baht per month. The price of green papaya - the key ingredient in the popular somtam - varies depending on the season from 4-10 baht per kilo though the price for somtam remains constant in the city's foodshops.

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12 The cult of Guan Im is becoming very popular in Southeast Asia - even among the non-Chinese. This may be due to the fact that she is associated with material prosperity. It may also be an indication of the feminization of Buddhist icons. Keyes (1996) explains that Guan Yin was a male Boddhisattva named Prajunaparamita who, through the course of history became a feminized deity.
Table 6.2

**DAENG**

**MONTHLY EXPENSES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>PRICE</th>
<th>TIMES/MONTH</th>
<th>FROM WHERE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rent</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>landlady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- water</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>from city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- electricity</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>from city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- telephone</td>
<td>5b/call(maew)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Maew's shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- gas</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>delivered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- charcoal</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>delivered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>10kg/day</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>delivered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noodles</td>
<td>1kg/day (8b/k)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Say Yut market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oil/fat</td>
<td>300b/vat</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat/fish</td>
<td>600b/day</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spices/seasoning/curry paste</td>
<td>50b/day</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Shop and market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>150b/day</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Say Yut Market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- papaya (st)</td>
<td>5kg/day 4-10b</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>delivered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice</td>
<td>32b/day</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>delivered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinks (water)</td>
<td>5 bottles (8b)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>delivered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- soft drinks</td>
<td>92 baht</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Daeng and her mother report purchasing approximately 5 kilograms of papaya per day.

This is a sharp drop from a few years ago when business was good.

Daeng: I used to sell ten kilos of chicken but those days are over. Another example is papaya... I used to sell ten kilos per day but now it's usually five kilos, sometimes four.

Tip's shop is new in the neighbourhood and is experiencing great success compared to Daeng's older and more established business. This may be due to the cleanliness and more professional service found at Tip's. Tip's location closer to Rangnam Road, where
many local residents work, is also an advantage. Daeng’s shop, on the other hand, is shabby, unorganized and does not appear as hygienic. Flies abound and stray cats which Daeng and her relatives feed climb in and out of the supplies.

Detailed budget information was not requested of formal establishments as they are reticent to share this type of information. Instead, questions such as "how many customers do you receive per day" combined with estimates of charges per customer enable me to estimate gross revenue and expenditures on a monthly basis. The Professor’s restaurant serves as a case in point.

Chaichana and Vipawan state receiving about 100 customers for lunch on weekdays and 50-80 for supper every night. With estimates of 90 and 200 baht being spent for lunch and supper respectively, daily revenues before costs are 25 000 baht, or 750 000 baht per month. I asked Chaichana and Vipawan to estimate how much they spend on food and non-alcohol supplies per week. A profit of 200 000 baht per month (the equivalent of 10 000 Canadian dollars) does not include the large outlay for beer and spirits which is certainly a very large expense category.

Mister Donut’s VMA branch manager reports that the store receives approximately 600 customers per day who spend 60 baht each on average. This translates to gross daily revenue of 36,000 baht for this location totalling to over one million baht per month, before expenses, with profit, then, slightly less than Bt 500,000. There is the likely possibility that the manager was misinformed about the cost of the long-term lease and/or exaggerated the number of customers per day along with the value of their average purchase.
Table 6.3

**PROFESSOR'S PUB**

**Estimated Monthly Expenses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense Category</th>
<th>Estimated Cost (Baht)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food and Supplies(^a)</td>
<td>300 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaries</td>
<td>54 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities (estimate)</td>
<td>5 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>359 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Not including alcoholic beverages

Source: Field Survey 1994

Table 6.4

**MISTER DONUT - VMA BRANCH**

**Estimated Monthly Expenses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense Category</th>
<th>Estimated Cost (Baht)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lease (20 million for 10 years)</td>
<td>166 667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and Supplies(^a)</td>
<td>300 000(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaries</td>
<td>80 000(^b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities (estimated)</td>
<td>3 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>549 667</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fieldwork 1994  \(^a\) According to Manager's estimate.  \(^b\) Estimated according to maximum salary possible (Bt 6000 per month) though most would make 3500-4000.

Other costs which were not included and certainly reduce profit margins are expensive franchise rights and the extensive print, radio and television advertising campaign (Figure 6.6).
Figure 6.6

Flyer Advertising Mister Donut
6.2.3 Rent for Housing and Business

Those operating micro-enterprises generally rent one room where the entire family lives and the larger establishment owners must rent their place of commerce. Rents for housing and vending location range from a low Bt 1500 paid by Tip to 5000 (250 Cdn) per month rent for Daeng and Ying. For selling space alone, Bt 8000 per month (400$) is charged to vendors in the "Rattana Foodcentre" serving students in a residence, soi dwellers and local office workers (see Figure 6.7). The least expensive situation is the one characterized by Samrit and his wife, Lek, who operate on the sidewalk. Although they used to pay "rent" to the police (see Chapter 7), the amount was minimal (300-400 baht or 15-20 dollars) compared to the rent paid by their colleagues at a fixed-pitch.

In addition to the typical month by month rental arrangement, which usually includes a deposit and sometimes one month rent in advance, there are plenty of other options to secure access to selling places. Luung and Mister Donut both negotiated long-term leases for their premises. Professor Chaichana and the owners of Fong Kee, on the other hand, own the buildings where their restaurants are located. The same holds true for the Rattana Foodcentre. Property ownership in Bangkok's booming real-estate almost guarantees financial security.

The microentrepreneurs have few high-value possessions in their rooms unless they have managed to purchase them through years of saving or acquired them through the generosity of others. In the case of Daeng and Ying, a refrigerator, radio and colour television were given to them by a Japanese man who once lived in the neighbourhood. He spoke Thai and had been a regular customer for quite some time.
Figure 6.7

Floor Plan of Rattana Foodcentre & Adjacent Student Residence

1. Shophouse 1
2. Shophouse 2

Rooms in Student Residence

Ground Floor

1. Clothing Vendors
2. 7-Eleven

Food Centre

Offices

Beauty Salon

Tenant Shops

L.S. Kwan
Ying: He was a Japanese man who moved to go to work in Europe... He took pity on me. He rented a room over there at Duang apartments. I asked him if I could buy it but he said "no". He gave it to me. He was an older man. He had good habits. He gave me a fridge, fan and television.

The wealthier informants who own or manage more highly capitalized businesses either separate home and work space or follow a more traditional shop-house residential pattern. The Professor's restaurant, for example, provides lodging on the premises for most of its employees who also double as domestic workers.

Low-level employees of Fong Kee are transported to and from work in a minivan courtesy of the restaurant. Most live in a condominium owned by the proprietor and are required to pay utilities only since lodging is a form of payment-in-kind, as are meals and uniforms. Some smaller shops also pay wages lower than the required minimum set by the government because they provide employees with lodging and meals (Naruemol and Oudin 1992). Providing "welfare" to employees is a more cost-effective strategy for small foodshops and a way to reinforce patron-client relations for the larger restaurants (see Chapter Seven).

6.3. INTEGRATION BETWEEN HOME AND WAGE WORKPLACE

The shophouse strategy appears at first to be an ideal integration between home and work place. The shophouse is associated with the arrival and firm establishment of the Chinese on Thai soil. Historically, shophouses represent the economic and spatial expansion of Bangkok in the 1950s.

The shophouse is a major feature of urban growth and character in modern Bangkok. The modern utilitarian box-shaped structure of the
post-war shophouses (increased in height to 4 and sometimes 5 floors) proved versatile for a variety of business functions and can be said to have spearheaded much of Bangkok's urban expansion (Askew 1994, 169).

Shophouses are not only a practical architectural form combining residence and place of work but also proved, as Askew argues, to be a profitable investment for what were suburbs at the time. Even in the extended periphery of Bangkok today, new shophouses continue to be built - sometimes with grandiose roman-style columns and other pastiche European features. Southeast Asia's "Levittowns" have a distinct style.

Several of the microentrepreneurs interviewed dream of one day owning a restaurant in a shophouse where they could live with their families on the top floors. In Bangkok, residence adjacent to workplace is a way of avoiding the city's often grid-locked traffic.

Some feminist authors advocate the combination of home and work space as a solution to the disintegration of the two due to industrialization. Home-based businesses "eliminate the journey to work" and are seen as more flexible than a nine to five office or factory employment (Christensen 1993). Dissatisfaction with the exigencies of the conventional workplace lead many women to explore the alternative of a home-based enterprise. Some rationalize this move as enabling them to combine the demands of housework, child-rearing and career. The so-called "electronic cottage", for example, has been the object of much scrutiny by many authors, including feminists (Gurstein 1995; Menzies 1981).

Upon further investigation, however, there appear to be some problems related to this arrangement. One of the chief complaints is not being able to leave work behind at the office (Christensen 1993, 71). Vipawan, the interior designer, faces this. Despite
employing numerous domestic workers, she is having trouble juggling three roles. While her husband goes to teach at the university every day, Vipawan runs their design consulting company, manages the restaurant, and supervises their two young children and associated home-life. At 32, despite her material wealth and employees, she feels as though she has no time to relax and re-charge for the next day. Vipawan explains that she and her husband purchased a condominium to move into once it is built. She needs a separation between home and work. This experience resembles the “double-day” of employed women in Western societies. Compared to microentrepreneurs who labour to make ends meet, Vipawan's double-day represents a choice guided by ambition rather than economic necessity.

A contrast is provided by the cashier of Fong Kee, Viwan, who is the niece of the original owner. She lives with her husband and two school-aged children in the suburbs. The construction of a new expressway means that - when traffic is not jammed - she can reach the restaurant in about 20 minutes. Prior to the construction of the expressway, it sometimes took her two hours. For this reason, she would often stay in the rooms on the top floor which are available for employees to sleep on occasion or nap.

Viwan: I finish around 6pm... except for some days when the person in the other shift can’t come in. On those days, I have to stay. Here, it closes at 10pm. If I don’t want to drive home, I sleep here. I live in Changwattana. It’s far but now there’s the expressway. I get there in 20 minutes.

Viwan's two sons are aged 10 and 7. They do not require the constant attention of preschool children and the fact that she has a maid enables Viwan to attend to the
Having a sleeping space for employees makes it possible to work late hours during busy periods. The restaurant acts as a temporary home for its employees when schedules demand it.

6.4 SHOP DESIGN AND PATTERNS OF LOCATION

The shop designs of those businesses studied can be divided into three categories. First are small foodshops and street stalls which occupy the least amount of space; second, the formal establishments with separation from the street, air-conditioning and more complex seating arrangements; and finally the two foodcentres studied in the VMA where foodshops are grouped around a central eating area.

6.4.1 Floor Plans

Figure 6.8 provides floor plans for Daeng and Ying, Noo and Tip. Noo, the pork noodle vendor, obtained the permission of the landlady to set up her small stall in the compound of the low-rise complex where she rents a room with her father and sister. These buildings are made of teak and are of a traditional design (see Figure 6.9). Noo located her pushcart immediately outside the gate of the compound in order to be visible and attract passers-by. Here, take-out customers can get their noodles or buy the popular instant "Mama" brand to make at home. Eat-in customers step behind the gate into the courtyard where four small tables with stools are set up. Children living in the compound sometimes do their homework at one of the tables when business is slow.
Figure 6.8
Floor Plans for Three Small Foodshops

Tip's Shop

Noo's Pork Noodle stall

Daeng & Ying's Shop

L.S. Kwan
The serving and eating area is therefore a semi-public "family" space populated by tenants in the compound.

The layout of Tip's operations resembles Noo's in the sense that she does not occupy a fixed pitch. Her pushcart plus a work table, like Noo's, is on the soi adjacent to a wall surrounding the proprietor's house. Here, a menu is hung on the wall and the food is prepared. Tip also sells dried noodles. She obtained the landlady's permission to sell in the alleyway between two houses: the first where her landlady lives and the second owned by the landowner's brother. Tip has erected an awning to shelter customers from rain and the tables are covered with plastic table cloths. The narrow laneway leads to the house where she rents a room with her husband, daughter and elderly mother. The room, containing a fridge, is where Tip prepares some of the ingredients early in the morning and stores equipment at night.

Daeng and Ying's shop is incongruous with those described already. They rent both their room and their adjacent selling space. The foodshop faces the soi and contains only two tables with stools. The shop is cramped and it is an ordeal to get inside the shop when it is busy. There is a small table around the corner from the shop facing the entrance to their room which is located next to a garbage heap where some tenants park vehicles. Children play in this area as shown in Figure 6.9. The small yard next to the shop also serves as a spontaneous selling area: Ying once sold jackfruit there and another person sometimes sells clothing from a rack (Figure 6.10).
Figure 6.9

Children Playing in the Vicinity of Foodshops

(photo by Gisèle Yasmeen)
Buying and Selling in Front of a Foodshop (photo by Gisèle Yasmeen)
The shop is well equipped with a pushcart, "picnic stove"\textsuperscript{13}, charcoal barbecue, work table with display case, several shelves and even a china cabinet. It has its own running water and electricity. Set down in the evening is not as difficult as it is for Tip because the shop can simply be locked up in the evening with perishables stored in the refrigerator in Daeng and Ying's sleeping room.

The Professor's restaurant is on two floors with the mezzanine open for seating only when needed. The typical shophouse structure is modified with the main floor being the amalgamation of two formerly separate buildings. Before the restaurant, the space was used as a showroom for designer furniture made in Professor Chaichana's factory. Sales were not satisfactory so they decided to open a restaurant instead. At first, the mezzanine was Chaichana's office. The restaurant was initially only in one shophouse. The other shophouse contained the stairway to the second floor office and a small take-out bakery to attract customers. Today the restaurant is three times the size of when it opened in 1990 and has earned the attention of local interior designers. The kitchen is located on the third floor above their interior design consulting office. It is a hot room with two chefs (one Thai woman, one Sino-Thai man) and many assistants busily chopping and preparing ingredients. The fact that we were invited to visit the kitchen indicates the high standards of hygiene insisted upon by Chaichana and

\textsuperscript{13} A 'picnic stove' is a wok on a gas source. I am told it is illegal to use in Bangkok but is nevertheless a ubiquitous piece of equipment in the city's foodshops.
Vipawan. Food is sent to the main floor by way of a dumbwaiter elevator. The family lives on the top floor.

The floorplan depicted for Fong Kee represents the fourth and current location of the 60 year old restaurant. When asked about the first location, Viwan explained:

Viwan: Let's go back about 50 years. We were at the Saenarak military academy. In the old days it was a school for military doctors. It was near the monument in front of the Pramongkut Hospital... When they decided to develop the neighbourhood we had to leave.

GY: Was it a shophouse?

Viwan: In the old days, there were no shophouses. It was a hong thaew made of wood. It was a very long one-storey building. We were there about 6 or 7 years. We moved to the corner where the Nakorn Luang Thai bank is. Near the monument as well.

GY: But there was no monument yet.

Viwan: Not yet. We heard that they wanted to build a monument. So we moved again and built a wegen taew [wooden building]. We were there about five or six years too. Then we moved to where the bookstore is now on this corner. We were there about 50 years. We renovated and built a two-storey building, later four-storeys.

Fong Kee shifted from its last location because of feng shui or Chinese geomancy where it is bad luck to be located adjacent to a bridge.

In the year 2518 (1975 a.d) they built the pedestrian bridge. It wasn't very nice. It looked like we were on top of the bridge. Chinese people believe that having a house on top of a bridge is bad luck. The mother said to move here because it was a better location. We had the opportunity to buy the property. We didn't have to move very far.

Fong Kee has been at its present location for nearly eight years. There is a dining area on the main floor where there are tables for busy periods but the main restaurant area is

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14 The fact that they and their children eat the restaurant food every day is one of the factors they identified explaining the high quality of the food served and cleanliness surrounding its preparation.
on the second floor (Figure 6.11). A dining room on the third floor has special rooms which can be closed off and reserved for weddings and banquets. The kitchen is on the fourth floor and the top floor contains sleeping rooms for occasional use by staff. Fong Kee is a traditional Sino-Thai dining establishment that has maintained continuity with customers and employees despite having relocated several times.

The Rattana Foodcentre contains eight shops, one of which is shared between two microentrepreneurs. Stalls specialize in the sale of noodles or curries. There are no stalls selling Isan food or “made to order” dishes. Shops are individually owned and operated and were formerly located in the shophouses renovated to make the current foodcentre. One exception is a noodle shop which formerly rented space in the gigantic MBK shopping centre. A ninth outlet is operated by management and sells cold drinks. The foodcentre seats approximately 60 patrons and is not air-conditioned. Customers pay cash directly to the vendors.

The Home Food Centre (HFC)\textsuperscript{15}, which opened its doors in September of 1994, presents a completely different picture of a foodcentre (Figure 6.12). It is located below the former location of Fong Kee. The space HFC occupies was previously the site of “Uncle Ray’s Ice Cream Parlour”. The corner location has experienced a great degree of commercial change in the past few years (see Figure 3.4 in Chapter Three).

\textsuperscript{15} This is the real name of the centre. The identity was impossible to conceal because it is the only one of its kind in the area. I did not have permission to interview foodshop owners or employees in the centre but did speak with the manager. All information provided here is therefore public.
Figure 6.11
Fong Kee Restaurant, Main Floor
Sor Khon Kaen, a large Thai agri-food conglomerate, decided to launch a series of foodcentres in order to market its products and as a general revenue-earning operation. It contains a number of shops which are franchise establishments such as "Chinese Express," "Noodle Duck," "Saeb Isan," "Genghis Khan" (Chicken Rice) and "Tae Jiew" which specializes in luuk chin (fish and meatball brochettes). Other shops, however, are individually or family-owned small businesses selling dishes such as rad naa and nam tok ("water fall"), both fried noodle dishes. There is also a dessert outlet and a fresh juice bar.

Customers are required to buy coupons for their transactions from a central booth operated by the management. Coupons enable the management to retain 30% of all sales in lieu of rent. Most main dishes cost 20-25 baht. In total, the HFC seats approximately 150 customers and is air-conditioned. Loitering is discouraged. The HFC is a more formal environment than Rattana Foodcentre in terms of the foodshops it contains, the service provided and the expected behaviour of patrons. It also engages in extensive and expensive advertising (see Figure 6.13).

6.4.2 The Soi Versus the Street

An important set of issues involves the nature of public eating on sois versus streets. A further distinction is made between the foodways seen on major arteries as opposed to small neighbourhood streets.

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16 Askew embarked on a project to study the historical evolution of a soi in Bangkok as part of an urban sociology undertaking (Kamolrat 1994).
Figure 6.13
Advertisement for the Home Food Center
Bangkok's sois can be characterized as semi-public (or semi-private) spaces where a certain informality prevails and the rules of society and of the state are not so rigorously enforced. A first example is the ways in which soi dwellers routinely address one another, with “have you eaten yet?” or pay nay (“where are you going?”), exemplifying a certain sense of family. This resembles the porchfront repartée of some North American communities and the neighbourhood familiarity of certain suburbs (Dyck 1989).

Residents share the soi as a living space and demonstrate informality not only in their speech but by dressing informally - even in pyjamas - as they eat in small soi foodshops. Municipal rules regarding the use of space for commercial purposes or sanitary regulations are rarely enforced in the soi. Instead, the power brokers are the land-owners who set the rules for microentrepreneurs giving or denying them permission to sell in a given space. Rattana Foodcentre, since it is located on a soi and is family-managed, combines some of these elements of informality.

The street operates under more formal rules. The tesakit, or municipal police, make routine checks, and collect(ed) bribes as described in the following chapter.

Generally, social interaction is less familiar and more formal. The main distinction between small and large streets is the scale and density of construction and the degree of human and vehicular traffic. For instance, in the VMA between six and nine in the evening, the south side of Rajavitee Road is so crowded with night market shoppers than one literally has to squeeze through the crowd of customers and sellers. Vendors announce their prices in a high pitched voice using a blow horn thereby contravening
city ordinances. Cars, buses, tuk-tuks and motorcycles wait in endless traffic jams alongside the chaos.

On Rangnam Road, around the same time, a less chaotic scene emerges. The Isan open air restaurants set out their tables and turn on their strings of small white lights. Pedestrians stroll, the "cafés" open and the day-time foodshops close their storefronts. The setting is nostalgic of older Bangkok.

6.5 CONCLUSION: LIVES AND SPACES

In this chapter we saw that the businesses studied in depth can be very loosely classified as formal or informal with some newer establishments - such as foodcentres - blurring the distinction between the two typologies.

In the smallest and least formal foodshops, economic survival is the modus operandi. In conformity with earlier discussions of liang, the mostly women microentrepreneurs struggle to assure their economic survival and nurture their families. This aspect of the food-system must be couched within an understanding of regional poverty in Thailand, particularly in Isan which is the home region of most small foodshop owners interviewed. Spatial and economic survival is a day to day affair; money is precariously earned and spent everyday in a place undergoing rapid physical transformation. Microentrepreneurs exploit themselves and their helpers/employees in order to survive.

The informality of an enterprise often relates to its location on a soi where informal social relations tend to be primordial and the power of the state is less visible.
Here, traditional patron-client relations exhibited in patterns of interaction between landowners and tenants affects the agency of individual foodshop owners. Those located on major arteries, however, must deal with the municipal police and larger-scale commerce.

I have demonstrated that the spaces associated with both small through medium to large-scale commerce in the prepared-food sector can assume a variety of forms. Even largely "traditional" architectural forms, such as shophouses, can be renovated to accommodate a modern institution such as the Professor's Pub. The HFC is located in a building which is at least fifty years old. Micro-enterprises can take on a variety of spatial positions and floor plans.

Whereas the leitmotif of the small foodshop sector is that of a "life support system", the larger-scale establishments cater to the aesthetic needs of wealthier owners and their customers. Some - such as the interior designers' restaurant - are part of what Sharon Zukin named the "Artistic Mode of Production". Others - like Fong Kee - are part of a traditional Sino-Thai heritage tied into the military and bureaucratic power structure. Others still, such as Mister Donut and the Home Food Centre are clearly part of the Thai corporate structure.

Middle-class entrepreneurial women are victims of the same "double day" and concomitant pressures as their cohorts in North America, despite the fact that their burdens are partially alleviated by being placed on the shoulders of domestic/restaurant employees who generally work long hours for low wages. Issues of family responsibility still condition and constrain their quotidian experiences.
The wealthier agents in the food-system have options: to relocate, to consult geomancers, to buy condominiums for themselves or their employees to live, and to drive to work on the new expressway. In the face of rapid socio-economic change in Bangkok, the manoeuvrability of the middle and upper classes is bleakly contrasted with the lack of resources of the microentrepreneurs selling cooked food.
This chapter knits together the enabling factors which lead to the emergence of Bangkok's dynamic and gendered foodscape as depicted in the case study of the Victory Monument Area. I begin by, firstly, introducing specific factors which condition entrance to the occupation of cooked-food seller and, secondly, the use of space in order to carry out this occupation. Topics explored include cooking knowledge - and how it is gendered - access to capital and the importance of mutual aid. The informal and formal mechanisms through which cooked-food sellers directly access a selling space are identified and explained. Selling areas are alternately defined as "public" versus "private" to justify access. The final part of the chapter argues that the individual cooked-food sellers' changing relations with capital and the state have a direct impact on access to public space. Women microentrepreneurs are disproportionately affected by these changes. Finally, the blurring of private versus public space in Bangkok's foodscape is summarized and reflected upon.

7.1 OPENING A FOODSHOP

Various enabling factors condition an individual's ability to open an enterprise selling prepared meals. The critical prerequisites are cooking skills, access to capital, and sufficient labour as well as knowledge of the market. The strategies employed by foodshop owners to attain these enabling conditions are highly varied.
Noo and her Father’s Pork Noodle Stall

Noo’s family is from Surin province in the Northeast. The pork noodle stall that she operates with her father opened in September 1994. Prior to this micro-enterprise, they operated a similar stall near the coliseum on Phetchaburi Road. There, she ran into problems with the tesakit who nearly arrested her and began to confiscate her tables and chairs until she realized she had to pay them “rent” for the space.

Noo was 19 years old at the time of the interview and her father is in his mid-fifties. There are five children in the family, all girls, Noo being the second oldest. She and her father accompanied her sister to Bangkok, then 17. “My younger sister passed the entrance exam for Sri Ayutthaya School. I came to live with her” explains Noo. Sri Ayutthaya is a prestigious secondary school in the Victory Monument Area and her sister eventually hoped to gain entrance to university. They moved to the neighbourhood in order to be close to the school. The eldest daughter was finishing her last year of teaching college in Surin in late 1994. The other younger daughters were all enrolled in school in Surin. Noo’s aunt owns and operates a street stall on nearby Rangnam Road. They also have other relatives in the city.

Noo and her father invested about 20,000 baht to start their first foodshop on Petchaburi Road to buy the pushcart, tables, chairs and utensils. In the present shop they earn about 350-500 baht per day after daily expenses of approximately Bt 600. They manage to send 3000 baht per month back home to help with expenses. “My older sister is still studying, we have to send money for her as well” explains Noo. Her mother operates a small dry-goods shop, while her father used to sell wholesale rice at retail price to various customers. They are also engaged in rice farming.

“I like selling things” explains Noo, who used to help her mother in the store prior to moving to the city. “I have big dreams,” she said to us with laughter, “I’d like to have my own shop.” A problem facing Noo and her father in the neighbourhood is the high rate of redevelopment. “People have to move so there are less customers,” Noo concludes.

Wira and Goy’s Rattana Foodcentre

Wira and Goy, a married couple in their mid-thirties opened the Rattana Foodcentre in July 1993. It was an accompaniment to the student residence which they had opened one year before. The residence and foodcentre were constructed from old renovated shophouses. Wira, who also works for United Airlines as a maintenance engineering supervisor, was educated in California for fourteen years where he completed high school and college. His family is wealthy being the old landlords in the area. They own 28 shophouses, 26 of which were renovated for the residence and foodcentre, and
the remainder divided into 25 small lots rented to clothing and accessory merchants and a 7-11. His family has generated its principal income from rent for over thirty years. Wira’s mother is the official owner of the property.

Wira and Goy find employees from the neighbourhood to clean up, wash dishes and work in the soda pop and juice stand which they operate in the foodcentre. “It’s more convenient for them,” says Goy. They’ve hired eight people ranging in age from age 18-50. All employees are originally from Isan. Some of the younger employees live on the premises and are paid 75 baht per day to start, less than minimum wage. Their housing is paid for but these employees are responsible for their own food expenses. Wira and Goy supervise the employees and the centre. “Really, these days, it isn’t clean enough,” according to Goy, “when we aren’t here, the cleaning staff doesn’t work”. Rattana Foodcentre has a certificate from the district office certifying cleanliness of the premises, requisite number of washrooms and sinks. It was the first place on the soi to obtain the required grease trap to avoid ground water pollution.

“It was a deteriorated slum” before Wira came back from the U.S. and decided to make some changes, explains Goy. Now, the foodcentre and residence generate considerably more revenue. There are over 100 rooms in the residence, normally two people to a room. The foodcentre is continually busy though there is some competition from foodshops further down the soi and from the nearby “Home Food Centre”. Rattana Foodcentre does not advertise. “We don’t put up any signs,” explains Goy, “but people find out about it by word of mouth.” In the next five years Wira and Goy plan to tear down the shophouses to build a high-rise apartment. “This building is already 25 years old” explains Wira, “we’ve had major problems with the plumbing”. “The life of the building is finished,” adds his wife, Goy. “The bank would like it if we invested [in a high rise]. It’s our goal but we’ve never done anything like that before,” Wira concludes.

The Professor’s Pub

Professor Chaichana has been teaching in the Department of Interior Design at King Mongkut Institute of Technology (KMIT) since 1976. He finished a Master’s Degree at the Pratt Institute of Design in Brooklyn, New York. He and Vipawan, one of his students at KMIT, got married nine years ago. Chaichana, whose family is originally from Sukhothai though he grew up in Bangkok, is now in his late forties and Vipawan, from Thonburi, is in her mid-thirties. Chaichana is one of nine siblings and Vipawan one of five. The two work as a team. They jointly own and operate the restaurant as well as the furniture making factory in Navranakorn which Chaichana has had since he came back from the United States more than twenty years ago. They also work in partnership as design consultants.

The two decided to open a restaurant on the former premises of their furniture showroom in a shophouse in the VMA. “Sales were bad,” explains Vipawan. They thought of the restaurant as an interior design project and have been very successful from both a business and design standpoint. Their restaurant has been reviewed in gastronomic, design and women’s magazines and Vipawan has even appeared on
television cooking shows though she is not the one who cooks in the restaurant!

Both of Sino-Thai background, Chaichana and Vipawan's restaurant serves both Thai and Chinese food. They keep a woman chef originally from Northern Thailand who looks after the Thai food. She is in her forties and self taught. Similarly self-taught and originally from Khon Kaen, a Sino-Thai man in his twenties is in charge of the Chinese kitchen. Their assistants are young men and women primarily from Isan.

Domestic employees for the Professor and his family who live on the fourth floor also help clean and serve in the restaurant. The women and girls live in their own quarters in the shophouse. Cleaning and waiting staff are relatives for the most part. The mother is the family's housekeeper and her son and daughters are waiters. They too are from Isan. Chaichana and Vipawan pay the chefs 6,000 baht per month and the waiters earn 3,000 - less than minimum wage - "but they can earn tips" explains Vipawan which brings the monthly salary to about Bt 4,000. Employees also receive two meals per day. Vipawan's older sister sometimes volunteers her time at the restaurant as well.

The Professor's Pub mainly caters to office workers at lunchtime but also has a substantial evening clientele. Their busiest time of the month is after payday and a peak period of the year is Chinese New Year. "They (workers in Bangkok) get money... a bonus. So they spend," explains Chaichana.

"We invest a lot in our kitchen" Chaichana explained and later invited us to visit the kitchen on the third floor. "Really, we clean, not like other restaurants, we live here and we teach the employees... We eat here" Vipawan says. They are concerned for their health and especially that of their two young sons. When asked if she was worried about lead contamination and pesticides in vegetables, Vipawan added, "we take a look [to see] that they (the employees) clean the vegetables."

The Professor and his wife know everyone in the vicinity. They are long-standing members of the community. They've noticed a lot of changes in the neighbourhood. "There are more restaurants, especially stalls", remarks Chaichana. "Because we have more office towers," he explains. Office workers come to eat lunch in the neighbourhood. They also comment on the growing number of apartment towers and condominiums in the VMA. At the time of the interview, they had already bought a flat in a high-rise and were intending to move in as soon as it was constructed. They plan to open another restaurant with a different style if they can find the right location.
7.1.1 Cooking Knowledge

The ability to cook is a marketable skill. It is also gendered. Cooking, in Thai society, is primarily a feminine skill. Women are the traditional custodians of Thai food knowledge but men of Chinese background have always been employed as professional cooks. Evidence from this thesis shows that ethnically Thai and Isan men are becoming more involved as small foodshop owners and are therefore required to have some cooking knowledge. There is some debate as to the value or complexity of these abilities and how they are obtained. Some authors assert that cooked-food vending is a low-skill occupation - typical of the so-called "informal sector". Could this be because it is traditionally defined as women's work?

The findings of the survey have shown that half of the women in Khlong Toey were not economically active. They were housewives staying home. The remaining half were doing piecemeal work, or were unskilled labourers in activities such as stall operation, street hawking, vending and small-scale trading which was the most important aspect of slum life in Bangkok. (Shahand, Tekie and Weber 1986, 16 my emphasis)

The above passage can be criticized on the grounds that it implies, first, that housewives are economically inactive. I am doubtful that there are many true housewives in Klong Toey, Bangkok's largest slum, to begin with since most individuals would be required to earn revenue. A second weakness is the assertion that operating a street food stall is "unskilled" work.

My findings suggest that most of the cooking done in Bangkok's foodshops includes the ability to select the best quality food at the market, knowledge of recipes and cooking methods and the presentation of final meals. Cooked-food sellers therefore exhibit considerable skill and knowledge. Food microentrepreneurs are both artists and
scientists: particularly those who prepare a complex variety of dishes. It is not only the preparation of individual recipes that requires knowledge, but the timing required to prepare a series of dishes simultaneously. Operating a micro-enterprise from a financial and managerial standpoint is not simple either.

Samrit reports having worked as an apprentice to learn the art and science of foodshop management. Lek claims that she then learned to cook from her husband!

GY: Who taught you how to cook?  
Lek: My husband. [Samrit enters the room]  
K: He taught you how to make kwaytiaw or ordinary dishes?  
Samrit: I used to be an employee.  
K: Who taught you how to cook?  
Samrit: A friend.  
K: Where?  
Samrit: soi Thonglor.  
GY: You worked there?  
Samrit: I wasn't really an employee. I went to do an apprenticeship.

Samrit explains that he worked as an apprentice in a close friend's foodshop. Apprenticeships (feuk ngan or "practice work") are fairly common in Thailand in both formal and informal enterprises. They are an important means to train workers and future entrepreneurs. Businesses also obtain free or inexpensive labour in the process. The apprentices learn cooking techniques, customer relations, contracting skills and money management. At the time of the interview, Samrit and Lek had a friend who was an informal part-time apprentice. The friend was still a tuk-tuk driver and Samrit was encouraging him to quit and enter a small business so that he would eventually "settle down". The tuk-tuk driving lifestyle, according to Samrit, does not encourage good habits. He admitted to drinking alcohol frequently and gambling while in that occupation. Samrit associated his change in occupation with a shift from being
irresponsible to looking after his family properly.

Other informants describe having been formally taught how to cook as opposed to girls learning from their mothers as I assumed was typical. Some, like Daeng, had formal training in cooking schools or, like Tip, in small “Chinese” hotels. Ying stated she had learned from a recipe book written by a member of the aristocracy when she worked for a wealthy and powerful family as a cook.

GY: Where did Mother Ying learn to cook?¹

Ying: I didn’t study. I learned by myself. When I worked on soi Ratchakruu they wanted me to make khanom². I cooked this and that. The employer had a recipe book. I read from that and cooked. The boss told me what ingredients to mix together. At that time I had to plan menus for all the meals. I improved my skills a lot.

Daeng attended a cooking school while living with her aunt in Petchabun province between the ages of 14 to 15. At the time, she also helped care for her younger cousins. She dropped-out of the course due to “lack of time and laziness” as she summarizes. At the age of 16 she moved to Bangkok and was hired in the cafeteria of a can-making factory in Bang Kae. She worked as an assistant cook:

Daeng: At first, they didn’t have a cook, so I went to help. I was called to work in the kitchen. I worked there about two months. I learned to cook there.

The learning of cooking related skills is not confined to the traditional practice of watching mother or grandmother cook at home. Informants perhaps downplay the importance of home-based learning in order to impress a foreign researcher. It is clear

¹ In some instances, it is a form of respect to address an older woman as “mother” or “auntie”. “Mother” is the most respectful of the two.

² Khanom is a general expression for sweets.
that core knowledge learned from parents has been supplemented, at least, by more formalized training.

Formal restaurants, such as Fong Kee and the Professor's Pub, hire “chefs” who have learned from experience but complement their training by teaching them how to prepare and present certain dishes. Fong Kee has two male chefs of Sino-Thai background in their early forties, grandsons of the restaurant's first chef. They are assisted by four young men aged 25-30 from Isan. The kitchen is therefore a masculine, bi-cultural space whereby the Chinese tradition of men cooking in restaurant kitchens is reproduced but includes four male members of a subordinated ethnic group.

Viwan: We have assistants who help prepare ingredients. There are several. They cut the vegetables and the meat. They are originally from Isan but have lived here for a long time. We trained them. They came here because someone from their village worked here before. So, after finishing school, they came here to help and learn.

Fong Kee also has eight men who work as waiters and five waitresses. All are in their twenties and from Isan. Two female cleaning staff are also from the Northeast.

As illustrated in the vignette near the beginning of this chapter, Professor Chaichana and his wife diligently train their chefs and six assistant cooks. Though the chefs know how to cook from experience, they are told how to prepare and present dishes according to the owners' specifications. Thai and Chinese cooking are kept separate under the direction of each chef and her/his assistants.

Important budgeting and management skills are needed to keep the enterprise operating on a daily basis. The smallest-scale entrepreneurs, in particular, are usually responsible from every aspect of the business from shopping through to budgeting.
Sidney Mintz, writing in the early 1970s, summarizes the skill levels of women microentrepreneurs compared to ostensibly "liberated" educated middle-class North American women:

Who is more modern, more western, more developed: a barefoot and illiterate Yoruba market woman who daily risks her security and her capital in vigorous individual competition with others like herself; or a Smith College graduate who spends her days ferrying her husband to the Westport railroad station and her children to ballet classes? (Mintz 1971, 267-8 cited in Tinker 1987, 20)

Although this refers to a now outdated situation in West Africa, as well as the "West," and food sellers in Bangkok are neither barefoot nor illiterate (for the most part), the risks, skills, astuteness and vigour necessary to survive as a microentrepreneur are undebatable.

7.1.2 Access to Capital

Informants employ a number of methods to obtain the necessary capital to invest in their businesses or to support themselves when sales are poor. Borrowing from friends, moneylenders or land-owners, going to pawnshops and, participating in rotating credit schemes are all widely-used ways of obtaining cash as detailed below.

Borrowing - Very few of the informants interviewed have bank accounts and none have ever borrowed money from a formal lending institution. The most common response to my question "do you have a bank account?" was to laugh and reply, "I don't have any money to deposit.". It is common, though, to borrow from one of the neighbourhood notables or a moneylender.
Ying: At first, I borrowed from one person that I know, near Sin's house. I paid it back bit by bit.

M: Now, do you still have a debt with someone else or not?

Ying: I still have a debt right now.

Daeng, qualified this during another interview:

M: Have you ever borrowed money?
Daeng: Yes, interest is about 5 or 10 percent [per month].
M: From whom? People from your home province?
Daeng: People around here.
M: The money-lender is a relative or the owner of the building?
Daeng: Owner of the property.

Borrowing patterns are part of an established set of patron-client relations which are explored later in this chapter.

Pawnshops - Until I learned the word for pawnshop in Thai - rong rap jam nam - I was completely unaware of the critical role these institutions play in Thai society. They are ubiquitous in Bangkok. Informants report using pawnshops as a quick source of cash from time to time. The pork noodle seller's father explains:

We have to send money home. I try to keep 50 baht per day in case we get sick. Sometimes I go to the pawnshops and leave some things to get money.

Historically, many of these shops were owned by Thai Chinese. As Skinner explains in his detailed description of occupational groups, pawnbrokers in the 1950s were almost all Teochiu and at the top of the socio-economic hierarchy of Chinese speech-groups and remain so today.
Rotating credit groups - As noted by Josephine Smart in her study of Hong Kong cooked-food hawkers, rotating credit is a popular way for microentrepreneurs to access large amounts of capital on a regular basis (Smart 1989; Chua 1981). The system is known as "tontine" in Singapore and "chit funds" in South Asia. Mitchell (1995) asserts that Chinese rotating credit associations (hui) play a role in financing large-scale business ventures of Overseas Chinese capitalists, even today. In Thailand, informal rotating credit schemes are known as len share - literally to 'play a share'.

Members of credit groups contribute regularly and can draw from the kitty at varying rates of interest depending on how early they want to access the money. Interest charged - particularly to those who draw first - is very high and non-borrowing members earn much more interest than they would by depositing in a bank. The system has a few variations but this is its basic structure (Cf. Geertz 1956; 1962).

In an urban milieu, where people are transient and can disappear at a moment's notice, credit circles are a risky venture. Indeed, there have been several high profile scandals involving corrupt fund leaders who moved to other countries, such as the United States, after absconding with millions of baht. One of my key informants, Ying, was a fund leader and victim of a cheating member who disappeared with 20,000 to 60,000 baht.

3 Askew has transliterated this as chae and calls them "credit circles" so my information about the word being derived from the English "share" may be wrong. While in Malaysia and Singapore, I brought up the topic of chit funds - the typical response was that it was a Chinese concept (hui see Chua 1981). On further consideration, rotating credit appears to be indigenous to many societies.

4 The amount lost due to cheating is not clear as there are discrepancies in the amounts reported by Daeng and her aunt Ying who was the share leader. Amounts may have been confused due to other losses which were the result of one member dying unexpectedly.
Ying: The cheater got some money and I could not get it back. I had a headache, couldn't sleep. People were cursing me. I had to take sleeping pills.

Morn: Did the members curse you or not?

Ying: No, not the members. They didn't curse me. I tried to collect the money and give it back to every member.

Daeng added:

Khun Mae was the leader of the group. She had to reimburse everybody. We had 18 people in the share, 1000 baht per person. If we hadn't responded to this cheating, we would not have been able to continue living in this neighbourhood. We would have had to move away.

Daeng and Ying are experiencing severe financial problems as a result of the cheating in the credit group. They had to pay both principal and interest to the other members.

Akin (1978, 30) describes how "Nate" - a chit-fund leader in the Bangkok slum of Trok Thai - opted not to pay back members of a failed credit circle which he led and thereby lost his power and prestige in the community. He did not take on the role of a nakleng or "big hearted" person.\(^5\)

In the business of the chae, a person with the heart of a nakleng would keep the chae going to complete the cycle even if by doing so he would himself get so indebted that his own future would be completely ruined. He must dare to take great risks. He must love his liam (prestige, honour) more than his property (Akin 1978, 30 cited by Askew 1994, 62).

Daeng explains that she and Ying saw themselves as responsible to the share participants. It was their duty to pay back all group members even if this led to their

\(^5\) Nakleng is a term with several contradictory meanings. In Haas' dictionary, it is given four distinct definitions: 1. rogue, rascal, gambler; 2. bold person, sporting person; 3. big-hearted person; and 4. person who is an authority on something (Haas 1964, 261). For a discussion of the relationship with masculinity, especially with regard to definition one of rogue, rascal or gambler, see Keyes (1986, 87-88).
financial ruin. Their honour was at stake. Ying took on the responsibility of nakleng even if it worsened her financial situation.

Despite the risks associated with rotating credit and her bad experience, Ying continues to "play" len share. She needs to obtain cash for big purchases or to financially support family members. Even though Daeng's younger brother tends to spend his tuition in snooker halls, living with some of his teenaged friends in a rented room, Ying continues to give him money. Here, nurturing brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews - even those who take advantage of her - takes precedence over Ying's own individual financial well-being.

Larger enterprises like Fong Kee, the Professor's Pub as well as Wira and Goy who own the Rattana Foodcentre benefit from generations of family wealth. Their primary advantage over recent migrants from Isan is that they own valuable real estate or profitable businesses in Bangkok. Larger tracts of farm land in the provinces are worthless in comparison. Wealth in land has led to capital accumulation and increased opportunities in general. Access to credit and capital is not a cause for concern.

7.1.3 Mutual Aid

In keeping with other research on streetfoods, the "informal sector" and small food enterprises, mutual aid is a crucial ingredient in the provision of necessary labour and capital for the functioning of the business. Relatives primarily help one another but help from friends and "patrons" - or more powerful "superiors" - should be included. Likewise, the withdrawal of support, in terms of labour, financial support or access to
space, can also be of detriment to the survival of a food establishment. These factors are now examined in greater detail.

**Kinship networks**

The shops studied in the quantitative survey as well as those scrutinized in-depth illustrate the centrality of kinship-based mutual aid. Nearly sixty percent of respondents in the quantitative survey report having “helpers”, while 41% have employees. The great majority of helpers, or volunteers, are nuclear family members or other relatives. They help in their spare time when not studying, working at a job or taking care of family responsibilities.

Evidently, the small, less formalized establishments rely on this type of support the most. Tip’s daughter helps her mother before going to school. Tip’s husband is also a principal assistant rather than co-owner.

Tip: He doesn’t work now. It’s better isn’t it? He used to work but I told him to quit to come and help me...

GY: But who is the owner of the shop?

Tip: I am!

This resembles the findings of Tinker and her team who report that men often quit their jobs to help their wives when the food business became profitable enough to support the family (Tinker 1987). In the Philippines for example, “women operate about two-thirds of the firms alone, but when a woman becomes successful she is often joined by her husband who may assist her in selling” (Tinker 1987, 16 emphasis in original).
Tip’s nephew also helps when he has time off from his studies at Ramkamhaeng University. Family assistance is supplemented by the labour of one paid employee. Spousal aid is the norm. Husbands and wives working together in foodshops is the norm in Southeast Asia as opposed to parts of Africa where women and men keep separate budgets, even within marriage (Tinker 1987). Luung’s duck noodle shop depends on the regular assistance of his wife. Similarly, Samrit and Lek own and manage their chicken noodle soup stall as a team. These examples from informal enterprises are evidence of gender complementarity in the foodscape. On this micro-scale, women and men in marriage partnerships are cooperating for mutual and family benefit.

Noo, the pork noodle vendor, does most of the food preparation and selling but her father goes to the market and manages the finances. Ying is assisted by adopted daughter, Daeng, who superficially appears to be running the shop most of the time.

Daeng: Really, “mother” is the owner and started the business but I am the one who works. Mother is the boss. Mother collects and dispenses the money.

Ying, as the senior and adopted mother, is in control of the enterprise but depends on the full-time help of Daeng and other relatives. Daeng’s teenaged niece, Wipa, helps everyday during her spare time after school (see Figure 7.1). A friend named Juk who

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6 Ramkamhaeng is an open university which permits students to study through correspondence and part-time. It is therefore one of the most accessible post-secondary institutions for low-income students who need to work or for those who cannot pass the difficult entrance exams at the top universities.

7 Certainly, I was not privy to marital disputes during my fieldwork because I did not get to know the informants as close friends (with the exception of Daeng who was not married).
works full-time at the 7-11 on a nearby street also helps on her time off. Helpers act out of a sense of mutual responsibility. Reciprocity is the basis of the system. Consequently, regular helpers receive meals, information on jobs and general social and emotional support.

Mutual aid is an important aspect of day to day life in the larger more formalised establishments as well. Husbands and wives - as in the case of Professor Chaichana and his wife Vipawan - work as co-managers. Wira and Goy who own Rattana Foodcentre, also co-manage Wira’s family property which is officially owned by his mother. Goy is a business administration graduate and spends most of her time overseeing the operations of their rental shophouses, student residence and foodcentre. Wira continues to work with an American-owned airline company as a maintenance engineering supervisor. Gender complementarity is therefore not the exclusive domain of the lower income groups in Bangkok. Middle class couples also engage in complementary behaviour when it comes to business. This may be a Thai pattern adopted by hybrid Sino-Thai culture. In the Chinese system, even today, the man will often work fourteen hours a day to keep the business afloat while his wife works equally long days taking care of family and household chores.  

This evidence from the Victory Monument suggests a more fluid gender division of labour. For the wealthier respondents, though, domestic labour is contracted out to servants.

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8 In a recent discussion with Tanya Lary, M.A. student in Urban Planning at UBC, streetvendors in Beijing are 70% male. Their wives were reported to be at home full-time. In a study conducted by Roslyn Kunin and Diana Lary for the Asia Pacific Foundation on Chinese-Canadian entrepreneurs, this firm gender division of labour was also evident among entrepreneurs.
Figure 7.1

Wipa Helping in Daeng's Shop

(photo by Gisèle Yasmeen)
At Fong Kee, relatives of the owner have regular salaries and positions. On the surface, the organizational structure of the restaurant resembles a highly formal establishment. Family relations, nevertheless, continue to hold sway. It is close relatives of the owner who have the best jobs in the restaurant. Some come into volunteer but have considerable decisionmaking power. The elderly mother of the restaurant owner, for example, comes in to help on a regular basis. She sits in the dining room at lunchtime and assists with small tasks such as folding napkins. Afterwards, she rests upstairs in one of the rooms available for staff to nap. Although grandmother's contribution appears symbolic and less crucial to the day to day operations of Fong Kee, she is in a position of authority and power and helps make major decisions. The decision to shift locations, for example, was hers. Grandmother is a daughter-in-law in this family but, nevertheless, has significant influence in business affairs.

The examples of kinship and neighbourhood-based mutual aid suggest a blurring of boundaries between what are often characterized as domestic and private concerns versus the work of business and the public. Patterns of mutual aid not only typify enterprises considered part of the "informal sector" but also larger, more formalized establishments. For micro-enterprises in Bangkok, it is this volunteer labour that keeps the food affordable for the masses in what is becoming a very expensive city. The cost of feeding the city's workers is therefore subsidized by mutual aid practices.
Patron-Client relations

Patron-client relations are of fundamental importance for explaining the presence of many stalls and restaurants. These relations exhibit both benevolent qualities and traits that work to the detriment of clients with less privilege. Arrangements tend to favour the more powerful patrons and uphold the "relations of ruling" which patron-client relations directly reflect. Traditionally, patron-client relations have specific meaning in Thai studies and refer to the feudal sakdi na system. In this political and economic structure, peasants worked as corvée labourers at specific times during the year for their lords and overmasters in return for protection and favours. Akin's (1975) examination of a Bangkok slum advanced the model of "patron-client" roles to depict the ground rules of Thai social organization. This replaced Embree's previously debated description of Thailand as a "loosely structured social system" (Embree 1957).

Akin identifies "reciprocity" between people as the basis of social networks in Trok Thai. Such reciprocity, expressed in patron-client relations, is the basis for the networks of social ties that knit society in Trok Thai. Leaders are conceived as "nodes" within a network of interaction. (Akin 1975, 293-95 in Askew 1994, 60).

Those in positions of power such as landowners, employers and other influential actors have rights and responsibilities toward their subordinates. Likewise, subordinates extract favours from their patrons but also are required to cater to the needs of their benefactors. "Akin emphasizes the precarious nature of livelihoods and the importance of personal contact and above all, patronage from people with greater power and skill" (Askew 1994, 60 emphasis added). These relationships have direct impact on an

9 See the glossary for a full definition of sakdi na which literally means "power over the fields". Feudalism is shorthand for this historical period but not altogether accurate.
individual's life-chances. Patrons, or *luukphi*, garner loyalty from clients (*luuknong*) through the bestowing of favours. This is an important basis of their power. Those receiving aid are bound to their patrons through debts of gratitude, known as *bunkhun*, a concept difficult to translate (Mills 1990).

What is missing from Askew's discussion of Thai patron-client models is the socio-economic inequality which keeps the system operating. Patron-client relations are far from complementary and are, instead, rife with disparities of power, privilege and access to resources. Some scholars hesitate to use the term "class" when describing the stratification of Thai society. Nonetheless, the "hierarchical principle" - particularly in Bangkok - has been grappled with for many decades (Cf. Evers and Korff 1982; O'Connor 1987).\(^{10}\) It is the least economically endowed clients who are most vulnerable and must win the favours of their patrons. In the case of cooked-food sellers in Bangkok, clients consist of streetfood sellers and microentrepreneurs. In Ying's case, landowners and former employers - patrons - have sometimes granted her favours or even direct assistance for starting her business. For this she is very grateful and is bound to those superiors through *bunkhun*.

Ying: The owner took me around to buy many things to open the shop... The landlady helped me pay instalments for a 'picnic' stove because I didn't have the money. The landlady helped me invest money because she took pity on me.

She continues to keep in touch with her former employers from *soi* Ratchakruu. When

\(^{10}\) Blanchard argued that "class" in the traditional sense, could not be applied to Thai society. He did, however, roughly sketch five major status and occupational groups ranging from the aristocracy to the lowest rung of "unskilled" labourers and hawkers. O'Connor provided a more developed and subtle schema of "hierarchy and community" thereby sketching a theory of indigenous Thai urbanism.
a child she had cared for got married, Ying was invited to the reception. They sometimes come to the shop and discretely give her money:

Ying: When they come they buy a little bit of food and give me a lot of money, 500 baht. I don't want the money but they insist that I take it. They buy a little something but give more money because they know about my problems. I'm shy with them. They just bought a little something.

These former employers have also asked Ying to suggest other employees for special functions. She sometimes acts as an intermediary between Bangkok's wealthy and impoverished migrants from Isan. Patrons, like at Fong Kee and the Professor's Pub, prefer to hire employees using a personal network of connections rather than by placing an advertisement or using an agency. This is a way of maintaining and building trust within longstanding relationships thereby enhancing their patron role.

In the case of conflict, patrons are called upon to intervene to settle disputes. When Ying first opened the foodshop, another cooked-food seller in the same building tried to prevent her from selling certain types of food.

Ying: That man came to see me and tried to forbid me to sell fried rice and made-to-order food. He told me not to sell soft drinks. I said to him, "That's my decision. That's business. You opened your shop after me, you can't tell me what not to sell". I scolded him. We argued. I told him, "Tell Jae-Noo [the landlady] what you want and she can tell me directly." I wasn't afraid of him.

This competitor eventually got evicted after two years by Jae-Noo, the landlady. Here, the patron acts as mediator to settle disputes informally. Patrons think of themselves as granting clients "favours" rather than enhancing their own economic and social position.

Ying's case illustrates how clients can be subject to the whims of their patrons. In the case of a microentrepreneur, this can involve the granting or removal of one of
the key factors of production -- the space on which to conduct business. The soi, though perceived as such and publicly accessible, is not really public space. It is privately owned and controlled.

7.2 SETTING UP ON THE SOI

Finding and accessing a suitable selling space is a matter of trial and error. It is risky and many microentrepreneurs' life histories are filled with accounts of failed ventures. The people I interviewed are the ones who persisted in the face of failure. A prime example is Samrit, the chicken-noodle vendor who operates a street stall with his wife, Lek.

Samrit: Prior to this, business wasn't working out. I lost more than 20,000 baht (CDN $1000).

Lek: Really, we lost money three times.

Samrit: We couldn't sell... we were losing money. We changed location until we found this spot.

Location is crucial. Prized selling spots are coveted and disputes often arise as to who has the right to a certain selling space.

The most important aspect of patron-client relations for the well-being of cooked-food sellers operating on the soi is the permission to sell on the landowner's property. Noo and Tip both have permission from their respective landladies to sell on their property. When Ying had a pushcart prior to opening her current shop she obtained permission from the landowner to sell in front of the house. This was the same landowner who helped her buy capital equipment. The landlady later withdrew

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access to this space.

Ying: Then the landlady said that my shop was on her property and she
didn’t want me to sell there. The landlady’s daughter didn’t want me to
sell there, in front of her house. Customers could see all her belongings.
She told me to find a new location.

The landlady’s daughter feared that the boundary between public and private space was
being eroded to her family’s detriment. Ying’s commercial activities were “too close to
home” and risked theft of the patron’s belongings. Permission to sell was subsequently
withdrawn and a more firm boundary between domestic and commercial space was
established. Fortunately, at this very time there was a new building constructed on the
site of Ying and Daeng’s present shop. Jae-Noo, the owner of the property, gave them
access to their present shop space.

Ying: Many people wanted this location but she selected me. This
person wanted it, that person wanted it and that one over there!

At the former location, Ying paid the landowner about 350 baht per month for water
and electricity. At the present location her access to the building where her shop and
room are located is guaranteed by paying the very expensive rent of 5000 baht per
month, not including utilities. In some senses she is “lucky” to have found a space so
soon after being displaced from her former pushcart location. On the other hand, her
ability to make ends meet has been seriously hampered by the high overhead costs.

Tip’s case demonstrates the beneficial aspects of having a landowner’s permission
to conduct business.

M: Why did you choose to start a food-shop here?

Tip: Because my house is here and when I asked Auntie [the landlady]
she said I could sell but to do it properly. It’s a good location.
Tip's selling space is free. She only pays rent for her small inexpensive room and a small amount for utilities. However, when probed deeply, Tip declares the narrow pathway where her shop is located as both a public space and on a second occasion as her own property.

Morn: Did you ask for permission to put the awning here or not?
Tip: I didn't ask permission.
Morn: It's a public place.
Tip: It's a public place. I didn't have to ask.

When asked if the municipal police (tesakit) had ever inspected her shop, she stipulated quite clearly that the pathway was part of her house, though she rents this property.

Tip: A municipal inspector came to my house and I told him that this area is in front of my house. So, if someone comes here, never mind because this is my own house.

Small foodstall owners justify their use of space in the soi in several ways depending on those with whom they are interacting: landowners, or government officials such as the tesakit. Definitions of proprietorship shift with the context of the discussion.

Cooked-food sellers who locate on the soi acquire the landowner's permission to do so. When questioned about the legitimacy of the BMA's regulation of their access to space they appeal to the "privateness" or "publicness" of the place used for vending. Similar latitude is not granted to those located on the major arteries of the city.

Wealthier owners of food establishments have considerably more leeway when accessing and maintaining control of a commercial space. The capital required to rent or buy space within a building is limited to the middle and upper classes. Renting a shop on a long-term lease, like Luung, or even the 8000 baht per month required of Rattana Foodcentre tenants, is a venture that vendors such as Noo, Tip as well as Samrit
and Lek cannot possibly fathom. A shophouse selling location is the long-term goal of most small foodshop and stall owners. To achieve their objectives, microentrepreneurs require a large pool of savings and the wherewithal to deal with the legal and bureaucratic aspects of leasing or, if they are very fortunate, property ownership.

Those in fixed shops as well as stalls on major streets must comply with licensing and health regulations to a greater extent than their counterparts in the lanes. The streetside stalls face the emerging regulations of the BMA which recently granted greater spatial access to vendors and concurrently seeks further regulation of these types of activities. This is addressed in the next section.

7.3 "A POINT TO EASE THE SITUATION": COMING TO TERMS WITH THE LOCAL STATE

In January 1993, Bangkok newspapers carried stories about the BMA and, later, the Ministry of the Interior “cracking down” on street vendors. The vendors negotiated with state authorities for the right to use sidewalks contingent upon certain conditions. These conditions revolve around acceptable business hours, the prohibiting of vending one day per week (Wednesdays, for street cleaning) and certain spatial restrictions. Hostile state policy towards street vending is nothing new as McGee has demonstrated for the cities of Hong Kong, Singapore and other Southeast Asian cities (McGee 1971; McGee and Yeung 1977). In the case of the BMA, this hostility has relented in the past few years as the next section shall explain. Fluctuating policies are another longstanding characteristic of Southeast Asian cities (McGee 1967).
The BMA accused vendors of breaking the established rules and proceeded to confiscate the goods of pavement vendors in Khlong Toey market (Bangkok Post, January 12, 1993). Vendors protested vehemently. Further complaints about obstruction of traffic and pavement congestion led the city to relocate some sidewalk food vendors congregated around pakkhlong talad to spaces run by the BMA or private markets. The government considered fining patrons of illegal vendors in order to curb the behaviour. This tense situation was often assuaged by the payment of bribes to municipal police by illegal vendors.

Deputy Interior Minister Chaowas Sudlabha... denied charges that the police take bribes, but admitted that officials sometimes neglect their duty. (Bangkok Post, January 19, 1993)

Several informants report having paid “rent” to the tesakit to avoid arrest and the confiscation of their goods and to secure their selling space. Noo used to have a shop on a major street near the coliseum. She had recently moved to Bangkok from the Northeast when she was nearly arrested and her goods confiscated.

Noo: They took away my chairs. The first time that I began my business I had just arrived from the province and I didn't know about the tesakit. The tesakit normally came on Wednesdays [when vending is prohibited]. That time, they came on a Monday. I couldn't move my things. They took away my tables in a truck. But he was kind, when I asked politely for my belongings, he gave them back to me.

She then began paying the tesakit “rent” of 300 baht per month for the space. They did not manage the space. “He didn't give a receipt. He would simply take the money and put it in his pocket,” she admitted. Selling in a public space, not including a space in front of a shop, is the ideal situation according to Noo.
Noo: If you sell in front of a building, you have to pay. I asked once and it's expensive. It costs 3000 baht [per month]. I don't have those means. Selling on the sidewalk is better. You only pay 300 baht per month to the tesakit. It's better than paying rent.

Samrit and Lek also used to bribe the municipal police for access to their current location, prior to the introduction of a new municipal policy.

Kapuk: Are you renting the space for your shop?
Samrit: Yes, from the tesakit, we used to pay 100 baht per month but not anymore.
Kapuk: And now?
Lek: We don't pay anymore.
Kapuk: Why not?
Lek: Jut phon pan. We have the right to conduct business there now.
GY: Did the tesakit ever give you a receipt?
Lek: No...[laughter]

The changing policies of the BMA toward street-based hawking are summarized as jut phon pan, or "selling tolerated," which is written on signs demarcating spaces which permit vending. Use of the "exempt" space is contingent upon the vendors obtaining identification cards from the district office.

7.3.1 Jut Phon Pan and the BMA’s Toleration of Hawking

Since 1992 when I first began fieldwork, the policies of the local state toward street vending have changed. When I returned to Bangkok in 1994, signs demarcating permitted vending areas on major thoroughfares had been established identified by a pictogram of a shoulder pole with hanging baskets and the inscription, jut phon pan.

This phrase is translated roughly as a space where selling is tolerated. The implication is that some restrictions apply. Jut simply means a "point" but the meaning of phon...
pan is less clear. Haas (1964) translates it as "to ease the situation". Following years of harrassment by municipal police and related bribery the BMA recently designated parts of major streets as "vendor friendly" thereby easing tensions.

The director of municipal police (tesakit) explained that streetvending was primarily viewed as a traffic and health problem (Chalee 1994). The director visited both Hong Kong and Singapore in order to compare situations and policies. The jut phon pan solution was designed following the explorations of other cities and significantly differs in its view of public space compared to the draconian measures imposed by Singapore. Singapore's "solution" to the hawking "problem" has been one of the most drastic and comprehensive in the world. All streetfood vendors, both mobile and stationary, were forced to relocate according to the government's specifications in typical Singaporean style. The reasons for the relocation were traffic management and public health. The next section illustrates the changes in its foodscape over the past several decades in order to compare the emerging scenario in Bangkok.

7.3.2 Singapore's Foodscape

"We're not a sandwich culture."

"The only place to get cheap food in Singapore nowadays is in primary school canteens."

- Professor Chua Beng Huat

Singapore has a long tradition of "public" eating albeit one that has slightly different origins from those identified for Bangkok. Lee (1992) interprets the hawker tradition of the Straits of Malacca metropolis as one originating from the city's coolie past; one in
which Chinese preferences dominate demographically. The migrant society which took root in Singapore was primarily one of male, manual labourers and their food needs were met by the growth of both itinerant and fixed-pitch hawkers selling affordable food. Other factors stimulating the preference for eating in the streets in old Singapore were the tropical climate making night stalls particularly popular, and the social role of hawker agglomerations as gathering places primarily for men, but sometimes for families (Lee 1992, 143-148).

The producers of this food have historically been men for the most part in keeping with the Chinese tradition. Wives and daughters would occasionally help their husbands with the business. Indians and Malays specialized in the sale of *roti canai*/*paratha* and *satay* respectively and despite the lack of an urban public eating tradition - particularly for the South Asians - the practice is now very popular (Lee 1992, 153).

As early as the 1930s, the colonial régime in Singapore identified hawking on the streets as a problem and began its attempts to control and redirect, even eliminate, this type of economic and spatial activity (*Report of the Committee Appointed to Investigate the Hawker Question*, 1932). To make thoroughfares available for other types of traffic, the government designed policies to alter the spatial location of food-stalls:

in 1932 and again in 1950, the colonial government decided to allow for “fixed pitch hawkers”, that is, for hawkers to sell from barrows, stalls or baskets, in a place marked out for them in the street. Such pitches were to be made available in any side street designated for such a purpose and

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11 Actually, as described by Lee (1992, 157-59), attempts to regulate hawkers began much earlier with licensing regulations in 1913 and the construction of the first hawker shelters in 1923. Most were simple covered places with no sanitation facilities.
Itinerant hawkers were to be excluded from such streets. Such streets were often either streets already occupied by groups of hawkers or nearby streets (Lee 1992, 154-55).

This is essentially the jut phon pan system recently instituted in Bangkok. The designated areas in Bangkok correspond to previous fixed pitch hawker agglomerations. Lee concludes that this type of policy legitimizes the habit of eating outside the home and was a precursor to the next major shift in Singapore's foodscape: the institution of government food centres and the removal of itinerant hawkers altogether.

As described by Ng (1993) and earlier by Yue-Man Yeung (1990), Singapore's streetfood vendors were relocated in the 1970s into government owned and operated "hawker centres" and "market-cum-food centres". Sometimes, old parking lots were used to resettle vendors into covered, controlled environments. The rapid drive to resettlement is directly related to the development of massive public housing schemes where 80% of Singaporeans continue to reside (Yeoh 1994). Every Housing Development Board (HDB) estate contains at least one self-serve "hawker centre" and usually an "eating house" where customers are served at the table. These government owned foodcentres are now in the process of being privatized. This is a matter of great controversy in a city where people depend a great deal on meals purchased in these establishments. Concerns revolve primarily around the potential increase in the price of food. The government owned centres are heavily subsidized and rents for stall owners are consequently very low. With the real-estate market as it is in Singapore, the privatization of foodcentres will certainly make food more expensive as rent subsidies
are removed. Newton Circus, one of Singapore's first and best-known hawker centres is
being closed down (Woo 1996).

By the early to mid 1980s, streetfood vendors and itinerant hawkers were nearly
extinct in Singapore with the exception of sidewalk cafés on Bugis Street and in
Chinatown where they are licensed and primarily serve tourists (Chua 1994). Whereas
in 1969, the census of hawkers indicated that 84% were mobile and 16% were
stationary, the last remaining streetvendors of both types in Kreta Ayer (Chinatown)
have now been relocated.

By 1993 there were only 129 itinerant hawkers left selling ice-cream and bread.
No new licenses have been issued since the massive relocation schemes were enacted.
Singapore regulates its food vendors even more than Tokyo (Chua 1994). On a recent
trip to Japan, mobile roasted yam vendors were seen pushing their carts through the
streets of the ultra-modern capital, often accompanied by loud chanting-type music and
the smell of hickory smoke. Nothing comparable remains in Singapore.

The newest addition to eating establishments in wealthy Singapore are the food
courts located in shopping centres.

In the mid-1980s, another "breed" of cooked-food outlets were added to
the cooked-food retail system. This relatively new "genre" of eating
place took the cue from the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) after
it opened its first air-conditioned food centre in Funan Centre in January
1985 (Ng 1993, 5).

The first privately owned food court was in Scotts Shopping Centre which opened in
1986. These food courts serve hawker food for the most part but in a more stylish
venue. More expensive, full meals are also available and the main cultural groups of
the island are always represented. Occasionally, there are outlets selling Western food but many Singaporean food writers agree that this is not a threat to local foodways. Lee reported that McDonald’s only has 5% market-share of the fast-food industry in the country amounting to six billion dollars a year. The figures are probably similar for Bangkok.¹²

Today, Singapore is the capital of lavish shopping plaza food courts, many replete with waterfalls, plants and designer lighting. The popularity of these new eating environments is attributed to the growth of consumerism in Singaporean society. These “value-added neighbourhood hawker centres” are considered more fashionable and comfortable, especially by the city’s affluent young people (Ng 1993, 45-51). They represent a contribution of the Singaporean “new middle class” to the city’s foodscape. Bangkok shows similar trends. Like their counterparts in Western cities, Southeast Asian new middle classes are redefining their social and spatial environments to accommodate their urbane, sophisticated tastes.

7.4 THE LOCAL-GLOBAL DIALECTIC: FOOD MICRO-ENTREPRENEURS AND THAI / INTERNATIONAL CAPITAL

This section shows that Thai foodshop owners are interacting in direct and indirect ways with large Thai and foreign owned food companies and agri-business corporations. The most obvious examples are the foodcentres which have emerged over the past ten to

¹² Dr. Napasri Maneewong informed me of a television documentary on the subject of adolescent behaviour in Bangkok. In one segment, it reported that teenagers typically go as a group to fast food restaurants such as McDonald’s where they linger for hours with a very small order of soft drinks or food.
twenty years. Other, less visible, manifestations of this trend are the employment of (former) foodshop owners and workers in cafeterias and the purchasing of supplies directly from mega-corporations. This represents the blurring of boundaries between the traditional and modern and the local versus global.

The interaction between microentrepreneurs and the volatile real-estate market as mediated through relations with landowners points to spatial transformations of selling environments vis-à-vis inputs of capital. This results in both opportunities for and marginalization of small-scale cooked-food sellers. Some small foodshop owners have relocated within the growing number of foodcentres in the city, most situated in department stores and shopping plazas. I begin by outlining the types of foodcentres studied in the VMA and provide further examples and conclusions on the nature of the local-global dialectic in the Bangkok food-system.

7.4.1 Shopping Plazas and Foodcentres

Central Plaza - described in the previous chapter - is located in suburban Bangkok serving the middle-class clientèle of Ladprao and Bang Kapi. The Plaza has a food-floor in the basement of Central Department Store which sells take-home food in small plastic bags - and, more recently, styrofoam - which is identical in form and content to that which is sold in soi and street-based foodshops. This resembles the type of food retailing prevalent in Japanese department stores (Jadavji 1995; McGee 1995).

Large shopping plazas are becoming ubiquitous in Bangkok, particularly in the suburbs and exurbs, and have their own foodscapes which are spatially distinct from the
outside world. Although the VMA is in a more central part of the city where densities are higher and large shopping plazas are absent, there exist, nevertheless, miniature versions of "mall foodscapes." Robinson's Department Store, for instance, has its own small, crowded foodcentre on the ground floor. A more pleasant food court is on the air-conditioned mezzanine and contains a full-service sukiyaki restaurant ("Noodle Garden") and five self-serve Thai-owned fast food chains sharing common seating which specialize in either fresh fruit juice, noodle dishes, fried rice or other small meals. Again, the coupon system is in use and individual dishes cost 20-25 baht. Prices exceed those on the street by about 10 baht (or 50 cents).

The Home Food Centre (HFC) is the newest addition to the collection of foodcentres in the VMA. Sor Khon Kaen, HFC's corporate owner, became famous for its fabrication and mass-distribution of a type of cured-pork sausage (*naem*): Fifty percent of Sor Khon Kaen is owned by the family which started the company. The HFC has a branch which opened earlier on Sathorn Road. Prospective tenants were approached and invited to open a branch in the HFC; only businesses which were experiencing successful sales were contacted. This resembles the recruitment process by Central Plaza. HFC similarly uses coupons with a 70/30 split of revenues.

Women account for the largest share of workers in the foodcentre outlets, as on the street. This shows that traditional gender roles are being superimposed on new spatial forms. The foodscape exhibits "layering" of gender relations which are building on a historically-rooted foundation. This does not mean, however, that women workers have control over individual enterprises. Some of the foodcentre outlets are franchised
chains, such as "Five Star Chicken" or "Noodle Duck". These chains are part of Thai corporate structure.

Food sold in foodcentres, particularly those which are highly formalized such as HFC, tends to be standardized and risks becoming of poorer quality than some of the food sold on the streets (Keyes 1996). Chua Beng Huat (1994) said the same of the comparison of food quality between hawker centres and the former, street-based, eateries in Singapore. Economic development appears to stamp out the diversity of food sold bringing it under more centralized ownership and control. This is a generalized statement, and some foodcentre outlets in highly modern shopping plazas sell excellent food.

McGee (1995) comments that the cost-cutting measures employed by some of these foodcentres may be a contributing factor to standardization and deterioration of food quality. Some outlets buy poorer quality raw materials (ie. food) and/or pay their employees very low wages. Poorly paid employees are not motivated to provide good service let alone quality food. Owner-operators are better skilled and motivated (Ley 1996). Further to this, young, inexperienced foodcentre outlet employees lack cooking skills compared to their counterparts in the informal sector.

7.4.2 Independent Foodcentres

An example of a less formalized foodcentre is the case of the "Rattana" foodcentre owned and operated by Wira and Goy - a couple in their mid-thirties. Wira's mother, who is still the official landowner, inherited property from her mother and developed it
into 28 shop houses which are rented to businesses and residential tenants. One row of shophouses was renovated as a student residence where more than 100 rooms are rented and a second row was later gutted and redeveloped as a small foodcentre.

At the time of the interview, the foodcentre existed for a year and three months. It was opened primarily to serve students in the residence who are prohibited from cooking in their rooms and also serves local residents and workers. Although Wira and Goy own and manage the foodcentre, they do not own the eight foodshops within the centre:

Goy: We're the property owners here but we don't own the foodshops in the centre. We rent the space only. We hire young people to clean up, bus tables, and put things away. We collect the rent from the shops.

The Rattana foodcentre charges 8000 baht per month which includes maintenance as well as utilities. Foodshops provide their own dishes but utensils belong to the centre. In addition, the foodcentre owns a stand where soft drinks and other non-alcoholic beverages are sold. The centre is open from six in the morning to eleven at night.

The vendors in the centre prefer not to use the coupon system:

Goy: The vendors don't like coupons because with coupons they earn less money. They feel that with the coupon "standard" they have to give the proprietor about 30 to 35 percent. The usual is 30 percent. With the coupon, they don't pay rent but a share of their income... Here, it's a small centre. It's not a shopping mall. It's better to charge rent.

Wira explains that this was more satisfactory to the vendors. The result is also less expensive food. Whereas large-scale air-conditioned foodcentres like the HFC charge 25 baht for a bowl of noodles, the Rattana centre vendor charges only 15.

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13 Goy explained that alcohol was deliberately not sold to avoid problems, such as violence.
The food sold in the foodcentre is normally prepared at home in advance by the shop owners with the obvious exception of noodle soup. The foodcentre owners prefer it this way:

Goy: Really, we don't want them to prepare meals here. They have to do it at home and later bring it here to sell. Our objective is to have them sell it here only but in the end, we can't control it. Sometimes they prepare food here too... We encourage them to prepare it at home because the cooking odours disturb the residents who live upstairs.

Businesses are basically home-based since the goods for sale are, for the most part, prepared in the family kitchen. This is another example of the blurring between home and work place. The home kitchen is both a site for household food preparation and commercial production. There is, in addition, a continuity between shop and home rather than a sharp division between home and work, or what is ostensibly private versus public. The sharing of Chaichana and Vipawan's domestic employees with the restaurant is another indication of the blurring of private and public.

It is difficult for sanitary inspectors to concern themselves with hygiene at the site of food production. In any case, inspectors do not concern themselves with these issues and grant licenses in terms of the requisite number of toilets and sinks and the clean appearance of the premises rather than food quality or cleanliness of utensils.

Foodshop owners in the Rattana foodcentre did not have to bid for their spaces. Most of them operated foodshops in the old shophouses prior to renovation and were given priority to relocate in the centre by their landlord, the patron.

Goy: The vendors here are former tenants. We proposed to close them down temporarily during the renovations to then give them a place in the new foodcentre. If we had just sent them away they wouldn't have been
able to find a place to earn their living. So, we made it so that they
could sell here.

Most of the foodshop owners accepted the offer. The few that declined were, for the
most part, male Sino-Thai vendors who were unaccustomed to the "self-serve" concept.

Goy: Because many Chinese *poh kha* (male vendors) need servers to
wait tables. They couldn't accept this system so they didn't move into the
foodcentre.

Only one of the vendors rents a room on the premises. An interesting phenomenon
displayed in the centre is that of "shop-sharing" whereby two vendors share the same
selling space but conduct business at different times. This phenomenon is
commonplace (Vespry 1993).

Table 7.1 provides a profile of four shops in the foodcentre as part of the
quantitative survey. The remaining four vendors refused to be questioned. Two of the
shops specialize in the sale of noodles, both of them operated by women. One shop,
selling chicken rice and pork leg, is operated by a Sino-Thai man of 37. The final shop
sells curry and rice and is operated by a single woman of 50. The other shop owners
are married. None of the cooked-food sellers have more than a primary education and
all have helpers who come in regularly consisting of family members. These
characteristics conform to the data on other foodshop owners.

A difference with other food microentrepreneurs is the birthplace of respondents.
Three reported being born in Bangkok and one is originally from Ratburi: a part of the
EBMR. This may be an indication of their relative wealth compared to cooked-food
sellers from Isan. The hefty shop rents of 8000 baht per month,
Table 7.1

CHARACTERISTICS OF FOODSHOP OWNERS IN THE RATTANA FOODCENTRE

Victory Monument Area, 1994

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shop</th>
<th>Type of Food Sold</th>
<th>Age of Owner</th>
<th>Birth Province</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Address Category(^{14})</th>
<th>Education Level(^{15})</th>
<th>Helpers (type)(^{16})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Curry &amp; Rice</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Ratburi</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Cousins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Chicken Rice/Pork</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Bangkok</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>V.M.A.</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Cousins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Noodles</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Bangkok</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>D.D.</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Noodles</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Bangkok</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>B.K.T.</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{14}\) "Same" refers to those who reported their address being the same as their foodshop. In this case, it refers to a vendor who rents a room in the residence adjacent to the Rattana Foodcentre. "V.M.A." refers to the Victory Monument Area; "D.D." is the Asoke-Din Daeng-Huay Kwang neighbourhood and finally, "B.K.T." makes reference to "Bang Khun Thian" on the outskirts of Bangkok.

\(^{15}\) "Primary" refers to Prathom 1-7, the equivalent of primary school grades 1-6 in Canada. Prathom 7 is now discontinued. By law, all Thai citizens must attend school until Prathom 6 or the age of 12, whichever comes first.

\(^{16}\) The category "cousins" refers to all blood relatives outside the nuclear family (parents, spouses and children). The latter are included in the category "Family".

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in addition to paying rent for one's living quarters, would be beyond the financial scope of Daeng, Ying, Samrit and Lek.

Throughout the interview, Wira and Goy used the tone of "patron" to describe relations with their tenants in the foodcentre. Many times, they implied they were doing their "clients" a favour by renting them a selling space or by providing the "youngsters" who cleaned up the centre with a job. When I asked them about paying employees minimum wage and following the regulations of the municipal district (ket) office I received the following explanation:

We don't operate like the big centres. We're kind of like a family. If they want a day off they can have a day off anytime they want. We don't make the days up. You come into work, you don't want to work you get someone to replace you... We treat them like family. If they're sick we take care of them. We bring them to the doctor. 17

Clean up employees - most of whom are related to each other - do not start with minimum wage but work their way up to the legally required 135 baht per day. A daily wage avoids problems related to "sloughing off" which Wira and Goy complained about when they paid salaries on a monthly basis. Many are teenagers described as irresponsible by management. The employees are no longer allowed to rent rooms in the residence as they were often caught napping during the day! Goy explains that employees also earn "bonuses" such as tips and free meals which justifies the lower wage. "Thais who aren't very well educated don't want to take on responsibilities," I was told. Goy complains that supervision is a problem and that she and Wira plan to

This part of the interview took place in English. When I found out that Wira spent most of his adult life studying in the United States, we switched from Thai to English but his wife continued in Thai.

17
hire a manager to supervise the workings of the foodcentre. They see themselves as
benefactors for their tenants and employees and, to a certain extent, play such a role.

Wira and his family are pillars of the local community having lived there for
several generations. He is critical of large-scale Thai conglomerates, such as CP which
he criticized at length during the interview. The *modus operandi* of the Rattana is part
of a more traditional system of Thai social relations based on patron-client networks and
qualitatively different than the more professionalised system in place at HFC and
Central Plaza Ladprao and similar establishments.

Since the opening of the Home Food Centre, business at the Rattana foodcentre
has suffered. Despite renovations, the building is old and dilapidated. Wira and Goy
would ideally like to redevelop the property as a high-rise condominium in the next six
years depending on their financial situation. They are in the process of preparing a plan
and worry that they lack the necessary experience for such a venture.

Small independent foodcentres like Rattana are less directly a part of national
and transnational corporations but, due to the wealth and power of their proprietors, are
inevitably tied into international circuits of capital. When Wira and Goy decide to
redevelop the property, the fate of the food vendors will be sealed one way or another.
On the one hand, they may be able to cater to more customers in another selling space.
On the other hand, they may not be able to compete in the new economic and spatial
environment.
7.4.3 Small Foodshop Owners in the New Economy

The cases of two foodshop owners - Daeng and Luung - illustrate the difficulties that some entrepreneurs in the prepared-food system have adjusting to the many changes taking place around them. Daeng has had to resort to working in a cafeteria in order to bring in extra income and Luung has difficulty finding enough customers.

Daeng and her mother can no longer make ends meet and provide for their family in Isan with the revenue from the foodshop. Daeng found a job as a cook at the cafeteria of the American University Alumnae (AUA) but could not tolerate the exhaustion of having to arrive at 5:00 am. The AUA subcontracts the responsibility of the cafeteria to an individual who then pays cooks 6000 baht per month to work twelve hour days. Since Daeng continued to help in the foodshop after work and would clean up until 10 or 10:30, the pace at the AUA was exhausting. In addition, the food was of such poor quality at the cafeteria that she resorted to drinking milk most of the time. She would arrive back home hungry and tired. After three weeks on the job, Daeng quit and found more suitable employment at the cafeteria of CP.

Ironically, Luung obtains his ducks from CP and is the next example of small foodshop owners engaging in direct contact with large corporations.

Before, I was in another trade. I had moved up-country. I sold things from the forest, like corn, to sell in the towns. My first wife worked there with me. After a year, she died. The children were very young so I had to come back to the city.

In his forties, Luung bought his foodshop named “Delicious Treat” from someone else and in the first ten years was quite successful. Since then, his duck-noodle business has deteriorated. The pictures of his “prime,” when he was featured on televised cooking
shows, remain faded on the dingy wall. He attributes the decline to the difficulty of finding employees, economic problems and the growth of shopping centres and night life. “In the old days, many customers came in the evening. Nowadays, it’s very quiet. Before, there weren’t places to visit in the evening.” He now closes his shop at 5pm. “I’m already 60 years old,” sighs Luung, “I should be retired but if I don’t work I don’t know how I’ll survive”. Fortunately, Luung has adult children who live at home and contribute to family income.

7.4.4 The Vagaries of the Real Estate Market

Discussions with small foodshop owners reveal that they have a fragile relationship to the spaces they occupy for the sale of prepared food. Their access to both public and private space is vulnerable, particularly due to the volatility of the real estate market in the VMA which is undergoing rapid transformation. This resembles the situation in Jakarta during the 1980s described in detail by Lea Jellinek (1991). Land speculation and redevelopment have been two of the reasons which enable Bangkok’s middle and wealthy classes to accumulate large amounts of capital. The entire local economy is in a state of flux with increasing migration to the city and the growth of a wealthier class of consumers who demand more comfortable living and leisure environments. The case of Ying and Daeng as well as Samrit and Lek provide the most telling examples of potential future displacement due to property development.

Ying and Daeng have been in their present location for five years. The landlady, Jae-Noo, has indicated that she is planning a high-rise apartment building for
the premises. Their future depends on the wishes of the land-owner who will determine whether or not they can operate the foodshop in the future apartment:

GY: But there will really be a foodshop in the new building?

Ying: There should be. The owner said that they don't want us to move. But, we'll see first. The owner sets the conditions.

Samrit and Lek have finally found a viable selling space on one of the streets in the study area but the small room where they live with their two children is also owned by Jae-Noo.

GY: I've been told that the landlady will build an apartment here. Where will you go?

Samrit: We've got big problems! We still don't have a place to go. We're trying to find a place but with no luck. We'd like to find something but it's hard for vendors to find housing.

Lek and Samrit are not counting on any privileges from their landlady. If they want to retain their prime selling space on the sidewalk they must live in the vicinity. The entire neighbourhood is undergoing rapid reconstruction as high-rise apartments and condominiums transform the cityscape.

7.5 SPATIAL ISSUES & THAI CONCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

This chapter identified factors which enable cooked-food sellers to open a foodshop thereby creating Bangkok's foodscape. Cooking knowledge, mutual aid and access to capital are all required. Knowing how to cook is a gendered skill, one that has been the traditional domain of Thai women, in the case of Thai food whereas Sino-Thai men have typically cooked in Chinese eating establishments. This is changing however with
more Thai and Isan men becoming involved in the foodscape in various capacities. Some Thai men work in conjunction with their spouses, providing examples of gender complementarity. Others work as assistants for male Sino-Thai chefs in larger eating establishments.

Samrit's case, at first glance provides an example of the "irresponsible" behaviour associated with young Thai men. However, it is not that simple. As Santisuda (1990) describes, men who come to Bangkok from Isan to work as tuk-tuk drivers often abuse drugs, such as stimulants, to cope with their long days in horrible traffic conditions. They then resort to alcohol to "come down" off the stimulants. It becomes a vicious circle and some have returned to their villages in the Northeast, insane because of the toll the lifestyle has taken on their minds and bodies. Labelling these men as "irresponsible" is blaming the victims of uneven development. Selling noodles on the street with his wife is a healthier and more profitable occupation for Samrit than driving a tuk-tuk.

Daeng's younger brother is a more suitable example of the "young irresponsible male" phenomenon. Twice he squandered the college tuition money given to him by his Aunt Ying hard earned by herself and Daeng. "He's a teenager, do you understand?" Daeng explained to us justifying his behaviour. Of course, Daeng, at his age was busy earning money for her family rather than spending time in snooker halls. Like sexual license, "responsibility" carries with it a double standard according to gender. Teenaged boys are expected to be irresponsible; girls are not. Daeng's niece Wipa and Tip's daughter help dutifully in their respective foodshops every day. This is
certainly related to the construction of femininity as "nurturing". Ying, for example is a mae liang for both her extended family and the neighbourhood, as are many of the female microentrepreneurs in Bangkok's foodscape.

Some of the factors leading to the opening of a foodshop intersect with well-known patterns within Thai society such as patron-client relations and cleavages based on ethnicity or income group. As the case of Fong Kee shows, however, people of different income and ethnic backgrounds come together in the foodscape mutually influencing one another.

The discussion also illustrated the complexity of labelling food-related places and activities as "public" versus "private." In the sois, for example, selling spaces can be viewed as either public or private depending on circumstances. Legally, however, the space is private and permission of the land-owner is necessary. Still, as evidenced by the case of Ying, permission can be withdrawn unexpectedly, in this particular case when the privacy of the land-owner is perceived as threatened by the "publicity" of cooked-food vending.

On the street, selling space is legally public but, until the recent introduction of the jut phon pan policy some municipal police officers were managing the space as their own fiefdom by charging "rent". Non-payment carried with it the threat of arrest or confiscation of selling equipment. The new policy aims "to ease the situation" and guarantees harassment-free tenure of designated selling spaces on the condition that cooked-food sellers follow a set of rules. This is a step toward making public space
truly accessible. However, policies toward street hawking, particular that of food, are known to fluctuate as evidence from Singapore suggests.

Foodshops located in fixed buildings face a vastly different set of circumstances. For the most part, these entrepreneurs are wealthier and able to sign long-term leases guaranteeing access to their selling spaces over the long term. They are protected from the fluctuating policies of the local state. Restaurant owners, such as Professor Chaichana and Vipawan, own their property outright and have increased options. Their peers, Wira and Goy, are considering redeveloping their property into a high-rise apartment complex thereby increasing revenues considerably. For these agents in the food-system, access to public space is not an immediate concern though they may generate revenue from the rental of spaces in "public" foodcentres.

The practices associated with cooked-food vending and the restaurant industry indicate that there is a blurring between the activities and spaces commonly thought of as public and private. Food being prepared at home and later sold in a foodcentre, and expensive restaurants purchasing condominiums to house employees are examples of this as is the Professor's sharing of domestic and restaurant employees. The "family" discourse propagated by Wira and Goy is yet another instance of this blurring which ties in with the system of patron-client relations. These systems of interaction are far from being equal and complementary but are rather part of Thai society's "relations of ruling" which help maintain the superior position of the more powerful patrons. Individuals studied do not interpret events in this manner and patrons rather see themselves as altruistically bestowing favours with clients showing gratitude for the gift.
Given the quickly changing real estate environment, the less resource-endowed "clients" are constrained in their choices and vulnerable to the whims of their landowners, the market and changing state policies. Even though they may eventually find niches in the new economy, such as in privately-owned and indoor foodcentres, the medium-term future appears uncertain for the microentrepreneurs in the VMA. Most of the microentrepreneurs who occupy sidewalks and lanes to sell food are female. Women are therefore disproportionately affected by redevelopments. Most are also subordinated with respect to their rural status, as migrants from the provinces.

The following excerpt from my field notes illustrates some of the issues involved when discussing "public" space in Bangkok.

FIELDNOTES 7.1: TAXES, UTILITIES AND INTERIM LAND-USE RESTAURANTS

K BOUGHT LUUKCIN NUA BROCHETTES. ON THE WAY BACK K SAID "YOU KNOW, THESE PEOPLE (MEANING THE STREETVENDORS) MAKE A LOT OF MONEY BUT THEY PAY NO TAX". I ASKED HIM TO ESTIMATE HOW MUCH THEY MAKE. HE SAID HE FIGURES ABOUT 1000 BAHT PER DAY. HE SAID THAT THEY DON'T HAVE TO PAY RENT BECAUSE THE STREET IS PUBLIC SPACE BUT I SUSPECT DIFFERENTLY. IRONICALLY, AS WE ARRIVED AT THE TRAVEL AGENCY, I NOTICED A HOSE GOING TO THE RESTAURANT ON THE CORNER. I INDICATED WHAT I NOTICED AND HE SAID THAT HE SUPPLIES THAT FOOD SHOP WITH WATER AND ELECTRICITY. I SAID, "OH YOU SELL THAT PERSON UTILITIES! IS THAT A FAIRLY COMMON ARRANGEMENT BETWEEN SHOP KEEPERS AND FOOD SHOP OWNERS? K BECAME RATHER DEFENSIVE. HE SAID. "OH THAT FOOD SHOP OWNER ASKED ME TO HELP HIM BECAUSE HE DOESN'T REALLY HAVE A 'PROPER PLACE' SO I SAID 'YES'". AS THOUGH THE FOODSHOP ISN'T PAYING FOR THE SERVICES! YET ANOTHER INCOME-GENERATING STRATEGY. ANOTHER APARTMENT CONSISTING OF ROOMS (HONG PAK) IS GOING UP ON THE LANE WHERE THE FOODSHOP IN QUESTION IS LOCATED. THE RESTAURANT THAT K SUPPLIES WITH UTILITIES APPEARS TO BE AN 'INTERIM LAND-USE' RESTAURANT. (SEPTEMBER 8, 1994)

"K" is an acquaintance who owns a travel agency and student residence. He assumes that access to "public" space is unproblematic. This is a fairly typical response to the
"streetfoods" question by the general public. Those who accuse vendors of earning too much disregard the high cost of food which offsets much income and seem to forget that those who use public space for the purposes of businesses sometimes have (or had) to pay bribes regularly to the tesakit. These vendors also support family members in the provinces, filling the void of an ineffective social welfare system and a development agenda focused on cities at the expense of rural areas.

In the above vignette, K exonerates his own behaviour of collecting undeclared money from a foodshop owner on the grounds that he is "helping" a person who does not have a "proper place". Not surprisingly, the small student residence which K owns and operates is also undeclared, and therefore not taxed. Ironically, K and his family agree that food sold in small shops on the street is of good quality for the most part and frequent street restaurants regularly.

For the purpose of this dissertation however, it has been useful to look at the ways in which what is conventionally thought of as public and private is sometimes blurred and re-orchestrated in Bangkok's contemporary foodscape. This chapter has looked at the factors which have enabled individual entrepreneurs to open their eating establishments and the changes in the foodscape with respect to municipal policies and the real estate market. The final chapter brings the findings of the entire study together and points to fruitful areas for future research.

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18 For an interesting group of articles advocating different positions on the issue see Good Life Magazine Vol. 3, No. 32, August 1994 (in Thai). It contains three articles written by three Thai academics in the nutrition field.
Chapter Eight

EPILOGUE

There are many lenses through which to view place. Food is one of them. Likewise, gender relations can be illustrated and better understood through an examination of foodways. In the preceding pages, I braided three different strands of empirical information to portray public eating in Thai urban society. Gender relations, food-systems and questions of urban change have been pieced together to construct a foodscape of Bangkok. Unlike traditional approaches to landscape, the foodscape I propose is one that challenges an Archimedean perspective on place. It is one that, instead, dwells on "spatial practices" (de Certeau 1990). As such, it is not a conventional geography but represents one of the newer approaches that incorporates sensitivities to local ways of seeing and categorizing space and pays attention to power relationships and "relations of ruling" in the food-system (Smith 1987).

The foodscape presented is a *bricolage*. A range of improvised techniques were used which were adapted to the subject under study depending on the tools and materials available. Methods were contingent upon the circumstances encountered. As much as possible, comments were framed by the moment of contact where observations and discussions took place. I attempted to keep the reader close to the "ground" by incorporating excerpts from my fieldnotes and lengthy quotations by informants. This
resulted in the creation of a "blurred genre" between conventional thesis, field diary and interview transcripts.

The ethnographic approach I employed included themes from feminist and post-colonialist thinking. The feminist content was one which sought to depict Thai gender relations in the food-system as more nuanced and complex than a cliché alluding to the "high status of women" in Southeast Asia (Errington 1990). The post-colonial content pushes theoreticians to examine a non-"Western" society on its own terms but also consider that traditional Thai gender relations may be more favourable to women in material terms than Western modernity. Evidence from the dissertation suggests, though, that factors such as "class" and ethnicity are equally important for understanding the workings of Bangkok's foodscape.

My first research question was "how can one represent Bangkok's foodscape?"

The entire dissertation attempts to do just this. The heuristic value of the foodscape approach is the recognition that it is a construction of the viewer, like landscape, and that the criteria selected (such as gender relations and urban change) are potentially unlimited. A more thorough consideration of ethnicity, age, income group or time-of-day, for example, would have produced a very different piece of research.

8.1 HIGHLIGHTS

The remainder of this chapter will group and contextualize the most theoretically relevant findings strewn throughout the thesis. I will organize these comments with reference to the three empirical research questions posed in the first chapter:
1. How can we historically and geographically represent the emergence of Bangkok's foodscape? What are its current and future trends?

2. How is Bangkok's foodscape gendered? Is it possible to typologize eating establishments vis-à-vis gender relations in urban Thailand?

3. How is the Bangkok socio-spatial environment changing and how is this affecting public eating?

I will group together my comments under the loose rubrics of a) the Thai urban foodsystem b) gender relations and c) urban change though some of the observations, for example the "blurring of boundaries", are necessarily entangled pertaining to all three categories since the objective of the thesis was to look at the ways gender, food and urban systems overlap. Table 8.1 is a summary of the abstract issues that will be highlighted.

Table 8.1

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE DISSERTATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Relations</th>
<th>Food-systems / Foodways</th>
<th>Urban Socio-spatial Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender and foodways;</td>
<td>Exploitation in the food system;</td>
<td>Foodways and urbanization;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postcolonial approach;</td>
<td>Rise of domestic transnational capital and emergence of post-industrial palate;</td>
<td>The urban &quot;spatialization&quot; of gender vis-à-vis eating habits;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender &amp; Place;</td>
<td>Blurring of boundaries/syncretism;</td>
<td>Capital accumulation and displacement of traditional spatial forms and concomitant rise of new middle class;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally distinct markings of femininity and masculinity;</td>
<td>Postmodernity in foodstyles and establishments, changing social and gender relations in the food-system;</td>
<td>Social and spatial adjustment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blurring of boundaries;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Debates in Thai and Southeast Asian Studies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**8.1.1 The Thai Urban Food-system**

The Thai food-system's transition was traced from its rural, subsistence-based origins to an urban, commercial form. Processed-foods are in increasing demand with high levels of female labour force participation, migration to the cities, the construction of kitchenless housing and the high cost of inputs such as food, electricity (or cooking fuel) and appliances. This, along with factors such as a Thai fondness for convenience foods, the lack of domestic space for entertaining and the difficulty of preparing many Thai dishes, has led to the establishment of small restaurants and foodshops all over the city, most of them owned and staffed by women. Small foodshops located on streets and especially the *sois*, are flexible multifunctional spaces which provide much more than cooked food and a source of employment. Latent functions include child-care, exchanges of information, support and friendship.

Even though some of the smallest stall owners can earn higher than the minimum wage and more than factory workers, most are still eking out a marginal living. The success of a foodshop is often based on a high degree of self-exploitation such as long hours, living in cramped quarters and relying on unpaid family labour. In addition, much of the income earned serves as welfare for the impoverished countryside through family remittances. In many ways, work in the food service industry is perhaps more exploitative than factory work, a point often neglected by economic theory. The long term health consequences of working as a microentrepreneur, where sleep deprivation and exposure to noxious fumes is the norm, is a matter for concern.
Food retailing is a profitable niche for Thai agri-food conglomerates resulting in the emergence of a "post-industrial palate" modifying MacLeod's (1989) earlier terminology. Some corporations, such as Sor Khon Kaen, have established foodcentres in order to corner this market and distribute their food products. The emergence of foodcentres in shopping plazas and office complexes mirrors this trend. Small foodshops with one to four employees still form the majority of outlets in these centres, though some are franchised outlets. Foodcentres therefore incorporate some of the traditional patterns of organization exhibited in street stalls and small restaurants. Some foodcentres, though located in modern air-conditioned malls, look to Thai traditional themes as "props" to market food.

New élite eating establishments sometimes try to incorporate "traditional" and "authentic" food retailing as well and are, instead, pastiche recreations of the past. Examples are coffee carts and "streetfood festivals" in upscale hotels and "garden restaurants" which resemble the development of postmodern spatial design in the West by recreating vaguely historical themes and styles. These pastiche creations point to the blurring of what is considered "traditional" versus "modern" in urban Thailand.

8.1.2 The Gendering of Bangkok's Foodscape

Informal foodshops are a life-support system for urbanites which provide affordable food for urbanites of all income groups. The predominance of women as small-scale entrepreneurs in the prepared-food sector is the result of many factors, not the least of which is Thai constructions and practices of gender. Foreign observers have interpreted
women's presence in public space and control of small businesses, such as foodshops as indications of their "high status". An added complication is the fact that Thailand, like many neighbouring societies, does not emphasize gender differences linguistically or engage in obviously brutal treatment of its women such as clitoridectomy or footbinding "which scream out for ethnographic investigation" (Errington 1990, 4 citing Atkinson 1982, 257).

Because feminist theories about gender tend to be formulated for and from societies where male-female difference is highly marked, we may be missing issues germane to the topic when we glance casually at the "high status of women" in an area where the treatment of women seems relatively benign. Actually, it could be that differences between men and women are not socially visible to us because they are not marked in ways we easily recognized. (Errington 1990, 405)

Bangkok's foodscape is a superb venue in which to explore complex gender ideologies which are not immediately understood by an outside observer. A contributing stereotype leading to women's dominance of food micro-enterprises is the view that women are better money-managers than men. Thai women are trusted with the family purse and are considered more responsible than males for "getting things done" - qualities associated with powerful persons in a Western context (Errington 1990, 4). Related factors are the structure of the rural Thai household as a "corporation of kinswomen" giving females access to relatives for support in the running of a small enterprise.

One determining factor fuelling the creation of micro and small food enterprises is the desire to earn money to support (liang or "to nurture") one's nuclear and extended family. Although nurturing is not exclusively a female practice, when it comes to food
it is construed as feminine both symbolically and in day-to-day life. Women and girls are highly involved in the direct nurturing of their birth and marital families both in terms of preparing food for the household and earning money to redistribute to relatives in the city and the countryside.

Industrialization in the Southeast Asian region has been based on the employment of women workers in factories, services and the public service. Employed women no longer have time to shop for food and cook thus stimulating the demand for prepared meals. One of the newest arrivals in the foodscape is known as the "plastic bag housewife" who is challenging the boundaries between what is conventionally thought of as public and private. She purchases prepared food and takes it to her family for a home-based, but not home-cooked meal. Nurturing has thereby been commodified, contracted out and displaced.

Small foodshops and the practices of which they are a part are blurring what are thought of as public and private spheres and spaces. The blurring of both conceptual boundaries and actual spaces is a theme which has been receiving a great deal of attention in social theory in general and feminist analyses in particular. This blurring of boundaries in Bangkok's foodscape helps us question the categorization of spaces and activities defined as public versus private (Staeheli 1996).

The dissertation has focused on gender relations rather than solely the role of women in prepared-food retailing. The place of men and masculinity in the foodscape has therefore been considered of fundamental importance. Traditionally, ethnically Thai and Isan men did not play an active role in food markets and as foodshop owners
because they occupied positions in the religious, bureaucratic and military hierarchies. While women have been characterized as "responsible" with money and thereby dutifully nurture their families, ethnically Thai (and Isan) men have been stereotyped as irresponsible. This research pointed out two examples of male irresponsibility: Samrit and Daeng's younger brother. Samrit's case may not be valid because the tuk-tuk driving lifestyle of which he was a part leads many men from Isan to participate in behaviour deemed "irresponsible", such as drinking, because it is such a physically brutal occupation. Daeng's brother's behaviour was attributed to his youth. The implication, even by Samrit's self-described example, is that men "grow out" of their irresponsible phase and eventually give up their bad habits to care for their families.

Men who are responsible business and life partners as husbands, fathers, and brothers greatly improve the situation of small foodshop owners instead of draining scarce resources. There are many examples of spousal mutual aid in this thesis pointing to patterns of gender complementarity in the food-system. This resembles Tinker's findings who concluded that Filipino and Thai couples who ran a micro-enterprise as a team conducted the most successful businesses. What we saw in Bangkok's food-system, more often than gender conflict, was cooperation between women and men, especially between spouses. A study of government officials, known for their philandering, might have contributed more examples of male irresponsibility. The view of ethnically Thai men as irresponsible is therefore also a stereotype that requires qualification based on context and characteristics of the population under scrutiny.
Sino-Thai, or ethnically Chinese, men did and still do play a role as foodshop owners and cooks in Bangkok’s foodscape. This is part of the history of immigration to Thailand whereby Chinese labourers, mostly male, brought their foodways with them and developed a distinct “coolie-culture” in their new environment. Lack of domestic space and cooking facilities fuelled the demand for cheap prepared food. The situation has shifted somewhat today with non-Chinese men taking a greater interest in the business as the Sino-Thai have become more affluent. New, non-Chinese migrants have stepped in to fill their shoes. Some work in partnership with Sino-Thai men in more formal establishments - such as the assistant cooks at Fong Kee - or with their spouses and/or other family members. Examples are provided by husband and wife teams from Isan opening noodle shops; formerly an exclusively Chinese domain. Masculinity is therefore being redefined in Bangkok in relation to the foodshop and larger restaurant business. Likewise, Sino-Thai women appear to have more decision making power in family enterprises than they would in more homogenously Sinitic societies.

In larger more profitable establishments, men form a much larger proportion of restaurant employees. They work as waiters and busboys whereas women work as hostesses, entertainers but also as chefs and cooks in the kitchen, with the notable exception of Chinese restaurants where men dominate food preparation. A gender division of labour therefore emerges in the larger establishments with women being employed for their cooking skills and/or aestheticized as part of the restaurant decor. Boundaries between the roles played by women versus men and the places associated with femininity and masculinity therefore seem to be more firmly recast in these spaces.
At the same time, newer Thai restaurants are blurring the boundaries between tradition and modernity, past and present. Further investigation might sort out to what extent this edification of separate spheres is attributed to the Chinese influence.

8.1.3 Changing Urban Socio-Spatial Systems

There are various enabling factors necessary for individuals to enter the foodshop business. In addition to the obvious question of finding and keeping a profitable selling space, these include:

- i) cooking knowledge
- ii) management/business skills
- iii) access to capital
- iv) labour/help

The first two skills have sometimes been acquired through an apprenticeship in a foodshop or previous employment in a hotel or cafeteria. This method of skill acquisition is much more formalized than expected and points to what is actually a "modern" input into what are thought of as "traditional" foodshops. The assumption that food knowledge is passed on from mother to daughter as part of a customary educational system is therefore an incomplete representation of the skill development of food microentrepreneurs.

Microentrepreneurs must be seen as skilled agents rather than simply part of the "informal sector" or "household economy". They engage in a high risk occupation in terms of the fickle tastes of customers, changing state policies and the vagaries of the...
real-estate market. Figure 8.1, taken from another Hong Kong Bank advertisement, depicts a Chinese mobile food vendor. The caption above the ad, “He’s the chef, the chauffeur and the chief executive. Who cares if he can’t spell entrepreneur?” valorizes traditional “Asian” practices such as food vending. A contradictory message is that this practice is quaint and outdated and that the microentrepreneur in the photo is somehow backward and uneducated. It is also an indication of the growing valorization of indigenous practices, such as foodways, in East and Southeast Asia. The reality is that foodvending microentrepreneurs are having an ever more difficult time earning a living in the rapidly changing and deteriorating urban environments of mega-cities such as Bangkok.

The second two sets of factors, access to capital and labour/help, depend on kinship networks, neighbourhood organizations (such as informal credit groups) and patron-client relations. For microentrepreneurs, access to capital is difficult and, when available, often insecure as they are relegated to borrowing from money-lenders, pawning belongings or engaging in high-risk informal rotating credit groups. Fortunes have been lost to these funds but many participants have no other means of obtaining large amounts of money.

Mutual aid is an important outcome of interactions between kin, neighbours, patrons and clients. These social relations, are absolutely necessary for the commercial viability of the establishment since keeping food affordable for consumers gives a foodshop its competitive edge. Free family labour therefore subsidizes the costs of social reproduction by feeding workers at a low cost.
He's the chef, the chauffeur and the chief executive. Who cares if he can't spell entrepreneur?

Businessmen in Asia rarely stand still. If there's an opportunity round the corner, they'll take it. So it counts to have a quick thinking bank. At Hong Kong Bank, we always remember fast decisions get things moving.

Figure 8.1: Hong Kong Bank Advertisement II
Landowners who play the role of patron can either be of assistance to their food
selling tenants/clients or can jeopardize the latters' ability to earn a living by
withdrawing access to space on their property to foodshop owners. Some micro-
entrepreneurs are forced to abandon their selling spaces as a result. Patron-client
relations in Bangkok's foodscape are clearly part of the Thai “relations of ruling” where,
ultimately, interactions are structured in the patron's favour because of a significant
power imbalance. Landowners in central Bangkok are choosing to redevelop their
property to increase profitability. This has a contradictory effect. On the one hand,
several small foodshop owners in the Victory Monument Area will be forced to relocate
in the near future due to redevelopment of their living and/or work spaces as high-
density apartments and condominiums. On the other hand, higher densities are already
bringing more customers to the area resulting in the creation of many more small
foodshops over the past few years. Since it is mostly poor women who engage in
small-scale cooked-food vending it is they and their families who are most affected by
these socio-economic and spatial changes.

The spatial and economic positions of the smallest most vulnerable cooked-food
sellers are unsure in the volatile environment of Bangkok. Public space, such as the
sidewalk, is the cheapest place to conduct business but is less secure due to fluctuating
municipal policies. With the deteriorating environmental situation, a streetfront location
may eventually become a liability. For those who can access public contracts or else a
place within a foodcentre, economic conditions improve but individual control over
work and the flexible informality of the enterprise is compromised.
The dissertation has illustrated that, in terms of accessing space to conduct business as a foodshop owner, sidewalks and laneways are considered either public, private or somewhere between as far as micro-entrepreneurs and their patrons are concerned. For example, prior to the introduction of a new policy guaranteeing access to some spaces for vending, municipal police (tesakit) sometimes managed sidewalks as their personal domain, collecting "rent" from vendors. This is no longer possible due to the introduction of a new policy referred to as jut phon pan. This policy directly benefits micro-entrepreneurs and, therefore, women. Similarly, in the sois (or lanes) vendors need to solicit the permission of land-owners prior to setting up a shop. The property is treated as the legally private realm of the owner. When asked, however, if they had obtained permission from the municipal administration, vendors would sometimes argue that their selling space was a "public" place. Distinctions between the two categories were blurred depending on the subject discussed.

8.2 BLURRED VISION

It is striking how at every point of entry into Bangkok’s foodscape, boundaries between what are conventionally thought of as discrete theoretical and empirical categories are blurred. What would have been framed as “traditional” versus “modern”, “informal versus formal” or “public” versus “private” ten or twenty years ago can no longer be viewed in this way. This is both an analytical problem, related to the binary concepts inherent in much Western theory and one related to the rapidity with which Bangkok society is changing making it difficult to anchor down and use particular concepts.
Teleological approaches popular in the 1970s and even the 1980s which would have tried to depict Bangkok's foodscape as undergoing a straightforward process of "modernization" are unthinkable today.

The theoretical impasse is not limited to this study but is related to a set of recent criticisms of conventional approaches to the social sciences. Dissatisfaction with what were agreed upon views on "how we know" (ontology) and "what we know" (epistemology) have been voiced by a range of critics including feminists, postcolonialists and postmodernists. The empirical evidence advanced in this thesis can help move this agenda forward.

8.2.1 The Bricoleuse/Bricoleur

The ethnographic approach of bricolage used in this research represents a way to accommodate the theoretical quandary outlined above. The conclusion of this dissertation does not advance a firm theoretical agenda nor does it find one overarching interpretation of Bangkok's foodscape. It does illustrate, however, how a fine grained combination of theoretical positions and sensitive research - both qualitative and quantitative - can elucidate the mutual interlacing of gender, food and spatial systems. As such, it is an agenda for how to do future research on the complex phenomenon of cities and the people that inhabit them.

A taken for granted daily activity, eating, is shown in its cross-cultural complexity in the portrait of Bangkok's foodscape. The discussion has helped us interrogate whether some of the core aspects of Western social theory, such as
private/public sphere models are appropriate in such a context. Their relevance, or lack of relevance, has a direct impact on feminist post-colonial conceptualisations of gender relations.

8.2.2 Non-Western Sphere Models?

Thai definitions of something resembling "public" and "private" spheres are difficult to ascertain. Certainly with respect to gender, femininity and masculinity are uniquely marked and spatialized, particularly in relation to food and the taking of meals. Differences are very stark compared to the foodscape painted by Conlon in "Dining Out in Bombay" (1995) where public eating has been a poorly serviced domain due to the plain lack of eating establishments because people prefer without question to eat at home. Secondly, the presence of South Asian women customers in stalls and restaurants is a fairly recent, and still under-represented phenomenon because of the shame associated with being seen as a "public woman". In comparison to East or South Asia, Thai restrictions on feminine mobility are practically absent.

Whether the concepts of public and private are relevant in Southeast Asian studies is a topic which requires far greater scrutiny, one that takes into consideration linguistics, cognition and a historical perspective. Notions of appropriate "spatiality" in urban Thai society are moderated by social class and ethnic background among other factors. We have seen that "good" middle-class women, for example, do not frequent places associated with prostitution and the sale of alcohol. There are, however, plenty of other options in "public" open to them such as various street cafés and the new
"garden restaurants". Men of all classes are afforded greater liberty and, as demonstrated, can be seen "slumming" in establishments of questionable reputation with impunity.

I began by remarking that Thai gender relations are, on the whole, contradictory, with women exercising considerable control over financial matters at home and in the community. They are subordinated nevertheless in access to higher echelons of power at the level of the nation-state and due to Chinese and Brahminic influences. Evidence from this thesis nevertheless provides examples of gender complementarity with spousal mutual aid being the norm rather than the exception in a wide range of stall and restaurant types. Discussions of Thai gender relations always need to be contextualised at the micro, meso or macro scales where they are qualitatively different at each geographical scale.

8.2.3 A New Syncretism

The smallest foodshops are examples of semi-public, or semi-private spaces combining domestic and work space, formal with informal patterns of behaviour. Those located in sois - themselves semi-public spaces - are regulated in highly complex and subtle ways by patron land-owners, as well as larger-scale commerce. Those on the street come into more direct contact with the local state and its officials. In both localities, women comprise at least three quarters of owner/operators. Noodle stalls, once an economic ghetto of Chinese immigrants to Thailand, are now the purview of recent immigrants from the impoverished Northeast.
Medium sized restaurants also exhibit the blurring of boundaries between domestic (private) and commercial (public) space. Sharing of domestic and restaurant employees (as evidenced in the Professor's Pub), providing housing for staff and family ownership and control are also in evidence, then, in the firm economy which is the traditional domain of the Sino-Thai. Gendering differs here with more male involvement, or more commonly control, of the enterprise. Kitchens, such as at Fong Kee, are sometimes exclusively male. Even this well established Chinese pattakarn employs large numbers of Isan men and women thereby transgressing what are thought of as more firm ethnic boundaries.

It is the newest hybrid establishments which provide the most telling indications of syncretism in the foodscape with respect to gender relations, ethnicity and "class" broadly defined. Foodcentres, particularly those owned by Thai conglomerates such as Central Pattana Group or Sor Khon Kaen, incorporate small food enterprises within a Sino-Thai corporate structure. Here, ethnically Thai women, for the most part, continue to work as cooked food vendors but within environments and conditions set by the foodcentre owners. This further complicates discussing the "gendering" of Bangkok's foodscape as the boundaries between what is woman dominated, Thai and in the "bazaar sector" is no longer spatially and economically distinct from the male dominated, Sino-Thai, "firm centred" economy. Table 8.2 summarizes the "bazaar", "firm" and new hybrid sectors within the Bangkok food-system.
Table 8.2

HYBRID INSTITUTIONS IN BANGKOK'S FOODSCAPE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informal Bazaar Economy</th>
<th>Formal Sector Firms</th>
<th>New Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stalls, very small shops; Located on sidewalks or sois; Ethnically Thai or Isan; Female dominated</td>
<td>Small restaurant or large Pattakarn; Shophouse location on streetfront; Chinese and Sino-Thai; Male dominated</td>
<td>Foodcentres, food floors; Indoor, air-conditioned complexes; Sino-Thai owned, Thai employees; Mixed gendering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows that we can think of three co-existing food sub-systems in Bangkok which make up the contemporary foodscape. General remarks on enterprise type, location, ethnicity and gendering can be made in relation to each sub-system. The details concerning individual informants show that it is not this simple with many food-establishments transgressing these loose boundaries. It seems evident, however, that the syncretic establishments, such as upscale foodcentres, may eventually replace the informal bazaar and Chinese-influenced firm sector. This is what happened in Singapore. While it is easy to become sentimental about the possible demise of street restaurants, the fact remains that many of the small foodshop owners I interviewed are interested in locating in a foodcentre, given the opportunity. Their ultimate dreams, however, aspire to owning a Sino-Thai style shophouse restaurant. There are tensions within the foodscape and future developments may not take the authoritarian state-driven path followed by Singapore.

From the standpoint of health and labour standards, formalization may benefit both the consumer and foodshop employees. Though food may be standardized, the good quality found in some street stalls might successfully be incorporated into
foodcentre niches. Also, the increasing concentration of ownership in the Thai food-system into the hands of a few mammoth conglomerates such as CP and Central Group, makes it unlikely that "mom and pop" foodshops will survive in the new economy. What is the fate of impoverished Isan migrants to the city, who, by an accident of the geography of economic development, are poor because their many rai of land are worthless compared to a tiny plot in central Bangkok? The process of economic development and rapid urbanization as it now stands in Thailand brings with it greater class and ethnic cleavages. Perhaps it takes an optimist to hope that a vibrant and healthy streetlife and a truly public sphere, will come to be valued and created anew in Bangkok's foodscape.

8.3 Future Investigations

A foodscape approach is not limited to the study of contemporary eating habits. Conlon (1995) effectively demonstrated this for the case of Bombay by providing a history of that city's eating habits. A historical foodscape approach could also be used to examine the potential Westernization of non-Western food-systems; the so-called "McDonaldization" effect. Fernandez (1991) has explored these issues for the Philippines and shown convincingly that, due to rampant poverty, Western foods are not a threat to indigenous foodways. Even though a highly modernized city-state such as Singapore does not appear to be increasingly colonized by Western fast-food chains, the situation might be different in a poorer society where Western cuisine is an economic status symbol. Walker's (1991, 1996) work showed that knowledge of Western food
was highly regarded among élites, however, I would tend to agree based on an argument along the lines of Fernandez that this is not an immediate threat to Thai urban foodways. A study of former Thai provincial towns which have undergone dramatic change, such as Chonburi ten years after the Equity Policy Center study, might provide answers to some of these questions and also show the emergence of new gender relations.

Studies of gender, food and place are also not limited to urban environments but can inform the already impressive research on gender and agricultural systems. The environmental degradation associated with rapid economic "development" has a direct impact on the food-system as this dissertation has shown. Cogent advocacy-oriented research is needed to protect communities threatened by these changes.

The integration of gender issues into studies of food-systems and place should be accorded greater priority. There are promising indications of scholarship in this direction. Future researchers need to remain wary of generalizing gender relations by carefully considering the ethnic, class and other dimensions which affect constructions and practices of gender with respect to the spatialization of foodways. The economic and social importance of understanding the linkages between gender, food and spatial systems should make similar studies a firm part of the research agenda of geographers and other social scientists.
GLOSSARY

ahaan: food

ahaan tam sang: "made to order" dishes whereby the customer chooses a dish from a "short order" menu rather from already prepared food. eg. fried rice, fried noodles

baht: basic unit of currency in Thailand. In August 1996, there were approximately 20 baht to the Canadian dollar.

bunkhun: a debt of gratitude

café: a lounge which serves alcohol and features live music, primarily provided by young female singers.

Chao Mae Guan Im: "Holy Mother Guan Im," the Thai appellation for the Chinese "Goddess of Mercy" Guan Yin.

dek: child

deuk taow: shop-house

doi moi: Vietnamese meaning renovation. Refers to the endorsement of free enterprise by the Communist government.

farang: foreigner

feng shui: Chinese geomancy

feuk ngan: literally "practice work"; an apprenticeship

gaeng som: a mild stew

gai yang: fried chicken

Guan Yin: [Mandarin] the Chinese Goddess of Mercy

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1 All terms are Thai unless indicated otherwise. This glossary was prepared with the help of Jessica North.
hab re: a vendor who sells using a shoulder pole and two baskets

halal: food which is permitted to Muslims and/or prepared according to Islamic custom.

hong taew: a term for shop-house (see deuk taew)

hong pak: dormitory; residence rooms for students.

hui: Chinese expression referring to mutual aid and rotating credit groups.

Isan: the Northeastern part of Thailand which is ethnically Lao.

jai ron: literally "hot hearted"; an impatient and emotional person (not well viewed in Thai society).

jut phon pan: literally "a point (jut) to ease the situation (phon pan);" spaces where vending is tolerated by the municipal government in Bangkok.

kampung/kampong: [Bahasa Malay and Indonesia]; Village, an urban neighbourhood; sometimes taken to mean a "slum district"

ket: municipal district

kha po paa: fish stomach

kha moo: pork leg

khaaw nieaw: "sticky" or glutinous rice

khaaw tom: rice porridge

khaaw pad: fried rice

khaaw gaeng: literally curry and rice; refers both to "pre-prepared" curries, soups and vegetable dishes which are eaten with rice and the food shops or restaurants in which they are sold.

khaaw man gai: known in Singapore and Malaysia in English as "chicken rice," it is a Hainanese dish which features boiled chicken, rice cooked in chicken broth and soup. Usually served with several condiments.

khanom: a dessert or sweet.
khanom jeep: Chinese steamed dumplings.

khay dao: fried egg.

khay jieaw: Thai omelette often prepared with onion and tomato.

khlong: a canal; the dominant mode of transportation in Central Thailand until the 1960s.

khon Isan: People from the Northeastern region of Thailand, ethnically Lao.

khon thai kin khaaw talot wela: "Thai people eat all the time".

khwan: vital essence; associated with rice; "If the khwan becomes detached or if it wanders, the person will be left vulnerable to illness and eventually to death" (Keyes 1987, 224). Many agricultural and social rituals involve securing or beckoning vital essence.

kin khaaw rue yang?: "Have you eaten yet?" A common greeting in Thailand.

kwaytiaw rad naa: broad noodles pan fried in a thick vegetable sauce.

kwaytiaw reua: "boat noodles;" usually beef noodle soup served in a small boat on dry land; nostalgic of an earlier era.

kwaytiaw: generally refers to rice noodles of any thickness, but can also include egg noodles, depending on the dish.

lap gai: a "chicken salad" from Northeastern Thailand marinated in garlic, lime and other herbs and spices; can also be made with pork or beef; traditionally served raw in the Northeast and marinated in bile and blood (Van Esterik 1992).

len share: to participate in a rotating credit association; members each contribute monthly to the pot and withdraw the sum one at a time while paying interest to the other members.

liam: prestige; honour

liang: to nurture; can mean to "feed" or to tend; to invite someone out and pay the bill (ie. to treat).

luuk kreung: literally "half offspring"; something or someone of mixed ancestry.

luuk: child or offspring
*luuk chin ping*: barbecued meatball brochettes with a slightly rubbery quality; made of fish or meat.

*luuknong*: subordinate.

*luukphi*: elders, superiors, patrons.

*mae baan tung plastic*: literally “plastic bag housewife;” a colloquial expression referring to women who purchase take out food for their families on the way home from work.

*mae kha*: a female vendor or shopkeeper.

*mae nam*: literally “mother of waters” meaning a river

*mae*: mother; also a common prefix

*Mae Posop*: the Rice Goddess

*maeng da*: giant water beetle; its essence (extracted by pounding pregnant female with a mortar and pestle) used to flavour numerous Thai dishes.

*mia noi*: a “minor wife” or mistress

*moo daeng*: Chinese red pork

*naem*: Chinese-style cured pork sausage

*nakleng*: rogue, rascal, gambler; bold person, sporting person; big-hearted person; person who is an authority on something (Haas 1964, 261).

*nam tok*: literally “waterfall;” also refers to a dish consisting of spicy roast beef slices.

*namprik*: a condiment made of fermented fish or shrimp, chilis, and various other herbs and spices; a distinguishing feature of Southeast Asian cuisines; eaten with any number of dishes or even plain rice.

*pad si ieuw*: panfried noodles, vegetables, pork and red soy sauce.

*paeng*: a selling platform

*paeng loy*: a street stall

*Pakklong Talad*: Bangkok’s central wholesale fruit, vegetable and flower market
pattakarn: an elegant expression for restaurant; used in formal literature or to refer to a sophisticated dining establishment,

pau liang: a stepfather, however the term can be used to describe a man who takes care of others.

pau to lo min: [Mandarin] literally “to uncover your head and show your face;” idiomatic Confucian expression alluding to the idea of seclusion of women in the home.

peranakan: [Malay] refers to the Chinese whose families emigrated to the Straits of Malacca several generations ago; Peranakans developed a unique culture including distinctive food, dress and language.

pheung: a stall covered with an awning

phuying mai dii: “bad woman;” refers to women who do not adhere to Thai ideals of chastity.

phuying dii: "good woman;" women who uphold the virtues of chastity.

ping mun ye jung wooi: [Cantonese] literally “poor man’s night club;” colloquial expression referring to street food stalls in Hong Kong (Smart 1989).

pinto: a “tiffin” or tiered lunch kit which comes apart into three or four bowl-shaped sections.

pla ré: "ready to eat fish"

plaa tod mamuang: fried fish with green mango chutney.

purdah: [Persian and Urdu] The ideology of keeping women secluded from men both in the home and in public places.

raan ahaan: literally “food shop”; a restaurant or eating establishment, large or small.

rai: Thai unit of measure equalling 1600 square meters

rong rap jam nam: a pawnshop

rot khen: a push-cart

roti canai: [called roti paratha south of Kuala Lumpur] Indian flatbread made of white flour and fried in clarified butter, served with a curry sauce.
ruen taew: a wooden one-storey building

sakdi na: literally "power over the fields; Thai feudalism; "During Ayutthayan times and the first half of the Bangkok era, every person in the realm was accorded a status associated with a specific acreage of rice land; the greater the acreage, the higher a person's position in a social hierarchy headed by the monarch. This hierarchy constituted the sakdi na system. Despite the association of a status with an area of cultivated land, a particular status did not indicate control over a specified amount of land." (Keyes 1987, 225)

sala thai: a traditional open pavilion, usually with sloping roof characteristic of Thai architecture.

salapao: Chinese steamed buns

Sampeng: a narrow lane in Chinatown known for its good prices for merchandise.

Sangha: the order of Buddhist monks.

sari-sari: Tagalog expression referring to a "mixed store" which sells sundry goods and prepared food.

satay: Malay term for barbecued brochettes; usually served with a peanut sauce and widely served in Thai cuisine.

say foam: "put it in a foam take-out box"

Shell chuan chim: "Shell" invites you to taste... Restaurant endorsement campaign sponsored by Shell Oil.

Siam: Name of the Kingdom of Thailand prior to 1932.

soi: a lane

som tam: spicy shredded green papaya salad made in two ways: the Northeastern recipe includes tiny raw crabs which the Central Thai version replaces with dried shrimp.

suan ahaan: open air "garden" restaurants, often quite large, some decorated in a style reminiscent of Thai traditional architecture.

sukiyaki: a boiling pot of broth into which egg, vegetables, vermicelli and meat are mixed and cooked.
talad nam: "floating" market which takes place on canals in the early morning.

talad to rung: night market

talad: market

talad din: land-based market

tam sang: "made to order"

tesakit: municipal police inspectors concerned with obstructions of roads and sidewalks, building permits and public hygiene.

tom yum plaaguung: hot and sour fish or prawn soup

tuk-tuk: motorized three-wheel trishaw

warteg: Tegal expression for a restaurant (Klopfer 1993)

warung: a stall; some also define it as a store which also sells prepared food (see McGee and Yeung 1977).

wirtschaft: [German] economics; pub or restaurant

yam: any type of soup

Yaowaraj: Bangkok's Chinatown

yong tao-foo: or niang tofu [Mandarin] literally "stuffed tofu"; An assortment of tidbits (mostly tofu-based, but also including fish balls, vegetables etc.) which one can choose from and from which the seller will chop up and combine with noodles of one's choice. Ingredients are placed in a clear soup or served "dry" with soup on the side (Woo 1996).
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Please note that Thai names are listed under first name, eg. Amara, with the surname spelled out in full. Thais refer to each other by first name, surnames being more or less a recent custom. However, referencing systems giving precedence to first or last name are both used in Thailand. Similarly, Malay (eg. Jamilah) first names are listed in alphabetical order and Chinese (eg. Ng), Japanese (eg. Yoshihara) and Vietnamese (eg. Trinh) authors are referred to by surname, followed by given name (without a comma) according to their referencing system. When an individual has a "combination" name (eg. Brenda Yeoh), I reference it in the Western manner.


Socio-economic Transformation in Thailand and Southeast Asia, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.


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333


Fraser, N. 1990. Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy. Social Text 25/26: 56-80.


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Theses in Progress. September 12. Thai Studies Programme, Chulalongkorn University.


The six following appendices are English versions of the research instruments used to complete this study and supplementary information not included in the main text. Appendices one to three are the guides which were used for the in-depth qualitative interviews. Appendix four is the questionnaire that was used to conduct the short quantitative survey. The fifth appendix is the “code book” designed by my assistant Kamolrat Sa-Ngeam which accompanies the SPSSx database summarizing the results of the quantitative survey. Finally, appendix six includes three monthly budgets for small foodshop owners which were not included in the main text.

Three qualitative interview guides were designed due to the vastly different circumstances of small versus large food establishments as well as the distinctive nature of chains and foodcentres. The same questions were not appropriate for each category. The guides included here were often modified depending on the individual being questioned and the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the guide contents. They are therefore included as indicators of themes discussed as well as specific questions asked.

The quantitative survey was administered by five contractual research assistants under my supervision. Individual assistants sometimes skipped over questions which make the data sometimes difficult to compare. This is particularly the case for information concerning helpers and employees which was a subject not thoroughly probed by some assistants. The basic data, however, which concerns age of the enterprise, owner/manager characteristics and number of customers can be considered quite complete, reliable and comparable.

The code book (Appendix 5) is included for reference only. It was used to help manoeuvre through the quantitative data with the help of SPSSx. Nevertheless, the original questionnaires were sometimes referred to in order to correct faulty data entry or gather more detail about an individual case.

Finally, the extra expense reports are included since only two were presented and discussed in detail in Chapter Six of the dissertation. Again, some responses were incomplete depending on what informants were willing to offer. As previously explained, larger establishments were not questioned in such detail about their expenditures because the owners/managers were not as certain about spending patterns and it was not seen as an appropriate subject for discussion. Generally, the wealthier the informant, the less s/he was willing to discuss budgetary concerns.
APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW GUIDE "A"
For stalls and small foodshops

Food Shops in Bangkok:
Eating Habits of Urban Dwellers

Gisèle Yasmeen
Ph.D. Candidate
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Questions will be asked in three categories:
   a. history and day-to-day activities of the shop
   b. relations between your business and government and other businesses.
   c. your personal background and relations in the neighbourhood

A. History and day to day activities of the shop

1. How long have you owned your shop? Did you buy it from someone else or did you start this business yourself? If yes, what type of changes did you make? How much money did you have to invest to start the business / buy the shop and where did you obtain this money (ie. for equipment etc.)?

2. What various types of food do you sell? Do you always obtain food from the same suppliers. Approximately how much do you spend on food every day? Please help me fill out Table number 1.

3. Are there any other activities (paid or unpaid) that take place in your shop besides selling food (eg. babysitting, selling non-food items, etc.) Which activities are remunerated and who performs them?

4. Do you have assistants or employees? What is the difference between a 'helper' and an employee? Do your helpers or employees get room and board instead of or in addition to a wage? If not, where do these various people sleep? How did you meet them? Do they have any other jobs/money making activities? Please help me fill out Table number 2.

5. Describe to me a typical day (what time you wake up, who does what and goes where, when do you make what type of food, busy periods of the day, week and month, slow periods. etc). Are your activities affected by change of seasons (flooding etc.)?
6. Approximately how many customers come per day? What do they usually buy and/or how much do they usually spend? What percent eat in the shop and how many take home the food (estimate)? Are most of your customers "regulars"?

7. Can you describe your typical customer or name different types (social or occupational groups) of customers? eg. ages, men or women, where they live and what type of work they do...

8. Do you extend credit? If yes, to whom? Have you ever borrowed money? If yes, from whom? If no, would you be interested in borrowing money? Preferably from what source (eg. bank, informal credit organization)?

9. Why or how did you choose/learn this occupation?

B. Relations with the government and other businesses

1. How much does it cost to rent your premises? How does this compare with the rent paid by neighbouring shop keepers? How did you find out about this space? How is this type of information usually obtained and what types of arrangements are usually made (eg. is there a lease? how are rent increases negotiated?). Who is your landlord/lady?

2. Do you have a licence or permit from the government to operate your shop? Have you ever been contacted by city officials about this matter or related issues such as health and cleanliness standards and adherence to the labour code? Have you ever been harassed by police or government officials? How were the disputes (if any) resolved? Do you know about any of these regulations? Tell me what you know.

3. Is your shop independent or is it linked / federated with other food shops or restaurants? Are you a member of any vendors or business person's organization? Would you like to be a member of such an organization in order to receive information about issues of concern to your occupation or further training (for example).

4. Have you ever been offered a public contract to provide food (for example to a school, hospital or university). Would you be interested in having such a contract? Would you consider relocating in a food centre in a shopping centre or other privately owned and regulated space?

5. Do you have a bank account? Have you ever dealt with a bank? Do you participate in informal credit schemes like len share? Please tell me about how you organize your finances and if you save money, and how.

6. Life in Bangkok is becoming very difficult. What are the issues that concern you most (eg. cost of living increase, crime, pollution, traffic problems). Is this a dangerous
part of the city? Are there any changes taking place in the neighbourhood which may affect your ability to conduct business? Would you like to have more information about some of these issues?

C. Life history, personal information

1. Where are you from originally (where were you born and raised)?

2. What educational level is you achieve? Can you read and write? Do you read the newspaper regularly? If so, which one? Do you listen to the radio and/or watch television?

3. What various jobs have you had in the past? Did you receive any training for these?

4. Are you married, divorced or separated? Do you have children? Tell me about your family. Where are your parents and your various brothers and sisters? What do they do? Do you support your family economically? Do you spend time helping them?

5. When did you move to Bangkok? Why? Did you ever live anywhere else in the city? Where?

6. Where do you live now? Describe to me your accommodations. Who lives with you?

7. What are your future goals? How do you plan to reach these goals? Do you enjoy working in the food industry? What are your other employment or money-earning options?
Table 1

MONTHLY EXPENSES

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Table 2

RESTAURANT STAFF CHARACTERISTICS

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<th>Salary</th>
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<td>Cooks</td>
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<td>Waiters (male)</td>
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<td>Waitresses (f)</td>
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<td>Cleaners</td>
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APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW GUIDE "B"
For larger, formalized restaurants

Food Shops in Bangkok:
Eating Habits of Urban Dwellers

General

1. Why did you choose to get involved in the restaurant business? How long have you been in this business? Is this your first restaurant? Do you own other restaurants in the city at this time? Are you the sole owner of this establishment? If not, please explain who the co-owners are.

2. Do you hold any other occupation? Please explain to me the nature of your other money earning, professional and voluntary activities? What types of professional training have you received for these occupations?

3. Did you purchase the restaurant from someone else or did you first open the establishment? If you did purchase it from another person, please explain to me the changes made to the menu, decor and management style. Please explain in what ways the restaurant has evolved over the years.

4. How many staff do you have? Please help me fill out the attached chart which will summarize characteristics about your staff. What are the wages like for various occupations? Are tips a significant part of staff income? Are employees provided with meals and lodgings instead of a portion of their wages or in addition to what they earn? Do you have any volunteer help (such as family and friends)?

5. Where does the restaurant obtain it's supplies? For example, please explain where you purchased your furnishings and equipment along with estimated costs involved. Also, please explain where day to day supplies are obtained such as perishable food, dry goods, fuel, ice and estimated costs associated with these items.

6. How many customers do you receive per day (on average)? Can you provide me with a socio-economic profile of your clientèle? Where do they live, how to they find out about your restaurant (eg. how do you advertise), what are their occupations and income-levels, what percent are men versus women, ages etc. How much do they usually spend per person?
7. What are your busiest periods of the day, month, year? Why is this so? Do you hire extra staff for these periods? What are your slowest periods of the day/month/year?

8. Are you federated or linked with any other restaurants (is this a chain or a franchise)? Are you a member of any professional organizations related to the restaurant business or business in general?

9. What type of contact have you had with the Ket Ratchathewi office or the B.M.A? Do government bodies provide you with regular information as well as inspections regarding health standards, taxes etc.? What specific contact have you had with government officials?

10. Do you rent this building or are you the owner? If you rent, what type of leasing arrangement do you have? Do you rent space to other businesses, organizations, or individuals?

11. Do you know many people in this neighbourhood? Do you know other restaurant or small food-shop owners? What various local restaurants do you patronize? In what way has this area changed since you first moved here? Do you like your present location? Why or why not?

12. Many people think that life in Bangkok is becoming very difficult. What are the issues that concern you most (eg. cost of living increase, crime, pollution, traffic problems). Is this a dangerous part of the city? Are there any changes taking place in the neighbourhood which may affect your ability to conduct business? Would you like to have more information about some of these issues?

Life history, personal information

1. Where are you from originally (where were you born and raised)?

2. What educational level did you achieve?

3. What various jobs have you had in the past? Did you receive any training for these?

4. How old are you? Are you married (or divorced / separated)? Do you have children? Tell me about your family. Where are your parents and your various brothers and sisters? What do they do? Do you support your family economically? Do you spend time helping them?
5. When did you move to Bangkok? Why? Did you ever live anywhere else in the city? Where?

6. Where do you live now? Describe to me your accommodations. Do you live alone? Who lives with you?

7. What are your future goals in terms of your career and this business? Do you enjoy being involved in the food industry? Is there any chance that this business may change significantly or close in the near future?

Restaurant Staff Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Home province</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Waiters (male)</td>
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APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW GUIDE "C"
For Fast Food Outlets and Foodcentres

Food Shops in Bangkok:
Eating Habits of Urban Dwellers

General

1. Who is the proprietor of this restaurant/foodcentre? Is it a "chain" or a franchise?

2. This restaurant has been here for how long?

3. What are the hours of operation?

Location

1. Why did you choose this location for your business? Has the restaurant/foodcentre changed its site, design or decor?

2. Do you rent this space or are you the owner? Do you have a lease? How much is the rent?

3. How many square meters is the restaurant/centre? Seating capacity, number of tables? Do you have a floor plan of the premises?

4. Who are your competitors? Did you do market research to ascertain your share of the market?

5. Would it be possible for us to get a copy of your company's annual report? Do you have information about your monthly budget?

Customers

1. Customer profile:
   - age, sex, occupation(s)?
- how much do they spend per person on average?
- how long do they stay on average?
- do they live/work in the neighbourhood?

2. What type of advertising do you do? Where do you advertise (print, radio, television)?

**Employees**

1. How many? How many men/women? Educational levels? Birthplace or where they are from originally? Salaries?

2. How many hours per day do the employees work? Do they work shifts or else the entire day?

3. Please explain to us the hierarchy of employees, for example:
   - manager
   - cooks
   - serving staff

**Operations**

1. Where is the food prepared? How and where do you buy the raw ingredients? Is there a central kitchen?

2. Where did you obtain your license/permit to conduct business and sell food (ie. district office, etc.)?

3. Have the sanitary inspectors ever come to the premises? How regularly do they come?

4. What are your peak hours/busy periods?

**Personal questions for the manager**

1. How long have you been the manager here?

2. How old are you? Please tell us about your training and educational background.

3. What are your future prospects/goals? Are there possibilities for advancement in
this company?

Employee Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
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APPENDIX 4

QUESTIONNAIRE
Quantitative Survey

Food Shops in Bangkok:
Eating Habits of Urban Dwellers

October 1994

Researcher: Gisèle Yasmeen
Ph.D Candidate at the University of British Columbia
Vancouver, BC, Canada
(Associated with CUSRI)

To be filled out by research assistant/interviewer

Name of the interviewer __________________________
Date (day, month, year) __________________________
Time __________________________
Location (street or neighbourhood, name of shop)
________________________________________

Type of food sold __________________________
________________________________________

1. General Information

1.1 Occupation of interviewee:
   a. owner
   b. manager
   c. other __________________________

1.2 Type of business:
   1. Hab rae
   2. Paeng loy
   3. Rot khen
   4. Pheung
   5. Hong thaew
   6. air-conditioned foodshop ($)
7. school cafeteria shop
8. hotel foodshop
9. Foodcentre
10. Pattakarn ($$$)
11. fast-food chain (eg. M-K Suki)
12. Other (specify) _________________

2. Personal Characteristics of the Respondant

2.1 Age _____________ 2.2 Birthplace _______
2.3 Sex  a. M  b. F

2.4 Marital status _______________
   a. celibataire  b. marié(e)
   c. divorcé/séparé  d. autre (explique)....

2.5 Domicile _______________ (street, soi, neighbourhood)
2.6 Educational level attained _______________
2.7 Do you have another occupation?  a. oui  b. non
   If yes, specify ____________________________

3. Business

3.1 How many years old is this business? ____________
3.2 Does the proprietor own other restaurants?
   a. yes
   b. no

   If yes, where are the other restaurants? _______________
   What type of food do they sell? _______________________

4. Customers

4.1 Approximately how many customers per day do you receive?
   a. less than 50
   b. between 50-100
   c. more than 100

4.2. Peak hours are normally between:
   a. 6 a.m. - 9 a.m.
   b. 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.
   c. 5 p.m. - 7 p.m.
d. 7 p.m. - 11 p.m.
e. after 11 p.m.

4.3. What percentage of customers live in the neighbourhood?
   a. less than 30%
   b. about 50%
   c. more than 70%
   d. other (explain)

4.4. What percentage of customers work in the neighbourhood?
   a. less than 30%
   b. about 50%
   c. more than 70%
   d. other (explain)

5. Employees

5.1 Do you have any employees?
   a. oui  b. non

5.2 Employee Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Nombre</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Province d'origine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chef cuisinier</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuisiniers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>serveurs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>serveuses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nettoyeurs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autres</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3 Do you have any unpaid assistants (*phu chuay*)?
   a. yes
   b. no

372
If yes, who are they?
   a. family members
   b. friends
   c. relatives
   d. other (explain)

5.4 Are employees provided with lodging and meals?
   a. lodging and meals
   b. meals only
   c. neither lodging nor meals
   d. other (explain)
APPENDIX 5

Code Book for Food Shops in Bangkok

For use with SPSSx summarizing quantitative data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Column Space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Number</td>
<td>No of questionnaire</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Date</td>
<td>Date of Interview</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. 15/10/94</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. 19/10/94</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Time</td>
<td>Time of interview</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. 09:00-10:30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. 10:31-12:00</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. 13:00-14:00</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. 14:31-16:00</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Area</td>
<td>Place of Foodshop</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Rangnam</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. V.M. (inc. Vol. Assoc.)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Demolished Buildings</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Sois</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Ratchavitee</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ftype1</td>
<td>Type of Food</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Isan Food (Somtam Laab Naamtok)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Made to order food</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Khao kaeng</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Noodles</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Khao Kha Moo/khao man gai</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. khao moo daeng</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Others eg. foreign food, gai tod khanom wan, luuk chin ping, drinks</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Ftype2</td>
<td>same codes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Status</td>
<td>Identity of interviewee</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Owner of shop</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Manager</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Employee
4. relative of owner
5. Head of food sector (manager)
6. Renter of stall (in foodcentre)

8. Shop type

- Hab rae
- Stall (paeng loy)
- Push-cart
- Peung
- Shop house (deuk taew)
- A/C Shop house
- School foodshop
- Hotel foodshop
- Foodcentre
- Pattakan
- Franchise
- Foodshop in apt.

9. Age

- Age of interviewee

10. Birth province

- Bangkok
- Chiang Mai
- Nakhon Si Thammarat
- Nakhon Ratchasima
- Yasothon
- Ratchaburi
- Ubon Ratchatani
- Udon Thani
- Buriram
- Surin
- Mahasarakham
- Uttaradit
- Sukhothai
- Nong khai
- Rayong
- Khon Kaen
- Roi-et
- Sa-gaew
- Pattani
- Si Saket
- Ang Thong
- Ayutthaya

375
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Samut Sakhon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Sakorn Nakhon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Lopburi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Surat Thani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Prachinburi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Phayao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Nakhon Prathom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Praeh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Isan Region</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>11.</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Gender of interviewee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12.</th>
<th>MStatus</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Divorced/separated/widowed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>13.</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Address of interviewee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Same as shop</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Si Phaya</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>V.M.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Saphan Kwai</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Asoke/D.D./Huay Kwang</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Laksi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Samrong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Ramkhamhaeng/Hua Mark</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Talad Phlu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Intramara/Suttisan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Makkasan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Pratunam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Lad Prao</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Bang Khun Thian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>14.</th>
<th>Educate</th>
<th>Education of Interviewee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Did not study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Primary School (P. 1-7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Secondary School (M. 1-3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Secondary School (M. 4-6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Vocational School (p.w.ch/p.w.s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>College/University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>15.</th>
<th>Extwork</th>
<th>Extra work (besides selling food)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

376
1. Yes
2. No

16. What
What type of extra work
1. Housekeeper/maid
2. Manual labourer/blue collar
3. White collar empl. (company)
4. Semi-gov'l empl. (electricity etc.)
5. Civil Servant

17. FMember1 to FMember2-7
1. First family member's occupation
   1. guide
   2. trader (selling clothes/lottery)
   3. grocery shop
   4. company employee (incl. ajaan)
   5. school janitor
   6. civil servant
   7. Carpenter

24. Howlong
How many years has shop been open?
1. Y
2. N

25. Branch
Do you have a branch?
1. Y
2. N

26. Where
Where is it located?
1. FC of Imperial Dep't St. Samrong
2. Chakrawan theatre. Din Daeng
3. Opposite this shop (Rangnam)

27. Nameshop
Name of other shop
1. Pheun How
2. Lek Suan
3. V.Assoc. of Chiang Mai
4. Noodle Garden
5. KFC

28. FType
Food sold in other location
1. Isan Food (Somtam Laab Naamtok)
2. Made to order food
3. Khao kaeng
4. Noodles
5. Khao Kha Moo/khao man gai
6. khao moo daeng
7. Others eg. foreign food, gai tod khanom wan, luuk chin ping, drinks

29. Customer

Number of Customers/day
1. Less than 50
2. 50-100
3. More than 100
4. 20/day

30. Period

Busy Times
1. 6-9 am
2. 11-2 pm
3. 5-7 pm
4. 7-11 pm
5. after 11 pm
6. no high peaks.. all the time
7. 4-10 pm

31. Areacus

Percentage of Customers who live in this area.
1. less than 30%
2. About 50%
3. More than 70%
4. About 40%
5. 60%
9. Not have

32. Workcus

Percentage of Customers who work in the area
1. Less than 30%
2. About 50%
3. More than 70%
4. About 30%
9. Not have

33. Employee

Do you have employees?
1. Yes
2. N

34. Chef

How many chefs (figure)

35. Chimale

Male chefs (how many)

36. Chifemal

How many female chefs

37. Chiage1

How old is 1st chef?

378
38. Chiage2
39. Chiage3
40. Chiageav  Average age of all chefs
41. Provin1  Original province of Chef 1
42. Provin2
43. Provin3
44. cook  How many?
45. CMale
46. CFemale
47. Cage1  Age of 1st cook
48. Cage2
to
50. Cage 4
51 Cageav  Average age of all cooks
52. Cpro1  Original province of Cook 1
to
55. Cpro4
56. Cproav  General origin
57. Serve  How many
58. Smale
59. Sfemale
60. Sage1  Age of first server
to
64. Sage 5
65. Sageav  Avg. age of servers
66. Spro1 Province of origin
70. Spro5

71. Sproav General origin

72. Clean How many?

73. Clmale

74. Clfemale

75. Clage1

76. Clage2

77. Clpro1

78. Clpro2

79. Cleans Cleaners and servers (same person)

80. Csmale

81. Csfemale

82. Csage1

83. Csage2 to

88. Csage7

89. Cspro1

90. Cspro2 to

95. Cspro7

96. General General helpers (how many)

97. Cashier

98. Helper Do you have helpers or not? (no wage)
1. yes
2. no

99. Hchief Chef's helper (how many?)
100. Hmale

101. Hfemale

102. Hagel

103. Hchipro1  Birthplace of chef's helper

104. Hchipro2

105. Hcook  How many cook helpers

106. Hcoomale

107. Hcfemale

108. Hcooage1

109. Hcooage2

110. Hcoopro1

111. Hcoopro2

112. Serclean  How many server/cleaner helpers

113. Hscmale

114. Hscfemal

115. Hscage1

116. Hscage2

117. Hscage3

118. Hscpro1

119. Hscpro2

120. Hscpro3

121. Hserve  Helpers who serve only (how many)

381
Who are the helpers?
1. Mem. of family (husband, wife, children)
2. Friend
3. Cousins/relatives

Employees receive what?
1. Have room to live and food
2. Food only, no room
3. No food, no room
4. Have money for transport and free food*

*(kfc) 560 baht per month for transit.
APPENDIX 6
Other Budgets for Small Foodshops

Samrit and Lek

Chicken Noodle Soup Vendors

EXPENSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>PRICE</th>
<th>X/MONTH</th>
<th>FROM WHERE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rent*</td>
<td>100b/week**</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tesakit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- water</td>
<td>350bt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Store next door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- electricity</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- telephone</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- garbage</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- gas</td>
<td>60baht/day</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- charcoal</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noodles</td>
<td>10k/day 10b/kg</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Say Yut Market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oil/fat</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat/fish</td>
<td>22k/day 28b/kg</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Khlong Tan Mkt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spices/seasoning/currypaste</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(roong gai)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>30bt/day 15 bags 6salung (1.5b)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Say Yut Market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice</td>
<td>30b/day</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinks (water)</td>
<td>Not asked</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- soft drinks</td>
<td>1 case / 3 days</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 case = 92 bt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This is rent for their selling space. The cost of their rented room where they live is 1850 baht per month.

** They no longer pay rent to the tesakit because of jut phon pan, in other words, vending is tolerated in that specific space.
## Luung

**Duck Noodles and Red Pork**

### EXPENSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>PRICE</th>
<th>TIMES/MONTH</th>
<th>FROM WHERE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lease</td>
<td>300,000bt</td>
<td>Once/3 yrs.</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- water</td>
<td>3-400 bt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(city)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- electricity</td>
<td>1000+</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- telephone</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- garbage</td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- gas</td>
<td>.500bt/barrel</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>delivered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- charcoal</td>
<td>20-30bt/day</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>2kg/jour</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Say Yut Mkt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noodles</td>
<td>10kg (30b/kg)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Older brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oil/fat</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat/fish</td>
<td>1 duck/day (?)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>CP delivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spices/seasoning/currypaste</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>1kg (?)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Say Yut Mkt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice</td>
<td>8/jour</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinks (water)</td>
<td>&quot;not much&quot;</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- soft drinks</td>
<td>&quot;not much&quot;</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Delivered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of the categories are incomplete due to Luung's reticence to divulge information. He also frequently changed the subject and did not think these questions were relevant. We were therefore not able to complete the table.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>PRICE</th>
<th>TIMES/MONTH</th>
<th>FROM WHERE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rent (room)</td>
<td>2,500 bt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- water</td>
<td>100 bt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- electricity</td>
<td>100 bt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- telephone</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- garbage</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- gas</td>
<td>161 bt/4 days</td>
<td>7.5x</td>
<td>Delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- charcoal</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noodles</td>
<td>5.5 kg/day 10 bt/kg</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Say Yut Market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- mama</td>
<td>18 pkg 4 bt each</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oil/fat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat/fish</td>
<td>2 kg 65 bt/kg</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- abat</td>
<td>2.5 kg 75 bt/kg</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- luukchin</td>
<td>2 kg. (4 bags)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spices/seasoning/paste</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>100 bt/day</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Say Yut Market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- papaya (st)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice</td>
<td>24 bt/day</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinks (water)</td>
<td>24 bottles/day</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- soft drinks</td>
<td>92 bt/case</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>