



# Thai Female Migration to Japan : Flows and Consequences

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Informal Human Flow  
between Thailand and Its Neighbors series 5

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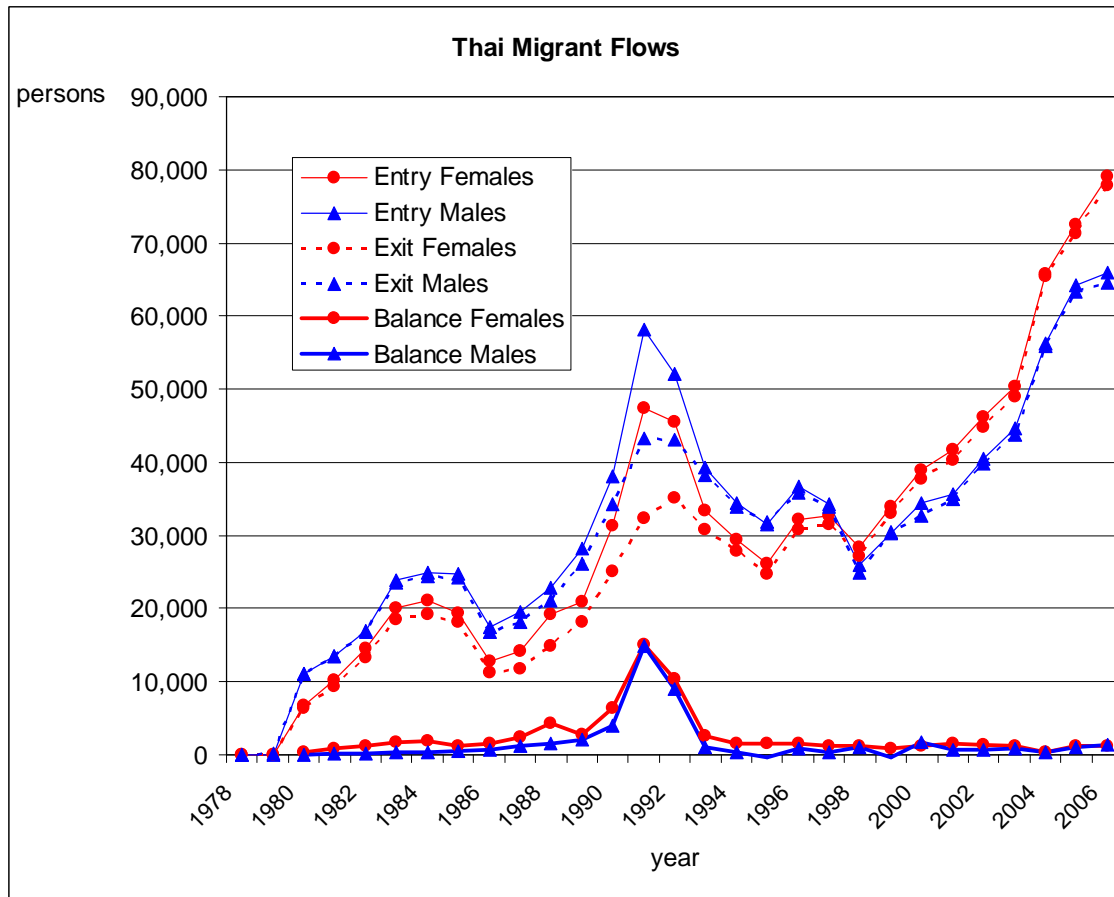
# Thai Female Migration to Japan: Flows and Consequences

Pataya Ruenkaew\*

Since the early 1980s Thai women have set off for international labor migration and Japan is among the most important receiving countries in Asia. Based on the findings of the study on *The Rights of Thai Women to Migrate to Work Abroad* (Pataya 2009) this paper discusses the development in Thai female transnational migration to Japan. Taking into account that migration is a dynamic, open-ended process that can produce consequential events, the paper discusses the flows of Thai women to Japan and their consequences. To point out the continuous nature of this migration, it will start with a description of the number of Thai migrants in this destination country.

## 1. Thai Migrants in Japan

Figure 1. Thai Migrant Flows



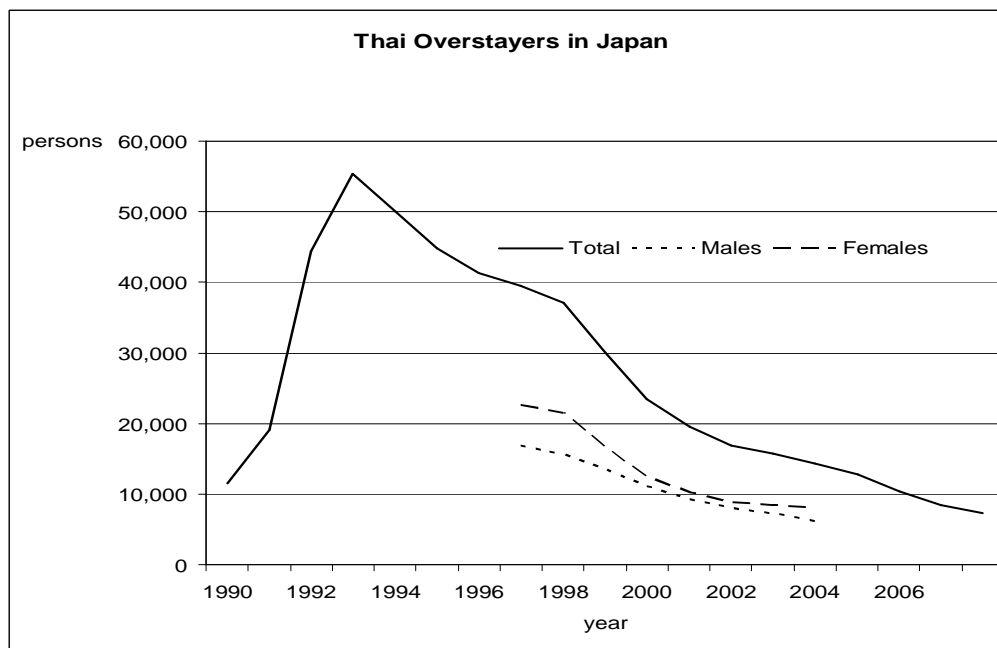
Source: Japan Immigration Association 1980-2007

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The legal labor migration from Thailand to Japan began about the end of the 1970s. Along with this kind of labor migration, the illegal recruitment of Thai labor, especially that of women for prostitution, has begun in 1981 (Wichit/ Pawana 1997:26). Statistics gathered by the Japanese Ministry of Justice indicate that the number of Thai new entrants has been very dynamic. It increased in a relatively steady manner from 1980 to 1989. In 1991, when the economic boom in Japan reached its peak, the number of Thais entering Japan had exceeded 100,000, but thereafter, within only five years it sharply declined by nearly half. Looking at the gender distribution of the number of Thai immigrants, we find that from 1980 to 1997 the number of entries into and exits from Japan by male Thais was slightly higher than that of females but since 1998 the numbers have been lower. The fluctuation of male Thai migrants is higher but the women have a longer duration of stay though they arrive less frequently (Pataya 2004: 37). Information from NGOs and the Thai embassy indicate that a number of unlawful entries do not appear in these statistics. The number of Thais entering Japan thus must be higher than official statistics show.

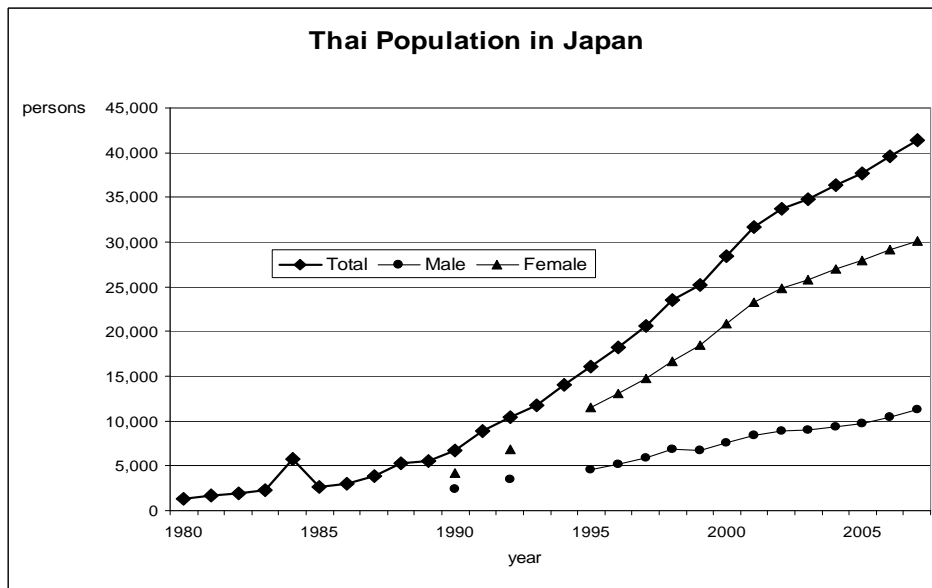
**Figure 2: Thai Overstayers in Japan**



Source: *Immigration Control*, Immigration Bureau, Ministry of Justice 2004-2008  
Thailand Overseas Employment Administration Office in Tokyo 2005, p. 8

Figure 2 shows that from 1993 to 1995 there were the highest number of Thai overstayers and from 1996 the number declined gradually. In 2008 less than 10,000 Thais overstayed their visa. However, this does not mean that the number of Thai population in Japan decreased. Looking at the data on the registered Thais in Japan, the trend goes in the opposite direction.

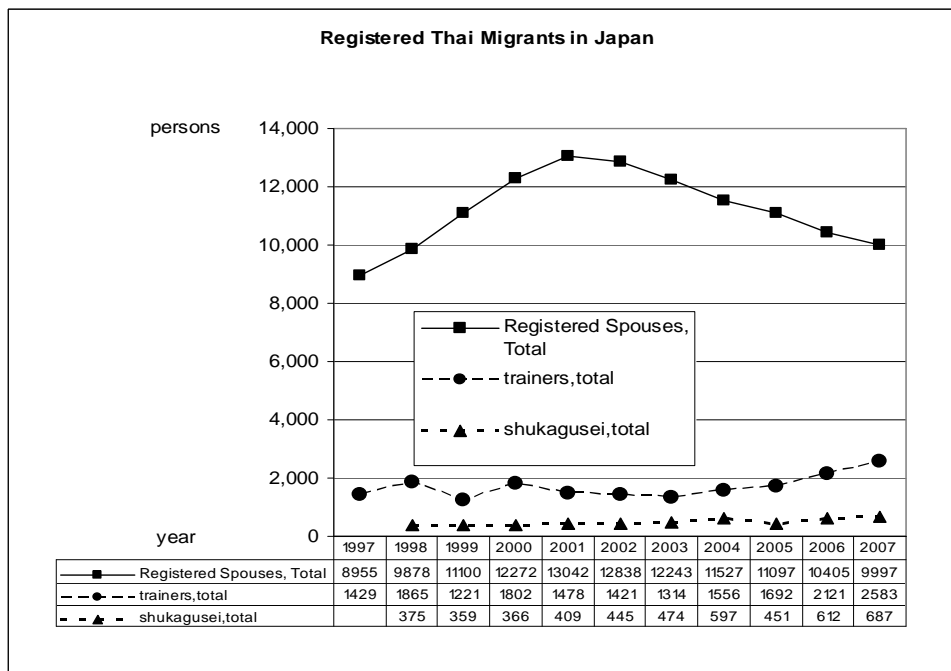
**Figure 3: Registered Thai Migrants in Japan**



Source: Japan Immigration Association 1980-2007

The Japanese immigration law requires migrants staying in Japan for over 90 days to register with the local government. This includes immigrants without legal status though only few do. The majority of registered migrants are those holding legal status. Since 1990 there was a rapid increase in the numbers of Thai women registered in Japan. In 2007 a total number of 41,384 Thais were registered in Japan. 11,230 were men while 30,154 were women. Taking into account the number of Thai immigrants without legal status who have not registered the number of Thai migrant women in Japan must be higher.

**Figure 4: Registered Thai Migrants in Japan, by legal status**



Source: Japan Immigration Association 1980-2007

Figure 4 shows the number of registered Thai migrants in Japan broken down by legal status, namely spouses of Japanese nationals, trainees and students of language schools (*shugakusei*). The number of these three groups of Thais in Japan indicates, as will be discussed in a later chapter, the continuation of labor and marriage migration from Thailand to Japan and its consequences. The number of Thais registered as trainees and students of language school has remained relatively constant with a slight increase. In contrast, the number of Thais registered as spouses of Japanese is dynamic. It increased from 1997 to 2001 and decreased gradually afterward.

## 2. Thai Migration to Japan

There are legal and illegal flows from Thailand to Japan, depending on the venue of migration as will be shown in the following.

### 2.1 Illegal Labor Migration

Japan has no policy of accepting unskilled foreign workers despite the fact that medium and small businesses are faced with labor shortage. There are no official overseas labor contracts between Thailand and Japan. Many Thais enter Japan through venues facilitated by brokers that are part of transnational criminal networks. In general the women have gained information on economic opportunities in Japan from relatives, friends, or other acquaintances who later introduce them to the brokers. These brokers then make arrangements for the women's travel and job placement, obtaining the necessary documents including visa, contacting job brokers in Japan, and organizing the trip.

„My friend has induced me to come to Japan. She said, if I wanted to be rich, I should come....I could work in a factory making lamps and could earn 4-50,000.- Baht monthly. She was a recruiter working for a broker in Bangkok....As I agreed to come, the broker came to take me to apply for a passport and visa. The broker brought also a ticket for me. I did not have to pay anything. The broker paid everything and organized a trip. There were five women including me who came in the same trip.” (Wandee:1/13-20)<sup>1</sup>.

When the women arrive in Japan, job brokers receive them and deliver them to employers. The women utilizing this way had found work as commercial sex workers in snack bars or as workers in small or medium manufactures such as food production etc.

“My niece and 7 of her relatives and two sisters of mine came to Japan, they all were brought to Nagano to work in snack bars.....I came later with another friend of mine. As we arrived the brokers took us to Nagano as my sisters' case but to Terauchi. We were brought to work in a food manufacture” (Mora:1/9-18).

Many women knew before that they were going to be sex workers in snack bars in Japan, while some had no idea which kind of work they would be given. They were deceived to take part in transnational prostitution. Thus the prostitution migration from Thailand to Japan can be considered partly as voluntary and partly as involuntary, from the point of view of migrant women.

“The one who took me here was called S. He was already arrested. He took me out of the bar one night, to his office. There I saw many passports. I asked him why he had so many passports. He said he brought women to work abroad, to Australia and Japan, and asked me whether I would like to go, too. I said, of course, I would like to.” (Patama:1/2-3).

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<sup>1</sup> Interview quotation: (Wandee:1/13-20) means interview with Wandee, page 1, line 13 to 20.

“I was lured to come here. They said I could come to work in a restaurant or in a beauty salon, just for a month. They were friends of my mother.....They told me that I would wash dishes in the kitchen and would earn 10,000.- Bath a month. They did not tell me that I would work in a snack bar.” (Mala:1/1-2,26-27).

## **2.2 Legal Labor Migration.**

There are three venues utilized by Thai women to migrate to work in Japan legally. They enter the country using a visa of entertainers, trainees and students of language schools. Very frequently the migration with entertainer’s visa is a hidden recruitment for transnational prostitution. Many graduates of the College of Dramatic Arts have been lured into this business. The women were promised to be employed only for performing Thai traditional dances in a restaurant or snack bar. In the work place they spend just a small amount of their time performing and are pressurized to accept the offer of their employers to provide sexual services to clients. This is because the wage for a dancer is relative low and insufficient for the cost of living in Japan<sup>2</sup>.

In the early 1980s Japan issued a new category of resident permit for “trainees”, which allows people from other Asian countries to undergo training in corporations with more than 50 employees in Japan (Behaghel/ Vogt 2006:128). The recruitment is operated by the corporations themselves through their branch offices in the sending countries or by organizations established by the Japanese government such as the Japan International Training Cooperation Organization (JITCO) or the governmental organs themselves. It was an attempt of the Japanese government to mitigate the pressure from business associations of small and medium enterprises facing a severe shortage of unskilled labor. Therefore, such training programs have been traditionally a hotbed for disguised labor outside the area permitted by the visa (Suzuki 2001:65-66). The migration of many trainees is also facilitated by brokers. As Marin reported:

„My trip was organized by a broker. I have paid altogether 200,000 Baht. I have taken a credit from a Bank. That broker is Thai and works together with a Japanese broker. They go from one factory to another asking workers to come and work in Japan. My sister came eight months before me, through the same broker. She told me to contact them.” (Marin:1/4-10).

Another lawful path of labor migration to Japan is being admitted to a Japanese language school, the so-called *shugakusei*. Students in a variety of schools other than the institutions of higher education specified in the School Education Law, or vocational and special schools, are granted entry (Komai 1995:54). This channel was opened in fall 1984, when the immigration restrictions for foreign students were relaxed and they were allowed to work 20 hours a week, so that they can finance their studies and cost of living (Behaghel/ Vogt 2006:127). As such, *shugakusei* has been misapplied as a convenient vehicle for labor migration. A number of foreign students immigrate de facto for the purpose of working in Japan while scarcely or not at all attending the classes. They are disguised laborers.

„A friend who worked in the same firm went to Japan as a student of a language school. She suggested me to follow her. I saw she went there, I would like to go, too. I wanted to learn, but my main interest was to work in Japan. Working here [in Thailand, P.R.] I could earn only little. They said, only washing dishes you could earn more than 10,000.- a month. I would like also to help my family. I taugth, I could learn and work in Japan at the same time” (Wanni:1/5-11).

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with the coordinator of the Friends for Women in Aichi on 25 November 2008.



### 2.3 Marriage Migration

During the recent 20 years intermarriages between Thai women and Japanese men have increased rapidly. This indicates the growth of marriage migration from Thailand to Japan. There are four ways in which intermarriage is initiated:

- Spontaneous marriage: In this variant, the couple meets spontaneously and decides to marry. As interview data shows, the women who opt for international marriage must have contact to foreigners, e.g. have worked in foreign enterprises or in tourist areas like Phuket or Khwaosan-Road, Bangkok.

“That time I worked in a firm producing spare parts for Honda. My son was about one and a half year old. He [the husband-to-be, P.R.] came to check the orders in Thailand. He worked for Honda. He came and went 3 or 4 times in an interval of 3 months. We knew each other then.” (Matsi :1/18-21).

“One relative of mine opened a beer bar in Phuket. I decided to go and work there. While working in that bar I met my Japanese husband. He was a tourist. We liked each other, so we lived together there.” (Praeo:1/32-34).

“After completing vocational school I went to Bangkok looking for a job. I got a job as a receptionist in a hotel at Khwaosan-Road. I had worked there for 2 years when I met my husband. He came to see me in Hotel every day. Sometime later we decided to live together.” (Weelee:2/7-9).

- Informal match-making: introduction through friends or relatives, who themselves are marriage migrants. My interview data reveal that Thai marriage migrant women were asked to find a bride by friends or relatives of her Japanese husband. So they themselves have become match-makers trying to establish a contact between Japanese men and their Thai friends or relatives.

“I had many friends. One of them introduced my Japanese husband to me. At the beginning I did not think anything. ...She said, may I introduce to you a Japanese boyfriend....As my friend introduced him to me, she had to translate for me, because I had never had a foreign boyfriend before. We used broken English. We stayed in contact. One day he asked me to marry him. First I thought if I marry him, how would my life be in a foreign country. But I was fond of him. We kept contact through telephone for more than three months.” (Wiman:1/10-16).

- Marriage bureaus: The commercial arrangement of intermarriage between Thai women and Japanese men is relative unknown and rarely documented in Thailand. According to my interview data, such institutions have existed already since 1992. And in 2004 this business still existed. Wirat and Marasri who were introduced to their Japanese husbands through such bureaus entered Japan in 1992 and 2004 respectively. The women have learned about the service of such bureaus mainly from their acquaintances or relatives who work as recruiters of the agencies.

“I went to that firm to leave my application for match-making. This firm searched brides for Japanese men. I knew it from a colleague, her aunty worked there. She persuaded me to apply for a Japanese bride-groom. About one month later I got a phone call from that firm, telling me that there was someone interested in me. I had to give my bio-data and address. The firm was situated in Bangkok, in a travel agency. I did not have to pay anything.” (Wiyada:1/4-8).

- Introduction through friends or relatives who work for a Japanese marriage bureau. Some women I interviewed were introduced to their Japanese husband by their friends

or relatives. In contrast to the introduction through friends and relative as described above, the match-makers in these cases are paid by a Japanese marriage bureau.

“A friend of mine married a Japanese man. She told me how rich Japanese people were and that we could earn much money. Many villagers both from my village and those in the surroundings migrated to Japan. This friend entered Japan legally and did not have to pay anything. So, I asked her to find me a husband..... We wrote through my friend for 6 months and exchanged our photos. I sent mine to this friend and she sent one photo of a Japanese man to me.....It was not really a marriage bureau, she was a housewife. But she took money from the man. As I knew, she has arranged 4 or 5 marriages. My husband had paid quite a big amount of money.” (Wimala: 1/5-7, 14-18, 23-25).

Besides, there is another kind of marriage migration which I consider as an outcome of labor migration. Many women who initially were illegal workers either in the sex industry or in other areas sometime later met Japanese men who were willing to marry them. Because they did not possess any official document the women had to surrender themselves to the immigration police to return to Thailand in order to apply for a passport and documents needed for marriage. They migrate again to Japan as a bride of a Japanese man. This cannot be anything other than marriage migration.

„I came to work in Nagoya, in a snack bar whose owner was a Thai lady. After one month I met my husband.....He introduced me to his parents, then I quit the job and lived with him. His parent accepted me as their daughter in law. I went back to Thailand in 1995, had to surrender myself to the immigration police, because I wanted to get married with him. I had to go back to apply for documents. I had to wait there for more than one year.” (Pring:2/2-4,13-17).

## **2.4 Trafficking in Persons**

When raising an issue on traffic in person<sup>3</sup>, especially in women, one will recall the recruitment for commercial sex workers. In case of labor migration from Thailand to Japan, the recruitment of workers and trainees also bears traits of traffic in persons. The migration of interviewee Mora and her relatives (see the quotation above) reveals that many women willing to migrate could not select which kind of work they would like to do. Who obtains which job placement is under the sole consideration of brokers. There remains no possibility for the women to negotiate because their unlawful entry leads to an illegal status. In such situation the women seem to be at the mercy of the brokers.

The findings of my recent study (Pataya 2009) underline the misuse by brokers of trainee visas as a venue for recruitment of unskilled laborers . Considering the method of visa arrangement and job placement such recruitment can be regarded as traffic in persons. „I got a three years visa as trainee. For the visa application the broker let me sign a contract with one firm who produced similar articles as those produced in the factory I had worked before. But when I arrived in Japan the firm I should work for was

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<sup>3</sup> The definition utilized here is adapted from the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Crime: “Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payment or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

a different one. It was an agricultural estate. In Thailand I had never worked in the field. I hate agriculture” (Marin:2/1-3) “Upon arrival the broker brought us to one place in a suburb of Tokyo. After a while some factory owners came to see us. Then they made a selection which trainees they wanted to take to be workers in their enterprises. I did not have the luck that this owner chose me to work here. My sister was chosen by other factory owner and now earns 18-19,000 monthly.” (Marin:3/6-9).

Besides, there were cases of Thai migrants who had paid the broker for the arrangement of labor migration with the status of trainees, but had obtained only tourist visa. They were told that they would be granted a trainee visa in Japan. After arrival they were brought to a factory and did not receive any news from the brokers. It can be anticipated that they would share the common plight as many Thai migrant workers, i.e. they overstay their tourist visa and become illegal migrant workers.

### **3. Consequences of Thai Female Migration to Japan**

Considering the continuous process of migration, during three decades the flows of Thai women to Japan have borne the following outcomes:

#### **3.1 The Development of Status From Spouse to Transnational Migrant Worker and vice versa.**

After some years of stay, many women in my sample who initially immigrated as spouses of a Japanese have searched and obtained a job placement, particularly when they could manage their daily life in Japanese or when their children did not depend on them any more. “I have two children, one is 15 years old and the other one is 12. At the moment I work in a factory producing spare parts for Honda. I started to search for a job 6-7 years ago, as my children have grown up and could take care of themselves.” (Wirat:1/17-19).

Many Thai women I interviewed have lived with their parents in law. As a daughter in law of a Japanese family some women were expected to take the burden from their mother in law regarding household works that left them little free time. The door to the outside world and to the employment has opened after their separation. “In the house of my parents in law my father in law was a household manager, he did everything. We had to live due to Japanese tradition. I could not go out but had to work to do everything.....The factory where I work produces car spare parts. As I was in the shelter they told me to think what I want to do. Nowadays my parents in law ask me to return to their house. My husband also would like me to go back to him. But I do not want to. Because living with him there I was not free. I felt like I was put in a house of detention.” (Weelee:1/33-34, 2/23-26).

While many women have developed their role to be a transnational worker, some cannot manage to do so because of their poor mastery of the Japanese language. “Here I am a house wife. I have tried to find a job, washing dishes in a restaurant. I went there and asked for a job. The owner did not give me any job because I could not speak Japanese well. I have learned the language, but only to be able to speak with my husband. At work place I have to communicate with the others and I could not.” (Marasri:1/26-27).

As discussed above, many women who initially entered the country as illegal migrant workers later could change their status to be a spouse of a Japanese through marriage. Some women left their jobs and became house-wives, while a number of them still

pursued their working career. Mora, a former manufacturing worker, continued hers in a noodle factory. After marriage some formal commercial sex workers like Patama and Malai kept on working in a snack bar but only selling drinks.

Therefore, under certain circumstances and in certain periods of time e.g. after the burden of child raising, free from household duties and equipped with language skills, women can develop their roles, from migrant workers to spouse or from spouse to transnational workers. The roles are interchangeable and frequently migrant women can possess different roles at the same time.

### **3.2 The Subsequent Immigration of Children of Thai Migrant Women**

Interview data indicate that a lot of Thai migrant women belong to the group of single mothers, i.e. separated or divorced women who take the sole responsibility for their children born in the relationship with Thai men. After a certain period of time, particularly when they gain legal status or their lives are settled in the destination country Thai migrant women fetched their children to stay with them in Japan. The reasons why they wanted their children to live with them in Japan are diverse. A good education, better life and future prospects seem to be the main reasons. However, for some women having the children live with them appears to be a possibility to free themselves from the burden of supporting the family left behind. "I took my child to me as she was 12 years old, after completion of elementary school, actually to accompany me. I have not raised her myself. So I think we do not have a relationship of parent and child. It might be the same as my relationship to my parent. They did not raise me either. May be I want to get rid of the burden. When my child stays with me I do not need to remit money home." (Prao:2/18-23).

The age of the children at the time of immigration varies. It ranges from small children aged under the age of 5 to teenagers. While many children could adjust to the new environment, some face difficulties. The study on Social Inclusion of Children whose Parent is Foreigner in Japan (Saito 2010) points out problems of the subsequently immigrated children in different age groups. Small Children, under 6 years old, their mothers have no access to information on vaccination and to health insurance as well. Japanese language seems to be a problem of children in the age group between 7 and 15 years, besides the problem of school bullying (Ijime). Frequently they are also communication gaps between parent and child. The problems of children between 16 and 18 years comprise lacking opportunities to learn the Japanese language, school dropout and temptation to commit crime.

### **3.3 Stateless Children Born to Illegal Thai Migrants in Japan.**

My former study showed that there is a considerable number of children born to Thai migrant women who obtain no legal status (Pataya 2002). Women shelters report that it is very difficult for children born out of wedlock to acquire Japanese citizenship, even though the father is a Japanese. The procedure of acquisition of Japanese citizenship is complicated. On the other hand most of the women over-stayed their visa and did not have documents because these were taken away and withheld by agents facilitating their immigration into Japan. Without documents the women cannot identify themselves as Thai citizens. As a result, their children cannot acquire Thai citizenship. Besides, there are many children born from Thai mothers and Japanese fathers who were left to stay in orphanages and who have no documents. All these circumstances result in statelessness of children of illegal Thai migrant women. The exact number of these children remains unexplored.

### **3.4 The Development of the Thai Community in Japan<sup>4</sup>.**

The data obtained from interviews and from observation show that Thai migrants arrived in Japan since the beginning of the 1980s and many of them, including those without legal status, remain in the country, though facing some difficulties. Over a considerable time they gradually built up a Thai community. This is not a community in the conventional concept that is restricted to a collectivity in a specific locality with clear boundaries, but refers to a series of common qualities and a specific potential for social action (Brummelhuis 1999:174). Gradually they recruit relatives and friends, and establish their own businesses. In Japanese territory they interact as Thai, share common objectives and subjective characteristics and have to depend on one another for survival in Japan. As a result a Thai community has emerged and serves as a self-protection or self-built resistance for mental security of the community members, as self-reliance in a crisis situation and at the same time a mechanism to achieve their goal of migration i.e. to earn a high amount of money for remittance to Thailand and to remain in Japan as well. One part of this community is a group of people without legal status.

### **3.5 The Repatriation to Thailand**

A considerable number of Thai women have entered Japan unlawfully and remain illegal migrants. After some time some women have returned to Thailand. There are “voluntary“ and “forced” returns<sup>5</sup>. Kannika (2007) found that Thai migrant workers in Japan voluntarily returned when they were convinced of the achievement of their migration’s objectives, i.e. having enough savings for the resettlement in their villages. On the other hand, many of them have longed for the reunification with their family in Thailand. However, as Kato (2007) pointed out in her study on female returnees, the failure to fulfill migration’s goal may lead to voluntary return as well. Because of their illegal status they have to report to the Japanese immigration bureau which then will organize their deportation, or they require support from the Thai embassy which then contacts the Japanese immigration bureau for the deportation and search for shelter to stay while waiting for departure.

Many women do not wish to be repatriated. Generally, there were arrested during routine controls conducted by the Japanese immigration bureau in snack bars or in manufactures. Few studies regarding Thai female returnees indicate many problems these women faced in Thailand such as a lack of job opportunities (Caouette/ Saito 1999), social reintegration and acceptance (Kato 2007). According to Kato(2007:90), economic achievement that women gained from their migration seems to be an important condition for acceptance by the society. Under the new Japanese immigration policy which aims, among other things, to reduce the size of the migrant population that overstayed their visa, the increase in number of female returnees to Thailand is anticipated. In many areas like Ibaraki and Tochigi the immigration bureau operated raids in snack bars and manufactures nearly monthly. As a result many Thai women were arrested and deported to Thailand<sup>6</sup>. Yet, measures for social and economic integration of returnees are still missing.

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<sup>4</sup> More detail about this issue please see my article on Toward the formation of a community. Thai migrants in Japan (Pataya 2004).

<sup>5</sup> According to the definition of the International Organization for Migration (IOM 2005), ‘voluntary return’ is one based on the voluntary decision of the individual, and ‘forced return’ means return that is not undertaken by the individual voluntarily.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with the chairperson of Thai Volunteer Networks in Japan on 20 November 2008.

## **Excursion: Comparison with Female Thai Migration to Germany.**

Migration from Thailand to Germany, other than to Japan, is clearly dominated by women when considering the gender proportion of Thai population in Germany. The number of Thai women living in Germany has increased rapidly since 1975 and the growth continues steadily. 85% of Thais in Germany are women.

The migration has served two purposes, (1) to work, mainly in prostitution and less in other areas, and (2) to marry a German. However, female migration from Thailand to Germany is to be considered as marriage migration, unlike that to Japan which clearly includes labor migration. Thai women utilize marriage as a means for immigration to Germany. The status of a spouse of a German citizen provides them with residence and work permits that constitute the prerequisites for income earning, their intended aims of migration. Marriage migration can thus be defined as: migration concerning or emerging by means of marriage. Given the barriers of immigration policy of countries of destination, marriage has turned out a means of legal immigration coupled with the expectation of social and economic achievement. It follows from my findings (Pataya 2003) that many Thai women migrating by means of marriage to a German share one common intention, i.e. to search an opportunity for employment in Germany. Because of the hindrance from immigration laws, if they want to stay they have to marry regardless of their purpose, whether they want to build a new family, search for better earning or to work in prostitution. Migration-cum-marriage should therefore be considered as a variety of transnational labor migration. It is a specific female form of migration. This aspect of utilizing marriage as means for immigration (for the purpose of working) to Japan is yet to be explored.

A considerable number of Thais in Germany shares one common characteristic with those in Japan, namely that they are single mothers. After a period ranging from 6 months to 3 years, when they can manage their living, the women take their children to live with them in Germany. Hence, as in the Japanese case, migration to Germany leads to the subsequently immigration of children. The social situation of these children is not yet the topic of either academics or policy makers. According to information<sup>7</sup> from organizations and individuals providing support to Thai women and their children, some children face difficulties in adjusting to the new surroundings, in finding friends, in the school system as well, particularly those who were teenagers at the time of immigration.

In Germany the problem of stateless children born to Thai migrant women is virtually non-existent. On the one hand, most Thai women obtain a legal status. On the other hand though mothers do not have resident permit, for their children the process of acquiring German citizenship is not at all as complicated and difficult as in Japan. Children born to foreign women will be granted German citizenship when the natural father is either a German or a foreigner possessing a permanent resident permit and having lived in Germany for more than 7 years, and acknowledges paternity. If the father is not willing to do, the youth welfare office will undertake DNA test to force acknowledging of paternity.

Thai female migration to Germany started more than three decades ago. The pioneer migrant women have become aged persons. Organizations and individuals supporting

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<sup>7</sup> It is a stock-taking on the living conditions and problems of the subsequently immigrated children I conducted recently. Its findings were presented in the workshop on The Subsequently Immigrated Children in Japan and Germany, National Women's Education Center, 23 January 2010

Thai women report that a number of aged migrants are inquiring for regulations, conditions and practical suggestions for returning to Thailand. The repatriation to Thailand of migrant women happens in Germany nowadays, and most of the women are in the retire aged.

#### 4. Conclusion

Thai female migration to Japan has occurred for more than two decades. The flows comprise marriage migration, legal and illegal labor migration which bear characteristics of trafficking in persons. The number of Thais registered in Japan confirms the continuing process. Furthermore, it leads to subsequent immigration of children and produces outcomes such as the transition of status from spouse to transnational worker, which is interchangeable, a considerable number of stateless children born to illegal Thai Migrants, the formation of a Thai community and the repatriation to Thailand. Policy makers and academics in both the sending and receiving countries are hardly aware of these outcomes of female migration from Thailand to Japan. This is so because migration is often perceived as a phenomenon that ends with the entry into the receiving country.

There is only scarce knowledge of the situation of the subsequently immigrated and stateless children. Similarly information on living and working conditions of transnational workers who abandoned the status of a spouse, and on the Thai community in Japan is lacking. These aspects should acquire interest both from academics and become topics of study in order to build up body of knowledge, and from Thai and Japanese policy makers to devise measures against these problems based on academic findings.

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