

## THE IMPACT OF URBANIZATION ON RURAL - URBAN LINKAGES

### IN THAILAND AND MALAYSIA \*

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Urbanization is but one component, albeit a major one, of a broad structural change in the economies and societies of both Thailand and Malaysia. Contrary to general opinion, that broad change is not one which involves a massive shift of population out of the primary sector into manufacturing and services, though it does involve very substantial increases in the proportion of both working population and the GDP. derived from those sectors as well as increases in the proportion of people living in towns and cities. Table 1 shows very clearly that while the proportion of the labour-force in agriculture has fallen substantially since 1960, the actual numbers of those employed in agriculture have increased, in the case of Malaysia rather slowly, though the official figures presumably ignore at least half a million illegal immigrants, many of whom work in agriculture. In Thailand the growth in the number of agricultural - thus rural - people has been greater. At the same time, Thailand has seen a substantial decrease in the proportion of GDP. derived from the primary sector (Table 2). Although the proportion so derived in the Malaysian economy has remained stable at 28 percent in 1965 and 1990, the addition of petroleum to the sources of primary sector income between those years distorts the picture.

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Table 1: Numbers and Proportion of Work-force in Agriculture 1960-1990

	<u>Numbers</u> <u>(000)</u>	<u>Proportion</u> <u>(%)</u>	<u>Decennial</u> <u>Increase 1960-</u> <u>1990 (%)</u>
Malaysia - 1960	1 724	63	
- 1970	2 027	57	17.6
- 1980	2 220	42	9.5
- 1990	2 255	32	1.4
Thailand - 1960	11 342	84	
- 1970	13 583	77	19.8
- 1980	16 718	71	23.1
- 1990	18 782	64	12.1

Compiled from *FAO Production Yearbooks*.

Table 2: Sectoral Origin of GDP (%), 1960-1990

	<u>Primary</u>	<u>Secondary</u>	<u>Tertiary</u>
Malaysia - 1965	28	25	47
- 1990	28	32	39
Thailand - 1965	32	23	45
- 1990	12	39	48

Compiled from World Bank, *World development report 1992*, and United Nations, *Yearbook of national accounts statistics, 1991*

A comparison of the two tables suggests that in both countries there has been a piling up of a relatively unproductive rural population. This is particularly the case in Thailand, where in 1990 64 percent of the population contributed only 12 percent to the national economy. It

is, of course, this rural population, in both countries, that has formed a labour pool from which people have been increasingly drawn into the towns and cities, whether permanently or in some form of circular migration. There can be little doubt that temporary urban employment is now widely seen as an alternative means of subsistence for many rural people even for some shifting cultivators occupying relatively remote upland regions (Grandstaff, 1980, 10), though the degree to which this is true is difficult to establish.

### Structural Change

Structural change in the economies of both countries, considered at the macro-level, is clearly a force behind differences in the rate and nature of urbanization and of linkages between town and country. For Peninsular Malaysia, but not Sabah and Sarawak, it can be argued that from as long ago as the late nineteenth century the economy was less 'agricultural' than that of Thailand. Brookfield (1994, 36 ff), for example has argued that Malaya's economy was significantly linked to the global capitalist economy at an early point in time, that even though its economy was overwhelmingly agricultural in colonial and immediate post-colonial times, a significant portion of agriculture, the rubber and later the oil-palm sector, was essentially 'industrial' in character, 'factories-in-the field', as it were <sup>1</sup>. Even in 1921 only 71 percent of the Malayan work-force was agricultural, a proportion not reached in Thailand until 1980 (Brookfield, 1994, 5; FAO, 1982).

By 1970, in Malaysia as a whole, agriculture and forestry together employed 53.5 percent of the work-force and this had fallen to only 27.8 percent by 1990 (Brookfield, 1994,

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<sup>1</sup> The 1947 Census of Malaya indicated that 61.3 percent of the total population was agricultural. No less than 25.9 percent was in rubber production, an 'industrial' type (IBRD, 1955, 8).

82). While the proportion of rural non-farm people has unquestionably risen in the last several decades, it seems likely that in Malaysia well over half of the population is now 'urban', though the official statistics fail to reflect this as yet. At the same time it seems likely that the numbers of agricultural workers is being maintained by 'illegal' immigrants, thought to number at least half-a-million, making up about a tenth of the labour-force.

However, it is clear that this pattern of rapid economic change with a fall in the proportions in the primary sector, measured both by production and employment, has not been shared by Sabah and Sarawak whose economies have remained less developed than that of the Peninsula and where their share in the nation's manufacturing output, below three percent in 1980, has actually fallen, even though the proportion of urban population has risen (Mohd. Yaakub *et. al.*, 1989, 7, 18-19).

In broad terms, Thailand's pattern of change is merely that of Sabah and Sarawak writ large, the problems of determining what is 'urban', notwithstanding. In broad terms, Thailand is now roughly where Peninsular Malaysia was two decades ago, except that the proportionate contribution of the primary sector to its economy is less than half of that of Malaysia as a whole. Moreover, whereas the numbers of agriculturalists in Malaysia increased by only about five percent in the period 1960-1990, the corresponding increase for Thailand was ten times that rate. Thus, given Malaysia's continued economic growth (roughly eight percent per year) it seems reasonable to suppose that (the official) numbers in agriculture will fall within the next decade. By contrast, even though Thailand's economic growth rate is similar to that of Malaysia, it is clear that the number of people in agriculture and in the rural areas will continue to increase even as their proportion in the total work-force continues to fall.

## Urbanization

It has just been suggested that urbanization, examined indirectly by way of structural change, has been later in Thailand than in Peninsular Malaysia. Although there are problems of comparability of data, especially of definition, in both time and space, Table 3 also shows clearly the slower pace of urbanization in Thailand.

Table 3 : Proportion of Urban Population - Selected Years (percent)

	<u>Year</u>				
	<u>1950</u>	<u>1960</u>	<u>1970</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1990</u>
Peninsular Malaysia	20.4	25.0	28.7	37.2)	43.0
				)	
Sabah	n.a.	n.a.	16.4	20.6)	
				)	
Sarawak	n.a.	n.a.	16.7	18.0)	
Thailand	10.5	12.5 (16.2)	13.2 (20.8)	14.4 (23.6)	23.0 (29.8)

Compiled from various sources

Note : Figures for Thailand given in parentheses include the population of designated sanitary districts with a population of over 5000. Most urban centres are underbounded so that even including the population of sanitary districts may still under-estimate the urban component. (See ESCAP, 1988, 22). World Bank projections for 2000 (Rigg, 1991, 133) are seriously in error being 42 and 23 percent for Malaysia and Thailand respectively. These were reached by 1990.

There are other notable contrasts which arise from their respective histories. Thailand, in modern times, has always been a unitary state. Indeed its recent history is arguably one of increasing the political power of the centre vis-a-vis the provinces. By contrast, Malaysia, and before it Malaya, has been a federal state, one in which during colonial times,

Singapore, (since 1964 a separate nation) performed many of the political and economic functions of a capital city. Thus in the 1930s, Kuala Lumpur, though capital of the Federated Malay States, was little larger than other urban centres such as Georgetown (Penang) and the tin-mining centre, Ipoh. This situation continued until well after Malaysia was formed in 1962. The federal structure favoured a relatively dispersed pattern of economic development epitomized by the promotion of state-level infrastructural development. Only at the state level, as in Thailand at the provincial level, was there a high degree of primacy with the largest centre in each state comprising between two-fifths (Kedah, Johor) and four-fifths (Melaka, Terengganu) of the state's urban population. This situation had changed substantially by 1980 when the Greater Kuala Lumpur Urban Area had a population of 1.3 million, compared with some 294 000 in Ipoh, the next largest town and Georgetown with 248 000, to give a primacy index of about 4.4. By contrast Bangkok was, in 1980, at least 20 times larger than the next-largest city, Chiang Mai. (Officially Bangkok was 46 times bigger than Chiang Mai, but the population of Ching Mai's planning area was 70 percent greater than that of its municipality. See ESCAP, 1988, 22). Since 1980, however, it seems likely that Greater Kuala Lumpur has increased its share of Malaysia's urban population. For Thailand the picture is less clear. Certainly, provincial centres such as Nakorn Sawan, Hat Yai, Khon Kaen and Pitsanulok, the third-to sixth-ranked towns in the nation, show rates of growth above that of Bangkok but from such relatively small bases that the overwhelming primacy of Bangkok is unlikely to be challenged for many decades (ESCAP, 1988).

### Rural-Urban Linkages

In considering the impact of urbanization upon rural-urban linkages it must be pointed out that there is a significant body of opinion that would deny the utility of the

conceptual dichotomy contained within the very terms rural and urban, at least within the context of the urbanization process (Hugo, 1992, 91-92). See also the work of T.G. McGee (1991, 3), who refers to the '... new regions of extended urban activity surrounding the core cities of many countries of Asia'. He argues that '... in the Asian context the conventional view of the urban transition, which assumes that the widely accepted distinction between rural and urban will persist as the urbanization process proceeds, needs to be re-evaluated'. He is, of course, correct in suggesting that '... the spatial juxtaposition of many of the larger city cores within heavily populated regions of intensive, mostly wet-rice agriculture ... has created densities of population that are frequently much higher than in the suburban areas of the West' (McGee, 1991, 5). Such extensive zones of intense interaction he labels *kotadesa*, literally 'town-village'. In these the rural-urban dichotomy is blurred to the extent, he argues, that it is of limited usefulness. But the distinction has long been a fuzzy one - witness the persistence of 'crofter-craftsmen' in nineteenth-century England or of the mid-twentieth century 'arbeiterbauer' in Germany's Baden-württemberg (Franklin 1964). If the core of the city is unquestionably 'urban' and a village of shifting cultivators is 'rural' then these are but the two ends of a continuum (McGee, 1964) in which regions of '*kotadesasi*' fall somewhere towards the middle. What is more to the point is that the modern city as the leading edge of global capitalism now penetrates, as an ikon, to remote areas via the transistor radio, and even, increasingly as a direct source of subsistence via trade in forest products, in Sabah and Sarawak for example, by way of involvement in circular migration, the *bejalai* of the Iban or the Karen of northern Thailand (Austin, 1988; Grandstaff, 1980), or even eco-tourism as amongst the Aeta of Subic Bay, Philippines. (See Skeldon, 1994, for a general discussion).

At this point the nature and intensity of linkages between the 'fuzzy' urban and the 'fuzzy' rural - to use 'fuzzy' in the sense in which it is used in mathematical set theory - can be little more than enumerated, for empirical studies are rather few, the work of Hugo, Ida Bagus Mantra, Suharso and others in Indonesia being excepted. (See Ida Bagus Mantra, 1985). There are serious gaps in our knowledge of the nature, frequency, purpose and effects of circular migration and of suburbanization, especially in respect of non-primate cities. Many rural surveys fail to investigate such manifestations of links with the city as town-to-village flows of money and goods, income from temporary urban employment, frequency and nature of visiting patterns, employment change in peri-urban villages. At the conceptual level too, much more needs to be clarified in terms not only of basic notions of 'ruralism', 'urbanism' and 'urbanization' but even of such implicitly primordial concepts as the village and village society (Kemp, 1989).

#### The Transportation 'Revolution'

While the penetration of global capitalism continues to enlarge markets, in terms of space, number of commodities and value and continues to create wealth while increasing spatial and class disparities, a major accompaniment of this process is the improvement of transportation infrastructure. This is only partly a phenomenon of urban expansion for access to such infrastructure is also a function of growing wealth in the countryside, sufficient for regular and sustained mobility, whether represented by daily commuting characteristic of the suburbs and *kotadesa* zones of the urban areas, weekly commuting or less-frequent movements which involve temporary residence in town or country.

Here technology reflects scale and range of movement. It is clear that in most developing urban centres some degree of 'pedestrian commuting' has long existed. Studies from India in the 1960s for example, showed each-way journeys of up to 10 km from peri-urban villages (and slums) to city employment. While this phenomenon still exists in some Asian cities, Ho Chi Min City and Hanoi are examples, for many it has been supplanted by bicycle commuting. As income levels increase, pedestrianism and the humble 'push-bike' are supplemented and then largely replaced by buses, bicycle and motor rickshaws, lorries and vans adapted to passenger transportation and ultimately by more 'formal' means of urban transportation. At each stage the spatial range of the transportation mode is increased. Thus an hour's journey on foot has a range of about four kilometers whereas a similar journey by private light motor-cycle may have a range of 20-30 km enabling easy integration of city and its expanding periphery, rather more than the corresponding range of transit systems.

The economics of this transportation revolution are not easy to pin down but it seems reasonable to suppose that for all but the (usually) street-dwelling underclass, transportation improvements, other than a shift to the private car, may be accompanied by a reduction in the proportional cost of mobility to individuals and households. Fairly generally it would seem that the cost of the journey to work absorbs a relatively high proportion of the income of new entrants to urban employment, but this declines with increasing incomes, and also as municipal governments subsidize transit and improve highways. In addition, the location of employment opportunities may also shift to peripheral locations as capitalists take advantage of lower land values and rents as well as greater accessibility at the periphery, a phenomenon clearly occurring in the Don Muang area of Greater Bangkok and in the Klang Valley where Kuala Lumpur is located. In the latter conurbation the construction of first the Kuala Lumpur-Pelabohan Kelang

road (Federal Highway) in the 1960s, followed by highways to the northwest, northwest and southwards to Seremban and beyond, has clearly had a major influence in expanding the city. Even Melaka is now within commuting distance while anecdotal evidence suggests that perhaps two-fifths of Seremban's workers are employed in the Klang Valley.

### Suburbanization

Suburbanization takes two main forms, one, obvious, is the construction of housing and ancillaries such as bus depots, shopping centres and other services on 'green-field' sites at the urban periphery. The other, subtle, is the internal transformation of already-existing settlement nodes. These may retain the aspect of rural villages or rural service centres but have been transformed from within as residents partly or completely abandon agricultural activities (Brookfield *at al.* 1991). (Such abandonment is by no means confined to the immediate vicinity of urban areas).

Studies of the impact of urbanization upon the peripheral areas of cities include those of Bangkok, by Mizuno (1978) and Thiravet Pramuanratkarn (1979) and a major recent study by Brookfield and his associates for Kuala Lumpur (Brookfield *et al.*, 1991). Mizuno notes the particular importance of highway construction and extremely liberal land-use regulation in encouraging the construction of factories on green-field sites at Tambon Om Noi, west of the City. From five factories on nine hectares of land in 1962, by 1972 40 factories, employing 6000 workers occupied 56 hectares. A major portion of the work-force came from other provinces residing in newly-constructed dormitories or renting small houses in the villages. At the same time public and private housing estates were constructed, occupying a total of 208 ha of former rice land. A further feature of urban penetration was represented by urban

commercial businesses - petrol stations, a branch bank - but the major change was amongst village people many of whom set up small concerns such as coffee shops, groceries, barber-shops. Within ten years the *tambon*, population increased from 3406 to 6930, 77 percent of the increase being by net migration. Whereas in 1957 303 of the 449 households in Om Noi were rice farmers (67 percent), by 1973 only 193 households of a total 1192 were so employed, representing a mere 16 percent. Out of those 303 rice-growing households in 1957, only 47 percent still grew rice by 1972. Of the 1636 ha under rice in 1957, by 1972 56 percent was still cultivated, 13 percent had been converted to residential uses, 3.4 percent was under factories and the remaining 460 ha had been abandoned. The residual rice area was under severe pressure with farmers reporting problems with water control, pollution by factory effluent, rubbish, and rats.

It seems clear that the combined pressures of technical difficulties in continuing to farm, the relatively low income to be derived from farming in comparison with petty business or factory employment force many villagers either to give up farming entirely or to reduce production to 'sideline' status. As Thiravet Pramuanratkarn (1979, 258, 259) has noted in respect of Bang Phut, another Bangkok peripheral village, 'Villagers do not rely upon agriculture for cash income. Only half of the Bang Phut households grow rice, and they grow a quantity just sufficient for household consumption'. The same author also refers to the practice of soil stripping by which topsoil is sold off to form lawns and gardens in low-density suburban development. Though this seriously damages the land and makes restoration to agricultural use very difficult it nevertheless represents a logical step in the process by which villagers become petty rentier capitalists. They rent out land for non-agricultural uses, as Mizuno has documented for Tambon Om Noi, or sell their land to developers who '... exert various kinds of leverage

to induce a sale, including dazzling offers or frank insistence on bulk or multiple-parcel sale which virtually compels an owner to sell along with his neighbours' (Theravit, 1979, 259).

The processes of internal transformation, commonly referred to as 'metropolitanization' or 'in situ suburbanization' are rather less obvious but no less far-reaching, involving changes in land use, increases in the number of people and houses, changes in house-types with the intrusion of suburban residences and changes in village occupational structures.

The study by Brookfield and his associates considered four Malay villages on the periphery of Kuala Lumpur each initially having rather distinct land-use profiles. Collapsing some of their categories for the sake of brevity, the following pattern of change between 1966 and 1986 is shown in Table 4.

Table 4 : Land-use in Four Villages, 1966, 1986 (%)

Land-use category	<u>Beranang</u>		<u>Janda Baik</u>		<u>Sg. Serai</u>		<u>Sg. Pencala</u>	
	<u>1966</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1966</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1966</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1966</u>	<u>1986</u>
Forest & swamp	2.4	8.4	66.3	70.9	26.6	23.7	55.4	80.8
Rubber	30.4	32.3	21.9	13.2	55.8	51.5	33.7	2.5
Rice	49.3	37.1	9.9	4.3	-	-	-	-
<i>Kampung and dusun</i>	14.0	17.9	1.3	8.0	6.9	12.6	2.2	4.0
Cleared land	2.6	1.9	0.5	1.6	10.4	4.1	8.0	1.1
Urban & non-agric	1.3	2.4	0.1	2.1	0.2	8.2	0.8	11.6
	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.1	99.9	100.1	100.1	100.1
Total area (ha)	805.7		2198.8		508.5		587.3	

Source : Brookfield *et al.* 1991, 53

These data clearly reflect the consequences of a major structural change in the villages where the price of labour becomes too high to continue farming while the land price is not yet high enough to prime alternative uses. Rice land is abandoned and becomes swamp (Beranang). Rubber land is abandoned and becomes secondary forest (Janda Baik and Sungei Pencala) while mixed tree-crop and garden (*kampung* and *dusun*) increase along with urban and other non-agricultural uses. These data are supported by Samsudin's study of a village in Ulu Selangor, well within the general sphere of influence of Kuala Lumpur. In examining the reasons for the abandonment of rubber land he found that the existence of non-farm income sources was an important explanatory factor (Samsudin, 1988). These were substantial. On average, smallholder families gained a monthly income of MR\$245 from rubber, MR\$359 from off-farm employment and MR\$126 by way of unearned income, mainly remittances (Samsudin, 1988, 150). Other factors in the abandonment of rubber land included distance to fields, with steeper and more distant areas being abandoned, as well as trees aged more than 30 years and hence less productive than younger ones (Samsudin, 1988, 139 ff). Samsudin (1988, 191) makes the further important point that landowners who were permanently employed off-farm were found to be more likely to abandon their smallholdings as productive enterprises. This, of course, is not the only reason why land is abandoned. Nor is abandonment confined to the urban periphery, being widespread in Peninsular Malaysia, where, by 1981, an estimated 890 000 ha of agricultural land had been abandoned, 82 percent of it in rubber and 18 percent in rice (Pazim, 1990, 9), presumably because the price of labour has risen.

The establishment of a specific linkage between off-farm employment and land abandonment was not included in the Brookfield study but the data for the heads of household included in it show the degree to which rural communities had, by 1986, been drawn into the

urban economy. Their 1966 employment structure is not known, though clearly rural, but 20 years later only 22 percent of heads gave farming as their predominant occupation, most of them working on their own account. (Unfortunately the study did not include identification of all income sources as distinct from income levels though it is reasonable to suppose that multiple rather than single sources of income were characteristic). The head-of-household income profiles, though highly variable from village to village, clearly show that a preponderance of heads in the poorest quartile were farmers or reportedly had no work (Brookfield *et al.*, 1991, 137). At the same time the proportion of family members engaged in agriculture was smaller than that for household heads, a finding consistent with that of Mizuno for Bangkok and of other studies in the region.

So far as incomes are concerned it seems likely that suburbanization has led to a widening of within-village differences as well as between-village differences, a view based upon some knowledge of the villages concerned. By 1986 the bottom quartile of households at Sungai Serai had an average monthly income of MR\$234 whereas the top quartile averaged MR\$1832, 7.8 times higher. In comparison Janda Baik families in the lower quartile had an average income of MR\$162 with the upper quartile averaging MR\$795 per month, 4.9 times higher (Brookfield *et al.*, 1991, 148).

In suburban areas it is clear that suburbanization, of whichever kind, has led to major changes in occupations, with farming becoming a minor interest. Full-time farmers become a minority and agriculture is, at best, reduced to a part-time occupation, a phenomenon visible amongst rice farmers in Melaka as early as the mid-1960s (Narkswasdi and Selvadurai, 1967). Abandoned land becomes significant either because it becomes technically difficult to farm it in

the mixed and basically incompatible land-use situation of the urban periphery, or because it is no longer worth farming it in the face of alternative employment opportunities or the chance to become a petty rentier capitalist. In Malaysia, where land law specifically empowers government to resume land for failure to cultivate it for more than three years there is little or no evidence that such sanctions have had the slightest influence in keeping land in production - as, for example, differential land taxation does in Japan.

How the tenacity with which farmers continue to own land in periurban locations may vary is difficult to establish. In Malaysia the ownership of land confers social status. Land is also a capital asset from which expected returns from capital gain often exceed actual returns from farming, as Samsudin (1988, 203-4) points out. In Thailand a similar situation exists though if Kemp (1989) is correct attachment to the land may be less strong there. The rate at which developers can build up a land bank will obviously be related not only to the tenacity with which farmers retain ownership of the land but also to their numbers. It can hardly be a coincidence that the spatial growth of Kuala Lumpur has, seemingly, proceeded most rapidly where land, mainly in rubber, was in the hands of large plantation companies.

#### Migration - Circular and Otherwise - and Economic Links

Urbanization, however, spreads its influence far beyond daily commuter range. Indeed, in functional terms, the city has far-distant bounds. The establishment of urban spheres of influence is no simple matter even in terms of migration fields. This is partly so because census-takers and other survey researchers commonly fail to investigate this aspect of population mobility, failing to distinguish between permanent and temporary movers or to define what these categories may mean in particular cases (see, for example, Young, 1978).

What can confidently be asserted is that scarcely anyone in rural Thailand or Malaysia is not a potential migrant. The degree to that potential is being realized is not so easy to establish for surveys in both countries are few. Notable, however, is the recent study by the Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University (Aphichat Chamratrithirong *et al.* 1994). While not providing detailed data on places of origin before migration to Bangkok, this survey of 4 547 migrants indicated that 18.8 percent were seasonal migrants whose stay there averaged five months (just over three months for men). Another 17.1 percent were 'repeat' migrants whose stay also averaged about five months. The volume of seasonal migration to and from Bangkok is such that the dry-season population is about nine percent higher than the wet season population. Seasonal workers make up almost 40 percent of the city's transportation/production sector where they work in construction, when dryness stimulates labour demand, in small factories and as casual labour. As the writers of this report note, 'Just as these migrants depend on their 3 or 4 months in Bangkok to provide them with cash to survive, much of the building of Bangkok's infrastructure requires the services of this labour force' (Aphichat, 1994, 35). The migration field from which seasonal migrants is drawn was reported by the Mahidol University group only to the level of national regions with the Northeast accounting for two-fifths of the total and the North another fifth (Aphichat, 1994, 44).

Looking from the rural end of seasonal migration streams, Somsak (1983, 59) reported that on 39 rainfed rice farms in the northeastern district of Khon Kaen 41 percent of income was derived from off-farm work compared with 25 percent from the same source on 38 irrigated rice farms. Unfortunately the data do not distinguish between off-farm non-agricultural work and off-farm agricultural work though the author does note that such work occurs mainly in the dry September to February period. How long circular migration on the scale the Mahidol

University researchers have established has existed is not well known but authoritative opinion would suggest that it was well-established, at least in some areas, as early as the 1950s. The study by Goldstein and Pichit (1974) fails to define what was meant by 'change of residence' or 'a move' while Thienchay's report on a longitudinal study of economic characteristics of rural Thai included a series of questions on secondary occupations but failed to mention the answers (Thienchay, 1974, 1 ff). However, the study by Ronald Ng (1978) at Lam Pao, Kalasin Province, showed that in 1971 wage labour, mainly on construction sites outside the villages and service sector activities such as riding pedicabs in provincial towns, accounted for 16 percent of household cash income (Ng, 1978, 66). That the income generated by employment involving short-term stays in urban areas is significant in the domestic economy of many rural Thai is unquestionable. How widespread it may be is simply unknown.

In Malaysia, circular migration has attracted limited attention from researchers. In Peninsular Malaysia, given the easy access to urban employment that widely exists it is possible that it is not an important phenomenon though rural-urban migration of a more or less permanent nature as well as daily commuting are clearly of some significance. Young's 1976 study of Simpang Empat, a group of hamlets near Alur Setar, the capital of the largely-rural rice-producing state of Kedah, is important here (Young 1978). She found that of 1974 non-migrants, 22 percent were daily commuters, mostly to urban jobs in Alur Setar indicating an already substantial incorporation into the urban economy (Young 1978, 424). Out-migrants comprised a further 781 persons of whom 669 were in employment, though 146 of those were in agriculture. Of the rest, 15 percent moved to non-agricultural work in small rural service centres with a population of less than 1000, another 20 percent to service centres with populations up to 10 000, 36 percent to towns in the 10 000-75 000 size range and the remaining

29 percent to larger centres. (Data computed from Young's Table 8). While these data are for all migrants rather than just circular ones, they do suggest that movement is not necessarily just to large cities. Pryor (1978, 72) suggested that in terms of general population redistribution urban areas with a population of more than 20 000 were, in the 1960s and early 1970s, growing faster than small towns and the rural areas, with evidence of out-migration from small towns in some Peninsular states.

Again from a rural perspective, in Malaysia it is clear that migration, whether circular or otherwise, has significant effects upon the rural economy as Pazim's recent study (1990) demonstrates. He found that in the western Peninsular Muda Irrigation Scheme, an area of double rice-cropping, the average household comprised 5.6 persons but only 1.4 labour units were available for on-farm work, 2.3 units having migrated. On the East Coast, in the Kemubu Irrigation Scheme, the average household was 6.4 persons with only 1.6 on-farm units. No fewer than 3.3 units were reported as 'migrated' (Pazim, 1990, 177). While the source of off-farm income was not identified by that writer, it was highly significant with income from off-farm employment together with 'unearned' income from remittances and pensions comprising an average of 39 percent at Muda and an astonishing 72 percent at Kemubu (Pazim, 1990, 189).

Such linkages of the urban and rural economies are obviously uneven in time and space though for lack of comprehensive studies it is impossible to provide details. Thus Ishak and his colleagues noted in their early study of three villages in northern Peninsular Malaysia that transfer payments by out-migrants, except those who happened to be the heads of households seasonally or regularly employed outside the villages were small (Ishak Shaari *et al.* 1978, 130). A contemporaneous study of Sik by George Elliston (1978), however, noted that while only five

percent of household members were 'temporarily outmigrant' with a further 11 percent 'prolonged outmigrants', remittances made a significant contribution to the household budgets of resident householders, with half of the households concerned claiming that over half of their cash income was derived from that source (Elliston, 1978, 217, 222).

So far as Thailand is concerned, little can be said beyond the fact that migration, at least in the short to medium term, as in developing countries generally, serves to link the urban and rural economies more directly than via the usual commercial and financial linkages. However, the nature and extent of the direct, person-to-person flows of goods, services and money to and from newly-migrated townfolk are little known. Certainly a major source of remittances, especially to the North and Northeast regions, is from young women providing sexual services in the capital. Even in the early 80s their number in Bangkok alone was around 200 000, with perhaps half a million in the country as a whole, representing about a tenth of the females in the 14-24 age-group (Pasuk Phonphaichit, 1982, 7). Pasuk's study of 50 girls showed that they earned substantial sums, most remitting to their rural families something every month as well as visiting them regularly (Pasuk, 1982, 22-23). The economic effects in the home villages were considerable, especially in respect of housing. Her case-histories also indicate substantial reliance on remittances for living expenses. But to provide an overview seems impossible at this juncture, the plethora of village-level economic studies consulted either failing to mention off-farm work at all or failing to distinguish urban income sources from others. As Utis Kaethien (1991, 1034) notes '... in Thailand, a high proportion of regional income expenditure is likely to be leaked ... to residents of other regions. It is quite possible that the majority of migrants send money back to their home area'. Such transfers are, of course, merely one expression of kin and village social linkages which persist following migration. It

is to these that consideration is now given.

### Social Linkages

The literature concerning the maintenance of social links between rural dwellers and those, usually near kin, who live more or less permanently in town is remarkably thin, the phenomenon usually attracting no more than a passing mention. (See, for example, Kuchiba *et al.*, 1979). Still less is there a literature concerned with the way in which links change through time. Given the relative cheapness of long-distance travel, relative that is to the generally higher incomes of townfolk, it is likely that for most cost is not a major factor in maintaining social links, as Dahlan's study of three Sabah towns indicates (Dahlan, 1989). This surveyed respondents in Kota Kinabalu (808 respondents), Sandakan (995 respondents) and Tawau (913 respondents), all towns in receipt of substantial rural-urban migration over the last 20 years, and longer as Hill and Voo (1990) suggest.

Since Dahlan's study is recent, and seemingly unique, it is worth summarizing the principal findings. While a significant proportion of migrants reported feelings of alienation from relatives in the villages, Kota Kinabalu and Sandakan 35 percent, Tawau 21 percent, only a small proportion indicated that distance was a major reason. (Unfortunately the study did not indicate where the migrants came from so distances may have been comparatively short. In any case few parts of the state are more than a day's surface travel from anywhere else). Findings are summarized below.

Table 5 : 'Linkage Behaviours' amongst Rural-Urban Migrants, Sabah

Respondents living with non-kin

	<u>Kota Kinabalu</u>	<u>Sandakan</u>	<u>Tawau</u>
Proportion (%)	29	20	16

Respondents reporting visits from village relatives

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Proportion (%)	69	28	71	27	66	34

Respondents reporting visits to village relatives

Proportion (%)	66	32	57	42	64	36
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Respondents reporting sending money to village relatives

Proportion (%)	52	42	61	38	54	45
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Source : Compiled from Tables in Dahlan (1989)

While data on the frequency of visits and amounts of remittances were not collected, the findings suggest well-established and continuing links. How these may relate to demographic characteristics and, especially, to length of residence is not clear though intuitively it might be expected that they would diminish with time. That this may not be so is suggested by the work of Hill and Voo, also in Sabah, but dealing with a Hakka Chinese immigrant farming community. While their study primarily focussed upon a generation-by-generation analysis of occupational and residential change, their fieldwork made it clear that visits, usually by townfolk to the remaining country-dwellers, certainly occurred though obviously highly variable in frequency from family to family.

## Conclusion

While the data on social linkages, especially as evidenced by visiting behaviours, is exiguous, it nevertheless points towards the maintenance of rural-urban linkages in the short to medium term. Two contradictory processes may be expected to continue to operate. First is that links, both social and economic, will expand as more and more people of rural origin move to the towns either permanently or as circular migrants. But such migration is clearly generational and it seems likely that villages will increasingly become the repository of the elderly, together with children who may be temporarily resident with them while their parents dwell in town. When the older generation passes away it is likely that the majority of the working generation, those well-established in urban employment, will cease to have any but sentimental links with their villages of origin.

Over several decades it seems likely that the number of agriculturalists in the work-force will begin to fall, an event probably no more than a decade away in Malaysia. Indeed, but for recent migration which has maintained the rural work-force, such a transition would have already occurred. The study by Hill and Voo (1990), though miniscule and involving an immigrant rather than an indigenous farming community, may be a foreshadowing microcosm of larger-scale events. Over a span of four generations, starting with a group almost entirely agricultural, the proportion of farmers fell from 61 percent in the second generation (born mainly between 1885 and 1910) to 39 percent in the third generation (born in the 1910s, 20s, and 30s) to only 10 percent in the fourth generation, the number reaching a maximum in the third generation.

In Thailand the peak numbers of agriculturalists are probably further away than in Malaysia - likely by at least a generation, notwithstanding the falling rates of population growth, shared by both rural and urban people, and despite continued rapid growth in G.D.P. and both permanent and circular migration. The degree to which migration, especially circular migration, may in future be directed away from Bangkok is not clear. Much will depend upon the continued economic growth of the city, one in which the diseconomies of a situation in which infrastructural development has clearly lagged behind other growth sectors are now evident. Levels of rural-urban migration by region of current residence, i.e. within-region migration, are currently low, below five percent in the Central, North, Northeast region and only nine percent in the South (Aphichat *et al*, 1994, 43). Bangkok clearly remains the destination of choice. What is clear, though the evidence is suggestive rather than conclusive, is that most villages are increasing linked to the regional and global economy. For rural people the city is becoming another source of subsistence.

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