

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Setting the scene

The last decade of the twentieth century witnessed a revival of large-scale immigration into Thailand. Since the late nineteenth century and the last major influx of Chinese immigration, Thailand had not experienced such massive immigration into the country (Chantavanich 1999; Dixon 1999; Manarungsan 1989; Silcock 1967). Recent estimates indicate that at least one million expatriates currently reside in Thailand. However, the term ‘immigration’ as normally used is not quite explicit. Generally, immigration is associated with a wide variety of types and forms of population movement into a country, such as tourists, documented and undocumented migrant workers, trafficked persons, asylum-seekers, and refugees (International Organization for Migration 2004). What this study focuses on is labour immigration, which is a major component of international migration into Thailand.

Research on labour migration into Thailand has concentrated on the immigration of illegal workers from neighbouring countries and the emigration of Thai workers. This study discusses the underlying structural changes in the Thai labour market since the 1990s and then examines skilled labour migration into the country, about which little was known. The migration of unskilled workers from other Asian countries is also poorly understood and information on their movement is scanty with regard to the structure of foreign labour migration and the situation of different migrant groups in terms of their country of origin, occupation, and status. This thesis discusses the role of migration in economic and social development in Thailand. This sets the context for detailed empirical research about the causes and process of migration and the characteristics of unskilled as well as skilled migrants to Thailand.

1.2 Significance of the research

There is a paucity of knowledge on international labour migration into Thailand, which greatly increased after the 1997 Asian financial and economic crisis. When the crisis began in July

1997, the Thai government announced the deportation of illegal migrant workers and intensified its campaign to seal its borders with neighbouring countries in an effort to stop new illegal migration. This was viewed primarily as a measure to safeguard Thai jobs for Thai citizens. In October 1997, the Department of Employment (DOE) estimated that there were at least 935,000 illegal workers (as compared to 750,000 workers before the crisis) on Thai soil and that the number of illegal workers increased to over 987,000 in 1998 (Chalamwong 1999: 15; Chalamwong 2001: 10-11). By the beginning of 1998, the National Security Council (NSC) reportedly had 290,000 illegal migrant workers repatriated and over 130,000 migrants intercepted at 53 border check points (*Migration News* May 1999, vol. 6, no. 5: online; Chalamwong 1998b: 16). Apart from illegal unskilled migrants from neighbouring countries, many skilled westerners working illegally (especially in so-called 'boiler-room' operations or unauthorised financial companies) were also reportedly arrested and deported (Parnsoonthorn 2005). Nevertheless, despite the government's stringent measures, the influx of illegal migrants continued.

Although the economic recession led to job losses and unemployment, Thai workers were reluctant to take over the jobs held previously by the low-paid foreign workers. Nor were they qualified for the skilled jobs formerly held by western workers. Thus, the demand for foreign skilled and unskilled workers was high and remains high. A study conducted by the Asian Research Center for Migration (ARCM) at Chulalongkorn University indicates that, despite the fact that hundreds of thousands of Thai workers became unemployed as a result of the economic crisis, Thailand still needed at least 86,895 migrant workers (Chantavanich 1999 cited in Chalamwong 2001: 12). Since the effort of the Thai government in replacing migrants with Thai workers was unsuccessful, it instituted a programme of registration of illegal workers which enabled employers to register their illegal employees. The registration of illegal workers exercise is a representative of the dilemma that the Thai state continues to face in its efforts to control the cross-border movement of people into the country.

Also, Thailand's dependence on foreign labour is structural, and is bound with the shift from labour-intensive to hi-tech production and a knowledge-based economy. At the same time, Thailand continues to rely on unskilled and semi-skilled workers for the construction, agricultural and fisheries sectors. The state's attempt to manage and regulate foreign workers

is regarded as *ad hoc* and reactive. Thus international labour migration (ILM) requires an explicit policy response from the Thai government. However, without adequate statistical information and research on migration, the government lacks both the statistical data and groundwork on which to base its policies on labour regulation and management.

1.3 Overall research aim and objectives

Labour migration poses a critical challenge for the Thai state. In this context, the central aim that underpins this thesis is to document the extent and characteristics of ILM into Thailand. It explores how structural change in the economy, the state's migration goals and the growth of the global labour market have guided and continued to guide immigration policy in the state. This research has the following specific objectives:

- 1) At the macro level, to present an historical account of the broad economic and socio-political reasons why Thailand has become a major migratory pole in Asia;
- 2) At the national level, to examine existing legislation and policies surrounding migration and labour standards in Thailand and the extent to which these facilitate labour immigration and shape the migratory process;
- 3) At the national level, to examine the trends in, and characteristics of, authorised labour migration into Thailand, including country of origin, gender, skills and occupational categories of foreign workers;
- 4) At the micro level, to document the migration experiences of two groups of labour migrants: unskilled construction workers and skilled workers. This will include an exploration of their reasons for migration, including economic and political imperatives, kinship ties and networks facilitating migration, as well as their perceptions about the benefits and disadvantages of migration

1.4 Tracing the continuities in ILM in historical and contemporary perspective

The literature on ILM is vast, and includes studies on theories of migration, migration patterns, migration goals, gender and migration and migration regulation. A range of disciplinary perspectives may also be identified, most notably from economics, history, political economy and geography. This section identifies a number of strands in the literature which are tied to the central issues of my thesis. The section is divided into five main parts:

- Significance of the study of ILM
- ILM in historical perspective
- Theories of ILM
- ILM in Asia
- ILM in Thailand

1.4.1 Significance of the study of ILM

No country of the world [today] remains unaffected by international migration flows. They are all either countries of origin, transit or destination for migrants, or all three simultaneously (International Organization for Migration 2003b: 1).

As the level of international migration rises, so does its impact on economic, social, cultural and political policies in most countries of the world. The phenomenon of international migration brings into play many sensitive issues of national security and identity, of social change and culture adaptation, and of economic vitality and development (International Organization for Migration 2003a: 1).

Many factors have been put forward to explain migration. The causes of environmental and political refugee movements may be more explicit, but the propensity for movement of the economic migrant is more complex. While refugees are forced to move out of their homeland in search of safety, escaping either from environmental catastrophe, or war, oppression, political violence or human rights violations, the movements of economic migrants are mostly voluntary. Moreover, environmental and political refugees can later become economically active migrant workers, whereas, it is not necessarily true that an economic migrant is a *prima facie* environmental or political refugee. The movement of the economic migrant, and especially in 'international labour migration', has therefore become the focus of migration studies. This is especially so when people from different cultural regions, who have different ethnic, linguistic, social backgrounds, and socio-political ideologies move to distant places and

their mobility entails far more social, cultural, economic, political, and environmental ramifications and complexities for individuals, families, households, community, and societies in both the sending and receiving countries (Sinha and Ataulloh 1987: 2). The study of international labour migration is therefore important not only because of the complexity of the migration process but also because of the inevitably changing socio-economic conditions caused by human mobility. Bohning (1996: 2) claims that '[a]t any rate, international economic migration is a growing phenomenon that tomorrow will involve more countries than today and a broader range of skills than in the past, even in low-income countries.' It is believed that there are now at least 60 million economically active migrants worldwide, both documented and undocumented (International Organization for Migration 2003a: 2).

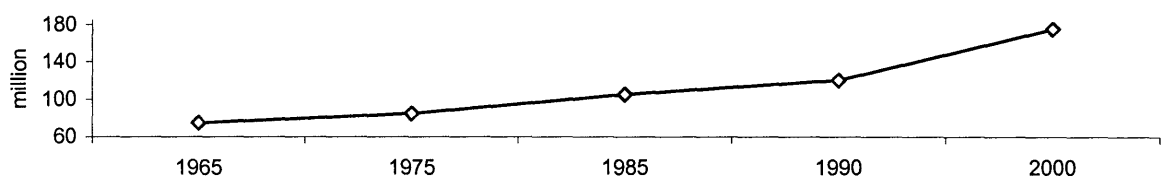
1.4.2 ILM in historical perspective

It is a cliché, but no less true, to state that migration is not a new phenomenon and no one can deny that human migration is as old as the human race itself (Demuth 2000: 21). According to the widely-accepted theory of human movement, the very first human species, *Homo erectus*, moved out of Africa over a million years ago and *Homo sapiens*, it appears, left their place of origin in Africa and spread from there for more than 120,000 years (Diamond 1997: 36-38; Manning 2005: 16-38). Hence, it is appropriate to say that, since time immemorial, people have moved, and still do, across ranges, oceans, and continents. The primeval man and woman were hunters and gatherers who trekked from one place to another in search of food or to escape natural difficulties; the modern man and woman 'continued to migrate in order to improve his [and her] lot in life even after establishing residence...' (United Nations 1998a: 87). What then is new about 'international migration'? Bohning (1984: 3) asserts that the international migration of human beings dates back only to when the idea of the 'nation-state' took hold in Europe during the Industrial Revolution and, as a result of colonialism, spread in all directions throughout the world. The nation-state also 'brought along with it a "we-they" or "in-out" distinction' (Bohning 1984: 29). Protection against outsiders is, thus, the state's ultimate purpose. People now not only move across natural boundaries, they cross the drawn borderline between states, over which 'non-belongers may not step without explicit or tacit consent' (Bohning 1981: 31). It is common knowledge that the British created the world's first

'nation state'. To be more precise, formal migration control was initiated in 1793 with the enactment of the Alien Bill in England (Kritz, Keely, and Tomasi 1981: xiii).

Even today, when it is believed that globalisation has reduced the sovereignty of the nation-state (increased deterritorialisation of the national economy) and that we live in a world of mobile capital, a world of international integration of markets, a world of brisk communication and transportation, and a world of (fairly) open national territories, human migration and border controls are still firmly in place in every part of the world (Munck 2002; Ohmae 1990; Sassen 1996; Thatcher 2002). Despite the fact that international migration is the third constituent of globalisation, population movement is liable to strict restrictions, from passports to various entry visa requirements and to employment licensing, all of which are dictated by migration policies of states and decisions pertaining to admission. The increasingly restrictive stance of border controls and entry requirements make it even harder nowadays for some people to move across national boundaries, especially after 2001. The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 have made states even more vigilant of people coming into their countries, and more protective of their territories (Human Rights Watch 2004: online). Nevertheless, people continue to migrate. Recent estimates suggest that, as of 2000, the migrant population worldwide (defined as people who had lived outside their country of birth for at least 12 months) was approximately 175 million. To put the number in perspective, this was something like 2.9 per cent of the world's population (Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2002: 11; International Organization for Migration 2003b: 1). It is also evident from Figure 1.1 that the world population of migrants today has more than doubled in 35 years. Even though global migration is a controversial issue, especially due to the difficulties with estimating the number of illegal migrants, with on-going wars, political conflicts, and uneven development in many parts of the world, the migrant population has undoubtedly grown in recent years.

Figure 1.1 Number of International Migrants, 1965-2000



Source: International Organization for Migration (2003b), p.1

From the slave trade to the collie system

Historically, international labour migration originated in the form of chattel slavery from Africa, and then as indentured labour chiefly from Asia (Bohning 1984; Castles 2000; Castles and Miller 1998; Pongsapich 1994; Potts 1990). Europeans began to use African slaves initially for household purposes around 1445. Large-scale forcible transfers of African slave labour did not occur until the late seventeenth century and persisted until the middle of the nineteenth century, producing the largest forced labour movement in world recorded history (Potts 1990: 38-40). By 1850, an estimated 15 million African slaves had been transferred to the Americas alone to meet the demand for field labour on plantations. A myriad of them were sent to the sugar growing colonies of the Caribbean (Appleyard 1991: 11 cited in Castles and Miller 1998: 53). Also, before the end of state-sanctioned slavery, approximately another 10 to 15 million Africans were transported as part of slave trade (Lewis 1982: 37). The abolition of slavery as a legal institution took place amid the European colonization of Asia and, as a result of that, indentured workers from Asia (mostly Chinese and Indian), Oceania (Melanesians and Micronesians) and Java became vital surrogate labour for slaves used by all the major colonial powers in plantations, mines, railroads, and constructions (Castles and Miller 1998; Kenwood and Loughheed 1999; Marks and Richardson 1984; Potts 1990; Stalker 1994). Unlike slaves, under the indentured labour system, indentured labourers (also known as 'coolies') usually signed a contract before their departure or at their destination to work for a fixed period of three to five years or thereabout in exchange for the cost of their passages, fixed wages, and housing (Kenwood and Loughheed 1999; Stalker 1994). The labourers were not prevented from renewing their contracts or from settling permanently in the receiving country (Kenwood and Loughheed 1999: 58). However, according to Potts (1990: 65), the indentured labour system was 'a mixture of various labour systems and stood somewhere between slavery, forced labour and debt bondage on the one hand and free wage labour on the other.' Since the indenture system was still subject to exploitation, and extremely arduous toil, it was very much indeed like slavery. In fact, some scholars have referred to this system as 'a new system of slavery' or 'a new form of slavery' (Peach 1994: 38; Potts 1990: 63).

While Chinese and Indians formed the largest group of indentured workers, especially since the 1850s, the increasing recruitment of indentured workers from Oceania, Japan and Java

began in the second half of the nineteenth century. Between 1840 and 1915, an estimated 280,000 indentured workers from Melanesia and Micronesia, locally known as *kanakas*, were brought to work on sugar plantations in Australia, Fiji, Samoa, Hawaii, New Caledonia, French Polynesia, Nauru, and Peru (Potts 1990: 95; Stalker 1994: 12). Even though the export of Japanese indentured labour began around 1870, it was not legalised until 1885, when an agreement was signed between the Japanese government and certain Hawaiian sugar plantation owners to permit Japanese labourers to emigrate to Hawaii (Kenwood and Lougheed 1999: 57-59; Stalker 1994: 12). Between 1885 and 1924, approximately 1.2 million Japanese indentured workers were employed in Hawaii, the United States, Korea, and Asiatic Russia, and a relatively smaller number in China, Brazil and Peru (Kenwood and Lougheed 1999: 59). Javanese indentured workers were used mainly by the Dutch in their colonized territories under the 1880 Coolie Ordinance. It is estimated that of the around 500,000 indentured workers recruited into Dutch colonies in 1931, upwards of 400,000 were Javanese, and of which 30,905 were employed in Surinam, a Dutch territory in America (Kloosterboer 1975: 33 cited in Potts 1990: 97). It is worth noting that the indentured labour system lasted longest in Dutch colonies. By the middle of the twentieth century, when indentureship was finally abolished, it has been estimated that between 12 and 37 million indentured workers had been transferred out of labour-abundant China and India and were used in colonial possessions around the world (Castles and Miller 1998: 54; Potts 1990: 71-72; Stalker 1994: 11).

Nevertheless, during the indenture labour epoch, there was also considerable movement of 'free' migrants from both India and China. Significant numbers of Indian traders, doctors and lawyers, so called 'passenger Indians', made themselves manifest in all countries where South Asian communities were settled (Peach 1994: 40). Large numbers of 'free' Chinese migrated to North America, Australia, Southeast Asia, the East Indies, the Philippine Islands, and Formosa (Kenwood and Lougheed 1999: 58; McKeown 2004: 158). But later, after the implementation of anti-Asian immigration laws in the Americas around the 1880s and the adoption of the 'White Australia' policy in 1901, the migration of Chinese to these destinations (that is, North Americas and Australia) dropped drastically (Asia Pacific Migration Research Network 1997: online; McKeown 2004: 175).

From Europe to the 'New World'

It was not until the century prior to the First World War that the world witnessed the largest movement of humankind, when over 50 million migrants, mainly Europeans, set sail to relatively sparsely populated 'New World' destinations (that is, the Americas, Australasia and, to a smaller extent, South America), where labour was scarce (Baines 1995: 1; Hatton and Williamson 1994a: 4-5; Kenwood and Loughheed 1999: 47). The exodus of Europeans to New World destinations started earlier and was happening right through the time of slavery and indentured labour. However, the core reasons for such people to migrate were not for employment. For instance, according to Stalker (1994: 13):

English convicts had been deported to Australia... Spanish and Portuguese went to the Caribbean and Central and South America, and the Dutch, English and France headed for North America. Most of these were adventurers, or political refugees, rather than migrant workers.

The bulk of the movement actually begun to take place from about 1880 and over time the tidal wave of movement magnified, proliferating from 118,000 migrants a year in the period 1821-1850 to 378,000 in 1851-1880 and to over a million a year arriving at the destination ports in 1881-1915 (Table 1.1). With industrialisation, demographic and economic changes in Western Europe led to landlessness and penury. Together with economic growth and nation building in the New World, technical advances in transportation, and the relaxation of government controls on movements of people, this generally enticed, facilitated and encouraged the vast movement (Castles 2000: 273; Kenwood and Loughheed 1999: 48-53). By 1915, as evident in Table 1.1, the United States was host to, in aggregate, almost 32 million immigrants and was by far the most important receiving country. The other key receiving countries included Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa (Baines 1995: 2; Hatton and Williamson 1994a: 5). However, between 1918 and 1945, economic stagnation, political turmoil and wars caused the curtailment of mass migration, dissipating the so-called 'age of migration' (Baines 1995: 67-69; Castles 2000: 274; Castles and Miller 1998: 62-64).

Table 1.1 International Immigration, 1821-1915

Country of Immigration	Immigrants (million persons)					
	1821-1850		1851-1880		1881-1915	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
United States	2.38	67.0	7.73	68.1	21.76	59.4
Canada	0.74	20.8	0.82	7.2	2.59	7.1
British W. Indies	0.08	2.3	0.27	2.4	0.53	1.4
Brazil	0.02	0.6	0.45	4.0	2.97	8.1
Argentina	-	-	0.44	3.9	4.26	11.6
Australia			0.79	7.0	2.77	7.6
New Zealand	0.19	5.4	0.25	2.2	0.26	0.7
All others	0.14	3.9	0.60	5.3	1.50	4.1
Total	3.55	100.0	11.35	100.0	36.64	100.0
Annual averages	118,000		378,000		1,046,857	

Source: Kenwood, A. G., and A. L. Lougheed (1999), p. 49.

After World War II

In the aftermath of the Second World War, as soon as economies started to recover, international labour migration grew in scale and it grew larger in scope than the migration of past centuries (Castles 2000; Castles and Miller 1998; Salt 1976; Salt and Clout 1976a). According to Castles (2000: 274), '[m]ore and more countries were affected by migration, while immigration countries received entrants from a broad spectrum of economic, social and cultural backgrounds.' Nonetheless, the previous form of settlement migration during the epoch of 'the age of migration' had substantially declined in favour of a new form of temporary migration of labour, henceforth known as 'guest workers' or 'contract workers'. The 'guest-worker system' was first introduced, after the War, in highly industrialised countries of Western Europe, contributing to reconstruction and to the creation of economic prosperity (Castles and Miller 1998; Cholewinski 1997).

Therefore, after 1945, workers migrated in significant numbers to Western Europe from the European periphery; to North America and Australia from Europe, Asia and Latin America; and later to Argentina from Uruguay; to Venezuela from Colombia; to the oil rich countries of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other Gulf States from nearby Arabian countries (such as Egypt and Jordan), and before long from Asia; to the Ivory Coast and Nigeria from the other West African countries; to the former apartheid economy of South Africa from neighbouring states; and, more recently, within East and Southeast Asia (Cholewinski 1997: 16-17).

1.4.3 Theories of ILM

Since international labour migration has grown in size and scope, research in the field has grown accordingly, if not faster. There are a number of approaches explaining international labour movements, yet there is no single approach that can comprehensively describe and explain the international migration phenomenon, nor a specific university discipline for the study of the field (Hammar 2001: 927). Economists, demographers, sociologists, geographers, and political scientists, for example, have offered different approaches and methodologies to study international labour migration, employing fundamentally different concepts, premises, and frames of reference (Brettell and Hollifield 2000a: 2-20; Castles and Miller 1998: 20; Massey et al. 1996: 182). Despite the variety of competing theoretical frameworks fragmented across disciplines and ideologies, Douglas Massey and his colleagues (1996) meticulously review and analyse the theories related to the migration process. They postulate that there appear to be two core approaches, which include the 'initiation of international migration' and 'perpetuation of international migration'. A brief description of the theories of international labour migration is, therefore, presented below:

The initiation of international migration

The *neo-classical economic*, *new economics of migration*, *dual labour market theory*, and *world systems theories* are claimed by Douglas Massey and his colleagues to be 'best-fit' theories to explain the initiation phase of migration.

The *neoclassical economic* perspective focuses almost entirely on disparities between countries, costs of migration, and expected net returns. The theory views the causes of population movement to lie in a combination of push and pull factors, which impel people to leave one area and attract them to another. The factors are, for instance, the differentials in demographic growth, living standards, economic opportunities, and political freedom (Castles and Miller 1998: 20). Nevertheless, to explain international labour migration, neoclassical economic theory perceives geographical differences in the supply of, and demand for, labour and the resulting differential in wages as the major factors driving individual migration decisions (see also, Borjas 1989). To cite one authority:

Countries with the large endowment of labour relative to capital have low equilibrium market wage, while countries with a limited endowment of labour relative to capital are characterized by a high market wage... The resulting differential in wages [thus] causes workers from the low-wage country to move to the high-wage country. As the result of this movement, the supply of labour decreases and wages rise in the capital-poor country, while the supply of labour increases and wages fall in the capital-rich country, leading, at equilibrium, to an international wage differential that reflects only the costs of international movement, pecuniary and psychic (Massey et al. 1996: 183).

The theory, in other words, assumes that in the absence of wage differentials, labour migration will not occur. Moreover, migration of international labour will eventually equalize economic disparities between countries, so that it is also known as an 'Equilibrium Model'.

However, it is noteworthy that the movement of highly skilled workers yields a different pattern. According to neoclassical economics, highly skilled workers are regarded as capital or human capital. The flows of highly skilled workers, like those of capital, respond to differences in the rate of return, which may be different from the overall wage rate. Highly skilled workers, then, tend to move in the opposite direction to the flow of unskilled labourers, as Massey and others (1996: 183) explain:

Mirroring the flow of workers from labour-abundant to labour-scarce countries is a flow of investment capital from capital-rich to capital poor countries. The relative scarcity of capital in poor countries yields a rate of return that is high by international standards, thereby attracting investment. The movement of capital also includes human capital, with highly skilled workers moving from capital-rich to capital-poor countries in order to reap high returns on their skills.

Neoclassical economic theory emphasises 'the individual decision' to migrate, based on a rational expected positive net return, usually monetary, from the movement. It is arguable that, before potential migrants can move and capture the higher wages associated with greater labour productivity, they have to undertake certain investments, such as the cost of travelling and maintenance, moving and looking for jobs, the effort involved in learning a new culture and language, and the difficulty experienced in adapting to a new environment (Massey et al. 1996: 184). This theory, therefore, assumes that migrants are keen on migrating only when expected earnings at the new destination are in excess of those in the country of origin. In addition, migrant workers will estimate the 'costs and benefits' of moving to alternative

locations and will move to where the expected discounted net returns are greater (Gorter, Nijkamp, and Poot 1998b; Massey et al. 1996).

Unlike neoclassical economic theories, a key perception of *the new economics of migration* approach is that individual migrants generally do not make decisions to migrate alone; indeed, the migration decisions are made collectively by related people (especially, family members) ‘not only to maximize expected income, but also to minimize risks and to loosen constraints associated with a variety of market failures, apart from those in the labour market’ (Massey et al. 1996: 186). It is emphatically the decision made by family members because, as Massey and others (1996: 186) put it, ‘households are in a position to control risks to their economic well-being by diversifying the allocation of household resources, such as family labour.’ The decision to migrate is, thus, according to Ammassari and Black (2001: 10), ‘a complex series of implicit and explicit “negotiations” occurring within the household’. Generally, in the developed world, risks to household income can be minimized through private insurance or governmental programmes. On the other hand, most developing countries are deficient in these institutional mechanisms for households to manage risks (Chomchai 2000: 33-34; Massey et al. 1996: 186; Stalker 2000: 131). This kind of market failure in the developing world, thus, tends to induce strong pressures for emigration.

Additionally, the new economics of migration theory assumes that income is not a homogeneous good and that sources of income matter, and they perceive migration as a ‘calculated strategy’ (Massey et al. 1996: 188; Stark 1991: 26). People often engage in what Stark (1991: 24) calls ‘interpersonal income comparisons’ within their reference group. Households, for that reason, have strong inducements to use their scarce resources in new income sources not only to increase their absolute income, but also to improve their income relative to other households, and, therefore, to reduce their relative deprivation and, incidentally, to increase their relative satisfaction compared with their reference group (Massey et al. 1996: 188; Stark 1991: 24). Thus, the prospect of labour movement also rises as the result of the change in income of other households and the degree of relative deprivation (Massey et al. 1996; Stark 1991).

Whereas the neoclassical economic and the new economics of migration theories focus on the micro-level decision process, *the dual labour market theory* looks at forces operating at higher levels of aggregation (Massey et al. 1996: 182). The theory suggests that migration is mainly demand-based. It is not the result of push factors in sending countries. The intrinsic labour demand for low-level workers in developed countries, which is derived from the economic structure of those nations, is the critical factor causing labour movement. Therefore, unlike the other two theories, the dual labour market theory argues that wage differentials between countries are insufficient conditions for migration of labour to occur. The theory fundamentally perceives that labour markets in highly developed countries are segmented, creating a so-called 'bifurcation of the labour force' (Berger and Piore 1980; Massey et al. 1996; Piore 1979). One, therefore, finds two divergent sectors co-existing in a developed economy. While workers in a capital-intensive primary sector get secure, stable and skilled jobs working in favourable working conditions, with high pay and plush equipment, workers in a labour-intensive secondary sector hold jobs that are unstable, unskilled, receive low pay and involve working in hazardous working conditions with limited benefits. Because of the undesirable pay and conditions in the labour-intensive secondary sector, it is difficult to attract local workers. Employers, then, turn to immigrant workers. Besides the 'bifurcation of the labour force', the demand for immigrant workers also stems from three other fundamental characteristics of developed countries, according to Massey and others (1996), including structural inflation, motivational problems, and the demography of the labour supply. Each of the three characteristics is briefly discussed below:

Structural inflation: the theory argues that wages are not a reflection of conditions of labour supply and demand, but indeed a reflection of workers' social and occupational status and pay. Therefore, wage changes are not entirely free to respond to changes in labour supply and demand; in contrast, they correspond to the hierarchies of prestige and status, which people perceive and expect. Increasing wages at the bottom in order to attract more workers for unskilled jobs during times of labour scarcity will result in a profound pressure to raise wages proportionately throughout the job hierarchy, to keep them commensurate with social expectations. Therefore, raising entry wages is expensive and unlikely to attract native workers. To avoid structural inflation, the importation of low-wage migrant workers is an alternative solution (Massey et al. 1996: 441; Stalker 2001: 23).

Motivational problems: The theory perceives that people in general work not only for money, but also for the build up and upholding of their identity and social status. Occupational hierarchies are, therefore, crucial for the incentive of workers. Since there are neither financial nor social status rewards from menial jobs at the bottom end of the hierarchies, acute motivational problems occur. Most local workers, thus, disdain to take up the jobs at the bottom rung. To fill the shortfall in demand for dead-end jobs, and to maintain labour as a variable factor of production, employers seek to recruit immigrant workers, who normally perceive this sort of job merely as a means to the end of earning income (Massey et al. 1996: 191-192; Stalker 2000: 132-134). The theory also perceives that the level of education of a country has a positive effect on motivational problems (Jennissen 2003: 174).

The demography of labour supply: In the past, the demand for workers fitting the low-wage, low-skill criteria, known as 'entry-level workers', in advanced industrial economies was met to a degree by women and teenagers. However, over time, these two traditional sources dwindled due to the rise in female labour force participation, the rise in divorce rates, which transformed women's jobs into sources of primary income support, and the decline in birth rates and the extension of formal education (Massey et al. 1996: 193; Stalker 2001: 23). Therefore, the demographic trend toward a smaller domestic supply for entry-level workers increases the demand for immigrant workers, causing labour migration flows.

Instead of linking the origins of the international labour movement to the bifurcation of the labour market within particular national economies, *world system theory* links them to the structure of the global economy – notably 'the penetration of capitalist economic relations into peripheral, non-capitalist societies', which has taken place since the sixteenth century through the concerted actions of colonial regimes, neo-colonial governments, multinational corporations, and national elites (Massey et al. 1996: 194). The theory argues that international labour migration is generated as land, raw materials and labour, especially, in the developing world are drawn into the world market economy. Policy toward overseas investments and toward the international flow of capital and goods induces the demand for migrant workers. Capitalist market formation in the developing world causes the movement of labour. Other factors, such as transportation, communication, and historical and cultural links, further

facilitate international labour migration (Amankwaa 1995; Chase-Dunn and Hall 1994; Massey et al. 1996; So 1990; Stalker 2000; Wallerstein 1983).

The perpetuation of international migration

Whereas theories about the initiation of migration perceive wage discrepancies, relative risks, recruitment effects, and market penetration as causes of labour migratory movement across time and space, network theory, institutional theory, cumulative causation theory, and migration system theory perceive new conditions that perpetuate migration and make additional movement more probable.

Network theory, like the neoclassical economic and the economics of migration theories, accepts the view that international migration is an individual or household decision; however, it argues that acts of migration at one point in time systematically change the context within which future migration decisions are made, greatly raising the odds that later decision makers will choose to migrate. Migrants' network connections constitute a form of 'social capital' to be drawn upon to secure access to employment in the foreign market. This is because of connections created by sets of interpersonal ties that link migrants, former migrants (or experienced compatriots), and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, camaraderie, and shared community origin. These are so-called 'auspices of migration' (Massey et al. 1996; Tilly and Brown 1968). These obligations inherent in network ties bring down the cost and risks of movement and increase the expected returns to migrants, for there is that 'movement in which prospective migrants learn of opportunities, are provided with transportation arranged, and have initial accommodation and employment arranged by means of primary social relationships with previous migrants' (MacDonald and MacDonald 1964: 82). The network, hence, increases the prospect of international labour movement and creates additional movement and so-called 'chain migration' (Brettell 2000; Choldin 1999; MacDonald and MacDonald 1964; Massey et al. 1996).

Institutional theory perceives that the role of both private and voluntary organizations that step in to, legally and illegally, assist migration processes furthers the movement of international labour, especially when the organizations become known by migrant workers and

institutionalised, constituting another form of 'social capital'. While for-profit organizations and private entrepreneurs, in return for fees, provide migrant workers with all sorts of legal and illegal services and means to facilitate migration, voluntary organizations ensure that, in the country of destination, migrant workers are offered some kind of protection. Therefore, the development of these migrant-supporting institutions makes migration more sound, secure, and safe, making additional movement of labour increasingly more likely (Massey et al. 1996: 200-201).

Cumulative causation theory points to the fact that the establishment of international labour migration streams creates responses that make additional movement more likely by changing the social context of subsequent migration decisions. According to Massey and others (1996), there are six socio-economic factors that are possibly affected by migration in a cumulative fashion, including the distribution of income, the distribution of land, the organization of agricultural production, the culture of migration, the regional distribution of human capital, and the social meaning of work. These are further explained below:

The distribution of income: People may be motivated to migrate to improve their income relative to other households in their reference group (see also, Stark and Taylor 1989; Stark 1991). Therefore, migration affects income distribution and creates relative deprivation among non-migrant families, inducing them to send a family member to migrate, which further aggravates income disparity and consolidates the sense of relative deprivation, leading to migration of more members of more families, and so forth (Massey et al. 1996: 201).

The distribution of land: With their higher earnings, most migrant workers tend to purchase farmland, but they are reluctant to return to agrarian production, so they are likely to let the land lie bare. As a result, the demand for local farm labour decreases, increasing the pressure for emigration. Thus, the more emigration, the more farmland purchased and withdrawn from production, the more pressure for more immigration of workers (Massey et al. 1996: 202).

The organization of agrarian production: With their higher total income, households with migrant members are capable and more likely than non-migrant families to use capital-intensive methods (such as machinery, fertilisers, and herbicides) for their farm production.

Therefore, migrant families need less labour per unit of output, pressuring agrarian labour to find jobs elsewhere, which in turn increases migration and further increases capitalisation of agriculture of more families, thereby causing still more migration of labour and so on (Massey et al. 1996: 202).

The culture of migration: Once people have migrated, they are very likely to change tastes and motivations, developing a sense of social mobility and a new life style. For that reason, their potential return to migration increases and they tend to repeatedly migrate. Furthermore, at the community level, for not only higher income but also because of new tastes and styles acquired, migration is perceived as a *de rigueur* activity and a ritual of passage to lift one's status, hence inciting more people in the community to migrate (Massey et al. 1996: 202-203).

The regional distribution of human capital: Migration is normally a selective process that draws skilled, productive, and highly motivated people into countries of destination, resulting in the depletion of human capital in the sending area (see also, Chiswick 2000; Lewis 1982). Consequently, the accumulation of human capital, over time, strengthens the economic growth of the receiving community and broadens the economic disparities between the countries of origin and destination, which further enhances the conditions for migration (Massey et al. 1996: 203).

The social meaning of work: The presence of migrant workers in significant numbers can alter the social definition of work, engendering a certain class of occupations to be stigmatised and to be labelled as 'immigrant jobs'. Thus, the immigrant jobs become less socially desirable and more culturally unwanted for locals, increasing the disinclination of local workers to take up the jobs, thereby reinforcing the structural demand for immigrant workers (Massey et al. 1996: 203-204; Stalker 2000: 134).

Another theory, *Migration system theory* recognizes that the study of changing trends and patterns in contemporary international labour movement require a dynamic rather than a static perspective, allowing for the identification of stable international migration systems (Gorter, Nijkamp, and Poot 1998b). According to Massey and others (1996: 204), 'these systems are characterized by relatively intense exchanges of goods, capital, and people between certain

countries and less intense exchanges between others.’ It is, therefore, necessary to examine both ends of the flow and to study both micro and macro elements of all linkages, including cultural, economic and political factors (Castles and Miller 1998). Individuals in the migration system have the role of active decision makers, who develop strategies to migrate, which are embedded in the different influences of the system, such as colonization, political influence, trade, investment, or cultural ties (Castles and Miller 1998; Gorter, Nijkamp, and Poot 1998b; Kritz and Zlotnik 1992; Massey et al. 1996). Therefore, this approach, as Gorter, Nijkamp, and Poot (1998b) argues, tends to have the character of a conceptual framework rather than of a specific theory.

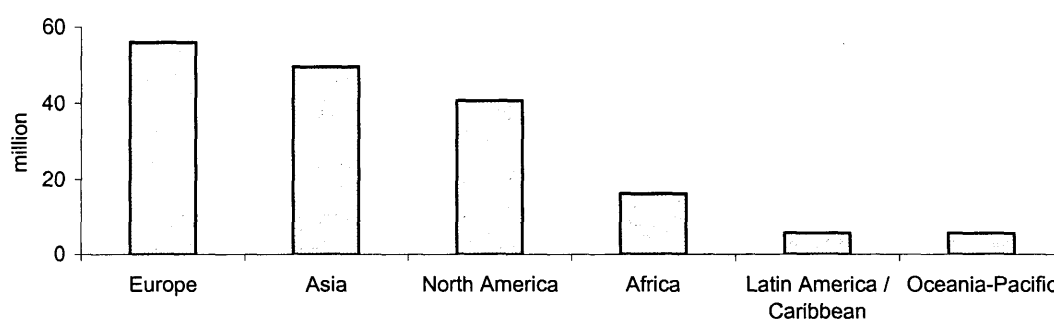
All in all, it is clear that the twofold theoretical approach of Massey and his colleagues (that is, the initiation and perpetuation of international labour migration) explains the fundamental forces driving the migration process. Their approach goes beyond this, though, to explore how what Massey calls ‘cumulative causation’ (such as social network spread, institutions supporting transnational movement development, and the social meaning of work changes in receiving countries) subverts the structural determinants of migration (Massey et al. 1996: 198). Nevertheless, there appears to be a chasm between these twofold approaches. Chantavanich and Risser (1996: 3) observe that, whereas theories about the initiation phase of migration are mainly economic lines of thought, sociological explanations seem to dominate the point of view of theories pertaining to the perpetuation phase. Moreover, the theories approach international labour movement with a different causal mechanism and at different levels of aggregation. Likewise, Massey and his colleagues (1996: 182) are of the opinion that, because of the complex and multifaceted nature of international labour migration, a full understanding of the subject can only be achieved by contributions from all disciplines and from sophisticated theories that incorporate a variety of perspectives, levels, and assumptions. Furthermore, Castle and Miller (1998: 20) contend that all these theories have their place, providing they do not pontificate that they are but the only correct one. Similarly, Sinha and Ataullah (1987: 69) assert that ‘No definite theory... has been propounded regarding factors responsible for migration. Migration is influenced not by a single factor [but] rather a long list of factors influence it.’ And in the opinion of Thompimson, the factors influencing such movement are ‘complex and intertwined’ (cited in Sinha and Ataullah 1987: 71). Research on international labour migration, therefore, tends to be intrinsically interdisciplinary and

comprised of a variety of methodologies, including a top-down ‘macro’ level, focusing on migration policy or market cogency, and a bottom-up ‘micro’ level, emphasizing the experience of the individual migrant or the migrant family (Brettell and Hollifield 2000a: 2). It is for this reason that this research will draw on a range of theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches in the study of international labour immigration and Thailand. The ways in which these are used are detailed more fully in Chapter Two.

1.4.4 ILM in Asia

Information on international labour migration in the old migratory pole in Europe and North America is much more extensive than that on new migratory poles (Bohning 1984; Castles and Miller 1998; Cheng and Bonacich 1984; Cholewinski 1997; Hatton and Williamson 1994b; Kritz, Keely, and Tomasi 1981; Potts 1990; Thomas 1954). However, studies of new migratory poles have recently been proliferating, and a new paradigm is emerging. After the oil crisis in 1973, one of the world’s newest migratory poles emerged, this time, in the Asia Pacific region, which some scholars refer to as ‘a new international migration system’ (Athukorala and Manning 1999: 1). It is evident in Figure 1.2 that Asia today has the second largest stock of international migrants, following the old migratory pole of Europe.

Figure 1.2 Migrant Stocks by World Region, 2000



Source: International Organization for Migration (2003b), p.1; and Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2002), p. 3.

The pattern of labour migration in this region is distinguished from that of the earlier period of major international labour migration, which was often motivated by a desire to establish permanent or long-term residence abroad. The familiar ‘once and once only’ and

unidirectional phenomenon of population movement became obsolete; the temporary and circular nature of migration has instead been a new prominent phenomenon (Jackson 1969a: 4). Growing trends discerned in the study of this region's contemporary migration are also an explosive growth in illegal migration, the feminisation of migration, and commercialisation of the recruitment industry (Castles 1998; Chantavanich and Risser 2000; Wickramasekera 2002). Rapid, but uneven, economic growth and shifting trends in economic development in the region are responsible for the changes in the nature of labour migration, rendering it more diverse and complex (Findlay, Jones, and Davidson 1998; Lim and Abella 1994; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development 1998; Wickramasekera 2002). The modern history of Asian international labour migration can be conveniently, if approximately, categorised into two broad stages: migration to the Middle East, and migration to East and Southeast Asia.

Migration to the Middle East

Initially, contract labour movements from Asian countries were predominantly to the oil-rich economies of the Middle East (i.e. the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States – Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Qatar), proliferating after the hike in oil prices of 1973. At its peak in the early 1980s, the movement of labour to the Middle East involved up to a million temporary workers a year (Castles and Miller 1998: 147; Lim and Abella 1994: 219). Labour was hired at first from other Arab countries in the vicinity, including Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, Syria, and Palestine; and then from South Asia, especially India and Pakistan (United Nations 1998a: 121). With the growth in the region's affluence from large oil surpluses, the wealthy Gulf States advanced more in colossal projects of oil production and infrastructure development, which led to a further importation of contract labour from other parts of Asia, especially from South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and later from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The cumulative surpluses of these GCC States are estimated to have escalated from US\$ 21 billion in the period 1961-1965 to US\$ 617.6 billion in the period 1976-1979. The total investment rose more than nine times from US\$ 13 billion in the period 1970-1974 to US\$ 123 billion in the period 1975-1979 (Abella 1994: 165 cited in United Nations 1998a: 120). Given the small size and young age structure of the local population, low female labour force participation, and limited availability of the necessary technical skills in

the Gulf States, the implementation of such immense projects was inconceivable without migrant workers (Arnold and Shah 1984: 1; Quibria 1996: 89). The South and Southeast Asian countries, on the other hand, had a large labour-abundant population, a relatively high labour force participation ratio, and a lower level of per capita income (Quibria 1996: 89-90). Labour was ‘...quickly mobilized by large multinational contractors and commercial recruiters and largely came under what has come to be called “project-tied” migration’ (Lim and Abella 1994: 222). The movement was, thus, characterised as temporary and highly regulated. The majority of migrant workers were young males employed in construction projects, attracted by high wages (Arnold and Shah 1984: 5). Wages in the Middle East were, on average, five to six times higher than wages in the labour sending countries, albeit they were half as high in the case of South Korea (Arnold and Shah 1984: 7).

The movement of labour to the Middle East started to slow down when many construction projects were completed and infrastructure investments declined amid the oil price collapse in the middle of 1980s, and were further disrupted during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the Gulf War in 1990-1991 (Castles and Miller 1998; Lim and Abella 1994; Wickramasekera 2002). However, the decline in the recruitment of contract workers in the Middle East was temporary. In effect, the further dependence on imported labour in these States contributed to the previous success in raising education levels among the local population, the establishment of a sponsorship system for recruitment (the *khafeel*), and most importantly, the diversification of the States’ sources of income, which meanwhile derived from revenues earned from huge overseas investments, especially in western industrial countries (Lim and Abella 1994: 222). When the demand for migrant workers rose again, while not as significant as the previous time, it became more diversified, this time characterised by a shift to service and production workers, leading to a feminisation of labour movements (Castles and Miller 1998: 147; Lim and Abella 1994: 222). Meanwhile, the regional labour pool (both men and women) had expanded, recruiting cheaper sources of labour, especially, from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, and more recently from China and Vietnam (Lim and Abella 1994: 222). In addition, there has been a cascade of cheaper professional, technical and managerial level Asian workers replacing westerners and non-national Arabs in the Middle East (Lim and Abella 1994: 223; United Nations 1998a: 123).

Newly-industrialising countries and the Asian labour market

Whereas the huge development projects in the Gulf States resulted in mass recruitment of Asian contract workers, in East and Southeast Asia, divergent economic development and demographic change led to movements of both skilled and unskilled workers in the region (Castles and Miller 1998; Freeman and Mo 1996; Manning 2000). From the late 1980s, and accelerating after the Plaza Agreement, the falling oil prices and the Gulf War of 1990-1991, there was a significant change in the direction of labour migration towards destinations within Asia itself (a phenomenal oft-quoted as 'intra-Asian movements' or 'Asianisation') particularly towards countries that experienced rapid and sustained economic growth, such as Japan and the newly-industrialising countries (NICs) – South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore – and later Malaysia and Thailand (Chantavanich and Risser 2000; Hugo 1996; Skeldon 1999). The 1985 Plaza Agreement brought about the revaluation of Japanese and NIC currencies, which in turn actuated industrial restructuring in these economies, leading to the growing circulation of labour (Kim 1996: 304).

From the middle of the twentieth century, prior to the recent economic crisis of 1997, the region experienced three successive waves of rapid economic growth, reaching double per capita incomes in a record time of a decade (or less in some countries). Japan led the first wave in the 1950s and the 1960s, and was followed by the four Asian NICs in the 1970s and the 1980s. Malaysia and Thailand shortly formed a third ripple of enhanced economic activities (Findlay, Jones, and Davidson 1998: online).

In response to the rapid economic growth, these countries began to experience increasing labour scarcities. Japan and Taiwan achieved full employment in the early and late 1960s respectively; Hong Kong, Singapore and South Korea in the early 1970s; and Malaysia in the late 1980s. Full employment was achieved in Thailand later in the early 1990s (Freeman and Mo 1996: 159; Lim and Abella 1994: 224). Having achieving full employment, as well as economic success, these countries also experienced rapid increases in wages all around. The response to wage increases and labour shortages took various forms, including an increase in labour force participation (especially of females), upgrading of technology and human capital, relocating labour-intensive production to countries with cheaper labour costs through Foreign

Direct Investment (FDI), and importing labour (Athukorala and Manning 1999; Lim and Abella 1994; Manning 2000; Manning 2002; Wickramasekera 2002).

With the increasing participation of women in the labour force, the government of these countries, especially Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan, was forced to implement a policy that required the hiring of foreign domestic helpers to enable middle class women to join the labour force and relieve them of their domestic chores (Wickramasekera 2002: 11-12). Likewise, the process of feminisation in this region was given an impetus by job opportunities created for women in the manufacturing sector, such as electronic assembly and garment manufacture, and later in the service sector (both formal and informal), such as nurses, entertainers, and domestic helpers, absorbing a sizeable number of female migrants (Chantavanich and Risser 2000: 16; Wickramasekera 1996: 110).

The patterns of outward capital investments, especially by Japan and the NICs, have not only precipitated a movement of goods, capital and culture, but also created conditions for the mobility of population and, effectively, the formation of an international labour market and interdependence among Asian countries (Kim 1996; Lim and Abella 1994). Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, and the oil-rich labour-scarce nation of Negara Brunei Darussalam (Brunei) are now the major labour receiving countries of the Asian region. There are also growing numbers of Japanese, Koreans, Taiwanese, Singaporean, and Hong Kong managers, professionals, technicians and other qualified workers accompanying the movements of FDI (Lim and Abella 1994; Manning 2002).

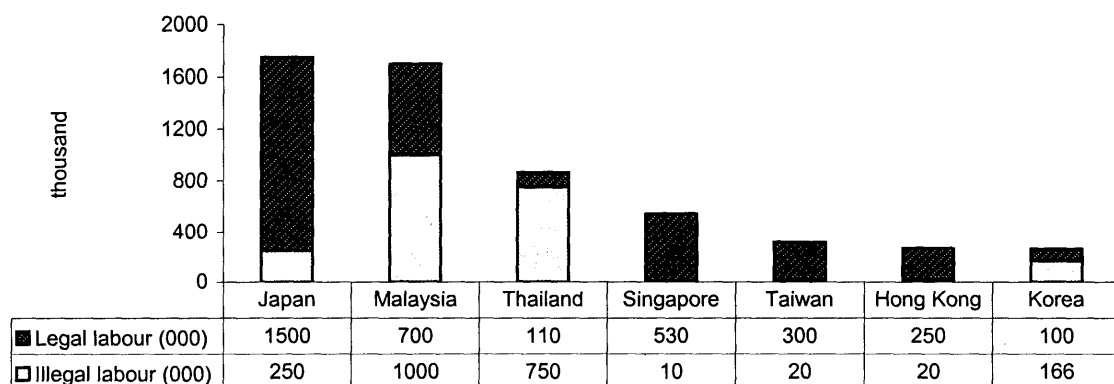
However, the pattern of international labour migration is not governed purely by disparities in labour market opportunities. Restrictions in immigration policy in receiving countries play a pivotal role in encouraging or precluding the international labour flows. Japan and South Korea are restrictive, implementing only training programmes for foreign workers; Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Brunei, as well as Malaysia, run various work permit systems (Athukorala and Manning 1999; Castles and Miller 1998; Freeman and Mo 1996; Kang 1996; Lee and Wang 1996; Lim 1996; Low 1995; Pillai 1999; Ruppert 1999; Tsay 2002).

As a consequence of (strict) immigration regulations and substantial labour shortages, a vital growing trend in the intra-Asian labour movement has been the increase of illegal migration. Besides restrictive immigration policies in receiving countries, according to Wickramasekera (2002: 22-24), there are several other crucial causes of current illegal migration in this region, including acute poverty and unemployment problems in the countries of origin, political persecution and armed conflict, impropriety of private recruitment agencies, exorbitant migration costs, activities of criminal gangs and traffickers, and bureaucratic procedures which add to the high cost of emigration.

1.4.5 ILM in Thailand

Thailand, the latest in the wave of successful Asian economies, has recently emerged as the new Asian migratory pole, following Japan, the NICs, and Malaysia. Thailand is now the third largest labour-receiving country in the region, while remaining one of the major labour-sending countries (Figure 1.3). What is also significant is that, according to Manning (2002: 365), over 80 per cent of migrant workers are illegal, making Thailand one of the largest illegal labour receiving economies. This number indeed indicates disconcerting problems for the country's entire labour immigration system.

Figure 1.3 Approximate Stock of Migrant Workers in Major Asian Receiving Countries, 2000

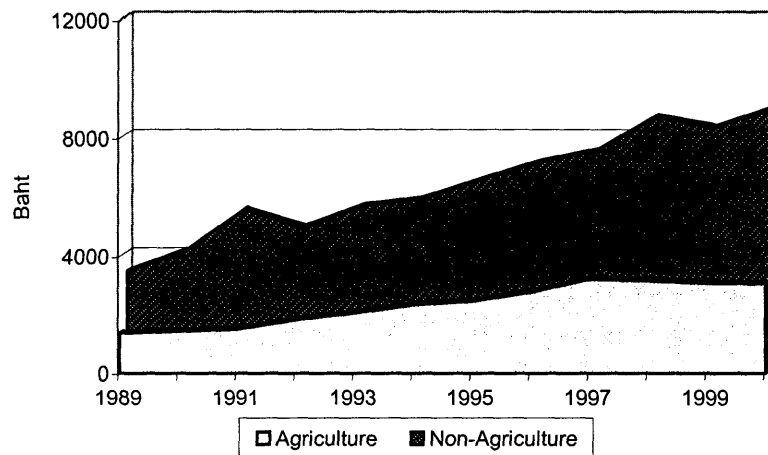


Source: Manning, Chris (2002), p. 365.

Unlike the other major receiving countries, even after Thailand seemingly achieved full employment in the early 1990s, the country still has a large agriculture sector (Freeman and

Mo 1996: 159). The facts that there are wide income gaps between the agricultural and non-agricultural sector (Figure 1.4) and, until the middle of 1990s, agriculture still accounted for over 50 per cent of the Thai labour force (Chapter Three), seem to indicate (and substantiate) that the economy faces no real (or absolute) labour shortages. If anything there are, rather, 'relative shortages of labour' (Bohning 1996: 12-13). It seems logical that when there is a higher remuneration elsewhere, people tend to move out of the low-paid agricultural sector (which is indeed gradually happening in Thailand, as the relative size of the Thai agricultural workforce is on the decline). Capital-intensive methods currently used in agricultural production have displaced agrarian labour, which in turn allow workers to find employment with higher returns in non-agricultural sectors. Given strict immigration regulations and the (still) labour-abundant agricultural sector in the country, the profound demand for migrant workers, in theory, should not yet have arisen, particularly in the agricultural sector. In assessing that, the case of Thailand is, therefore, both theoretically intriguing and practically vital in the study of the international migration of labour. Thus, Thai economic development and the demand for foreign workers are specifically discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

Figure 1.4 Average Monthly Wages of Employed Person in Thailand, 1989-2000



Source: National Statistical Office (2003), online.

Patterns, processes and policy in Thailand

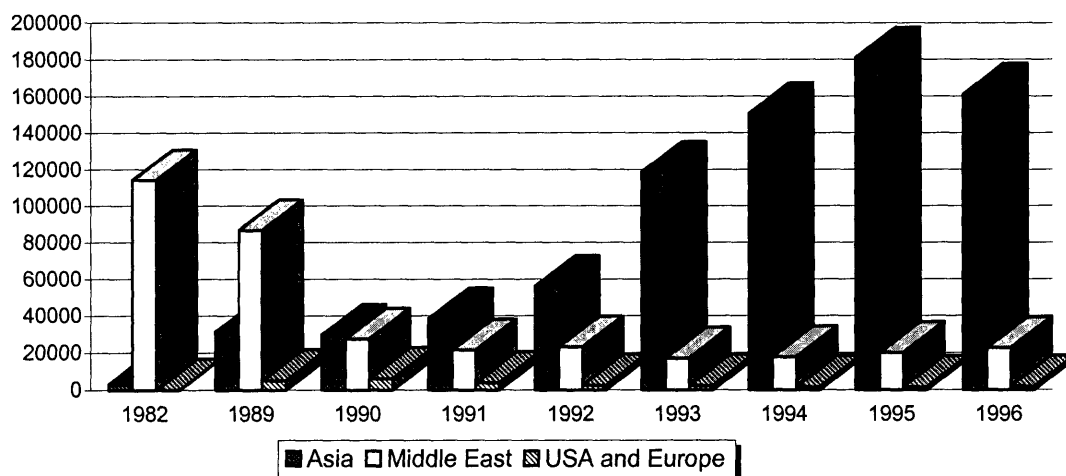
The literature has suggested strongly that international labour migration to Thailand is not at all a new phenomenon and that Thailand is indeed the epitome of the modern Asian migration

model (Chaintayananda, Risser, and Chantavanich 1997; Chantavanich 1999; Chantavanich, Germershausen, and Beesey 2000; Tsay 2000). It began, in the late 1960s, with a small out flow of Thai professional, technical and kindred (PTK) workers in search of better career opportunities in the Western world, especially in the USA and the UK (Ruth 1970). To illustrate the extent of the flow, the Thai Department of Employment (DOE) reported that about 293 Thais applied for employment in the UK between 1973 and 1977 and the embassy of the United State of America in Thailand reported issuing working visas to 23,219 Thais during the ten year period between 1966 and 1977 (Chiengkul 1986: 311).

During the oil boom, a massive exodus of Thai workers (an estimated 262,343 workers between 1980 and 1989) went to the Middle East for employment, then shifted to Japan, the four NICs, Brunei, and Malaysia in the period of Asianisation, forming a major stream of migrant workers into the receiving countries (Amara 1986 cited in Chantavanich 1999: online). The flow of Thai migrant workers to the Middle East plummeted significantly in 1990, from 87,748 in 1989 to 27,478 as a result of political conflicts and declining migrant labour demand in the Middle East, as well as diplomatic acrimony between Thailand and Saudi Arabia precipitated by allegations of Royal jewellery larceny and the murder of the Saudi attaché (Amara 1986 cited in Chantavanich 1999: online).

On the other hand, the trend in movement of Thai workers to Asian countries started to increase in the early 1990s (Figure 1.5). These labour movements were on a temporary basis and facilitated by employment agencies and the government (Chantavanich, Germershausen, and Beesey 2000). Over time, a much larger number of Thai female workers migrated in search of employment abroad and a greater number of Thai workers worked unlawfully in the receiving countries (Chantavanich 1999; Chantavanich, Germershausen, and Beesey 2000; Tsay 2002). Nevertheless, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, between the early 1980s and the middle of the 1990s, Thailand underwent economic structural transformations (from agriculture to manufacturing, and later from low-skilled labour-intensive to more-capital-technology-intensive industries) and enjoyed significant economic growth. Then, the country gradually changed from a labour exporting country to a country both sending and receiving migrant labour.

Figure 1.5 Number of Documented Thai Migrant Workers Going Abroad by Region of Destination, 1982, 1989-1996



Source: For 1982 and 1989: Sussangkarn, Chalongphob (1996a) p. 130.
Between 1990 and 1996: Chalamwong, Yongyuth (1998b), p. 19.

In 1994, a well-known empirical study by Pracha Vasuprasat (1994), using econometric model analysis, revealed a turning point in labour migration from Thailand and verified the contribution of exports of commodities in place of labour in creating employment and rising income. Vasuprasat (1994) argues that international labour migration and economic development in Thailand are interrelated, as is obvious for other labour sending countries. The Thai government's policy in favour of export-oriented industrialisation, which was implemented in the middle of 1970s, has revitalised international trade, encouraged FDI, and altered the composition of the economy's production and labour market. This has resulted in an increase in employment in non-agricultural work and, as reflected by the country's growing GNP per capita, a rise in nominal wages and national income. Because of the rise in wages and income, wage differentials between Thailand and the other labour receiving countries were narrowing, and therefore discouraged Thai workers from seeking employment abroad (Vasuprasat 1994: 199). However, although the nominal wage rates (and national income level) have been accelerating over the last two decades, wages (and national income levels) in Thailand still have not risen as much as those in the other major labour receiving countries, such as Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong, which explains the continuity of emigration of Thai workers (Wickramasekera 1996: 98; Yamagata 1996: 47-48). Another study by Yongyuth Chalamwong, (2001: 11) also indicates that, even before 1998, Thailand had already become a net importer of both legal and illegal international labour, with a total

net balance of 914,100 in 1998. The largest numbers of foreign workers were from neighbouring countries whose economic development progressed at a slower rate than that of Thailand, namely from Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos (Chaintayananda, Risser, and Chantavanich 1997; Chalamwong 2001; Chantavanich 1999).

Furthermore, the previous growth of the Thai economy had also contributed to the shortage of skilled manpower, especially in the fields of metallurgy and material science, electronics and information technology, as well as a paucity of experts in scores of other spheres (Chalamwong 1998a: 168; Sussangkarn 1996a: 129). The country's Ninth National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP) also encourages more competitiveness through development of the knowledge base. Because the government has made it a crusade to move up the technological ladder in its quest to become a knowledge-based economy, it is inevitable that there is, and will be, more demand for better-educated and higher skilled labour, both for services and direct production, which cannot yet be met by the Thai labour force (Dhanani and Scholtes 2002; Goodno 1995; Lall 1999). As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, even though Thailand already has a relatively high literacy rate, the country now more than ever needs more workers with an education beyond the primary level. Thailand's secondary enrolment ratio is not yet satisfactory, let alone enrolment at the higher level of training, education, and skill. Despite the government's remedial efforts to improve people's qualifications by increasing the transition rate from primary to secondary education since the Seventh NESDP began in 1991, the majority of Thai workers today have, at most, primary schooling only.

Existing studies on foreign workers in Thailand

Since Thailand has become a net labour importer and foreign workers have started to make their presence felt in large numbers, there has been a shifting focus of research interest to the immigration of foreign labour. While emigration of Thai labour has already been well documented, the experience of Thailand with immigration of foreign workers is a more recent phenomenon (Chantavanich, Germershausen, and Beesey 2000; Pongsapich 1986; Pongsapich 1994; Ratanakomut 1996; Tsay 2002; Vasuprasat 1994). Studies about international labour in

Thailand may have proliferated recently, nevertheless, there is still a paucity of literature and there are only a handful of major studies on the subject.

Most major studies appear to focus on certain welfare-related issues and on specific immigrant groups, especially unskilled, illegal workers from neighbouring countries. This is because the majority of the foreign workers were in an unregulated situation that made them particularly vulnerable to exploitation. Studies such as those by Sophal and Sovannarith (2000) and Koetsawang (2001) focus on the experiences of workers from Cambodia and Myanmar respectively, attempting to find issues and problems arising from migration and to understand their reasons for migration into Thailand. Likewise, the recently published research of the Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR), conducted by Awatsaya Panam and her colleagues (2004), focuses on the migratory experiences and living and working conditions of female domestic workers from Myanmar.

The major studies, especially from projects of the International Labour Organization-International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO-IPEC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the Asian Research Center for Migration (ARCM) deal specifically with the growing concern about sensitive issues such as criminal activities in trafficking labour, especially women and children, and with issues of education, human rights, and, especially, health among foreign workers (Chantavanich, Beesey, and Paul 2000; International Labour Organization 1998; International Organization for Migration 2000; Wille 2001). These studies, nevertheless, cover not only migrants in Thailand but also in other parts of the Southeast Asian region, especially in the so-called 'Greater Mekong Sub-region'.

Another focus of study about labour immigration to Thailand has been government policy. Even though there is little literature that solely concentrates on the government's policy, many of the studies deal at length with the immigration policy of the Thai government. There is, in these studies, great consensus about the government's lack of experience in dealing with the issue of managing migrant workers and in adopting an explicit policy about international migration. The government's immigration policies have been vague, shifting constantly between permitting, restricting, and prohibiting the entry of migrant workers (Chaintayananda, Risser, and Chantavanich 1997; Chalamwong 1998a; Chalamwong 1998b; Chalamwong 1999;

Chalamwong 2001; Chantavanich 1999). By using Computable General Equilibrium (CGE), based on a Social Accounting Matrix (SAM) of Thailand, to simulate the impacts of (unskilled) migrant workers, Chalongphob Sussangkarn (1996b) analyses various policies and reveals that, compared to the case of the absence of migrant workers, with a prudently calculated tax or levy on foreign labour, the presence of foreign workers can be beneficial to the economy as a whole and can also benefit everybody in the economy, both 'poorer households' and 'richer households'. He argues that the revenue from the tax or levy on labour importation can be used for the benefit of the poorer households by providing projects that benefit the poor directly, or that help to increase their skills, while the rich can enjoy cheap labour (Sussangkarn 1996b).

There is some significant literature about economic aspects of immigration (Chalamwong 1998a; Chalamwong 1998b; Chalamwong 1999; Chalamwong 2001; Chantavanich 1999; Sevilla and Chalamwong 1996; Sussangkarn 1996a). However, these studies are small in terms of both scale and scope. They mainly explore the trends in international labour migration to Thailand, the link between the immigration of foreign labour and economic development in the country, and the effect of economic changes on immigrant workers, especially after the recent economic crisis.

So far, there appears to be only one study on skilled foreign workers in Thailand. Nonetheless, Napaporn Havanon (1997) focuses mainly on illegal workers and their experiences. She also examines some of the possible consequences of the presence of such workers to the Thai economy (for example, technology transfers and job competitions between foreign and local workers). Among other things, she found that the government's migration policy is ambiguous and, thus, there is a clear need for more research.

1.5 Conclusion

All in all, the existing body of knowledge regarding international labour migration in Thailand seems to be limited. The lack of understanding about Thailand's international migrant labour force is clear in the lack of an explicit migration policy by the Thai authorities. The Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand, Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, also concedes that "we need a new

system to deal with alien workers because the existing one is inefficient” (Srivalo 2002: para. 2). According to Dr Surichai Wun’gao (2001: para. 3), the Director of the Centre for Social Development Studies, Chulalongkorn University, the past failures of the Thai government’s policies on migrant workers in the country are a result of partial understanding and weak policy-making, which stem from the shortage of adequate research study. Most of the existing major studies focus on specific migrant groups (such as illegal migrants) and emphasize only some specific issues (especially, welfare-related issues), leaving many loopholes in the body of knowledge. This study, therefore, seeks to help to contribute to greater understanding of labour migration to Thailand – as described at the beginning of this chapter – by providing the big picture.

In setting the context for this study, this chapter has summarised major theories about international labour migration and discussed the history of labour migration. It can be concluded that there is, currently, an array of theoretical approaches explaining international labour movements; yet there seems to be no single approach or blanket principle that can comprehensively describe and explain the international migration phenomenon, nor a specific university discipline for the study of the field. Different disciplines offer different approaches and methodologies for the study of international labour migration. They also employ fundamentally different concepts, premises, and frames of reference. Nevertheless, according to Douglas Massey and his colleagues (1996), there appear to be two core approaches, which include the initiation of international migration and the perpetuation of international migration. Still, there are some interstices between these twofold approaches. Research on international labour migration, thus, tends to be intrinsically interdisciplinary and comprised of a variety of methodologies, including a top-down ‘macro’ level and a bottom-up ‘micro’ level.

Historically, international labour migration has grown significantly in scale and scope, and the type of movement has changed over time. The form of migration has changed from forced movement to voluntary permanent movement and to temporary forms of migration. It has been evident in the past that the pattern of international labour migration is not governed purely by disparities in economic development and/or labour market opportunities. Social and political phenomena, as well as restrictions in immigration policy in both receiving and sending countries, play a pivotal role in encouraging or precluding international labour flows.

Since the early 1970s, Asia has become a so-called 'new international migration system'. Thailand, the latest in the wave of the Asian economic success economies, has emerged as the new Asian migratory pole. It is the third largest labour-receiving country in the region, as well as one of the major labour-sending countries. Thus, Thailand is indeed an archetype of the modern Asian migration model. Since Thailand has become a net labour importer and foreign workers have started to make their presence felt in large numbers, there has been a shifting focus of research interest to the immigration of labour to Thailand. Although studies about international labour in Thailand have proliferated recently, there is still a shortage of literature and there are only a handful of major studies on the subject. These appear to focus on certain welfare-related issues and on specific immigrant groups, especially unskilled and illegal workers, and child labour from neighbouring countries. There is little information about other aspects of labour immigration. Chapter Three will examine further the economic and socio-political reasons responsible for Thailand becoming this major migratory pole in Asia.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

This chapter has provided a brief review of the literature on the history of international migration and theories of international labour migration. Current research about international labour migration in Thailand was reviewed. This provides essential background information about the development of knowledge about international labour migration. As well, it portrays how the world's migratory poles emerge and Thailand's place in the picture, so as to set the context for this study.

The following Chapter Two sets out the methodology that underpins the research described hereafter. It discusses sources of data, the methods of data collection and their limitations, and the ways in which some of these limitations were overcome. Methods used to analyse data in order to realise the objectives of this research are described.

In Chapter Three, the current situation pertaining to economic development in Thailand is examined. This chapter sheds light on how the country became a migratory pole and explores the economic determinants of the demand for foreign workers in the country. The chapter consists of six sections. The first two sections serve as an introduction, providing the outline

of the chapter and general background of the Thai economy. The third reviews Thailand's economic development strategies, which is fundamental to understanding the country's economic development. The fourth examines the current vigour of the Thai economy from a regional comparative perspective. The fifth focuses on changes in production factors in the Thai economy and the consequences of these changes. The final section provides a general conclusion.

Chapter Four examines the processes of labour migration into the country. It concentrates on the governance of migration and labour laws and regulations. The chapter comprises four sections. Following an introductory section, the second section reviews historical trends in Thai immigration policies and migrant concepts under Thai legislation. In the third section, the current regulatory framework governing foreign workers' right to enter, reside and work in Thailand is examined. This section also discusses possible processes and pathways for foreign employment, as well as labour standards in Thailand. A final section summarises and draws conclusions from these reviews.

Chapter Five provides a statistical review of the profile of foreign workers in Thailand. It is the intention of this chapter to examine the trends and characteristics of authorised labour migrants in the country over the past decade. It includes a statistical analysis of the magnitude of labour immigration; the characteristics of foreign workers by gender, country of origin, and economic activity; and their geographical distribution within Thailand. Even though the analysis in this chapter will be limited to authorised foreign workers because of the lack of data about illegal migrant workers, some groups of authorised foreign workers can also provide a generalised picture of illegal migrant workers in the country.

Chapters Six and Seven present the results from structured interviews of unskilled foreign construction workers, and from mailed questionnaire of skilled foreign workers, in that order. These chapters describe and analyse the demographic, employment, migration process, social life and network, financial issues, and post arrival experiences of survey populations, as well as drawing on some relevant theories outlined in this chapter to illuminate findings. Finally, Chapter Eight summaries the main findings of this study and some suggestions for further research are presented in the afterword.

Chapter Two

Methodological Issues

Given the complexity of the subject and the study's multi-level approach to analysis, this study pursues a wide range of theoretical perspectives and utilises a variety of methodological approaches. The methods and research design that underpinned this study are set out below.

2.1 Sources of data for the research

With an eye to gain a full understanding of the entire system of migrant labour in Thailand, it is crucial that this study is based on information that can reflect the full scope of the subject, including 'longitudinal' and 'cross-sectional' perspectives. This involves the collection of facts and figures at international, regional, national and individual levels.

At the international and regional level, in order to provide a background context and supportive evidence, relevant macroeconomic and historic data were collected, as well as information concerning international workers' rights and conditions. International agreements and, especially, International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions and Recommendations are the chief sources of information about workers' labour standards. While various International Organisations such as the United Nations (UN), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) provide major sources of global economic and socio-demographic data, historic, background and other pertinent information was also collected from the extensive literature on migration, such as those published by Centre for Asia Pacific Social Transformation Studies (CAPSTRANS), Scalabrini Migration Center, Asian Pacific Migration Research Network (APMRN), and Asia Migrant Centre. Collection of data from these sources was particularly important in providing data to assist the researcher to realise the first specific objective of this research, to present an historical account of economic and socio-political causes of Thailand's becoming a major migratory pole in Asia.

At the national level, baseline information takes into account key Thai economic indicators, Thai socio-demographic data, the history of the country in relation to labour movements, figures on labour immigration and emigration, as well as migration and labour-related laws and regulations. These provided quantitative and qualitative data inputs for a top-down 'macro' level examination, essential for the research to realise the second and third objectives of this research (as detailed on p. 3). Annual official reports, research studies and various types of publications from government agencies are the important and informative sources of these sorts of data. The Bank of Thailand (BOT), the Board of Investment (BOI), and the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) provided all key economic records. The National Statistical Office (NSO) and Ministry of Labour (MOL) also provided good socio-demographic data, as well as facts and figures on immigration and emigration. Series of laws and regulations, which include migration and labour-related statutes, are published in *Rat-cha-khit-ja-nu-bak-sa* – the Thai Royal Government Gazette – and are available at the Parliament Library in Bangkok. In addition, prominent research centres, such as the Asian Research Center for Migration (ARCM), the Institute for Population and Social Research, and the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI), make public a vast array of literature on Thai economic, socio-political, labour, and migration-related issues. Also, newspapers – mainly electronic versions of *Bangkok Post* (collected since 1997); *The Nation* (collected since 2001); and *Migration News* (collected since 1994) – provide up-to-date information on migration policies and on the state of affairs of the economy and international labour.

The final objective of this research required collection of data from individual migrants. Thus, at the individual level, to explore the experience of individual foreign workers, such survey-type data as personal and demographic characteristics (i.e. age, gender, citizenship, education, and marital and parental status), mode of entry, employment, financial matters (i.e. income, benefits, and remittance), reasons for migration, and future perspectives, were collected. Questionnaire surveys were used to collect information about skilled foreign workers. Structured formal interviews were conducted to gather information on unskilled and semi-skilled foreign construction workers. This provided both quantitative and qualitative data inputs for a bottom-up 'micro' level analysis.

2.2 Data collection tools and limitations

Since this study relied on assorted and multi-level data, the methodology required different methods of data collection. As outlined above, this study thus employed a combination of three key data collection instruments. These were: first, a search of administrative records and documents; second, questionnaire surveys; and third, structured-interviews. Each tool is suitable for the collection of different kinds of data and each has its own limitations. The following section deals with these matters in depth.

Administrative records and documents

The ‘administrative records and documents’ technique – the term is borrowed from Catherine Hakim (2000) – is used to gather both qualitative and quantitative secondary data that is collected and recorded by various government and non-government organisations. This technique is suitable for gathering readily obtainable information, macro-level time series data, and some scattered data (such as facts and figures about illegal migrants). However, since the data are collected and maintained by various organisations, lack of consistency, varied collection purposes, re-classification and different methods of data collection by each organisation means there are major limitations associated with the use of this technique. For instance, in 1993, the Department of Employment (DOE) was transferred from the Ministry of Interior to a newly established (then) Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. Consequently, several data previously collected by the Department were scanty, if recorded at all. This causes difficulty, especially when trends are examined. In addition, the collection of this sort of data is by and large for specific purposes, which means that some information is limited. Reasons for migration are thus neither available in labour force surveys, nor in population censuses. Likewise, it is especially problematic to use a dataset with a vague category, such as ‘Other’. There is almost no way to know what the ‘Other’ category consists of, or if it covers the same categories in previous or later periods. Researchers basically have to take what they get. Nonetheless, data derived from administrative records and documents are still useful, if they can be systematically interpreted, adjusted, re-systematized and/or interpolated to make them yield the information needed (as done here, particularly in Chapter Five).

Furthermore, different organisations often employ different concepts, definitions, terminology and typologies for the same category to suite their own uses. Today, there is still no consistent concept of ‘migration’ nor are there universally agreed upon criteria for distinguishing ‘migrants’ or ‘level of skill of workers’. Migration-related terms used in this thesis are principally in accordance with Thai statutes (see Chapter Four), or follow the definition of the International Organization for Migration (2004). This is simply because this is a study of Thai affairs, where the local authority – via laws and regulations – plays the foremost role in determining circumstances in its territory.

Another concern raised here involves languages and translation. Many data and documents are recorded or written in the Thai language. Credible interpretation and translation of the meaning of words or the content in the context of a different language require researchers’ understanding not only of their general purport but also their literal meaning and indeed their exact original sense (Barzun and Graff 1992: 282-284). This is especially important when dealing with abstract statutory issues. This study has taken into cognizance the meaning of words or content when interpreting or translating documents. In many cases consultation with experts (such as lawyers and DOE officers) has been sought to ensure accurate translation. Data from administrative records and documents were primarily used in meeting the first three objectives of this study, to examine ILM at the macro and national levels.

Questionnaire Surveys

In meeting the last objective of this study, structured questionnaires requiring written answers were key instruments used in this study to collect primary data from skilled foreign workers. This follows a well-tested tradition of data collection in the Social Sciences (Bilsborrow et al. 1997; Burns 1997; Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 1992; Hakim 2000). They were used to elicit information about profiles, processes, causes and experiences of foreign workers in Thailand. Given a large and widespread population of foreign workers, this particular tool offered a methodical and time-saving way of collecting information. In keeping with the requirements of the University of New England’s Human Research Ethics Committee, the survey was anonymous with no identifying information collected. Individual responses are kept confidential, and all results presented in aggregate form.

The questionnaire consisted of six sections: the first dealt with participants' personal details, the second with details about their occupation, the third with processes of their migration, the fourth with the social life and social networks of the participants in Thailand, the fifth with remittances and financial matters, and the sixth with issues regarding post-arrival experiences and future prospects (Appendix A). The first section enabled the researcher to obtain a personal profile of the participants: gender, age, marital status, education and citizenship (and their extraction), in order to help assess the characteristics of the participants. This information was particularly useful for the purpose of comparison and further examination. The second allowed the researcher to elicit not only the previous and present occupations of participants and their current work status, but also provided information about their employment conditions. In the third section, questions were designed to obtain information about pre-migration perceptions and the actual processes and incentives for migration. Whereas the first three sections focused on the 'initiation of international migration', the last three sections dealt with the 'perpetuation of international migration'. Questions asked in the fourth section were designed to examine the workers' social lives and to investigate whether migration networking was established, by seeking information about their sources of non-financial and financial assistance, their methods of finding work, their activities during their spare time, and their connections with friends and relatives in their home countries. While the fifth section dealt with participants' financial matters – income, savings, expenses, and remittances – the final section provided information on their migration experiences and future plans.

A written structured questionnaire is, however, problematic if carried out with a population of low educational and literacy levels, or using an unfamiliar language to participants (Neuman 2003: 289). The questionnaire used in this study was provided in two languages, English and Thai. Presumably, most skilled and educated foreign workers are *au fait* with English and/or Thai. In practice, only the English version was actually needed. In order to clarify item wording and check the suitability of the questionnaire to best obtain accurate information, two pilot surveys were conducted. To ensure clarification of the questions, a draft of the questionnaire was piloted first during November 2004, with twelve volunteer participants from English and non-English speaking countries – two Australians, Japanese and Thais; and one Canadian, French, German, Indonesian, Korean, and Malaysian. After a minor revision of the questionnaire, a second pilot survey was conducted during December 2004. A sample of six

foreign workers in Thailand was selected in the pre-test for the questionnaire's aptness. No amendment was needed after the second trial. Written questionnaire surveys were only used with skilled foreign workers since unskilled foreign workers are mostly illiterate.

As mentioned earlier, the entire population of migrant labour in Thailand is very large and dispersed. It was therefore necessary to develop an appropriate sampling frame. The target skilled population for this study were those employed by BOI promoted-companies (registered between 1 January 2003 and 5 November 2004) and those working for international schools (that are members of the International Schools Association of Thailand, ISAT). These were chosen because it is quite obvious that the nature of the work performed by these organisations involves foreign workers. In addition, postal addresses for the target population were publicly obtainable from both BOI and ISAT.

Altogether, 1,386 questionnaires were mailed to potential participants on 31 January 2005. To ease potential concerns and to elicit a high response from potential participants, the purpose of the study (that is, academic research for a university degree) and the guarantee of the unconditional and voluntary nature of the survey were notified in the cover letter attached to the questionnaire. The letter, also, contained contact details of the researcher (including postal addresses, email addresses, telephone numbers, and mobile numbers). The researcher was available to answer any question of the participants (Appendix B). By 31 April 2005 the responses (returned using supplied reply paid envelopes) received had reached the minimum target of one hundred completed questionnaires. This represented an approximately 7.2 return rate. It is important to note that the results from this survey should be considered as a case study and should not be extrapolated to the general population of skilled foreign workers in Thailand. Nevertheless, the survey results provide a snapshot and specific evidence about the situation of this sample group of skilled foreign workers. In fact, the overall sample seems to be heterogeneous and closely reflects the total population of skilled foreign workers (Chapters Five and Seven). It is also important to note that information about skilled foreign workers in Thailand is still limited. It is hoped that the study, despite its shortcomings, will add to understanding of the subject.

Structured Interview

A formal structured interview can be a time-consuming data collection method but it eases the problem of limited literacy of the participants, as in the case of unskilled workers in Thailand, and provides for direct and instant communication between the researcher and participants (Burns 1997: 485; Neuman 2003: 289). It can provide more informative and detailed responses than those from the questionnaire surveys (Burns 1997: 484-485; Neuman 2003: 290-291). To ensure the quality of the interviews, this study follows the guidelines of Steinar Kvale (1996). Thus, for the purpose of comparison between skilled and unskilled participants, questions asked in the interviews used the same questions and patterns as those contained in the mailed questionnaire survey. However, communication beyond the questions and also the environment of the participants were also noted and recorded during the interviews.

Due to the size of the foreign worker population and its dispersion in the country, it was necessary to establish limits for this particular aspect of this study. Unlike the method used for the mailed questionnaire survey, a specific industry and geographical location were selected. The Construction Industry in Bangkok and the surrounds of Bangkok (including Nakhon Pathom, Nontha Buri, Pathum Thani, Samut Prakan, Samut Sakhon, Chon Buri and Ayutthaya) was selected for the case study for unskilled and semi-skilled foreign workers. The Bangkok Metropolitan area is located in the central part of the country and is also the core of the country's economic activities. In addition, statistics show that the Bangkok Metropolitan area hosts a large number of foreign workers (Chapter Five). The construction workers normally stay unobtrusively in the background and keep themselves away from the general community. With visibility in terms of location of construction sites, the potential participants could be approached at their place of work or residence around the construction sites. Also, it is commonly known (and statistics show) that the construction industry is one of the largest industries in terms of employment of unskilled foreign workers (Chapter Five).

In order to recruit unskilled construction workers, I drove along the main roads that pass through the Bangkok Metropolitan area, starting from the outskirts of Bangkok near Pathum Thani province, and stopped when a construction site was seen. For reasons of anonymity, the locations of the construction sites will not be revealed. The employer's or supervisor's consent

was first sought before conducting the interviews. Interviews were also conducted during rest time and after work, providing the participants agreed of their own free will to participate in the study. Since many participants were unable to understand and/or comprehensibly communicate in English or Thai, translators sometimes assisted with the interviews (after signing confidentiality agreements) (Appendix C). In order to ensure reliable responses, I first developed 'co-operative' relationships with key figures on the construction sites which included site supervisors, shopkeepers and leaders of worker groups introduced by site supervisors. In addition, I developed relationships at a personal level with some of foreign workers by mingling with them after working hours and, sometimes, joining them at dinner. During the interviews, I explained the purpose of the study and assured participants that I was not a government official and that permission to conduct the interview had been sought from the site supervisors or the owners. The participants were also informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time, and – in fact – one participant did so, on the ground of tiredness. A private location was chosen for the interview, to ensure privacy and confidentiality.

Consequently, most participants seemed to talk freely and were happy to be approached by the researcher. The presence of a translator, however, seemed to intimidate some participants. They seemed reluctant to answer questions at the early stage of the interview and their answers tended to be shorter than those of participants without the aid of a translator. To alleviate such problem, young female translators were chosen because they were perceived to be less threatening. Also, translators were often brought in from outside the construction site and were present in an interview only when needed. It is also important to note that because the researcher is a Thai national – with a similar culture to that of participants and a good understanding of their social backgrounds – the researcher faced no difficulties in comprehending and interpreting the cultural context of the answers of the participants. For instance, I understood that *Sanoook* or 'having fun' was used as in 'being (financially) satisfied' when a number of participants indicated their reasons for intending to remain in Thailand permanently and/or for intending to return to Thailand again. Nevertheless, translators sometimes misinterpreted questions and answers, especially at the earlier stage of the interview. There appeared, however, to be only a few such incidents. When this occurred, the questions were elucidated and asked again, to ensure accurate responses were obtained.

This aspect of the study involved 100 interviews conducted on eight construction sites, with approximately three to seven days spent at each site. Interviews were conducted between the months of January and March 2005. The results from this study also cannot be considered representative of all unskilled foreign workers in Thailand. Nor should it be considered representative of migrant construction workers in particular. This is because sampling was limited to eight construction sites and the potential participants and construction sites were not selected randomly. The convenience (or accidental) sampling method and, in a few cases, the snowball technique were used to select participants, techniques commonly used in encouraging participants from a hard-to-reach group (Burgess 1993: 31-33; Kumar 2005: 178-179). Construction sites are private properties. Without an owner's consent, it would not be possible to conduct interviews. Thus, armed with the knowledge that the foreign construction workers' group in Thailand is not highly heterogeneous (in terms of the country of origin), the eight construction sites were specifically selected to reflect this. In fact, the study shows specific results and should, therefore, be treated as a case study. Notwithstanding these limitations, a combination of large, medium, and small sized construction sites were selected in as many sites as possible in diverse locations across the study area. Not all workers in any one construction site were interviewed. This ensured a multiplicity of participants, avoiding, for example, couples and too many workers of the same origins.

The information gathered from both mailed questionnaires and structured interview surveys was analysed using SPSS to provide information in the form of descriptive and inferential statistics. The final results are presented using a combination of frequencies, percentages, cross tabulation, significance and strength of association. To provide more robust measures for generalisation, tests for significance and strength of association (or correlation coefficient) were also conducted. Note that, for simplicity, ANOVA was chosen over the *t*-test when testing for significance. Both ANOVA and the *t*-test generally deliver the same result (Griffiths, Hill, and Judge 1993; Gujarati 1995). Also, all 'qualitative' factors were treated as 'binary' (or 'dichotomous') variables when examining strength of association. The results of the interviews and of the questionnaire survey are presented in Chapters Six and Seven respectively.

2.3 Conclusion

In meeting the four specific objectives of this research, this study utilised a combination of three main methods of data collection. This included a search of administrative records and documents, questionnaire surveys, and structured interviews. This chapter has discussed these techniques, the limitations of each data collection method, and the ways in which the limitations were overcome. In all, use of these methodologies has enabled the author to access sufficient appropriate data to address the specific objectives of the research and to realise its central aim – to document the extent and characteristics of international labour migration to Thailand. The following chapters present and examine the data collected relevant to this aim and draws conclusions from them.