

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Rationale

During the last decade, Chiang Mai has become the center of the northern region and drawn more and more people into the city. The number of population in Chiang Mai has increased 0.93 percent/year, according to the 2000 Population and Housing Census of Chiang Mai District which showed the Demographic Characteristic of Chiang Mai population from 1990 to 2000. Most of the population (73.5 percent) resided in the Municipality area. These statistics unquestionably confirmed the growth of Chiang Mai city.

The development of the city has brought about the improvement of economic opportunities and the opportunity to get higher education for women. According to the 2000 Population and Housing Census of Chiang Mai District which showed the number of women in the work place, it was found that during 1990-2000, the number of working women increased and women's education level was also higher: 43.9 percent of women were employees, 36.6 percent had their own businesses and 20.5 percent took other jobs. Compared with the statistics collected from 1970 to 1980, this indicates that the role of women has changed dramatically and there have been many jobs available for women. It has also been observed that women with higher education and economic status tend to get married in their later age or stay single. The study by Guest and Tan (1993) showed that marriage was increasingly being delayed by Thai men and women and they remained unmarried through their thirties and into their forties. This change has an effect on other aspects of Thai life, including fertility pattern, life styles and living standard. Moreover, a study by Limanonda (1995) stated that because Thailand has undergone a rapid change in socio-economic structure toward more modernization and urbanization, the age at marriage at present, from the data of Housing Census, especially that in Bangkok, will be slightly higher, and the proportion of those remaining single will be larger than in 1980.

As Chiang Mai has become the center of the northern region, resulting from many developments as mentioned above, these also have the effect on social change and change of attitudes toward marriage decision of working women in Chiang Mai. The census data of Chiang Mai (1990) showed that the singulate mean age at first marriage of men was 25.6 while that of women was 22.9 but in 2000 the singulate mean age at first marriage in both men and women increased to 27 and 24.1 respectively.

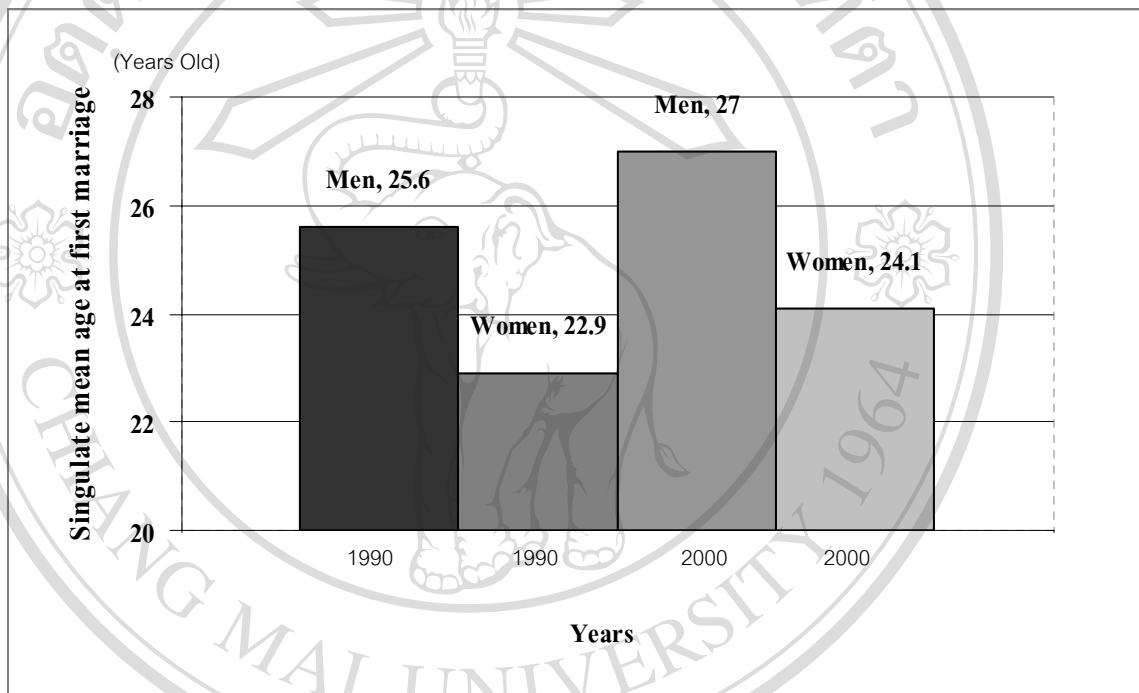


Figure 1.1 The singulate mean age at first marriage in both men and women in Chiang Mai.

Source: National Statistic Office; Chiang Mai 1990-2000.

It has been pointed out that the improvement of the status of women in different fields of occupation, education and economic status, are found to play an important role in the changing of nuptiality patterns. However, to the researcher's knowledge no specific study has been done on the change of attitudes toward marriage decision of working women in Mueang district, Chiang Mai.

1.2 Hypotheses

1.2.1 Improvement in education, occupation and economic status are the factors that obviously affect the attitudes of Chiang Mai women towards marriage. These have the influence on their decision in delaying marriage and staying single.

1.2.2 The longer the women stay single (up to their late thirties to over forties), the higher number of them remain single.

1.3 Purposes of the study

This paper is an attempt to study the nature and extent of the change of attitudes towards marriage decision of working women in Mueang District, Chiang Mai in relation to the improvement of women's status in each field of occupation. It investigates the factor that affects the changing attitudes toward marriage decision of working women of all marital status. This research is also survey the attitudes of the middle-age women (late thirties to over forties) toward marriage.

1.4 Education/ application advantages

The study on the change of attitudes towards marriage of working women in Mueang District, Chiang Mai does not only indicate the effect of the improvement of women's status on their decision to marry but also contribute to the national nuptiality demographic. It is very interesting to find out how the marriage decisions of Chiang Mai working women differ from women in other regions.

1.5 Scope and method

Since the scope of data collection is to survey the attitudes of working women of all marital status in Mueang District, Chiang Mai, it is necessary to classify occupation groups that are relevant to the scope (The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare: Classification of Job Standard, 2538). So in this paper 6 groups of occupation will be selected as target groups. Those are:

Group 1 Specialists: people qualified or employed in one of the profession, such as, doctors, teachers, nurses, engineers, architects, dentists, pharmacists.

Group 2 Administrative and policy makers: people who have in the position to administer the company such as manager, managing director, including lawyer.

Group 3 Officials and office workers: people who work in office including the government worker.

Group 4 Businesses people: people who are the owner of the shop or some business.

Group 5 Service people: people who have duty on service, such as, public relations, flight attendants, cashiers, waitresses, and beauticians.

Group 6 Unskilled workers: people who do hard physical work that is not skilled, such as coolie, servant.

In each group, there are 3 subgroups classified by age: 20-30, 31-40 and 40-50. The questionnaires were given to women in each age-based group. In total, 180 questionnaires were distributed to working women in Mueang district, Chiang Mai.

The data was collected in a form of a questionnaire on the attitudes of women in Mueang District, Chiang Mai. A follow-up interview was conducted on some respondents with specific answers on attitudes that need to be clarified. The questionnaires were piloted before distribution to the target groups as mentioned above. After that the data was analyzed using SPSS program. The study also draws upon the information in the changing nuptiality demographic data from the 2000 Population and Housing Census and previous document research.

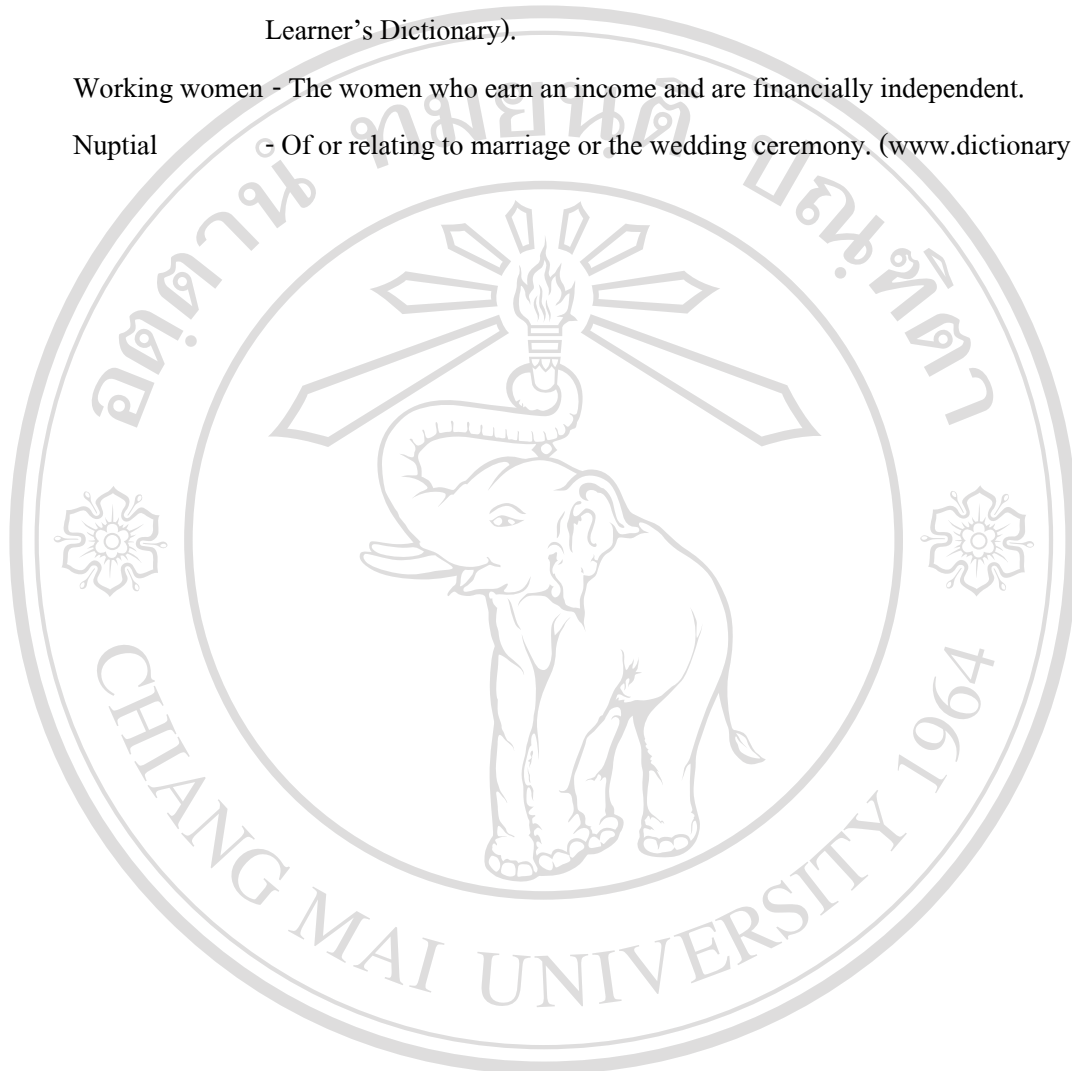
This study was focused on working women in Mueang district, Chiang Mai, with the main target groups as mentioned above in different locations such as universities, hospitals, school, offices, factories, markets.

1.6 Definition of terms used in this paper

Marriage - The union of a man and a woman by a legal ceremony (Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary).

Working women - The women who earn an income and are financially independent.

Nuptial - Of or relating to marriage or the wedding ceremony. (www.dictionary.com)



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