

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Since Thai women in general nowadays have better education, a wider variety of careers are open to them, and women have taken up more active roles in society. As a result of this change, the opinion of women toward marriage also changed. Women who have high educational qualifications, good occupation and high income have different attitudes from women of the previous time. Therefore, this research emphasizes the study of attitudes towards marriage of working women in Mueang district, Chiang Mai by putting forward the hypothesis that education, occupation and income are the main factors affecting the changing attitudes of women nowadays and many of them choose to stay single if they have all of these factors. After conducting the survey on the targeted groups of working women, it has been found that the factors mentioned influence the decision making of women to get married as follows:

5.1 Education

Education is one of the factors affecting women's decision to marry. Most women nowadays stay single or marry late because they spend most of their time studying in the highest level. From the statistics in 2000 Population and Housing Census of Chiang Mai, it was found that most women in the rural area marry earlier than those women in the urban area. Most women in the rural area get married in the early age. After graduating from grade 9, they may have to leave school and help their parents at home. When they want to get married, most parents will agree and allow them to marry because they will get more laborer; on the contrary, women in the city will try to get the highest education they can, at least a bachelor's degree, before giving into marriage.

5.2 Occupation and economic status

Occupation and economic status are the other two important factors influencing over women's attitude towards marriage. These two factors cannot be separated because good occupation means good income. This survey found that women with good jobs and high income have totally different idea from women who earn low wages. Women in group 1-5 share the same

idea and attitude towards marriage. That is they do not see much of its value because women now can work and earn as much as men do. They can stand on their own legs and support their family as well as men do. Moreover, women now view marriage as an extra burden which they do not want. They will get married only when they believe that they really find the right mate. On the other hand, women in group 6 (unskilled workers) who have low income revealed that they need a financial support from men and that is the main reason made them marry legally and illegally. Most women in group 6 just stay together with their mates without marriage registration because they are afraid of losing their job. At present employers prefer young unmarried women because they have flexibility on their working hours and more concentration on their work.

Due to the situation that women nowadays can principally rely on themselves, they are no longer afraid of being alone or single. Statistics of 2000 Population of Housing Census have shown that divorce is increasing significantly every year because when serious troubles occur in family, modern women will easily choose divorce as their way out. Easy divorce results in increasing number of new family structure called “single parent family”. Concerns and arguments are already brought up among many groups in the society that this “single parent family” can originate many social problems. Single mothers are doubted whether they can really be both father and mother, whether they can provide enough time and take good care of their children.

From the changing in women’s role, most women debate if they should take total responsibility of household chores. They feel that when they are able to work outside to help support the family, men should also assist with the domestic chores.

5.3 Not finding the right mate

This is an additional factor why women prefer staying single or being unmarried. Thai society teaches and believes in “the perfect mate” which makes highly successful Thai women have problems finding “good matches” who also have the same economic status, education, occupation etc. Statistic has shown that the number of single women is significantly increasing because modern women’s attitude towards being single is changed. In the past, women who stay single for too long will be called “an old maid” but now they are admired as “a smart one” who can be on their own legs.

Most single women who are aged over 40 have announced that they are proud of their status and do not think of marriage at all except for finding real good match. They have revealed different reasons supporting their wish not to marry such as they are too old to take care of others, they adore freedom, they want to spend most of their time working.

5.4 Different views toward women's role in the family

Although modern women have taken up more active roles in society, surprisingly, their responsibility at home after marriage is still the same as in the past. Thai culture and belief still exist in modern Thai women's concept: the concept of a wife as a "homemaker" in doing house chores and taking care of husband and children. From the result of the survey, it is found that women in the occupation groups who work hard and have low income do not want to do house chores because they already feel exhausted from their work outside; on the contrary, women in the specialist group who get higher income think that house chores could still be women's responsibility. From the finding on who should be responsible for house chores, most women do not seem to mind doing house chores but whether they want to do house chores or not could depend on what kind of work they do outside their home or their working hours. These factors might be the reason the women can or cannot take the responsibility.

Finally, the survey result on the women's opinions indicates that the role of women and their attitudes towards marriage have changed but some traditional beliefs and values still remain. The traditional Thai proverb that states "A women's destiny lies entirely in her husbands' hands", however, might no longer be considered suitable for some women today.

The fact that many respondents in the unskilled worker group choose the choice "uncertain" could be interpreted that the questions are not clear enough or they might not have paid attention to these issue before.

With limitation of time and the design of the scope of the study, this research did not look into the significance of the northern Lanna culture in relation to the changing roles of women and their attitudes toward marriage. It would be interesting to study and explore this cultural aspect to find out if it bears any difference from that in the other regions.