

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Following from the late-twentieth-century's trend of Western capitalism, the twenty-first century, Thailand graduation from a 'developing country,' has begun with a rush of negotiation and conclusion of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with China (implemented since October 2003), India (since September 2004), Australia (since January 2005), New Zealand (since July 2005), Japan (since November 2007), USA (halted negotiation due to political instability of Thailand since September 2006), and so on¹. As an ardent admirer of neoliberal development in Southeast Asia, the Thai government forcibly went ahead with the FTAs with China, which, for them, seemed a huge market that was unconditionally waiting for Thai products. It especially moved up the agreement in agricultural sector as Early Harvest Scheme, and implemented a removal of tariff barrier of some vegetables and fruits of a certain quota in October 2003 without giving almost any information to its own local farmers. As merits of the Trade Agreement with China, the government often mentions promotion of economic welfare, which indicates revitalization of domestic economy through trade liberalization (Tharathorn and Somkiat, 2005; Saritdet, 2007). Although it was also true that Thailand experienced an average economic growth of nearly eight percent per year before 1997, the economic crisis emerged due to foreign direct investment and export-led economy mainly in manufacturing sectors (TDRI, n.d.). Yet a voice of anxiety and opposition was also heard against trade liberalization especially from the agricultural sector facing much cheaper Chinese agricultural and industrial products.

¹ Prior to these bilateral FTA, ASEAN countries including Thailand formed the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) in 1993.

Since the end of 2003 when the Thai government announced the negotiation and conclusion of FTA with China and the opening of the domestic garlic market along with other vegetables, a huge critique against trade liberalization was raised from NGOs about globalization. Thai media was sympathetic to the poor villagers, some politicians, and some academics that existing Thai markets would be easily destroyed by import of cheaper products from China, which has been the top garlic export country in the world for more than 15 years. The items of Early Harvest in trade with China are 116 types of fruits and vegetables, including garlic – but within a quota –, shallot, tomatoes, tapioca, longan, and durian, and the negative impact on small-scale garlic farmers of it, was much reported by media in Thailand in 2004. The Chinese garlic has been flown into Thailand at the price of half to two-thirds of Thai garlic since December 2003, and Thai farmers could not sell their garlic well in that season. In 2005 the price of garlic at the Thai market went down to one-third of the price before 2003, and garlic farmers had a hard time, although the price regained a little in 2006.

Thai garlic farmers protested strongly after facing a steep drop in garlic prices in domestic markets. In response, the Thai government had set up a support program for the garlic growers, and provided 1,500 to 12,000 baht of monetary compensation – depending on the region – for the cancellation of garlic production per *rai* with some conditions in 2005. The government in fact recommended cancellation of garlic production to farmers since 2003 (cf. Table 2.1). Regarding this, several Thai NGOs also criticized the government, saying that what they set up a compensation scheme was nothing but their acceptance that their policy of liberating garlic market was wrong in the first place.

As part of the total yield of garlic in Thailand, 90 percent of it was produced in the Northern Thai region, while the other 10 percent is harvested in Northeastern region and a few in central region (cf. Figure 2.7). In Northern Thailand, Chiang Mai Province produces the most, followed by Mae Hong Song Province, Lamphun Province, and a little yield from Lampang and Chiang Rai Province. In Chiang Mai, Chai Pra Kan District in northern part of Chiang Mai Province holds the top garlic

yield at district level in Thailand along with Mae Ai District. In Chai Pra Kan, Si Dong Yen Sub-district produces the most amounts of garlic. Thus I chose Dong Pa Sak Village in Si Dong Yen Sub-district as my field research site.

Hearing that cheaper Chinese garlic began to be imported to Thailand, people expected that many Thai farmers would simply give up garlic production. Official statistics suggests that the total area size of garlic production decreased from 132,000 *rai* in 2003 to 106,000 *rai* in 2005, or about 20% decrease (Office of Agricultural Economy) (cf. Figure 2.7 and 2.9). Nevertheless, the local farmers' practical action could not be generalized as shown in macro statistics, and the simple cancellation of garlic production is at least not the case in Si Dong Yen Sub-district in Chai Pra Kan District, which has been one of the most garlic growing district in Thailand for 30 years. In Si Dong Yen, it is observed that many farmers actively continue to cultivate garlic as if it were still their main crop. Therefore, I came to be interested in why the farmers persist in garlic production without being discouraged by adversity.

As a part of labor formation history in Northern Thai agricultural sector, after the intensive commercial production of rice was introduced in the 1960s, commercialization of agriculture had spread in rural villages in the 1970s (Tanabe 1981, Anan 1984, 2000). The garlic production in Si Dong Yen Sub-district as cash crops had also started around the latter 1970s. At first, the labor was covered by family members and exchange laborers. However, from the latter 1970s to the 1980s, along with increasing commercialization, capitalist farmers as well as on-farm wage laborers including former tenants have emerged, and those numbers grown rapidly in the rural villages. As a mediator of agricultural fertilizers and chemicals, agricultural cooperatives were established under the support of government in this period, and the garlic cooperatives in Chai Pra Kan were also established in 1991. Farming in Northern Thailand today is often supported by daily wage laborers, and farm management in Si Dong Yen is no exception. Wage labor comprises poor, landless farmers, female farmers who work in their neighbor's field whenever they have time, and migrant laborers from Myanmar. Garlic is a crop to require intensive labor, in

particular for planting and harvesting. Thus, large numbers of wage labor is hired for its production.

Gender division of labor is also very clear in garlic production just like other types of vegetable production. In Northern Thailand, women traditionally play a big role, or are just given as an equally important role as men in agriculture (Benchaphun *et al.*, 1987). In the case of rice production, making a ridge between rice fields, cultivating the soil traditionally by buffalo and by a farm tractor for some cases in these days, spreading agricultural chemicals, carrying harvested rice, or threshing are traditionally male roles, while planting rice, weeding, harvesting rice, or making a sheaf of rice are female roles. In garlic production has a similar kind of gender division of labor, although femininity in it should be specially mentioned with more than a half labor in production process being covered by women. In relation with gender perspective, it is reported that in 1980s, along with increasing opportunity of wage labor, growing numbers of women, some of whom used to engage exclusively in domestic work and exchanging labor till then, had come to be involved into wage labor (Anan, 2000: 105).

In the post-harvest processing of garlic, piece-work by village women is recognized today, whose fact makes the role of women more important in garlic production. The system of piece work is much similar to other industrial commodities such as sewing clothes or embroidery that is done by rural women in Northern Thailand. For example, there are jobs to tie the harvested garlic in a bundle, or to cut roots and sprouts, peel the outside skin of garlic bulb, and take the garlic to pieces. There are several piece work jobs in relation with garlic processing in the village, and mostly women engage in these jobs. Thus, if the processing work in garlic production has decreased as a result of recession of garlic business through trade liberalization, it is these women who are much affected by it. However, these phenomena, which might be one kind of uneven experience of trade liberalization for Thai rural women, are easily overlooked if I simply evaluate trade liberalization with the macro economic analysis, even with a critical view. Therefore, this research paid attention to

female labor as well as feminine-type wage labor as an important part of agrarian transition.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Since the government's announcement of trade liberalization in agricultural sector including garlic through Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with China in 2003, the debates between pros and cons were hotly held in Thailand. Yet, the debates tended to be monolithic, exclusively with economic utility: those in favor said that farmers would stop garlic production in the face of cheaper garlic from the other area and come to grow more suitable crops for them, which after all promoted economic efficiency (TDRI, n.d.; Tharathorn and Somkiat, 2005; Rangsan, 2008a, b). Those against said that the inflow of cheaper vegetables from foreign countries would destroy the domestic small-scale agriculture and farmers' livelihoods (Kingkorn, 2006; Supanee and Waraporn, 2006; Sajin, 2007; FTA Watch, 2007; Chavin, *et al.*, 2007; Research Center of Applied Economy, *et al.*, 2008; Wisarn, 2008).

The government statistics shows that about 20 percent of the garlic production area of the whole of Thailand had decreased in the relation with trade liberalization before 2006. However, this meant that there were still farmers who kept the practice of garlic production going remaining in the 80 percent despite the government recommendation of its cancellation, and that Chai Pra Kan District was one of them. When I visited the Si Dong Yen region for a preliminary inspection in 2005 and 2006, I also recognized that many farmers engaged in garlic production while complaining about its low price. Then, the above arguments of both those for and against could neither explain why farmers of as much as 80 percent persisted in garlic practice nor how the farmers have survived through the garlic slump period.

In this sense, Walker (2007a, b) pays attention to livelihoods of ex-garlic farmers after trade liberalization with an approach similar to this work. However, Walker's focus is on the farmers who left garlic production, and he reports how farmers in his research village shifted their farm production from garlic to other crops

such as beans with contract farming. In contrast with Walker, the main focus of this research is on farmers who still persist in garlic production against neoliberal explanation. Many of the farmers of Si Dong Yen region or of Chai Pra Kan District continued garlic production because its contexts are different from Walker's site. The existence of these different reactions among garlic producers by region indicates the "multiple trajectories" of agricultural villages with trade liberalization as a driving force (Hart, 1997), and this suggests that researchers cannot generalize any case but be context specific.

Furthermore, a problem of perspective on garlic farmers was also found among existing research on the impact of trade liberalization in Thailand. Some of them pay attention to both macro and micro levels, and calculate the loss for small-scale garlic farmers in relation to trade liberalization (Research Center of Applied Economy, *et al.*, 2008). But since they do not pay attention to social relations of people in the farming process, they regard related stakeholders in local garlic production as 'garlic growers,' and overlook agricultural wage laborers who in fact form the foundation of the agricultural production system in present-day Thailand. In other words, farmers are identified as independent entrepreneurs mostly at the household level, and thus, individual wage laborers are often invisible. Even more neglected is paid and unpaid female (or feminine) agricultural labor. Since they are made invisible, their loss of labor opportunity is also not evident. On this point, I find the advantage in the new agrarian political economy approach and look at labor process and labor market including changing gender division of labor.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on research backgrounds and problem description so far, research questions of this work are:

- (1) Why and how was trade liberalization of garlic commodity promoted in Thailand, and what is the impact of it on the local agricultural villages?

(2) Why have Thai farmers persisted in garlic production in the face of lower priced Chinese garlic through trade liberalization?

(3) What are garlic farm families' coping strategies with instable livelihoods at a household level, such as changes in garlic labor process or enlarging off-farm work, and how are female family members involved in it at an individual level?

1.4 Research Objectives

The main objective of this research is to contribute to understanding of contemporary agrarian transition in Northern Thailand with newly launched trade liberalization as a driving force. Various new questions have been raised for the study of agrarian transition of Third World after 1990s such as about traditional farm family, reemergence of pre-capitalist form, and resistance to market intervention. With a focus on garlic small-scale farmers in Northern Thailand, this research aims to provide a case study to understand why, how, in what degree small-scale farmers have persisted.

At a macro level, this work argues that trade liberalization was not introduced inevitably driven by market, but rather pushed by the state as a political project. Thus, taking the Thai small-scale garlic production that is widely recognized as a business that most suffered as the result of trade liberalization in Thailand, as an example, it rather specifies how several regulations which the state and the market introduced to the local farmers, and clarifies how they increased state control over farmers rather than simply debating who are winners and losers in terms of economics and evaluated merit and demerit of trade liberalization.

Then, focusing on the linkage between the above macro structure and the micro, local practice through trade liberalization, the work identifies that trade liberalization and related regulations at the macro level are not effectively enforced at the local level, with local farmers' viewing trade liberalization in a different way from the most of the political and economic experts. Thai farmers certainly suffer steep

price drop of garlic after trade liberalization, but some active farmers at the same time views trade liberalization as an opportunity to improve their hard livelihoods. They take the newly promoted state and market projects in their advantage, and participate in the project which they see useful, while rejecting the ones not serving any of their purposes. After all, despite the coercive structure at the macro level, the local farmers also have some leadership in their practice.

Shifting the level of analysis to the local, the work also clarifies the diversity and complexity of the local practices. Common strategy of most farmers who survived the recession period of Thai garlic business is diversification of agricultural crops: from production of exclusively garlic into several crop productions. However, toward the same background of increasing market competition as well as government control, small-scale farmers of the same village respond in different ways: some give up farming; some reduce garlic production and shift its relative importance into other crop production with contract farming; some shift from garlic production to potato production; or some enlarge garlic production level.

Lastly, this work also pays attention to individual women of farm families as well as agricultural wage laborer as other important subjects in garlic production at the local level. Where scholars examine agrarian transition under the changing large structure of market, they tend to focus on such gender differences at the community or household level and thereby miss gender difference in them. However, women's roll and status in practice are different from men across farm families, in particular garlic production, whose labor formation traditionally leaned to women very much, and are often subordinate to men. Therefore, this work demonstrates shifting roles of women in garlic farm families. In addition, wage labor plays an important role in Thai garlic production today. Thus, the exploited yet active character of wage labor in garlic production is examined with the concept of feminization of agricultural labor.

1.5 Theoretical Background and Literature Review

In this section, I will review three theories on which the rationale of this research is based. These are: political economy of trade liberalization, debate over peasant persistence or de-agrarianization under agrarian study, and feminization of agricultural labor.

1.5.1 Political Economy of Trade Liberalization

Trade liberalization is a part of a globalizing process to promote free trade under neoliberal theory. It has rapidly spread across the world in the end of twentieth century through the US-dominated International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO), or the bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA). While it is vigorously promoted aiming at economic growth by neoliberal proponents, some others oppose it saying that ‘free trade’ involves contradiction in its nature due to political and economic dimensions of the neoliberal project, or that it just promotes further uneven geographical development (Fernández-Kelly, 2007: 6; Harvey, 2007: 23). In this subsection, I first review the basic idea of trade liberalization that comes from neoliberal theories, then focus on critique of it with argument that globalization including trade liberalization as a political project that leads to uneven development, lastly narrowing the scope and look at liberalization of agro-food trade.

Neoliberalism primarily proposes to reduce the role of the state in social and economic affairs. It believes that human well-being can be best achieved by the maximization of individual freedoms within institutional frameworks of private property rights, individual liberty, free markets, free trade (Harvey, 2007: 22; Calhoun *ed.*, 2002). For that purpose, the state should create and preserve appropriate institutional frameworks, although it should not overact beyond these tasks.

Free trade tends to be considered that it has spread under neoliberal economy from the 1980s onward, but in fact its idea was developed more than 100 years ago, when the neoclassical economy was proposed for the first time in the 1870s. Free

trade aims to minimize or ideally remove taxes and other trade barriers such as subsidies, quotas and regulations for international exchange of goods and services with the ideas of comparative advantage and survival of the fittest (Fernández-Kelly, 2007: 7). Its main concern is an allocation of goods and resources through interaction of supply and demand in the market system, as is famous in Adam Smith's concept of "invisible hand of the market" (Smith, 1991[1776]).

In contrast to this main stream assertion of various advantageous aspects of trade liberalization, the cases that report its negative impact also come out one after another, including various case reports of the impact of the NAFTA to the local (Fernández-Kelly *ed.*, 2007), cases that examine bilateral trade agreements in terms of threatening force of food sovereignty (APNFS *ed.*, 2006), and the reports that criticize Free Trade Area under the APEC as a political agenda (Morrison and Pedrosa *eds.*, 2007). For example, critics say that the series of phenomena of globalization are a political project by those who would be able to gain the greatest benefit through globalization (Harvey, 2007: 33; McMichael, 2004: 152). For McMichael, globalization is a political intervention to overcome the limitations of the development projects that has promoted state-regulated market based on Keynesian economics from 1945 to 1970s, and the beneficiaries of it today are only 20 percent of the world's population. Following the same logic, he continues, what we often seen under the globalization is not 'free market,' which sounds like natural and neutral event, but somebody is "freeing" markets as a political act (McMichael, 2004:152).

Similarly, Harvey (1990, 2006[1982], 2007) views that time and space compression through globalization is one of capitalists' strategies to break the inevitable deadlock and contradiction of capital accumulation in the Fordist era. Harvey (2007: 33) analyzes that those states strongly promote neoliberalism as a political scheme to reestablish conditions for capital accumulation and restore class power. Neoliberalism is not beneficial for the majority of people, but it brings a huge success for the upper classes. The main ideology behind neoliberalism is "to redistribute" rather than "to generate" (Harvey, 2007: 34). Thus, what it does is to transfer assets, wealth, or income either from the mass of the population toward the

upper classes or from vulnerable to richer countries. Trade liberalization or abolishing state welfare is also one element of this process. The myth that certain sectors fail because they are not competitive enough is nothing but propagated by the upper-class. While claiming the Spencer's argument of "the survival of the fittest," systemic problems are masked under such ideological claim (Spencer, 2002[1864]: 444). After all, Harvey (2007) critically argues that although the state's role should be decreased in the neoliberal model, the fact is that it plays a crucial role in backing and promoting the neoliberal processes through monopoly and the law.

While TNCs promote trade liberalization for their own benefit, some "Third World" states also support it. In relation with industrial sector, for the newly industrial countries (NICs) – Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, Brazil, and Mexico, participation into world economy through the globalization was an expression of the contradiction of 'development' (McMichael, 2004: 77, 114). What gradually became evident during development era is that the First World is not waiting for the Third World to catch up; rather, the gap between the two world regions is expanding.

In the course of liberalization of trade, some states aim at promoting agro-food trade. However, the liberalization of agro-food trade has not guaranteed survival of small-scale farmers in the Third World states (Harvey, 1990, 2006[1982]; Watts and Goodman, 1997; McMichael, 2004). Especially, small-scale local farmers who have been spatially fixed and depended on state subsidies, farm credit, risk insurances, and so on had been exposed directly to volatile world prices through the trade liberalization (McMichael, 2004: 169). The point is that the TNCs have been already controlled about three-fourth of all global trade in primary commodities including price manipulation. Thus, the Third World states expected that the establishment of the WTO as an organization that holds independent jurisdiction for the GATT would stabilize the world market in a better way (McMichael, 2004: 171-172; Harvey, 2007: 32).

The study of the world agro-food structure is compiled into a book of *Globalising Food: Agrarian Questions and Global Restructuring* (Goodman and Watts eds., 1997). In its introduction Watts and Goodman (1997: 1) illustrate that

“1990s is a moment of unprecedented deregulation of agriculture (a shift from aid to trade), the hegemony of export oriented neoliberal development strategies, and a recognition that globalization of the world agro-food economy was proceeding apace.” Agro-food trade after 1980s promoted contradiction and uneven development through food consumption. From this and other cases, Watts and Goodman (1997: 2, 3) suggest the necessity to pay attention both production and distribution level and consumption level for the study of agro-food. At the level of production and distribution the food economy has been radically restructured and increasingly driven by global demand and internationalization of the agro-food industry, while at the level of consumption the food economy has differentiated and increased a gap among people along with the change in food-ways.

As I explored earlier, the major international organization that has established to promote smooth world trade is World Trade Organization (WTO). Although what the WTO has promoted is deregulation under neoliberal theories, Harvey (1990: 170-172) critically argues that the process of globalization by neoliberalism is in fact often the process of increasing regulation than deregulation. Likewise, Friedmann (1993: 52, cited in Watts and Goodman, 1997: 3) also argues that in the process of globalization the giant food companies and the retailers or TNCs regulate production and consumption of food, that is, agro-food economy, so that they can plan investment and marketing on a global scale. Friedmann calls it ‘private global regulation,’ but I call this phenomenon ‘re-regulation.’

Regarding the argument of regulation, Marsden (1997) provides the case to show the impact of such regulation at the local level. With cases in the Caribbean, Brazil, and Britain after the Cold War, Marsden studies regulations related to global commodity chains and shows the relationship between networks, quality control/regulation, and power. In the globalised food networks, the private firms supported by the state came to force strict quality control to smaller family producers. They control not only the way to harvest, handle and pack fruits, but also the timing of the process so that the fruits mature upon arrival at importing countries’ market, such as the US and Europe, or sometimes to Japan. Just-in-time system is required. Then, those actors

and agencies that define and implement quality conditions begin to accumulate power in the food network. Through this, social and economic differentiation where smaller producer excluded has occurred. In addition, Marsden (1997: 178) finds that under the global market competition, the national governments also increased the pressure on quality control of export products. As a result, small farmers are marginalized in external commodity market. Furthermore, environmental vulnerability also becomes marginal to the priorities of production. It also brought internal conflict and competition between different sectors of agriculture, such as between sugar plantation and other farmers, older and young farmers, and larger and small farmers.

Contrary to Marsden, a scholar who looks at increase of regulation in a favorable way is Walker (2007a, b, 2009). With a case of farmers' agricultural production from garlic to other crops through contract farming in Northern Thailand, he shows how farmers' livelihoods became better compared with the time when they engaged in garlic production without any price guarantee before. Walker coincidentally provides field information of changing garlic production from Northern Thailand, which is similar to this work although from a different area. Basically supports trade liberalization, Walker (2007a, c, 2008) argues that the perspective of anti-trade liberalization groups in Thailand is simplifying the impact of trade liberalization as well as garlic production system too much. I agree with him on this point. However, while Walker's focus is on the farmers who abandoned garlic production soon after trade liberalization, my focus in this work is on farmers who persisted in garlic production so as to explicate the complexity of trade liberalization of agricultural commodity in practice.

Related to redistribution of capital and resource through globalization project, liberalization of trade also causes a problem of food insecurity. The goal of food security is to provide sufficient and predictable food supplies, and in the case of developing countries to reduce national hunger and poverty (FAO, 2003). However, in the Uruguay Round, the United States challenged this by claiming that the food security becomes possible mostly through smoothing world markets by free trade in food. It is called "global conception of food security" (McMichael, 2004: 171-172).

Its' idea again stems from 'comparative advantage,' saying that when the system of food trade is well-managed and when there are some countries who produce food more than others as "breadbasket", trade liberalization is the best way for countries lacking food to secure food channel. Despite strong critiques of this model, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United States (FAO) also supports this idea and thus promote agricultural trade liberalization (FAO, 2003).

In summary, this subsection looked at the complex aspect of macro politics behind trade liberalization in general and trade liberalization of agro-food. Despite the proliferation of neoliberalism in the global scale, in fact, not deregulation but rather re-regulation by both private retailers and states is recognized. The increasing regulation along with commoditization of agro-food and its trade liberalization gives an uneven impact on the local farmers. As I see in Marsden's case studies, the regulation formation process is at the same time expression of power relations.

1.5.2 Agrarian Transition: De-agrarianization, Re-agrarianization and Beyond

Originating from Karl Kautsky's (1888[1889]) classic volume of *The Agrarian Question* in the 1890s in Germany, since the beginning of twentieth century, classic agrarian political economists were interested in the study of agriculture, politics, capitalist accumulation, and the agrarian transitions to capitalism in multiple, nonlinear ways (Watts and Goodman, 1997: 5; Bernstein and Byres, 2001; Rigg 2001: 10). In the 1960s, these classic theories are succeeded and revitalized by neo-Marxists who analyzed the Third World peasantries, class-based collective action, property relations, and market integration and commoditization process (for example, Wolf, 1966, 1969; Moore, 1966), along with the availability of Chayanov's (1966) work on peasant economies after it appeared in English in 1966. After the 1980s, the agrarian question has gathered more attention of scholars, and the question has also modified to more diversified ones, reflecting the exact situation of rural South and growing globalization (for example, Hart *et al.*, 1989; Goodman and Watts *eds.*, 1997; Rigg

2001: 15). Many have come to study global agro-food industry, application of Fordist and post-Fordist perspectives, and regulation theory. In an attempt of reconceptualizing peasantries (Kearney, 1996), they are also interested in the persistence of the traditional farm family, reemergence of pre-capitalist form, and resistance to industrialization. These questions are not independent but rather interrelated. This work also relates to all questions, but put its main focus on persistence of peasants or of small-scale farmers under the era of trade liberalization.

The debate over the persistent survival of peasants or their disappearance has long been a part of the history of agrarian study, and continues even today. In classic theory, Lenin (1964 [1899]) and Chayanov (1966) were interested in proletarianization of peasant by penetration of capitalist economy in peasant society. On the one hand, Lenin argued that polarization of peasant society into two classes of capitalist farmers and landless wage laborers, and final disappearance of peasants. On the other hand, Chayanov expected continuation of peasantry or small-scale farm under capitalist economy with self-exploitation manner of the farmers. Today, the issue is still debated although it is more diversified and complicated.

A common phenomenon of village agriculture in the Third World today in association with above debate is in that increasing number of people are engaging in 'off-farm paid work.' When I look at a household as a unit of analysis, many households engage in both on and off-farm work at the same time (Goodman and Redclift, 1982; Kearney, 1996; Eder, 1999; Rigg, 2001, 2005; Yos, 2008), although the income proportion from both works is different depending on the household. Among various scholars, Goodman and Redclift (1982) and Eder (1999) concludes that small farms sustain supported by supplemental income through off-farm work by family members, while Elson (1997) and Rigg (2001) suggest "de-agrarianization" mainly due to increase of non-farm activity, de-linkage between landholding and prosperity, and modernization of lifestyle in the village. Kearney (1996) is also interested in the persistence of peasantry, but based on the fact that only 20 percent of villagers are full-time farmers while remaining 80 percent are involved in informal

activity and wage labor in his research village, he came to consider reconceptualization of the peasantry especially in terms of maintenance of culture.

There are also related views to examine persistence of small-scale agriculture not from household strategy but in terms of changing market structure (Goodman and Watts *eds.*, 1997; Nevin and Peluso *eds.*, 2008), in addition to introduction of contract farming (Little and Watts *eds.*, 1994; Walker, 2009). Agro-food industries have also reached the Third World farm family under globalization of trade and economy today, and it came to buy products from small-scale farm family through contract. Despite the advantage and disadvantage of form of contract for farmers, the literatures suggest that contract farming enabled the persistence of small-scale farmers in the Third World village.

In reference to the debate over de-agrarianization and re-agrarianization, Hirsh (2011: 187) argues against both and instead suggests a phenomenon of the “repositioning of agrarian relations”. With several case studies of agrarian transformations from Greater Mekong Subregion including my interim report of this work (Chayan and Chusak *eds.*, 2011; Miyake 2011), Hirsch (2011: 187) discusses that this region in fact has not de-agrarianized at all, and therefore has less to do with re-agrarianization. For him, what is occurring in agrarian society today is “a reshaping and revitalization of agricultural production” under today’s wider and globalized society.

I would like to take a step toward literatures about Northern Thai agrarian transition, and to explore critical ways of understanding the formation of Thai nation-state as well as Northern Thai integration into it, with a focus on expansion of land control by the state. In the past when land was still abundant in Northern Thailand, little attention was given to agrarian issues, and the control of labor was regarded as more important than land (Kemp, 1981: 2-3; Vandergeest and Peluso, 1995: 392). The traditional system of landholdings in Northern Thailand was usufruct of kinship groups, which is distinguished from the Western manner of individual ownership (Kemp, 1981: 14; Anan, 1994: 611-616). These rights were recognized by the community as long as the kin group continued to cultivate through inheritance.

Originally, the inheritance used to be matrilineal, that is, a mother's land was inherited by her daughters, while movable properties such as money or cattle were inherited by sons. However, such matrilineal tradition has been changing in the last several decades, and today land is inherited more equally among both female and male children (Anan, 1994).

Influenced by Western-oriented ideas of land tenure systems, Thailand regarded the non-commercial, communal land use as economically inefficient and socially and culturally backward, and promoted the codification of landholdings in rural areas (Cleary and Eaton, 1996; Anan, 2000). In addition, based on the state development discourse of decreasing the economic gap between center and periphery, of modernizing villagers, and of increasing national security, 1970s was the time when commercialization of agriculture began to penetrate rural villages after introduction of intensive commercial production of rice in the 1960s (Anan, 2000: 83). Along with such transition, capitalist farmers have emerged in the villages on the one hand, and wage laborers have increased on the other.

According to Tanabe (1981, cited in Ritchie, 1996: 322), in a village in the rural Chiang Mai of Northern Thailand in 1974, about two thirds of village households were farmers, and the other a third were involved in agricultural wage labor. Anan (1984, 2000) also shows similar characteristic, although he emphasizes the existence of landless farmers and their struggles as tenant. The 1980s in rural Chiang Mai was the time of increasingly commercialization of agriculture and cash crops, increasingly commercialization of land and land sale, and emergence of wage labor mainly in agricultural work with some limited non-agricultural one (Anan, 2000). The reason why agricultural wage labor had increased is that landowners had come to prefer hired labor system for cultivation of their land, to renting the land to the tenants, although, nonetheless, many poor farmers went on holding small piece of land mainly due to the feeling of insecurity (Anan, 2000). Along with the increasing opportunity of wage labor, growing numbers of women were formally engaged exclusively in domestic work and exchanging labor had also come to be involved into wage labor (Werasit, 1988; Anan, 2000: 125). Laborers from outside villages had also

come to be seen. This tells us that emergence of wage labor transformed labor market formation, involving women. However, not so many studies have done more than this to know situation of female role. Thus, it is necessary to focus on this point.

From 1985 to the beginning of 1990s was the time when the state-led Land Titling Project was (re)implemented, and many poor villagers lost their land to the capitalists both inside and outside of the village, who competitively bought land for land speculation (Anan, 1994; Vandergeest and Peluso, 1995; Miyake, 2003). Farmers who sold or lost their land became wage laborers. Through the field study in 1991 in the same village as Tanabe (1981), Ritchie (1996: 324) says that the structure of rural village has changed a lot. Only about five percent of the households were exclusively involved in farming, and construction work is the most common job for both women and men. He found, what he calls, interpenetrated structure of rural and urban, with a mix of agricultural, non-farm and hybrid households and occupations.

At the same time, 1980s was a time of transnational corporation have increasingly opened their manufacturing factories in the Third World under post-Fordism (Harvey, 1990), and Thailand including the North was no exception as it received such factories by creating special industrial zones. Although in (and from) the villages in Northeastern Thailand, in 1987-93, Mills (1999) conducted research regarding rural young women's migrant labor to the factories in the capital Bangkok and successfully shows a discourse of modernity through rural women's subjectivity.

Now turning into the 21st century, I found in my former research that most rural villagers make money as wage labor, and often stress is caused by low wages and instable livelihood (Miyake, 2003: 94). Related to this phenomenon, while claiming that rural poverty is "de-linked" from land, Rigg (2005: 192) emphasizes to look at the other types of work opportunity in both on- and off- farming areas without sticking to farming. He pays attention to diversification of livelihood including non-farm work and mobility, and to the cultural and social changes behind. Although a classic literature, Scott (1976: 33, 34) says that poor farmers dislike the 'high-wage but insecure work' more than 'low-wage but secure job,' and suggests that "we may learn more about the politics of peasants by asking not merely how poor they are but

also how precarious their livelihood is.” I do not simply agree with the argument that rural poverty is de-linked from land. From the case study of landless rural workers movement in Brazil (Robles, 2001) and my former work of landless farmers’ social movement in Northern Thailand (Miyake, 2003), many villagers who used to lose interest in land once in favor of non-farm work seem to have come back to land again, with being tired of insecure livelihood of wage labor under neoliberalism. Nonetheless, villagers do not stick only to land as the old days, but, as Rigg suggests, combine farm work and non-farm work depending of situations. Thus, despite the debate that whether land lost its importance for the agrarian study, I consider that to study about contemporary way of making a livelihood of the rural villages is important.

In this section I examined the methods of forming classic agrarian questions, debate over persistence of peasants, and literatures about Northern Thai agrarian transition. The Northern Thai agrarian literature pays little attention to the role of women. However, as I examined above, now is the time both female and male villagers are tremendously involved in wage labor and subcontracted work, both on- and off-farm. In the next subsection, I would like to review literature on the feminization of agricultural labor, which I argue is currently occurring in Northern Thailand.

1.5.3 Feminization of Agriculture

Feminization of labor in manufacturing industry led by multinational corporations in the Third World is already well reported by feminist Marxists and other scholars (Elson and Pearson, 1981; Harvey, 1990: 153; Ong, 1991; Wolf, 1992; Pearson, 1998; Mills, 1999), but today a similar tendency is recognized in the agricultural sector as well. Scholars of agrarian political economists do not necessarily report them, or there is not available literature about it with Thai case either.

Despite the similarity of the exploitation form of labor in agricultural sector to the one in the industry, farmers had not been regarded as ‘labor’ until recently.

Hahamovitch and Halpern (2004) say that the US scholars tend to consider that farm workers or rural laborers are not a 'working class,' and are therefore beyond state influence. They were even excluded from the legal institutional system of industrial relations established by the 1935 Wagner Act. However, with various case studies showing that rural and industrial workers are related today or sometimes are just same people, the perspective has changed. In addition, 'class,' which is considered as a category unrelated to farmers, is also formed in the rural region. For example, in Latin America, industrialization is a relatively minor factor in comparison to class movements as agrarian movements. Thus, they say, to study agriculture is important for labor historians.

Feminist scholars also add different arguments to this perspective. It is good to bring class analysis to the study of agricultural sector, but, feminists insist, class formation among women is different from the one among men (Hahamovitch and Halpern, 2004). Garikipati (2006: 1) criticizes the debate on feminization of agriculture in India because it remains "within the narrow confines of class," viewing feminization process as one of class struggles. For her, class is important institution, but it lets us miss other critical institutions such as patriarchy and household. For this argument, I can notice that it maintains the same line with feminist agrarian scholars which I looked at before. For Garikipati (2006: 1), "such exclusion can lead to only a partial understanding of the causes and consequences of feminization." Since poverty and responsibility for household make women difficult to have bargaining power in the labor market, if women's workload had increased more through feminization of agriculture, it may intensify gender inequality and both individual and systemic exploitation of women.

For definitions of the 'feminization of agriculture,' two factors are raised mainly. First, it "refers to women's increasing participation in the agricultural labor force, whether as independent producers, as unremunerated family workers, or as agricultural wage workers. Women work not only in the fields and pastures, but also in agricultural processing and packing plants (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2006). Even the phenomenon of women's increasing participation, there are two patterns: one is that

women have increasingly higher participation rates; and two is that the women's share of agricultural labor shifts from less than half to more than half. Some scholars focus on only the former pattern (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2006; Zhang *et al.*, 2006), some scholars pay attention to both patterns (Katz, 2003; Deere, 2005).

Second, just like feminization of industrial labor means the increase of 'feminine-type' flexible labor, the feminization of agriculture also indicates increase of feminine-type labor in agriculture: that is, seasonal, temporary, or casual labor as supplementary workers of permanent labor, mainly male, labor force (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2006: 6). In addition, "working conditions are characterized by insecurity, long working hours, environmental health hazards, low wages, and limited opportunities for training and skill development" (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2006: 8).

Has the number of women involved in agriculture increased really? (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2006: 1). This question describes that although rural women have been traditionally involved in agriculture, yet it is also true that the role of women in agriculture has broadened and deepened over the last few decades. According to her, FAO's reports in 1999 shows that in Africa and Asia, for example, almost half of the agricultural labor force is women. More in detail, as for India, the percentage of women agricultural laborers increased from 25.6% to 43.4%, compared to the increase from 16.2% to 27.4% for men during 1961-2001 (Garikipati, 2006: 2). This is also due to seasonally out-migration of men. In the case of China, the feminization of agriculture has been clearly observed along with the Chinese market transition since 1978, as is expressed in the phrase of 'men work and women plough' (Zuo, 2004: 510). This is because when rural China transformed from commune-based farming to household-based one, many men chose off-farm employment, leaving agricultural and household works to their wives. Although more than 100 million immigrants are recognized recently, more than two-thirds of them are men (Zuo, 2004; Zhang *et al.*, 2006).

When we study increasing women participation, differentiation by age is important. With elaborated quantitative research in China, Zhang *et al.* (2006: 23-25) report that while young women prefer off-farm work just like young men,

middle-aged women from 26 years old to 45 years old remain in farm work partly because they send their husband to off-farm work without special skill of their own. Furthermore, elderly women engage in non-paid housework and grandchild care.

As the feminization of industrial labor has a certain reason to have occurred, the feminization of agricultural labor also has been a driving force. In the region where there is a labor demand in urban industry, men have often been involved, and female family members are left at home (Hahamovitch and Halpern, 2004: 6). In other words, more men than women migrate for the urban work. As one of the reasons less women migrate to the city, with a case in India, Samita Sen (cited in Hahamovitch and Halpern, 2004: 7) says that women are often opposed to the migration by their husbands and fathers, and colonial officials saw this as a violation of loyalty to the family and patriarchal power within it. That is why women tend to remain at home in the village, and the feminization of the farm is a true picture of rural villages today, instead of image of “farmers as men and thus rural women as farmers’ wives and daughters” (Hahamovitch and Halpern, 2004: 7). From this point, Hahamovitch and Halpern (2004: 8) conclude that “migration and class formation are highly gendered experiences.”

Although the above reason is seen from the viewpoint of demand of male labor in off-farm work, at the same time there is also a demand of female or feminine-type labor in on-farm work despite men are in the village or not. Referring to the cases in Latin America since the early 1980s, and in Sub-Saharan Africa in the late 1980s, Lastarria-Cornhiel (2006: 7, 8) illustrates that women’s job opportunity has indeed increased under neoliberal policies of new labor demand for high-value agricultural export production. The low-wage, long-hour working condition is due to high competition among agri-business firms to reduce costs. Since there is a law, agro-industries need to provide minimum wage rates and social benefits to permanent workers. However, in order to avoid such labor market regulation, they prefer hiring temporary or casual labor. They targeted women for such kinds of jobs because women cannot help accepting lower wage jobs due to lack of other opportunity or assets.

The idea of gender division of labor in agriculture might have traditionally existed, but it has been further promoted by agribusiness enterprises. Lastarria-Cornhiel (2006: 5-6) says that agribusiness enterprises provide women with the labor-intensive tasks such as “weeding and pruning in the fields, selection and cutting in processing, and sorting and wrapping in packing,” while provide men with “the tasks that entail strength such as lifting crates and construction of greenhouses, or that involve machinery such as driving tractors and trucks, applying pesticides, and maintaining equipment.” In other words, women are more likely to be given unskilled work and less payment.

Regarding the gendered problems caused by the feminization of agriculture, as seen in the above case studies over China, India, Latin America, or Africa, the problems seem to differ depending on local culture and institution, such as patriarchy, religion, and caste of each country just like agrarian scholars suggest the necessity of studying ‘multiple trajectories.’ In Latin America and Africa, the feminization of agriculture is often led by neoliberal policies. In order to produce high-value agricultural products such as flowers, what kind of working conditions industries had provided to rural women laborers has already mentioned above as a ‘feminine-type’ labor. Its characteristics were low wage, long hours, and flexible labor market. The neoliberal structure is the first reason that women had come to seek for wage labor. The liberalization policies that promote higher input costs, lower farm-gate prices, and cuts in access to credit and social services for smallholder sector are often unfriendly for smallholder sector that produces mostly food for local and regional markets (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2006: 17). Facing the decline in food security, low-income and low-asset rural households, both men and women, had to seek other income sources including insecure wage labor in agri-business industry in order to maintain the household. Neoliberal policies directly and indirectly exploited women from poor households.

As for India, Garikipati refers to the Marxist’s ‘poverty-push’ thesis that suggests that women’s increased participation in agriculture does not mean improvement of their living standard but is merely the result of an increasing poverty

among smallholders and artisans (Byres, 1981; Agarwal, 1986; Garikipati, 2006: 3). Female members of smaller landholding households were forced to work in order to supplement farm incomes, and it increased women's responsibility for family provisioning and payment for debt. These compelled "women to accept low wages, greater 'unfreedom' and a general worsening of working conditions" (da Corta and Venkateshwarlu, 1999, cited in Garikipati, 2006: 3).

Related to the feminization of agriculture and gender relation, there is a question that whether women's participation to the economic activities increase their decision-making power in the household and community, especially in terms of reproductive work and responsibilities, and control over income (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2006: 12). By reviewing several literatures, Lastarria-Cornhiel (2006) concludes that there is no consistent account for this. Not only the situations differ by region, but also the conclusions differ by researchers. Yet, she concludes that while "women who work off-farm as wage workers and directly receive their wages have more control over those wages," "women who work as unremunerated family workers are less likely to increase their status and decision-making power" (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 2006: 12).

With the Indian case mentioned above, Garikipati (2006) says that the amount of reproductive work of women basically stayed same, and women's contribution to household provisioning does not improve women's domestic status. Garikipati (2006: 8, 15) observes that for improving women's bargaining power, women's ownership of assets is more important than contribution of provisioning. Regarding the decision-making power, she asked "who decides to sell, who goes to sell, and who keeps the money from the sale" for the sale of crop and livestock. Her findings are as follows: for livestock, women's participation in the sale of crop and big livestock is negligible, although they may sell poultry by themselves and get smaller incomes. Women's participation into them becomes lesser for the higher-class households; for crops, men perform 73.1% of all sales. "Despite their significantly higher share of agricultural employment vis-à-vis men, women do not enjoy a corresponding domestic status" (Garikipati, 2006: 1).

The opinion on China again seems divided. Zuo (2004: 511) reports that while “men’s outmigration offers new opportunities for men to improve their own social and economic prosperity,” women “are confined to the economy of subsistence and non paid household responsibilities.” Due to this, some scholars point out that feminization of agriculture in China increased marital inequality between husband and wife. However, Zuo deploys a different view. When starting the research, she noticed that despite their multiple burdens in agriculture or domestic works forced by Chinese patriarchy, few women view such gendered division of labor as unfair. Due to mutual obligations and relational exchange of each family member, majority of the wives consider the gendered division of labor as fair, despite their increased burden of agricultural and domestic responsibilities, and the growing gap in cash income between themselves and their husband.

Concluding this subsection, I would like to summarize Lastarria-Cornhiel’s (2006: 18) consideration on the relation between gender relation and feminization of agriculture. That is to say, first, women labor is considered as cheap and flexible. Second, feminization of agriculture indicates increased gender dynamics. That is, men migrate to the city (partly due to men’s accessibility to education than women) and women increased their responsibility on farm. The number of women-headed households has also increased. Third, as for women’s bargaining position both in households and labor markets, while women whose access to assets and resources are high gained benefits, those who not, did not. Lastly, regarding interaction between economic policy and gender relations in households, neoliberalism considered that women should be responsible for reproductive as well as unpaid work in the households. Under this idea, costs of food and social services increased because accessibility has decreased. Since women worked outside, their total working hours have increased. Especially in the countries and regions where gender division of labor is clear, women’s work has increased. These four currents should be considered in my study as well.

In this subsection, I have reviewed feminization of agricultural labor because it is now occurring in Northern Thailand and my research site. It is firstly due to the

more rural men going to off-farm wage labor and secondly due to the attempt of decreasing production cost in the agricultural processing. This study will explore whether it is occurring or not, and if it does, how and why it is occurring, and how it changes women's status in rural villages. Furthermore, to avoid the exclusively structuralist approach I reviewed before, I will look at feminization of agriculture in a context specific way in my field site. In addition I will adopt the perspective of female agency to study actors in feminized agriculture.

1.6 Conceptualization

This study aimed to understand how Thai small-scale garlic farmers had persisted in garlic production in the face of cheaper foreign garlic in Thai domestic market through launch of trade liberalization in Thailand since October 2003. In the provided conceptual framework (Figure 1.1), first, as a driving force of new agrarian transition, trade liberalization of garlic was a subject of study. Main actors who led trade liberalization of garlic were the state and market. Their policies were backed by the perspective of globalism and neoliberalism. The term "globalism" is the one suggested by McMichael (2004) and Harvey (2007), with the intention of clearly expressing that globalization is a political project to overcome the deadlock of over-accumulation under capitalism. Agreeing with their idea, I adopt the term here.

However, the theory of trade liberalization has a contradiction and thus unevenly affects local producers, or in this case, on garlic farmers through the liberalization of domestic market. Those who gained through trade liberalization in Thailand were large-scale, agro-food corporations and several corporations from the manufacturing industry. In fact, even before globalization, Thai local farmers' livelihoods have long been unstable as a result of constant intervention by the uneven development and penetration of capitalistic economy since around 1970s. This has been especially true in garlic production that requires high investment to cover intensive labor, and is accordingly accompanied by high risk. Although some scholars suggests that fluctuation of garlic price is not related to trade liberalization (Walker,

2007c; Research Center of Applied Economy, *et al.*, 2008; Wisarn, 2008), trade liberalization added more price fluctuation to Thai garlic market in light of the rapid and furious increase of cheap garlic import from China². Through trade liberalization, this time, the market structures of both commodity and labor had been restructured again. The increasing market competition, price fluctuation of the garlic commodity, or its saturated market was considered as leading to the instability of rural people's livelihoods.

Expecting such increasing instability in farmers' livelihood, in particular of garlic farmers, the government introduced new forms of regulation over price, choice

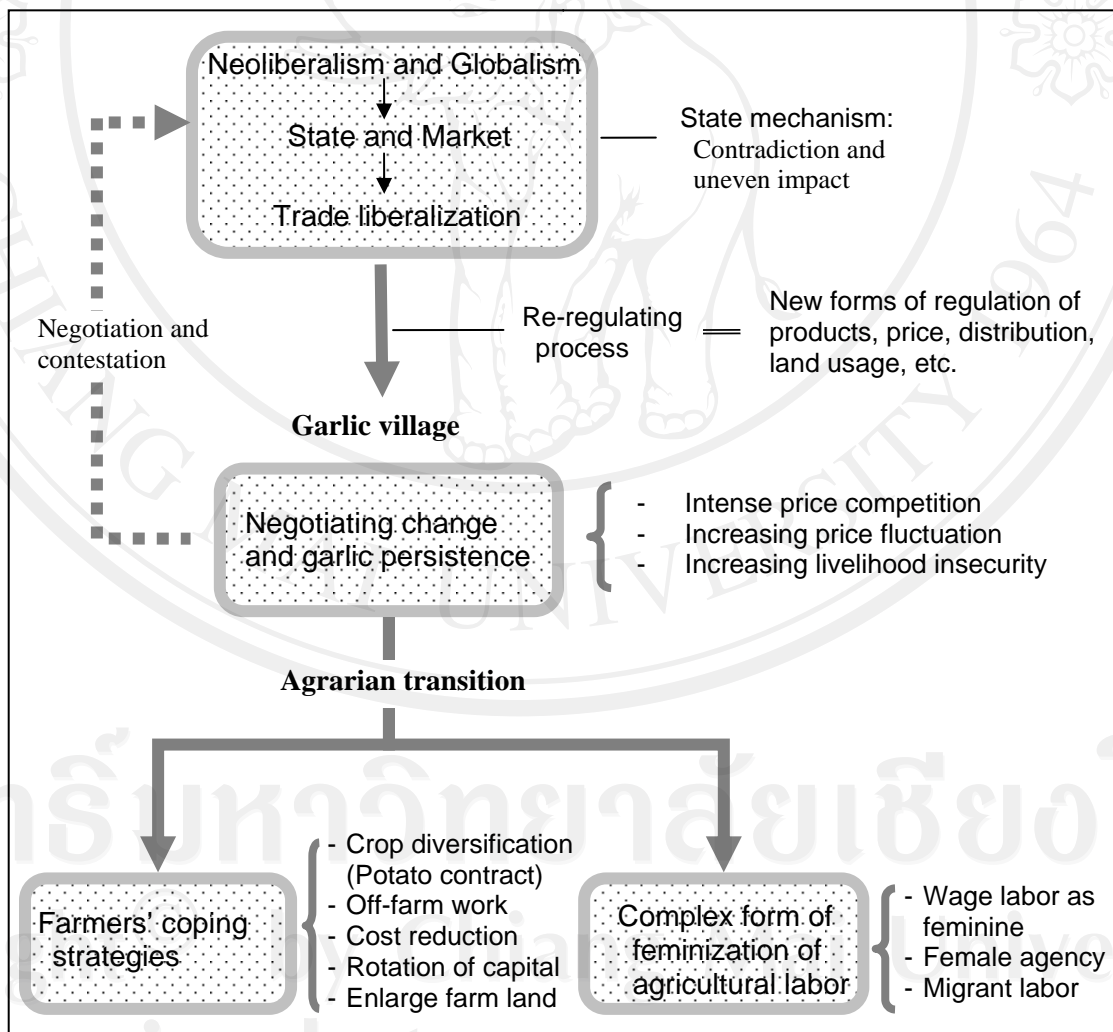


Figure 1.1 Conceptual framework of this research.

² See section 2.2.3 for more detail argument.

of commodities, distribution systems, land usage, etc, which resulted in the increase of control by the government. It is said that one of the distinctive features of neoliberalism is deregulation of the market. However, Harvey (2007) points out that the practice under neoliberalism is in fact a process of “re-regulation” rather than deregulation by finding the increase of regulation in practice despite its theory, whose argument was applicable to this work.

In this sense, the meaning of trade liberalization of garlic in this work is different from many of former researches on the same topic (Chavin, *et al.*, 2007; Research Center of Applied Economy, *et al.*, 2008; Wisarn, 2008). Since some view an impact of trade liberalization exclusively from economic point of view, or some consider the irrelevance of garlic price drop with trade liberalization, they conclude that trade liberalization did not have a negative impact on local garlic farmers. However, this work considered that with the experience of price drop as well as increase of state’s regulation in garlic production, Thai garlic farmers did not regard trade liberalization as a free market but rather as something increasing market instability and state regulations and control. In other words, in this work, the impact of trade liberalization was analyzed not only in terms of economics but also from political and social point of views.

Those who experienced uneven impacts by trade liberalization of garlic commodity were local small-scale farmers or producers. Regarding the usage of the terms of peasant and farmer, despite a few differences in definition of peasant, both Wolf (1969: xiv) and Kearney (1996: 61) distinguish peasant and farmer like this: Peasants mainly produce crops for self consumption (use value) and sell remained crops, while farmers mainly produce cash crops (exchange value). In other part, Kearney (1996: 129) links peasants to tradition and subsistence, while do farmers to modern and commercial. Rigg (2001: 41) also states that the usage of peasant for current villagers who engage in farming is odd. Following these definitions, since garlic farmers in Dong Pa Sak Village engaged in production of cash crop of garlic for about 30 years, I use the term ‘farmers’ for the Dong Pa Sak garlic farmers. Furthermore, related to the definition of farmers, I categorized farmers who cultivate

less than 5 *rai* of land for garlic as small-scale garlic farmers, and regarded them as main subject of this study.

Both promoters and opponents of trade liberalization expected decrease of small-scale, Thai garlic farmers after trade liberalization. However, the reality was their persistence. Therefore, this research studied how the farmers negotiated with the government and the market for the survival through the competitive market, and also paid attention to their multiple coping strategies in the garlic production.

The common, main livelihood strategies of the farmers who continued garlic production, diversification of agriculture in addition to the increase of income source to off-farm works, the way of cost reduction, etc. was focused upon. In Northern Thailand, smallholders often expand their work to off-farm one in a flexible way, being called “flexible peasants” by Yos (2008). The tendency of being flexible peasants or flexible farmers was also considered in this work. In the meantime, considering that some small-scale farmers leaving garlic production or even farm activities itself, the study also looked at changing land-use structure in the garlic village.

When we study the labor process in agriculture, those whom I should not overlook are wage laborers, especially women. Northern Thailand today is the time when rural villagers are tremendously involved in wage labor and subcontracted works of both on- and off-farm. Since work opportunity in the rural region is small, men increasingly engage in off-farm wage labor such as construction, which provides better wage. Then, female farmers who are left at home by their male family members have to take care of their family’s field for themselves. As a result, the female labor in agriculture increases whether in terms of practical time, of ratio of women in comparison with men, or in terms of responsibility. This is called “feminization of agricultural labor” (see the former section) and I applied this concept in order to study changing labor structure in addition to labor condition in the garlic village.

In the case of garlic production in Northern Thailand, many women have been in fact traditionally involved in its entire labor process. Thus, garlic production was originally conceptualized as a feminine sphere. Adding to it, the decrease of male

farmer and labor was accelerated for a moment as a result of less demand of wage labor after trade liberalization. Not only works at the field but also post-harvest processing of garlic was also occupied by female or feminine-type labor. The processing was done with piece-work systems, which was comparable to the concept of “feminization of labor” in industrial sector (Ong, 1991; Pearson, 1998), and their position was vulnerable to employers or market intervention. Furthermore, as a part of trans-nationalization movement today, migrant labor from Myanmar was also observed to be increasing in the region, and they are often employed at the lower wage than the local Thai people. Thus, the possibility of local Thai workers being replaced with the cheaper migrant labor was regarded as high. After all, by adopting the concept of feminization, complex situations of feminine-type wage labor in garlic production was clarified.

Although the hard and exploitative labor structure in garlic production in the era of trade liberalization was identified with feminist concepts, another feminist concept of “female agency” was employed in this work to express not passive but active female wage labor (Ong, 1991; Wolf, 1992; Ramamurthy, 2000). With this concept, I looked for the dynamics in women’s labor, their struggles for better-off livelihoods, and negotiation of social boundaries under a certain control and regulation by the state and market.

In conclusion, this research attempted to show that not a few small-scale Thai garlic farmers have persisted, so far, despite increasing competition in the market through trade liberalization. This is contrary to many experts’ predictions, because they, the farmers, boldly confronted the new market system, somehow negotiating and contesting new systems and regulations. Agrarian landscapes of garlic villages have changed as a result of trade liberalization, and the livelihoods of original smallholders became more diverse and complex. While some farmers may enjoy better livelihoods in the new market system, other farmers may suffer from it. With the concept that even farmers who engage in wage work with exploitative labor condition are not necessarily passive with their situation but positively acting in it, this study focused on those vulnerable actors.

1.7 Research Methodology

1.7.1 Research Site Description

Garlic has been grown as a cash crop for more than 30 years in Thailand. Out of a total planting area of 105,986 *rai* throughout the whole Thai country, 100,563 *rai* or 95 percent lied in the North, 5,007 *rai* or 4.7 percent in the Northeast, and 416 *rai* or 0.3 percent in the Central Region as of 2005 (Table 1.1), and this proportion of garlic production scale by the region does not change much even today. Therefore, it

Table 1.1 Garlic production area size and amount of garlic production in 2005.

Region	Area size of production		Amount of production (ton)	Amount of production per <i>rai</i> (kg)
	(<i>rai</i>)	ratio		
North	100,563	95.0%	102,745	1,027
Northeast	5,007	4.7%	3,546	749
Central	416	0.3%	307	751
The whole country	105,986	100.0%	106,598	1,013

Source: Office of Agricultural Economics in Thailand.

Table 1.2 Garlic production area size and amount of garlic production of each province in 2005.

Province	Area size of production		Amount of production (ton)	Amount of production per <i>rai</i> (kg)
	(<i>rai</i>)	ratio		
Chiang Mai	29,773	30%	34,734	1,175
Mae Hong Son	19,603	19%	20,113	1,028
Lam Phun	17,835	18%	19,201	1,078
Pha Yao	11,182	11%	8,927	802
Chiang Rai	9,179	9%	9,020	993
Lam Phang	8,267	8%	6,810	813
Other five	4,724	5%	3,940	792.4
Total in North	100,563	100%	102,745	1,027

Source: Office of Agricultural Economics in Thailand.

can be said that the vast majority of garlic is grown in the Northern Thailand. In Northern Thailand, Chiang Mai produces garlic the most, followed by Lamphun and Mae Hong Son Provinces (Table 1.2). In Chiang Mai Province, along with Fang and Mae Ai District, Chai Pra Kan District is the most garlic producing district.

My field site, Dong Pa Sak Village, Si Dong Yen Sub-district, Chai Pra Kan District, Chiang Mai Province lies about 130 km north of Chiang Mai City (Figure 1.2). Si Dong Yen Sub-district is easy to access from Chiang Mai City through the national road, Route 107. Chai Pra Kan District is subdivided into four sub-district, and the Si Dong Yen Sub-district contains 18 villages of 43 villages in the district.

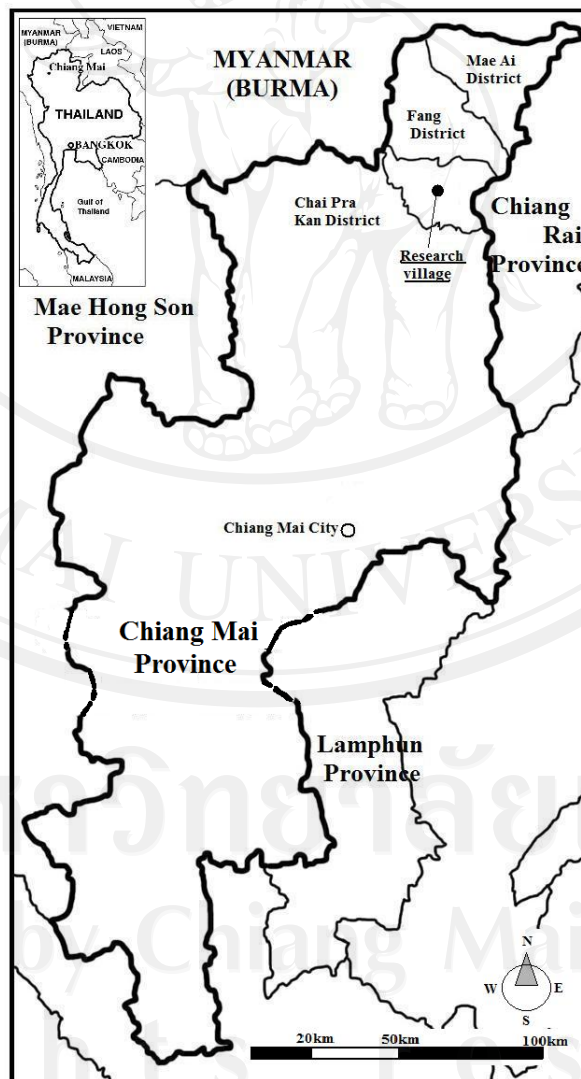


Figure 1.2 Research site.

Dong Pa Sak Village had 1,224 populations of 401 households in March 2006³. Farmers there began to grow garlic since around 1970 in addition to other agricultural products, and the main occupation of the village has been agriculture till now. As the reason that garlic production has been prevalent in Chai Pra Kan District, the farmers tell that the field is the most suitable area for planting garlic because the climate is quite cool and water resources are abundant compared to other areas. It takes approximately four months to grow garlic, from the middle of October to March in Chai Pra Kan. Besides garlic, the farmers have grown chili, shallot, various green vegetables, and so on according to the season. In addition to these, they also began to produce new crops such as potato, sweet corn, peanuts after trade liberalization. Some farmers also grew fruit trees such as orange, longan, and litchi. Few farmers grow rice.

1.7.2 Research Scope

This research attempted to critically investigate contemporary agrarian transition in Northern Thailand with newly launched trade liberalization as its driving force. For these objectives, I adopted two units of analysis: small-scale farm family and gender. First, this research looked at an impact of trade liberalization on the local, and the way how the local responded to it, and the subject of these questions was the small-scale farm family. In other words, with the household as a basic unit of analysis I studied why small-scale farm families persisted garlic production despite negative impact of trade liberalization, and what was their coping strategy. The analysis from finding was applied and raised up to the sub-district or district level to suggest a direction of agrarian transition of the garlic region.

The second unit of analysis was gender, and it was especially adopted for the study of changing labor process in garlic production. When scholars adopt a household as a unit of analysis, they often overlook a role of women in the household. Thus, I lowered the level of analysis to the individual level in the household, and

³ Source: Village headman office.

focused on women. Women were studied from two perspectives: how they were exploited, and how they were active. In addition, with the usage of femininity in a symbolic manner, some men as well as migrant laborers were also studied under the concept of gender, if they were in an exploited position in relation with garlic production.

With regard to a level of analysis, findings at the village level such as changing small-scale farmers' and wage labor's livelihood through trade liberalization was analyzed and applied to critically explicate oppressive social structure. The structures ranged from the small ones such as the one in a labor process in the garlic production to the large ones such as relationship between agriculture and manufacturing industry in the era of trade liberalization in Thailand. In doing so, the level of abstraction was sufficient so that I could consider the study as one case of contemporary agrarian transition in the Third World.

1.7.3 Field Study and Data Collection

I conducted full-scale field research in Dong Pa Sak Village from August of 2007 to May 2008 (The garlic season is from October to March at the latest). Since it was only three hours by public transportation to go back and forth between the Dong Pa Sak Village and Chiang Mai City, where I live, I stayed about one week of each month in the village, and came back to my home in Chiang Mai City to make various records of field research and to prepare for the next one. Besides the above period, I also visited the village several times since May 2005 when I visited there for the first time. I visited there in March 2006 as another preliminary research, and did in March of 2009 and October of 2010 for follow-up researches. I often visited the village in March because it was the time right after garlic harvest, and the farmers had some lively comments on garlic production of its season.

In the village, I stayed in a house of a small-scale farm family who used to produce garlic. The head of this household used to be a garlic farmer who was an active member of a private farmers' organization in Northern Thailand, and had been

a key informant for NGOs, academics, or anybody who wanted to know the problem of small-scale garlic farmers. However, he passed away from an unforeseen accident in September 2007. Yet, as his family already knew me very well, I stayed at his family's house whenever I stayed in Dong Pa Sak Village. Since this family's relatives, four households in particular, were all small-scale garlic farm families in Dong Pa Sak Village, this family (in an enlarged sense) turned out to be a good starting point for my ethnographical research of garlic farmers in Dong Pa Sak Village.

I combined three ways of data collection: participatory observation, interviews, and documentary research. I have done individual in-depth interviews of 40 villagers including 22 small-scale garlic growers (17 men, five women), two middle-scale garlic growers (one man and one woman), 10 wage laborers (all women), one female local garlic trader, one male local vegetable trader, four farmers' children. The time of interviewed ranged from 20 minutes to more than two hours, though mostly about for 30 minutes to one hour. My Thai language is working level, although I experienced some difficulties to ask in detail or to raise some specific, complicated questions. I neither speak nor understand Northern Thai direct very well, but all of interviewees understood central Thai language. Thus, I conducted these in-depth interviews by myself, recorded them in a machine with interviewees' permission, and transcribed all interviews in a written English form. I asked some Thai people to check my transcription of interviews later to avoid wrong translation. Besides these formal interviews with voice recording, I talked with and informally interviewed the villagers whom I became acquainted with through the above interviews, whenever I had a chance.

I also visited and interviewed garlic COOP members of both Chai Pra Kan and Mae Ai District respectively, knowing that they sent a petition to the government in 2007. In addition, I joined the field visit of the Thai and international NGO twice, and joined their interview to the Dong Pa Sak village headman, garlic COOP of Chai Pra Kan District, and a workshop with garlic farmers in Fang District. I was also provided interview records of 17 garlic farmers in a written form from the Thai NGO. Those

interviews were conducted in September 2005 and September 2006, and provided useful information before I started my field research.

As to participatory observation, I observed garlic production at several farmers' fields, and made notes at the place or after came back to host family's home. I also had a chance to observe post-harvest garlic processing at both garlic farmers' private home and a local small-scale factory. I was allowed to help this in my host family's house, although I was not allowed to join garlic planting in the field because, according to them, garlic planting requires a certain skill. Since I stayed at a farm family's house, I also observed and often joined their daily life during off-field hours: doing supplementary work, chatting with neighbors, going to local market, shopping at big, modern supermarket, cooking, eating, watching TV, etc.

As a part of participatory observation, outside of the research village, I also visited some important spots for garlic trade in Thailand, to deepen my understanding of garlic trade structure in Thailand. I visited central wholesale market in Chiang Mai, and then in Bangkok, which is the biggest in Thailand. I also went to Chiang Khon, a port town, where trade ships discharge its loads including garlic from China, and to Mae Sai where traders of Chinese garlic often own a warehouse.

Documentary research was firstly done to collect macro level data related to garlic trade of both the world and Thailand, in addition to the data related to Thai garlic production such as price and yield. Those data was mainly collected from Office of Agricultural Economics, Thailand, through their publications and website. Some data of world trade was also cited from FAO website. Second, I searched and examined documents related to Thai policy over FTAs and trade liberalization. I obtained some documents released by Thai government through the internet, at the library, or provided from Thai NGO. I also referred to some documents appeared in the preceding research monographs as secondary ones. Third, I visited Chiang Mai offices of Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce, etc. of Thailand in order to request official documents related to Thai government policy over reduction of garlic planted acreage. I could meet an officer who was in charge of the problem after farmers' petition, but could not obtain any useful documents.

1.8 Organization of Thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction to the research, providing basic information of the research background, problems, questions and objectives, which is followed by the theoretical background and research conceptualization. It also gives information on the research site and research methodology.

At a macro-level background of this research that is an important driving force of agrarian transition, Chapter 2 focuses on trade liberalization in Thailand, and critically analyzes by who, why and how it was promoted. It provides detailed statistics of garlic trade both of the world level and of Thailand, and suggests that it is difficult for Thai garlic farmers to compete with China that has always been a top garlic exporter to the world. The government had also recognized the difficulty of small-scale, Thai garlic farmers' survival after trade liberalization, and launched several new policies, including garlic reduction program and registration systems, for garlic field size. Focusing on these government policies, the latter sections of this chapter argue that, first, trade liberalization is in fact re-regulating process by the state, which is contrary to neoliberal assertion of it as a means for deregulation, and second, trade liberalization caused a shift in local labor control, from free farm operator to un-free farm worker.

Chapter 3 introduces a brief overview of a garlic village and garlic production. It first describes the history of the Dong Pa Sak Village of Si Dong Yen Sub-district in relation with garlic production, followed by an introduction of the labor process in garlic production and its femininity. It shows that on the one hand, garlic production is a traditionally feminine type of work in Northern Thailand, but since men's engagement in agriculture is comparatively high in Si Dong Yen region, the gender ratio was relatively balanced. The third section reveals related actors in garlic production, and suggests their diverse characters even among seemingly homogeneous small-scale garlic farmers. In the final section, it introduces the unique

nature of high-risk, high-return garlic production as an important factor to understand farmers' preference for the crop despite its risk of having a narrow market.

Before I move on to the analysis of micro, local level, Chapter 4 stays at an in-between level, which is the relationship between structure and actors, examining the local actors' responses to market structural changes coming from above in a unilateral way. It first traces the concrete case of garlic farmers' protest in search for the government support and countermeasures against a steep price drop of garlic after trade liberalization, and secondly shows increase of insecurity in garlic production as a main reason of their protest. Thirdly, what farmers returned to garlic production after a few years, despite the government prohibition is discussed with the concept of contestation. As a result, the last section argues that despite the market structural change around the newly imposed regulations by the government, local garlic farmers are not passive but still have decision-making power. They constantly negotiate with larger structural change so as to make the changes into opportunities.

Shifting the focus from the macro to micro, Chapter 5 studies the way Si Dong Yen farmers continue to cultivate garlic without going bankrupt. It introduces farmers' strategies of multiple coping strategies: diversification of crops, cost reduction, diversification of work into off-farm, rotation of capital, and expansion of farm land. These strategies are not separate but interrelated. By combining some of these strategies, small-scale and even landless farmers persist in garlic production, making a profit when the garlic price rose up. Although land expansion is an efficient strategy if the land is accessible, expansion of farm land increases a tendency toward concentration of land ownership.

Paying attention to the other important factors related to local garlic production, such as wage labor, Chapter 6 analyzes workers' vulnerable position in the garlic labor process, with the concept of feminization of agricultural labor. In the wave of garlic reduction after trade liberalization, while more men diversify their work to off-farm, more women work longer in the agricultural sector as wage laborers in quest for a second source of income. This phenomenon is suggested as feminization of agricultural labor, in combination with the phenomenon of deteriorating working

condition of wage labor. Furthermore, migrant labor has increased in a reflection of the era of globalization, and the tendency of their replacement with local wage labor is also suggested in the last section. Since the working conditions of migrant labor are feminine in the same token, it is discussed as the complexity of feminization of agricultural labor.

Lastly, the concluding chapter summarizes the main findings of the research, and shows why and how the small-scale garlic farming persists till today. In doing so, it aims to contribute to understanding of contemporary agrarian transition in Northern Thailand with newly launched trade liberalization as a driving force.