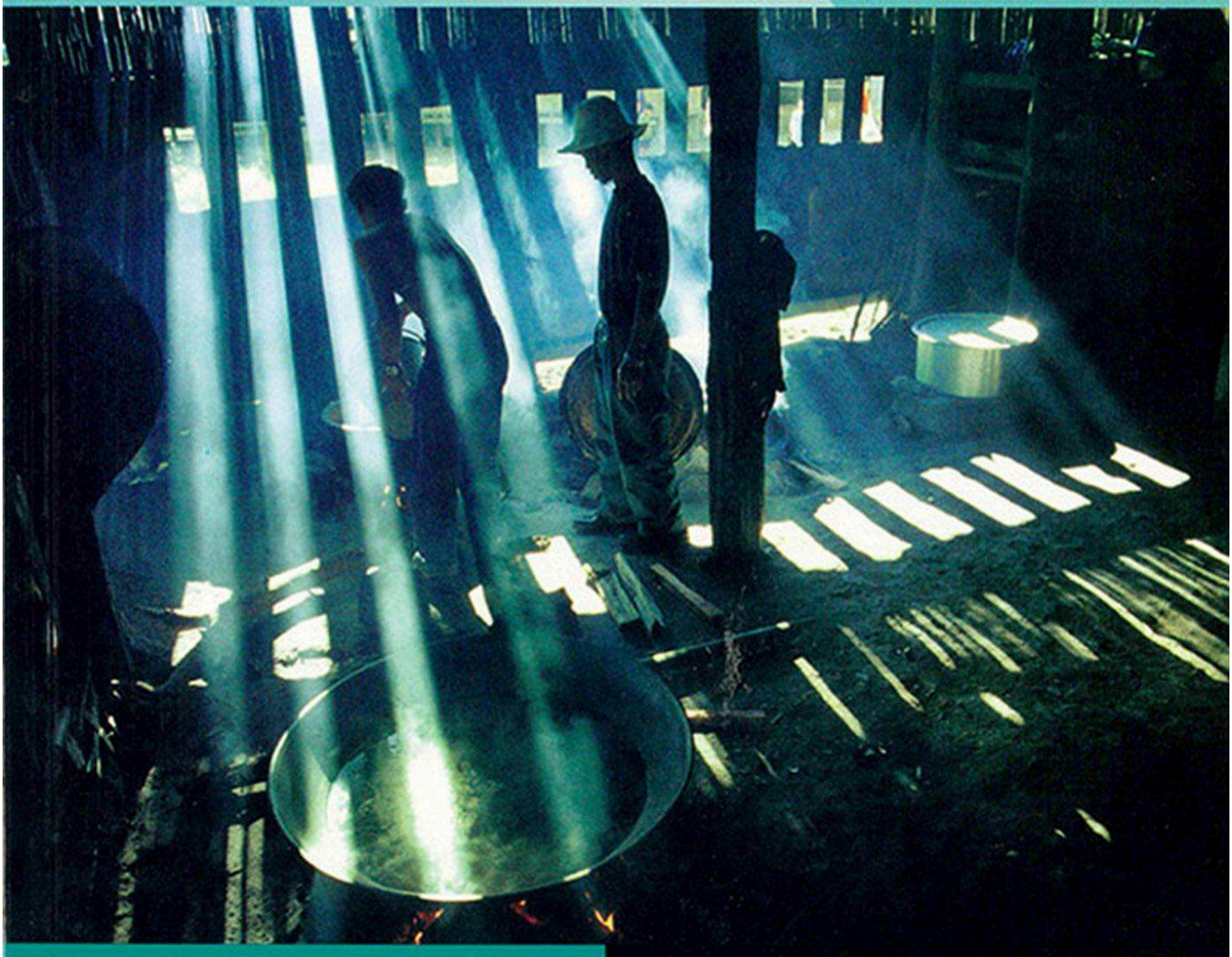
YAA BAA:

PRODUCTION, TRAFFIC AND CONSUMPTION OF METHAMPHETAMINE IN MAINLAND SOUTHEAST ASIA



Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy &
Joël Meissonnier

Institut de recherche sur l'Asie du Sud-Est contemporaine

Yaa Baa

Production, Traffic and Consumption of Methamphetamine in Mainland Southeast Asia

Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy and Joël Meissonnier

DOI: 10.4000/12eg0
Publisher: Institut de recherche sur l'Asie du Sud-Est contemporaine, National university of Singapore press
Place of publication: Singapour
Year of publication: 2004
Publication date: 2 octobre 2024
Series: NUS Press-IRASEC Studies on Southeast Asia
Digital ISBN: 978-2-35596-063-5

https://books.openedition.org

Print edition
ISBN (Print version): 978-9971-69-278-0
Number of pages: xxii-210

DIGITAL REFERENCE

Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud, and Joël Meissonnier. *Yaa Baa*. Institut de recherche sur l'Asie du Sud-Est contemporaine, National university of Singapore press, 2004, https://doi.org/10.4000/12eg0.

Cover metadata
Caption
In the border areas of Burma heroin and methamphetamine production occurs in makeshift laboratories.
Credits
Photo by Timothy Allen, Typeset by Scientifik Graphics.
This text was automatically generated on 9 octobre 2024.

ABSTRACT

The abuse of methamphetamines in Southeast Asia has become a major problem over the past decade. Thailand has been particularly hard hit: methamphetamine abuse now affects all sectors of Thai society. In the early 1990s, methamphetamine manufacturers moved their laboratories across the border into Burma, and began large-scale production. The new cheaper product, *yaa baa* or 'madness medicine', flooded the local market and spread quickly to the surrounding countries. *Yaa baa* from laboratories in Burma has been found also in Europe and the United States.

The authors analyse the growth of methamphetamine production in Burma in its political context, which makes the book valuable. There are many books about opium and heroin production in the Golden Triangle, but this is the first about methamphetamines. This book fills an important gap in the literature about the Golden Triangle.

PIERRE-ARNAUD CHOUVY

Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy is a geographer and research fellow at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), France. He specialises in the geopolitics of illicit drugs with a particular focus on Asia. For more information on his work and other publications, visit www.geopium.org.

JOËL MEISSONNIER

Joël Meissonnier is a sociologist, specialising in mobility and consumption behaviours. He is the author of *Provinciliens : les voyageurs du quotidien, entre capitale et province*.

Yaa Baa

Production, Traffic, and Consumption of Methamphetamine in Mainland Southeast Asia

Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy
and
Joël Meissonnier

SINGAPORE

IRASEC
INSTITUT DE RECHERCHE SUR L'ASIE DU SUD-EST CONTEMPORAINE

 Singapore University Press
an imprint of NUS Publishing
AS3-01-02. 3 Arts Link
Singapore 117569

Fax: (65) 6774-0652
E-mail: nusbooks@nus.edu.sg
Website: http://www.nus.edu.sg/npu

Institut de Recherche sur l'Asie du Sud-Est Contemporaine
32/38 Sino-Thai Tower, 15th Floor
Sukhumvit Soi 21 (Soi Asoke)
Bangkok 10110
Thailand

Fax: (66) 2 260 2800
E-mail: publications@irasec.com
Website: http://www.irasec.com

ISBN 9971-69-278-3 (Paper)

Cover photo: In the border areas of Burma heroin and methamphetamine production occurs in makeshift laboratories. Photo by Timothy Allen.

Typeset by: Scientifik Graphics
Printed by: Vetak Printers

Contents

Maps

Charts

Preface

In 2000, the Bangkok-based French scientific institution IRASEC (Institut de Recherche sur l'Asie du Sud-Est Contemporaine — Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia) asked geographer Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy and sociologist Joël Meissonnier to conduct research on the drug *yaa baa*, Thailand's most popular amphetamine-type stimulant (ATS). Their common research resulted in a publication two years later entitled *Yaa Baa: Production, trafic et consommation de méthamphétamine en Asie du Sud-Est continentale.*[1]

At the time of research, both *yaa baa* consumption rates and the number of users had increased so dramatically in Thailand that a sizeable share of the kingdom's youth could be said to have been touched by the ATS drug in some way or another. Consumed by those who used it for work as well as for recreation, *yaa baa* became prominent and highly desirable. Students pressured to succeed academically, fishermen forced by their occupations to spend long nights on deck, teenagers trying to free themselves from the constraints of a strict social framework, and yuppies searching for meaning to their lives — all had begun to enlist the help of this cheap, colourful pill. Some did not even consider *yaa baa* to be a drug because its side effects were not perceived as harmful. And despite the tendency of wealthy Thais to avoid the consumption patterns and tastes of the poorer classes, this "nearly perfect product" appealed to all levels of Thai society.

Yaa baa in Thai society did not appear out of thin air. In neighbouring Burma, methamphetamine pills came to rival both opium and heroin as the most profitable product in the narcotics trafficking business. The mountainous, minority-controlled border regions between Thailand and Burma have played a significant role in the recent emergence of the ATS trade. Long-established routes running through the Golden Triangle, which for centuries had been a dynamic hub for various kinds of commerce, now served the new opportunities brought forth by the pill trade.

Downstream, numerous wholesalers with military and political links on both sides of the border supplied methamphetamine tablets to a multitude of retailers and dealers. Traffickers concealed their illegal cargo in truck petrol tanks, car chassis, and even inside their underwear. Customs posts were overwhelmed by the flood of pills, and officials were often encouraged to turn a blind eye to the passing traffic.

But at the beginning of 2003, a political earthquake erupted in Thailand, leaving in its wake a new approach to solving what had become an acute, widespread drug problem: the "war against drugs" launched by Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. During this three-month war, authorities seized 40 million methamphetamine tablets and jailed 92,500 drug addicts, 43,000 dealers, and 750 drug producers and importers. Leading drug traffickers arrested included Surasakdi Chantradraprasart, who controlled a large share of the Bangkok market. Some 1,300 civil servants were sacked or placed in custody for their complicity in the illegal drug trade.

These dramatic outcomes of Thailand's war against drugs have come at a very high social price. At least 2,500 people were killed during the anti-drug campaign, some of them no more than ordinary users. Children were also among the casualties. Nevertheless, the government claimed the operation to have been a "victory beyond expectation".

Thailand's drug war "success" seems to have been sustained by another war against drugs — one ostensibly declared on the other side of the border — by the Burmese military regime. Under pressure from the international community, the Burmese junta appears to have targeted the source of its drug supply more directly than its neighbour. Burma's campaign to eradicate poppy cultivation has come under scrutiny from the United States, the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control (UNFDAC), and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Even China is now putting increasing pressure on its Burmese ally in this regard.

Burmese authorities involved in countering the illicit drug trade have constantly displayed good intentions over the last few years. The "National Plan Against the Drug Menace" was launched by Burma's Prime Minister General Than Shwe on 7 October 1998. The campaign received a boost in support from Than Shwe's successor, the seemingly more decisive General Khin Nyunt. In 1996 a joint US-Burma opium yield survey reported an estimated 163,000 hectares of poppy cultivation and a production total of 2,500 tons of opium. By 2003, just seven years later, these figures had dropped sharply to 60,000 hectares of opium poppy

cultivation, with a potential production yield of approximately 800 tons. As of 2004 it is expected that opium will completely disappear from Burmese fields before the end of the decade. Even the United Wa State Army (UWSA), which, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), had allegedly assumed control over approximately one third of this lucrative industry, now seems ready to abandon opium in favour of substitute crops.

But the 2005 deadline for eradicating poppy cultivation in the Wa region seems wildly optimistic, even if Pau Yu Chang, Chairman of the UWSA and the most powerful Wa leader, has proposed "to have his head chopped off if his promise is not fulfilled in time". The crop substitution programs have not yet yielded positive results for the Wa, and this mountain-dwelling population is still desperately lacking in alternatives to opium cultivation. An estimated 300,000 people belonging mostly to ethnic minorities, some of whom live in *de facto* independence from Rangoon's authority, remain engaged in poppy cultivation in Burma. Though the eradication process may be harsh, the worthiness of its goal is beyond question.

But what about ATS?

The Burmese government seems less amenable to dealing with this problem. During a seminar held in Rangoon on 27 January 2004 organised by the Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies, police Colonel Hkam Awng, the Joint Secretary of the Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control, emphasised the inability of his government to cope with the ATS phenomenon without additional support. Because necessary precursor chemicals such as acetic anhydride and ephedrine are not produced in Burma, responsibility must also lie with India, China and Thailand, where these chemicals are manufactured.

Colonel Hkam Awng's stance in effect confirmed the extent of the ATS problem. The output of methamphetamine by producers of the UWSA is alleged to have increased dramatically, and is supposed to have made up for financial losses caused by the sharp decline in opium production. New transport routes, mainly at points further south of the Golden Triangle, have already been established to export Burmese-produced ATS. But how can this be, if the region's primary drug market was supposedly eliminated by the Thai government's recent anti-drug campaign?

The "war against drugs" has had far-reaching consequences for Thai society, sometimes of unexpected proportions. Hundreds of extra-judicial executions badly affected Thailand's image in the international arena, and the government's reputation regarding human rights has been seriously

called into question. The ends may justify the means, but drug eradication operations do not always appear to have been carried out for the sake of justice. In many cases, victims' links to drug trafficking were not sufficiently demonstrated, and it appears that such actions were taken as the result of false denunciations or the settling of old scores.

As a result of the campaign a significant number of families lost their only potential breadwinner, either because the targeted family member was killed or put in jail. Thus, many households are now without an income. Some users, still coping with addiction, now find it harder to obtain their precious pills. Plans to rehabilitate drug users also appear tenuous when confronted with the scope of the drug problem. These developments have left many people worse off than ever and the distress is felt not only in Bangkok, but across the whole country.

In the field of illicit drug studies, some believe that a "war against drugs" simply generates more demand. This rather simplistic view has prompted certain institutions to focus their efforts on producers and on the eradication of what they see as a significant threat to society. But even if one considers such a paradigm valid, it should not be forgotten that methamphetamine presents its own set of challenges to those who seek to eliminate it. While poppy fields can be easily located using satellite images complemented by ground surveillance, and heroin production requires heavy and costly equipment that is neither easily nor discreetly assembled, ATS manufacturing is much more complicated to detect. Creating an ATS production unit is inexpensive to undertake and easy to assemble. Some producers even establish their own "factories" at home. Furthermore, it is simpler still to produce ATS in the Golden Triangle region, where national laws are not strictly enforced. Hence if political solutions and government responses to the methamphetamine boom are sought via a focus on production alone, the problem is likely to remain unsolved.

Why do people use illicit drugs? The question is not a new one. Recently the market price of a *yaa baa* tablet in Thailand increased dramatically, from around 100 baht (2 euros) at the end of 2002, to approximately 400 baht in 2003. The government's terror campaign has shaken many ATS suppliers and consumers. Dealers are definitely more cautious, and the price hike may have discouraged those consumers who are less well-off. As violent as the campaign was in Thailand, every war must come to an end, and in the wake of this drug war the Thai government has claimed victory. However, the conditions that previously drove a substantial part of the Thai population to use methamphetamine

have not disappeared, just because the drug war has ostensibly ended in victory.

The 1997 financial crisis placed a great deal of social and economic strain on the poorest sectors of Thai society, and the country's unemployment rate remains high. It is still relatively difficult for individuals lacking training or credentials to find and keep a job. For those people who are employed, and who hold jobs that are physically or mentally demanding, an artificial stimulant can still be welcome. The country's younger generations are under pressure at school as the exam system is still very selective; they, too, may thrive on the mental boost provided by substances that enhance mental concentration and endurance.

Thai society has also experienced tremendous social changes over the past 25 years. Many people have migrated from the countryside to seek jobs in urban areas, and the traditional family structure has changed accordingly. Extended family members that once took care of the younger children are now often geographically separated, and the nuclear family has become the norm in Thailand's larger cities. Employed mothers and fathers who are subject to work pressures sometimes face difficulty in carrying out their parental roles at home. Left unsupervised and unattended, children must find their own ways to deal with a lack of structure, guidance, and even emotional support; under these circumstances they may still look for easy remedies to assuage their sense of loneliness or neglect.

Schools were recently identified as one of the primary institutional locations for *yaa baa* trafficking and consumption, and many teachers and administrators are now struggling to find ways to navigate their pupils safely through this new passage. However, teaching is a very formal affair in the Thai system. Educational methods are at times rigid, based as they are on the need for absolute respect by pupils for their professors. Dialogue is the exception rather than the rule. Thus, teenagers may be inclined to find their own coping mechanisms. Peer groups build their own models of discourse and behaviour, inventing new reference points or becoming implicated in volatile situations that may degenerate into violent brawls for the most trivial of reasons.

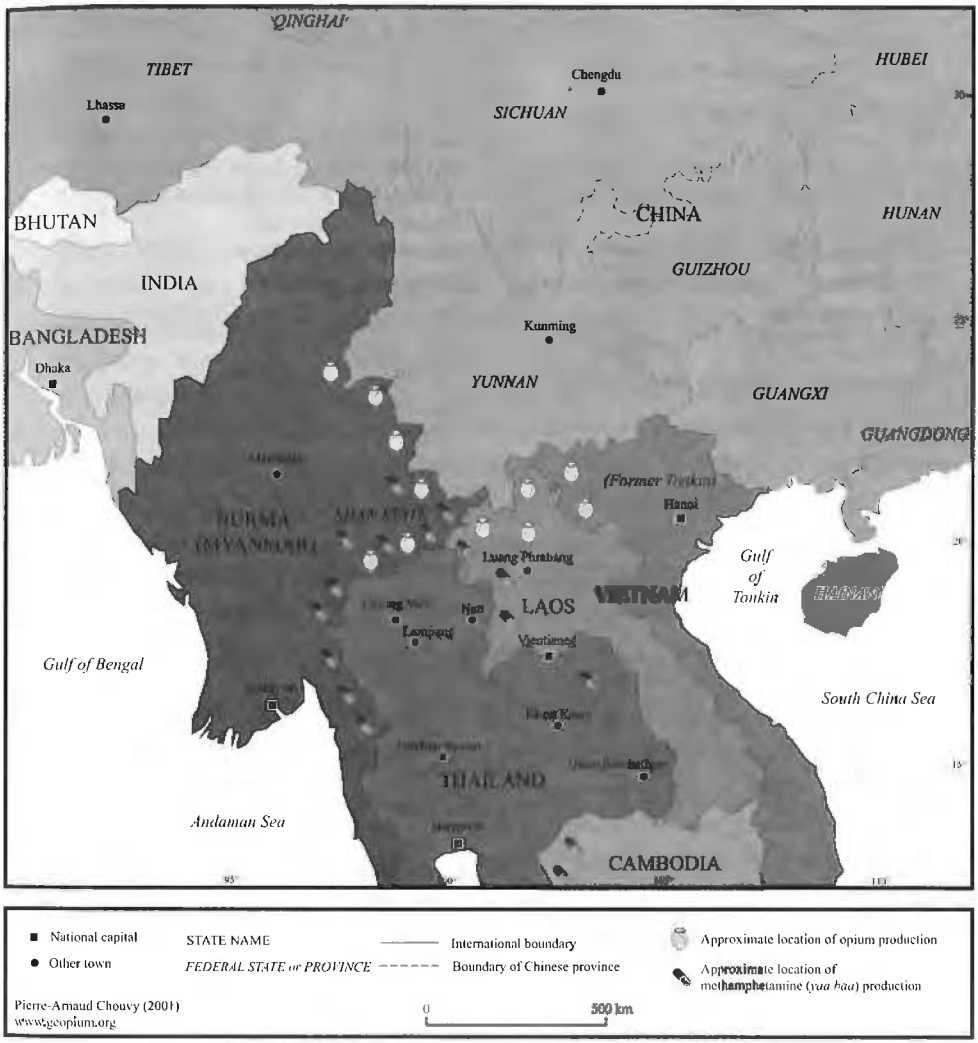
Additionally, there appears to be a lack of concrete shared goals among the younger generation of Thais. "Decline of politicisation, growth of derision" writes Joël Meissonnier, in reference to a common sensibility he observes among Thai young people. And drug use is unquestionably part of their "soft rebellious" stance.

Interviewed by the *Bangkok Post* in December 2003, Chartichai Suthiklom, the Deputy Secretary-General of the Thai Office of Narcotics Control Board, estimated that as many as two million people in Thailand were involved in drug-related activities, either as addicts, consumers, traders, retailers, pusher, producers, financiers, support staff, chemical traders, or carriers. Most have now been re-integrated into society after rehabilitation treatment or prison terms. It is too early to measure the consequences of the entire campaign. But many people have lost their jobs, their social positions, and the validation of society. It is not difficult to imagine part of this population returning to re-established drug networks, even if their involvement is not exclusively based on ATS.

Indeed, the 14,000 factories and 15,000 schools proclaimed "free of drugs" by Thai officials in December 2003 could well be the trees that hide the forest. Drug trafficking and illegal drug consumption have undoubtedly been tightly reined in for the time being. However, they most probably have not been driven away for good.

While Thailand's "war against drugs" was the opening battle, it is unlikely to be the final one in national efforts to eradicate drug use. And this book, written before the violent and tragic climax of the operation, seeks to explain why. Although the authors' publication predates the war on drugs waged by the Thai Prime Minister, it can still provide readers with fundamental keys to understanding the historical, geographic, political and sociological settings of the *yaa baa* phenomenon. Such a book thus provides a better understanding to the current situation regarding illicit drugs in general, and ATS in particular, for both Burma and Thailand.

Stéphane Dovert
Director of the IRASEC
Bangkok, 5 February 2004



Principal Sites of Opium and Methamphetamine Production in Mainland Southeast Asia

Comparative Profiles of Burma and Thailand

Country Profiles*

BURMA**	THAILAND
GENERAL INFORMATION	
Area: 676,577 km^2	**Area:** 513,115 km^2
Population: 45.6 million	**Population:** 62 million
Capital: Rangoon	**Capital:** Bangkok
Political Regime: Military dictatorship	**Political Regime:** Constitutional monarchy
POLITICAL INFORMATION for year 2000	
Head of State:	**Head of State:**
General Than Shwe, Secretary of State Peace and Development Council (SPDC)	King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX)
Prime Minister: Khin Nyunt	**Prime Minister:** Thaksin Shinawatra
Official language: Burmese	**Official language:** Thai
Main religion: Buddhism (85%)	**Main religion:** Buddhism (90%)
Ethnic composition:	**Ethnic composition:**
Burmese (68%), Shan (9%), Karen (7%)	Thais (75%), Chinese (14%), Malays (6%)
ECONOMIC INFORMATION for year 2000	
GDP: $63.7 billion	**GDP: $119 billion**
Growth rate: 4.9%	**Growth rate:** 4.3%
Per capita GDP: $1,500	**Per capita GDP:** $1,913
Currency: 1 dollar = 6.59 kyat (6 June 2002)	**Currency:** 1 dollar = 42.51 baht (6 June 2002)
Annual inflation rate: 18%	**Annual inflation rate:** 1.6%
Main trade partners:	**Main trade partners:**
Exports	**Exports**
1. India – 13%	1. United States – 23%
2. Singapore – 11%	2. Japan – 14%
3. China – 11%	3. Singapore – 8%
Imports	**Imports**
1. Singapore – 28%	1. Japan – 25%
2. Thailand –12%	2. Singapore – 11%
3. China – 10%	3. United States – 10%
PRODUCTION OF ILLICIT DRUGS	
Opium:	**Opium:**
108,700 hectares of poppy in 2000	890 hectares of poppy in 2000
ATS:	**ATS:**
Undetermined quantity	Undetermined quantity
Cannabis:	**Cannabis:**
Marginal production	Marginal production

Notes:

* Only the two Southeast Asian countries that are highlighted in the present study are included here.

** The Union of Burma was renamed "Myanmar" on 25 June 1989 by the military dictatorship then known by the acronym "SLORC" (State Law and Order Restoration Council). Rangoon, the capital, has also been renamed Yangon.

Just say no is not an option. Just say "know" is.
— Antonio Escohotado, *A Brief History of Drugs*, 1999

Introduction

The 1990s saw an explosive increase in consumption levels of illicit synthetic drugs in Southeast Asia. This increase largely consisted of drugs classified as amphetamine-type stimulants, or ATS, a category that includes methamphetamine. Since then, synthetic products such as methamphetamine and ecstasy have flooded illegal drug markets across East and Southeast Asia. The present study focuses on methamphetamine — the most important of these synthetic drugs in terms of quantities produced and consumed — to account for the rise and functioning of an integrated system of illicit drug production, distribution, and consumption in mainland Southeast Asia.

Southeast Asian methamphetamine comes mainly from Burma. It has also been produced in Thailand, the latter of which accounts for most of the drug's regional consumer market. In Thailand methamphetamine is known as *yaa baa*, or "madness drug"; its original name *yaa maa* ("horse medicine") being the name of a local pharmaceutical company. In 1996 Sanoh Thienthong, Health Minister at the time in the cabinet of General Chavalit Yongchaiyudth, substituted the name *yaa baa*[1] for *yaa maa* in an attempt to change the image of a product whose consumption levels had already reached alarming proportions.

Regional *yaa baa* use is concentrated in Thailand, but it has also spread to Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, and China. Higher-than-average levels of social and economic development seem to favour ATS use by younger populations, particularly school-age youngsters and university students. Macao and Hong Kong show strong "recreational" *yaa baa* use patterns among these groups. In Hong Kong and urban areas of Thailand, the drug's popularity with young people is part of a Western-influenced nightlife culture that includes techno music and fashion, clubbing, and illicit drug-taking.

Additionally, ATS use is also common among other kinds of people in the region ranging from truck drivers to farmers, illegal immigrants who may or may not be engaged in prostitution, and political refugees from Burma. Some workers turn to *yaa baa* to increase their productive capacity, whether physical or intellectual. Hence in Thailand, ATS can be considered as both a labour and a recreational drug. This dual status thus distinguishes it from heroin, also an illicit drug that was formerly popular, but one that was eventually dethroned in the mid-1990s by methamphetamine, the new "drug of choice". Methamphetamine production began to take off in Burma, mainly in areas controlled by the Wa ethnic minority of the United Wa State Army (UWSA), but also in other areas held by various insurgent groups. As this happened there was a corresponding rapid increase in *yaa baa* traffic and consumption in Thailand — so much so that by the late 1990s, Thai authorities estimated that production levels in Burma would exceed 600 million pills in the year 2000, and reach 800 million by 2002.[2]

The consequences of the methamphetamine economy for societies and economies in mainland Southeast Asia are wide-ranging. Individuals' habitual *yaa baa* use over the long term can threaten social well-being, since those given to such practices are likely to suffer irreparable degeneration of the nervous system and psychological damage. Widespread abuse of the drug by working-age young people also raises the spectre of declining economic productivity, particularly in urban regions where it is surprisingly common to find young people using the drug to excess.

The production and trafficking of ATS and other illicit drugs also bears upon national security, if indirectly. The case of Thailand is particularly striking in this regard. To fight drug trafficking and related violence, the country's armed forces, police, and customs authorities have been mobilised along the Thai-Burmese border on a scale unmatched since the end of the communist threat. This effort has also seen other formerly anti-communist groups redeployed to drug trafficking campaigns. The fact that Thai military troops from the Laotian and Cambodian fronts have also been diverted to the Burmese border illustrates the perceived urgency of the situation. However, as will be shown later, it can be argued that the armed violence characterising the drug trade proceeds as much from its illicit nature and the conflict-ridden contexts in which it thrives, as it does from the militarisation of anti-drug operations and policies.

Before surveying the economy and geopolitics of illicit substances more closely, it is necessary to clarify the very concept of a "drug". On

the face of it, a drug can be defined according to the chemical substances that make up its composition. But legal definitions also come into play: chemical substances deemed as dangerous and lacking in recognised medicinal value typically fall under the purview of international legislation on narcotics. However, apart from the nature of the bio-dynamic effects it may induce, a drug is essentially defined by the relationship the user has with it, to quote the words of the pharmacognosy specialist J-M. Pelt.[3] Hence, it is necessary for a given chemical substance to be consumed in a specific way in order for it to correspond to what we understand by the term "drug". The method and frequency of substance use, which varies according to the individual, serve to define the parameters of drug addiction.

It is therefore the consumer who, through usage, determines which substance is or is not a drug, according to the particular individual concerned. In reality, for an "addict" to exist, a toxic substance — and by implication, a chemical addiction — is not necessary. Any compulsive or habit-forming practice, whether it involves sport, gambling, work, or even sex, amply illustrates this possibility.[4] Thus, although some such activities may cause the body to release active substances such as adrenaline or endorphins, this result in itself should not be considered the intrinsic cause of the addiction.[5]

Thus, to devise efficient counter-addictive practices, research should focus more on the effects and methods of consuming illicit drugs than on the products themselves. Seen from a similar theoretical perspective, one may doubt the efficiency of drug eradication campaigns upon which "anti-drug policies" are based since, in the long run, such policies serve to maintain rather than limit drug trafficking patterns and dynamics.

Given all this, the present study investigates the causes and effects of the entire spectrum of methamphetamine production, trafficking, and consumption. Although methamphetamine production in Burma can be said to spur consumption in Thailand, it is also true that Thailand is the country whose thriving market for drugs stimulates ATS production in Burma and other areas of mainland Southeast Asia. To understand the specific mechanisms of the illicit drug market, one has to provide a clearer picture of the push and pull factors that are so characteristic of an illegal economy. Thus, the study of *yaa baa* production, trafficking, and consumption must be done in regional terms, without dissociating production from consumption. A geographical and geopolitical approach to the phenomenon is therefore desirable, as these perspectives illuminate production and trafficking patterns. Of course, bilateral relations between

Burma and Thailand also call for such a geopolitical approach: the consumption boom in Thailand is only the *alter ego* of the explosive rise in production in Burma, and *vice versa*.

However, the intricacies of *yaa baa* consumer markets in Thailand are no less complex than the regional geopolitics of methamphetamine production and trafficking. *Yaa baa* consumption is indeed extremely diverse and wide-ranging, and the drug in turn proves able to satisfy the expectations of many different types of users. This has clearly to do with the peculiarity of *yaa baa* itself, a substance that defies the usual consumer profiles for illicit drugs. In Thailand methamphetamine is not positioned along a market segment for psychotropic products, but rather pervades the entire consumer market. Far from conforming to the classical model where a drug becomes associated with a particular social category, *yaa baa* is as popular with "street children" as it is with privileged youth. Unlike most narcotics, *yaa baa* is widely consumed in both rural and urban areas. This is especially the case for user patterns in some politically "sensitive" parts of the countryside, where consumption levels are particularly high. Finally, if methamphetamine is consumed today by an overwhelming majority of young, even very young Thais — from primary school-goers to high school and university students — this is the result of an astonishing trend reversal. As recently as ten years ago, *yaa baa* belonged to a market comprised mostly of working adults who took it to cope with the demands of physically or mentally taxing livelihoods.

These social trends, coalescing around a drug whose multiple properties allow it to satisfy the varied aspirations of Thai consumers, have served to elevate *yaa baa* to the ranks of what could be called "virtuous substances". Methamphetamine's secondary effects are rarely recognised or admitted; according to its fervent supporters, *yaa baa* has all the advantages of a drug with none of its defects. It is considered something harmless and enticing.

Various interrelated social patterns are often cited to explain the explosive growth in methamphetamine consumption in Thailand. The present study highlights two social distinctions that characterise the population of Thai methamphetamine users. One such divide, between young users and adults, emerges out of a host of divergent drug-taking practices and images of the product. The second division distinguishes ordinary *yaa baa* consumers from the well-to-do, revealing motivations for taking the drug that differ greatly between the two populations.

In Part One of the book, geographer Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy begins with a brief primer on the chemical and physiological effects of the

synthetic substance that forms the basis of this study, namely, methamphetamine, which belongs to a wider drug classification of amphetamine-type stimulants, or ATS. Following this is an account of the historical and geopolitical conditions that first gave rise to methamphetamine production and consumption in mainland Southeast Asia, and that subsequently allowed it to flourish. To better understand the evolution of illicit drug production in Burma (Myanmar), the country's recent history and protracted armed conflicts are likewise analysed by means of an approach that combines historical geography and geopolitics. Indeed, as already shown by illicit opium production, methamphetamine production in Burma thrives under conditions of a longstanding war economy.

In Part Two, sociologist Joël Meissonnier investigates contemporary conditions in mainland Southeast Asia, particularly Thailand, that help to sustain the *yaa baa* economy. The sociological "method of circuits" is used to discern patterns in the transport and marketing of methamphetamine pills across the region. The purpose here is to describe the actual circulation of methamphetamine, while at the same time highlight the interests and social interactions of drug intermediaries that stand between producer and consumer. Charting the *yaa baa* circuit in this way makes it possible to identify the possible geographic passage points, inter-nodal transfers, and the moments and places where illicit drug supplies change hands, as well as to profile those who handle the transactions and the owners who are in charge. It then becomes possible to reconstruct movements by which the circuit is sustained over time by seeing how new *yaa baa* consumers are drawn into the circuit, and new dealers are incited to resort to trafficking.

Joël Meissonnier then opens Part Three with an historical overview of circumstances faced by successive generations of young Thais during the last quarter of the 20th century. This is undertaken to identify the socio-historical origins of methamphetamine consumption among Thai youth. In brief, the 1970s in Thailand saw the emergence of an educated society whose younger members shared a political conscience; during the 1980s, by contrast, a new generation possessing ambitions rather than convictions had come to the fore. By the late 1990s a third generation of Thai youth had materialised whose members were far more hedonistic than their predecessors. Dazzled by consumerism, this proved also to be the generation of young Thais most inclined to use methamphetamine.

In line with the sociological approach adopted in Part Three, the study then addresses the current state of two major social institutions in

Thailand, the school and the family, to show how each has inadvertently helped to expand the numbers of youngsters and young adults who use methamphetamine. Religion has also played an indirect role. The analysis explains how the workings of these institutions effectively render many young people defenceless against the prospect of being lured into illicit drug use. This is so because *yaa baa* in Thailand is inexpensive, easily accessible, and ubiquitous — even for school-age young people.

Taking into account methamphetamine user practices in Thailand that vary between youngsters and adults, and between city-dwellers and those in the countryside, the purpose of the final section of Part Three is to construct a model that differentiates ATS consumers according to their motivations and financial interests. This abstract model, which aims to simplify reality without falsifying it, demonstrates the complexity of social patterns that characterise the market for *yaa baa* in Thailand. Moreover, it serves as a foundation for widening the geographical scope of the analysis, as from this original model is generated affiliated hypotheses on methamphetamine use in the three neighbouring countries of Laos, Burma, and Cambodia.

PART ONE

Yaa Baa, An Illicit Drug from the Golden Triangle: A Geo-Historical and Geopolitical Study of Its Production and Traffic

CHAPTER 1

Methamphetamine

Addiction

Like many drugs, amphetamines and their derivatives can cause addiction. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines drug addiction as "a mental and sometimes also a physical state, resulting from the interaction between a product and an organism". This interaction causes behavioural changes, and can drive the user to take the product continuously or periodically in order to experience its pleasurable mental effects, if he is not already taking the drug simply to avoid the sickness caused by deprivation. Of course, a single person can be addicted to many products.

Methamphetamine and other psycho-stimulant drugs rarely cause physical addiction and a resultant state of withdrawal. Hence, weaning, which in the strict sense of the term corresponds to the first step of the detoxification of a person physically dependent on an addictive substance, does not apply here. On the other hand, the methamphetamine user rapidly develops a strong mental addiction to consuming amphetamine derivatives. Tolerance is the pharmacological state of adapting to a drug characterised by a decrease in the effects produced by the same dose of a drug leading to a compensatory increase in quantities of it consumed. Tolerance is not yet clearly demonstrated in the context of the use of psycho-stimulants,[1] but it seems to develop slowly in the individual drug user.[2]

How Methamphetamine Works

Amphetamine derivatives such as methamphetamines modify the working of the brain over a prolonged period, sometimes permanently. They affect the brain's production of dopamine, noradrenaline and serotonin, causing

large amounts of dopamine and noradrenaline to be released. These amines, being neurotransmitters, act on the central nervous system and result in an intense sensation of well being, pleasure and euphoria in the consumer. Amphetamines "empty" cells of their neurotransmitter contents[3] and cause a very steep increase in the extra-cellular concentration of dopamine at the level of the "compensating circuits" of the brain,[4] since they also inhibit neural recapture. Amphetamines are therefore stimulants which cause physical and mental hyperactivity, which is why they are sometimes called "wake-up amines". Prolonged amphetamine usage has an undesirable effect, since after a period of weeks the brain's ability to release dopamine and therefore enable a normal functioning of the psyche is considerably reduced for some time.[5] Research carried out by two teams of the Brookhaven National Laboratory of the U.S. Department of Energy showed that addictive substances increased the dopamine level in the brain when the drug users were "high" and caused them to have far fewer dopamine receptors than non-drug users.[6]

Although methamphetamine (a hydrochloride compound) acts in smaller doses than amphetamine (a sulphate compound), at the biochemical level there is no real difference between the two. Technically, the amine NH_2 in amphetamine becomes amino-methyl $NH\text{-}CH_3$ in the case of methamphetamine. The consequence of this chemical difference is particularly significant since "the crossing of the blood-brain barrier is made considerably easier for methamphetamine, which reaches the brain faster and more efficiently than amphetamine".[7] Apart from the speed with which the effects can be felt by the user, one of the striking differences between amphetamine and methamphetamine lies in the duration of their effects — from 3 to 6 hours for the former, and from 8 to 24 hours for the latter.[8]

Once the ways these products act on neurons has been clarified, it is possible to understand why they cause a mental and not physical addiction. In fact, "mental addiction results largely but not exclusively from the activation of neurons containing dopamine that belong to the compensatory system of the brain; physical addiction is caused in part by the de-sensitisation of the opiate receptors of the spinal cord".[9]

Effects of Methamphetamine

It is precisely through this chemical action of amphetamine derivatives that the effects desired by the drug user are obtained and reproduced. Amongst these numerous effects — many of which are undesirable — are

anorexia (accompanied by an increase in physical activity), hyper-vigilance, hyperamnesia, and anxiety.

On the strictly physical level, ATS side effects may bring on the appearance of mydriasis,[10] tachycardia,[11] and strong bursts of hypertension, which apart from the irreversible damage they may cause to the brain vessels, may be fatal.[12] There are many other side effects that affect the nervous system, including athetosis,[13] tremors and convulsions, irritability, aggressiveness, extreme nervousness, insomnia, mental confusion, and hyperthermia.[14] Moreover, conditions similar to schizophrenia can be brought on by panic attacks, attacks of paranoia, or visual and audible hallucinations. Acute paranoiac psychoses persisting for months have frequently been observed in methamphetamine users.[15]

However, mention has been made in numerous folk-medicine traditions of the stimulating action of Ephedra-based decoctions. Ephedra is the plant from which ephedrine — the precursor of methamphetamine — is extracted. Methamphetamine was known as a love drug in the 1970s, and has more recently fuelled rave parties, where it is often ingested as an aphrodisiac. Similar to the drug ecstasy, methamphetamine helps subjects shed their inhibitions.[16]

It is not possible to determine the precise danger threshold of methamphetamine dosage, as this varies according to the metabolism of each individual and the exact composition of the drug. However, overdose can occur with the ingestion of at least 50 milligrams of methamphetamine. Death may be brought on as a result of hyperthermia, hypertension and cardiovascular deficiency. Methamphetamine abuse may incite a physical hyperactivity that, paired with chronic under-nourishment due to its anorectic effects, increases the risk of death. Though consumption of methamphetamine rarely causes death, it can result in serious and permanent cerebral lesions much more severe than those caused by amphetamines.[17]

Of course the strength of the dose and the frequency of drug consumption determine its effect on users. This idea is not new: as early as in the 16th century Paraclesus wrote, “There is poison in everything and there is nothing without poison. Whether a poison becomes one or not depends only on the dose.”[18]

Treatment of Methamphetamine Users

According to specialists, methamphetamine dependence is the most difficult to treat amongst all addictions. This is first because of the extreme state

of excitability and irritability of the users, and second because of their strong physical resistance to any form of treatment as long as the effects of the drug persist. Intoxication generally lasts for 4 to 24 hours after a dose. However, the withdrawal period, during which there is possibility of a relapse, is very long, ranging from six to eight months for an occasional user and up to two to three years for a regular one. Some never totally regain their physical and mental faculties because of the damage caused to the central nervous system.

Of course, acute amphetamine intoxication can be treated, although mental addiction can never be overcome with certainty. For physical treatment, stomach washes are particularly recommended. The practitioner can also advise ingestion of large quantities of active charcoal (also called "activated coal" and known for its adsorptive capacity), which fixes the toxic substance and prevents blood poisoning. On the other hand, in order to accelerate the elimination of the active substance, urine can be acidified if the renal functions are not impaired. Finally, a symptomatic treatment is often given which consists of administering tranquillisers or anti-anxiety drugs, hydrating, controlling hyperthermia, or administering anti-convulsive and anti-hypertensive medicine.[19]

CHAPTER 2

History of a Product and Its Production Techniques

History of Amphetamine and Methamphetamine

Amphetamine was first synthesised in Germany in 1887. However, it was almost 30 years before a medical application was found for it at the end of the 1920s when the drug began to be widely used as an anti-depressant and a decongestant. It was also used to fight obesity, given that ephedrine — from which methamphetamine is produced — acts to reduce excess weight by stimulating thermogenesis. These qualities led to an explosion in the popular consumption of ephedrine products in some countries, particularly the United States.[1]

Easier to produce and more powerful than amphetamine, as it acts in smaller doses, methamphetamine was first isolated either in Germany in 1888 or in Japan in 1919 (sources are still controversial).[2] Methamphetamine presents itself in the form of a crystalline powder soluble in water that users can take intravenously. This made it a rapid and effective method of consumption that some Southeast Asian consumers prefer even today.

Methamphetamine use was common among various armies during the Second World War, and the drug remained a popular item with American soldiers during the Vietnam War. A veritable epidemic of methamphetamine consumption occurred among the general population in post-war Japan, and the American public also had unrestricted access to both amphetamine and methamphetamine as early as the 1950s. There, students, truck drivers, and athletes used it without any medical supervision. Eventually use of the drug plummeted, however, after the U.S. Controlled Substances Act of 1970 restricted the production of methamphetamine that could be injected intravenously.

Methamphetamine can be found in Schedule B of the United Nations Convention on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances[3] under the category of "psycho-analeptic substances" or "stimulants of the central nervous system", the latter also including hallucinogens, amphetamines, barbiturates and benzodiazepines. However, when methamphetamine is in a form that can be injected intravenously it is also included in Schedule A, which includes substances that are considered to be the most harmful and least useful from a medical standpoint.

Methamphetamine Production

Methamphetamine[4] can be produced from the extract of ephedrine, a phenethylamine[5] kind of alkaloid as is mescaline from the peyote cactus (Lophophora williamsii Lemaire),[6] cathine[7] from the khat (Catha edulis Forskal), or even theobromine of cocoa beans (Theobroma cacao Linnaeus). It is contained in certain Ephedra, the only genus of the family of Ephedraceae of the order Ephedrales. The latter includes perennial xerophytic bushes or creepers that grow in dry tropical and temperate regions where they can reach a height of 45 to 120 cm. The plant has the austere look of species that live in extreme conditions. Its "woody stem, often underground, has aerial branches, that are green, thin and often easily broken at the nodes where are found two, three of four leaves reduced to sheathing scales".[8] Its yellow flowers are generally small in size.[9] Ephedra grows on soil with good drainage, so it adapts well to rocky substrata and sandy slopes, and to open and particularly sunny areas of semi-arid regions. It is a plant difficult to cultivate and requires approximately four years to mature.

The genus Ephedra is thought to have originated in Northern China and Mongolia, where one still finds the three species Ephedra sinica (Stapf), Ephedra intermedia (Schrenk and C.A. Mey) and Ephedra equisetina (Bunge).[10] In addition, there are around 60 other varieties found in such places as the Indian subcontinent [Ephedra geradiana (Wall)], the deserts and steppes of Central Asia, and in the Americas where Ephedra nevadensis (Watson) and Ephedra viridis (Colville) were used to brew "Mormons' Tea" and "Desert Tea" (or "Squaw Tea"), respectively.[11] In Europe there is Ephedra distachya (Linnaeus). Sometimes called "sea grapes" or "joint grass" (as it cured arthritis), this plant grows notably well on the sand dunes of the Atlantic coast of France and is relatively toxic.

It is, however, in the Middle East that the oldest sample of a variety of Ephedra was discovered. It was found in the Zagros Mountains of present-day northeastern Iraq near the banks of the Zarb, a tributary of the Tigris River. In 1951, Ralph and Rose Solecki carried out archeological research in the Shanidar caves, a site that was inhabited by Neanderthals 60,000 years ago during the Upper Pleistocene era.[12] The excavation revealed that as far back as this era, funerary rites were far more elaborate than previously imagined, and could include inhuming plants such as Ephedra altissima (Desf), which was identified from its pollen by Arlette Leroi-Gourhan. The discovery of Ephedra in a Neanderthal tomb was, in and of itself, insufficient evidence to allow researchers to conclude that its properties as a stimulant and a cure for arthritis were known at this period. However, the presence of other plants having well-known medicinal properties in the tomb of Shanidar IV led Leroi-Gourhan to speculate that these properties must have been recognised by local inhabitants.[13]

Ephedra sinica (Stapf), the variety commonly found in China under the name of mahuang (from ma, "astringent", and huang, "of yellow colour") is of particular interest here. The plant's properties, related to its ephedrine and pseudo-ephedrine content, has led it to be used for medicinal purposes since at least 4,800 years ago. With it the Chinese treated many ailments, including colds, "hay fever", asthma, bronchitis, arthritis, fever, and hypotension, as well as edemas and urticaria, excessive perspiration, headaches, urinary infections and venereal disease. Branches of Ephedra were sun-dried and then crushed into powder before being boiled in a mixture of water and honey. Similarly, inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent and North America have long taken this substance as a decoction, and still do so today. The Ephedra that are of greatest interest to us here have an overall alkaloid content of 0.5 to 2.5 per cent, among which the proportion of ephedrine, depending on the species, ranges from 30 to 90 per cent.

More recently, and especially during the decade of the 1990s, the illegal production of methamphetamine has developed considerably, partly due to its advantages over heroin. For instance, agricultural constraints are relatively absent. Unlike those who cultivate opium poppies (or coca), amphetamine producers do not require a vast area dedicated to illicit production, where the vagaries of climate and eradication campaigns may endanger production. Furthermore, Ephedra, unlike the opium poppy, is not subject to legal restrictions of any kind. It is considered illicit only if misused.[14]

Moreover, the number of precursors required for the production of ATS (amphetamine-type stimulants) is far fewer than those required for producing opium derivatives.[15] Whereas transformation of opium can yield only one type of substance, this is not the case with ephedrine or Ephedra, which can also be transformed into methcathinone (ephedrone).[16] Various ATS products can be obtained from the same key precursor, which can itself come from different pre-precursors. From sassafras oil, camphor or nutmeg, one can obtain safrole or piperonal, precursors of ecstasy; these substances can then be used to synthesize others which can, in turn, be used to produce either ecstasy or any of its analogues.[17] Ephedrine can also be replaced by pseudo-ephedrine, an active principle widely used in nasal decongestants, and can even be obtained from benzaldehyde during the sugar-refining process.

The process of chemically transforming amphetamine-type stimulants is far more flexible and a great deal less complex than the requirements for producing and refining heroin. Ephedrine, which was first isolated in 1887 by Japanese researchers S. Nagai and W. N. Kanao, who also synthesised it, is extracted with the help of sodium carbonate, along with other alkaloids of the plant (norephedrine, pseudo-ephedrine, or adrenaline). By adding hydrochloric acid, the alkaloids are transformed into hydrochlorides (chlorhydrate) before being dissolved in chloroform. Finally, after evaporation, the various alkaloids can be separated from each other according to the solubility of their oxalates. Alternatively, ephedrine can be obtained by a synthetic process also developed by Nagai and Kanao.[18] As for amphetamine, it can be obtained from phenylacetic acid and then transformed into sulphate by the action of sulphuric acid, the latter a precursor and chemical product frequently used in the illicit production of narcotics and psychotropic substances.[19] Methamphetamine hydrochloride can easily be obtained from ephedrine or pseudo-ephedrine and hydriodic acid.

By virtue of the 1988 United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, these two substances are subject to strict international controls. Hydriodic acid is necessary for manufacturing amphetamine derivatives; if not available, the acid can be created by combining iodine and red phosphorous, two products not subject to any legal controls. Phenyl-1-propanone-2 (P-2-P), or phenylpropanolamine, which is used in the pharmaceutical industry for the legal synthesis of amphetamine, methamphetamine, and some of its derivatives,[20] can also be used as a precursor for manufacturing an amphetamine classified as a methamphetamine.[21] Thus, according to a

report of the International Narcotics Control Board in 1998, about 84 tons of P-2-P, which could be used to produce 40 tons of amphetamine, had been seized worldwide during the previous four years. In 1997, 141 tons of ephedrine and pseudo-ephedrine were intercepted in various countries.[22]

It requires 1.6 tons of ephedrine, which can be obtained by pure synthesis, to produce one ton of methamphetamine.[23] This amount can in turn produce around one million methamphetamine pills of 1.07g of active substance per single dose. Given the high risk of explosion from chemical reactions produced during the transformation process, amphetamine manufacturing is a dangerous activity — particularly so when carried out in laboratories located in the middle of urban areas. Potentially toxic product such as hydrochloric acid, battery acid, drain cleaning liquids, detergents, and anti-frost products are frequently used in yaa baa production.

Thousands of recipes for producing methamphetamine or ecstasy are available on the Internet, revealing the simplicity of production techniques.[24] And given the large areas of so-called "wild Ephedra" found in China and in Kazakhstan, plus growing ATS consumption, one can understand why drug traffickers already involved in the production of heroin are opting to move or diversify into the methamphetamine trade. "Easier", more flexible, and cheaper than heroin production and trafficking, methamphetamine (yaa baa) is a rapidly developing "narcotic phenomenon" in Southeast Asia.[25] Thus in the year 2000, the cost of producing a single methamphetamine pill in Burma was estimated at 3 cents of a US dollar. The same pill sold for the retail price of between 45 and 65 cents on the streets of Bangkok.[26]

A single comparison here is apt: in 1994 the total quantity of ATS precursors seized on the Asian continent constituted only one per cent of seizures worldwide, while currently, in 2000, Asia closely follows North America and Europe in its volume of ATS traffic. As early as 1996 the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) was presciently warning of a "growing diversification of the illicit drug industry in many regions, and, as it happens, in the Golden Triangle".[27]

CHAPTER 3

The Historical and Geographic Context of the Golden Triangle

Gold and the Triangle[1]

The "Golden Triangle" in mainland Southeast Asia is one of the two main areas of illicit opiate production in the world. In addition, it is also from there that hundreds of millions of methamphetamine pills are sourced. More precisely, it is in the highlands of the fan-shaped region of northern Indochina, in the hilly and mountainous outskirts of Burma, Laos and Thailand, that the opium poppy, Papaver somniferum Linnaeus, is cultivated. While this agricultural activity has been carried out in the neighbouring border regions of the three countries ever since the 19th century, it is now largely confined to the Kachin and Shan states of northeastern Burma along the Chinese, Laotian, and Thai borders.

Mainland Southeast Asia is made up of a peninsular mass whose orientation is clearly southwards. Here, Burma shares around 1,800 km of land with Thailand. At the heart of this tortuous relief runs the border separating the two countries, following the same longitudinal direction. The region is characterised by expanses of hills, mountains, and plateaux that lack any extremes in altitude. However, the contrast between the plains and mountains is marked: the hills are largely covered with thick forests, whereas the plains have long been devoid of trees. Climate and geography account for this: most of the region lies in the tropical belt, but the hills receive heavier seasonal monsoon rains than the plains.

Hence the Burmese–Thai border region, just like the border that joins Burma and Laos, is far less populated than the outlying plains and alluvial basins of the Irrawaddy and Chao Phraya rivers. In these hills, mountains, and plateaux, diversity vies with density. Here, particularly in the area of the Shan plateau, was formed the mosaic of populations to which

Georges Condominas referred when he characterised the ethnic map of the region as a "pointillist painting".[2]

The Golden Triangle is therefore a multi-ethnic and interstate region, and the presence of numerous ethnic groups spread across both sides of this mountainous border region facilitates the illegal movement of people and goods. In reality, Burma, Thailand and Laos — like Vietnam and China — see much cross-border movement. The lines of demarcation between Laos and Thailand, Laos and Burma, and Burma and Thailand traverse two zones that are intricately woven together: the Tai linguistic zone composed of Shan, Thai, and Lao peoples, over which is superimposed a more complex zone of numerous other ethnic groups that are dispersed throughout the three-border area.

In fact, opium began to be produced in these regions at a relatively late date. Let us remember that opium consumption — and later, the commercial cultivation of the opium poppy — were imposed on imperial China by the British in the 19th century. Production in Southeast Asia really only started later, with the forced migration of certain populations from southern China to the fan-shaped highlands of northern Indochina. Production and trade of opiates thus developed simultaneously in mainland Southeast Asia. This was partly due to the emigration of two population streams whose convergence would, from the end of the 19th century, signal the emergence of the Golden Triangle.

The Hui, also called Panthay by the Burmese and Haw by the Thai, were among the emigrants. They are thought to have descended from one Umar al-Bukhari, a native of Bukhara whom the Mongols had appointed to govern southwest China during the 13th-century Yuan dynasty. Following the Muslim "Panthay Rebellion" of 1856 in Yunnan, the Hui settled in what is now Tonkin, Laos, and Burma's Wa country and Shan state. In Burma's Kokang area they founded the city of Panglong in 1875.

Being great traders, the Hui were famous for having plied the routes linking Yunnan to Burma, Laos and Thailand (where they had also settled) for centuries. The Hui allied themselves with the Hmong populations[3] of the Miao-Yao linguistic family, who had also fled from Chinese authorities after rebelling against them in 1853,[4] as well as with the Lahu, Lisu, and Akha peoples of the Tibetan-Burmese linguistic family. Populating highlands above 1,000 metres that were favourable for cultivating poppy, the itinerant Hmong farmers cleared land by practising slash-and-burn, or swidden, agriculture in order to ensure opium and staple crops (mountain rice and corn). Thanks to their mules and links with the valleys and plains where regional markets were held,[5] the Hui

found outlets for Hmong products while providing them with basic consumer goods, using networks that had been established for the tea trade as early as the 14th century.

The eventual southwards expansion of the Chinese therefore acted to displace well-known caravanning groups (the Hui) and some of the region's most skilled opium producers (the Hmong) from southern China to Southeast Asia. The Hui's caravan routes traversed Siam very early, eventually making Thailand an important historical hub for the transit of opium and heroin. Today Thailand's status as a trafficking hub extends to the methamphetamine trade, most of which continues to be transported from Burma by old trading routes.

The historic dimension of these trade routes is underscored by the fact that many passageways now used today for both legal and black market trade, were once used by the Burmese for their incursions into Siam. The most famous of these was the route linking Moulmein to Myawaddy. After Ruili, Mae Sai is now the second most important transit point leading out of Shan State situated on the so-called "Burma Road" at the Chinese–Burmese border. Between these two frontier posts lies Mandalay, the historical capital of northern Burma, which is linked to Thailand via a route linking Taunggyi–Hopong–Mong Hsan–Lai Hka–Mong Yang–Mong Ping–Mong Ka–Kengtung–Tachileck and, on the other side of the border, Mae Sai. This was the pathway for the two most important trades to ever take place between Burma and Thailand, those in jade and opium.[6] As for the jade route — the future Burma Road — it was actually developed at the end of the 17th century by Chinese merchants of Yunnan, although the passageways had been used at least since the 13th century, when they served as routes for the Mongol invasions.[7]

Today the various players of these border areas — in this case the producers and the traffickers of illicit drugs — have succeeded in turning to their advantage a region deemed a backwater by the criteria of modern economic development. Some locals have judiciously exploited the region's difficulties of access and control, all of which serves to constrain the actions of state authorities there and maintain the "outlaw" nature of the Golden Triangle area.

The expression "Golden Triangle" was first popularised by the United States' Vice-Secretary of State Marshall Green during a press conference on 12 July 1971. Referring to "a polygon whose angles could be found in Burma, Laos and Thailand" where opium production was concentrated, Green implicitly acknowledged — and probably rightly so — the absence

of opium production in China. This exclusion was all the more necessary as it was made three days prior to the announcement by President Nixon of his official visit to the People's Republic scheduled for February 1972.

In addition to being a geographic reference, the expression "Golden Triangle" also describes the economic characteristics of the region under consideration. "Golden" in fact refers to the opium trade, which developed considerably over the course of the 20th century. According to Bertil Lintner, the first traders of the three-border region, especially those of the Thai-Burmese border town of Tachileck, exchanged the precious substance for 99 per cent pure gold bars.[8]

It is from the latex that is harvested from each capsule of Papaver somniferum — after incision, bleeding, and coagulation of the sap — that local producers obtain opium. This narcotic substance has a characteristic sticky texture, acrid smell, and dark brown or reddish appearance. Its market value is high because it contains around 40 alkaloids such as morphine, which, once chemically extracted, make it possible to obtain morphine hydrochloride and then heroin hydrochloride, the last of these being among the most potentially addictive types of drugs.

Emergence of the Golden Triangle and Its Key Players

It was the radical changes in China in 1949 that actually initiated the Golden Triangle's development. Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) troops fled from Yunnan to Burma to escape the Chinese communists' People's Liberation Army (PLA). From 1950 onwards, the PLA introduced substitution crops in southern China and all legal and illegal exports of opium to Southeast Asia (or at any rate, those from the Han-dominated regions of the ethnic Chinese) quickly ceased. While China implemented drastic measures to eradicate its populations' opium addiction problem, Southeast Asia quickly took over opium production in the context of the Cold War conflict.

The participation of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the conflict between the KMT and the PLA, and the policies of the French military in Indochina, helped to expand opium production. The Western military presence had an influence in Bangkok and Saigon that is now well-known. These cities were the two main centres of opium consumption. By virtue of the actions of French soldiers and Special Services in Saigon, and later, the operations of the CIA, Bangkok and Saigon became linked to areas of opium production in northeastern Burma and northern French Indochina. Communist threats and the Indochinese war combined with

a Chinese diaspora — the latter of which consumed great quantities of opium in the Peninsula — to cause illicit opium production to emerge in the Golden Triangle region of the northern Indochinese highlands.

It is in this context that the protracted conflicts and the trafficking of illicit drugs began to flourish in mainland Southeast Asia and still prevail today. After their flight to northeastern Burma, the KMT troops received technical but not financial help from U.S. intelligence services, and took over the large majority of the drug trade. The mule caravans that transported the Burmese opium under the control of the armed forces of the KMT were then chiefly made up of the Hui, Panthay, and Chin Haw, the only groups that had the necessary networks and means for such trafficking.

After 1967 and the "Opium War" which saw the defeat of the Sino-Shan Chang Chi-fu (alias Khun Sa or Sinchai Changtrakul in Thai) at Ban Houay Xay, a site that lies along the banks of the Mekong in Laos, the KMT controlled almost 90 per cent of the opium trade from its bases in northern Thailand. The Shan caravans transported only seven per cent of the Burmese opium at that time and the caravans of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), which were laden with jade, only three per cent.[9]

Mainland Southeast Asia is certainly well-known for its role in the Cold War. Indeed, communist guerrillas, against whom Washington was fighting east of the Annamite Range, were also active in Thailand, Burma and Laos. These movements originated out of anti-Japanese alliances contracted during the Second World War between the communists and the British in Malaya and Burma. They led to complex social conflicts in Thailand and Burma that were motivated by extremely intricate ideological, territorial and national interests.

Thus the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT), created in 1942 to fight against the Japanese, received its first military help from China in 1960 and established "liberated areas" in the mountainous and hilly regions in the north of the country. Vietnam helped the CPT as well, following the setting up of the American military bases in Thailand in 1965. Hanoi's involvement served to counterbalance not only the American presence there, but also the growing influence of Peking.

China's reaction was to promptly take over the CPT's guerrillas and create a new force, the 11th Army, to defend the border. The army's ethnic composition was 80 per cent Hmong and 20 per cent Wa and Yao. During the same period Bangkok, which had allowed American military bases on its soil, allowed entry of Chinese nationalist troops of the KMT into

Thai territory. The KMT's flight from Yunnan and its turbulent withdrawal into the mountains of the northern Indochinese peninsula had in fact given Thailand and the United States a useful tool with which to counter the communist threat. Thus in 1968 at Batang, on the Thai side of the Mekong, approximately 600 men of the KMT attacked a Laotian communist post at the behest of the Thai army. This ground-level cooperation with the KMT lasted for some 15 years.[10]

The production and trafficking of opiates — whether done by the Hmong trained by the CIA in the mountains of Laos, or by KMT troops taking refuge in the area now termed the Golden Triangle — was therefore a major component of anti-communist measures carried out by Thailand and the United States. But the CPT almost completely disappeared in the early 1980s. Undermined by internal disputes, it suffered greatly due to the alliance between Thailand and China following the recognition of the People's Republic by Bangkok in 1975. Peking, which up to 1979 had hardly any need of Thailand, asked for its support during the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. Thailand then agreed to support the Khmer Rouge, thus ensuring the end of the Chinese help to the CPT as well as the maintenance of a Khmer Rouge buffer area isolating it from possible Vietnamese interference.[11]

The Communist Party of Burma (CPB) also played a major role in the emergence of the Golden Triangle.[12] In 1950 it had received help from China to form a Popular Front government in Kachin State. It was hoped that this would enable the conquest of the central plain and Rangoon. The KMT troops, supported by the CIA and made up of 30,000 men of mainly Shan, Kachin and Burmese-Chinese origin, had failed in their project to win back China. In fact it was the People's Republic that went on the offensive. In order to do so, it incited the CPB to form an alliance with the drug traffickers of Kokang, a region of Burma on the Chinese border whose population was 90 per cent Chinese and whose land was reputedly famous for its opium. The traffickers agreed to form a "revolutionary" armed force in exchange for support in trafficking. The Kokang region received rapid investment, and the CPB, supported by numerous Chinese "counsellors", spread throughout the Kachin State in its mission to take on the regular Burmese troops.

Once the CPB had been structured at the military level, China withdrew its troops and continued to provide only light weapons to the "communist" fighters. The latter became increasingly involved in the development of the opium economy, especially as they were unable to go beyond the 20,000 sq km of "liberated zones" of the Sino-Burmese border region.

Just as it had done with the CPT, China also greatly reduced its aid to the CPB after the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. The CPB had then to involve itself more and more in alliances with minorities, supporting them in their search for autonomy. In 1980, the Chinese annual financial aid to the CPB dropped from the equivalent of 7.5 million dollars to 5 million, causing the CPB to change over to drug trafficking and carry out guerrilla operations that were more akin to banditry than communist struggle.

Finally, in 1989 the Tiananmen Square events isolated Beijing from the international community and led China to put an end to its subversive strategies in Southeast Asia, which resulted in China's ceasing to give any further help or financial aid to the other Asian communist parties. Relations with the Southeast Asian states became all-essential for Beijing, so China's alliance with the Burmese state began to take precedence over support to the CPB. China imported Burmese rice, wood, jade, precious stones and minerals and exported many manufactured goods to Mandalay and Rangoon. The ascendancy of commercial relations over the propagation of communist ideology was thus established, and by 1991 the value of trade between China and Burma was estimated at three to four billion dollars.

Thus the role of the KMT, CPB and the Kokang Chinese in developing the trafficking in opium, the dissolution of the CPB, and the subsequent rise of numerous armies more or less involved in drug trafficking, such as the United Wa State Army (UWSA), are all rooted in rivalries and confrontations between proxies of the Communist and Western camps. Indeed, the Wa formed the main armed wing of the CPB, and it was only after the disintegration of the Party that the UWSA appeared in Burma. The emergence of the Golden Triangle and its main actors, such as the UWSA and the Kokang Chinese, is thus directly linked to the context of the Cold War and the ascendance of the drug economy by the various players engaged in these fights.

This fermenting bed of conflict, perpetuated by the illicit opiate industry, made it possible for various UWSA and Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) officers, as well as some Chinese nationals, to begin producing methamphetamine in Burma. It is also due to this conflict that Thailand, previously a major outlet for Burmese heroin, became the trafficking hub for yaa baa, as well as the main regional centre for its consumption. The Golden Triangle, whose opium production accounts for one of the world's major, if not largest amount, depending on the year, has truly diversified.

Further Expansion of Drug Production in the Golden Triangle

Historically, the production of opium in Burma concentrated along the Chinese, Laotian and Thai borders, is in peripheral and mountainous regions difficult to access such as Kokang in Shan State. While in Southeast Asia the early spread of opium production took place in the heart of the Laotian and Thai territories, it is in the more peripheral regions of north and northeastern Burma that the vast majority of the Golden Triangle's opium is produced today.

The tumultuous political history of Burma since its independence in 1948 and the fall of the CPB in 1989 created a climate conducive to the rapid development of opium production. The coming to power in 1988 of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), the governmental institution of the Burmese junta, had a similar effect. And things hardly changed after SLORC's discreet facelift, when it was transformed into the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) on 15 November 1997.[13]

The country's internal and external geopolitics, which favour recourse to an illegal drug economy, do not appear to have been significantly affected by the change of ministers that took place within the SPDC in November 2001. In fact, the production of opium and methamphetamine is still closely linked to the state of rebellion in the border territories. The Burmese junta has adopted a policy of conciliation vis-à-vis the various armed groups which, according to some observers, is dangerous and even hypocritical. Thus, in January 1996, Khun Sa, Chief Commander of the Mong Tai Army (MTA) and nicknamed "the opium king", surrendered following an agreement reached between the junta and the UWSA. The UWSA had long coveted the MTA-held regions to gain access to border crossing points along the Thai frontier, supposedly so as to secure a direct control of the export of drugs.

The situation of the Burmese border areas has been, and still is, in continual ferment, with a complex balance of power that involves major interests. For example, the splitting up of the MTA has given rise to a few armed nationalist groups such as the Shan State Army (SSA) of Yawd Serk, who some sources include in the list of leaders suspected of involvement in drug trafficking.[14] However, and not without ulterior motive, Yawd Serk emphasizes his dual desire to fight against both the Burmese army and drug trafficking.[15]

For example, in September 2000, the SSA attacked a methamphetamine laboratory situated opposite the Thai district of Chiang Dao and reportedly

seized hundreds of thousands of pills, which provoked a counterattack by the regular Burmese troops supported by two battalions of the UWSA; the latter, however, did not take part in direct combat. The SSA also reacted violently to the relocation of the Wa population carried out by the UWSA in November 2000 to a region opposite the Wiang Heng district, the latter an area dedicated to opium production. On 20 November, in a move to defend its territory, the SSA attacked methamphetamine laboratories held by assorted Muser hill tribesmen and some Wa (who had recruited the Muser to pass yaa baa into Thailand), along with regular troops of the Tatmadaw (or Burmese army), and seized 200,000 pills. The operation, which ended in a clash between the Burmese 395th battalion and the Thai Cavalry 3rd battalion, was considered to be a Thai attack by the Burmese junta.[16]

Such events enable us to place the various players on the Burma scene in the geopolitics of regional drug trafficking. In fact, the SSA and the UWSA clash regularly along the Thai border as the Wa try to seize land still under SSA control. Thai officials believe that they most likely do so in an effort to bring their methamphetamine laboratories closer to the border and to the Thai market.[17]

In this context, it is not illogical that at least one faction of the Burmese junta has given its support to the UWSA. This is indicated by the alleged visit on 1 October 1999 of General Khin Nyunt, Chief of the Burmese intelligence services and the First Secretary of the Junta,[18] to Wei Hsueh-kang, the commander of the UWSA's 361st brigade who had, and still has, an arrest warrant against him pending in the United States.[19] Khin Nyunt was in fact filmed inspecting the progress of the construction of Wei Hsueh-kang's headquarters at a place called "46" opposite San Ma Ked in the Thai district of Mae Fa Luang. [20] It is again Khin Nyunt who visited the site of Mong Yawn in July 1999, where he would have met chief officers of the UWSA.

Affirms Desmond Ball, "In the case of many methamphetamine [yaa baa] production labs, you've got Burmese troops actually guarding the plants, you've got military intelligence guys providing the escorts of the trafficking caravans, you've got MI [military intelligence] people allowing it to actually cross the border into Thailand."[21] On the other side of this geopolitical chessboard, against the SPDC-UWSA alliance, stand the SSA and Thailand. This structure is in keeping with a purely political logic and a long tradition according to which Thailand operates through proxies. It is therefore not surprising that Bangkok gives its support in the form of arms and intelligence to the SSA of Yawd Serk in his fight

against the junta, the UWSA, and the latter's alleged production of methamphetamine.[22]

Other observers share Ball's point of view by affirming that some Burmese army personnel are "in charge of strengthening the controls at the locations of the refineries, of escorting the drug convoys and then transporting the chemical precursors".[23] In addition, the same sources specify that "the Burmese army" or at least some of its units, deduct a tax — not to say a commission — on the trafficking of yaa baa: one baht per tablet, or ten per cent of the wholesale selling price at the border, to whatever Thai traffickers get there first. But profits from the methamphetamine trade are presumably also shared between some officers of the UWSA and some factions of the Burmese army.[24]

However, many other armed groups at the border are also suspected of some involvement in the various stages of drug trafficking, whether it concerns opiates or, increasingly, synthetic drugs. Thus in 1990, only a year after the mutiny and dismantling of the CPB, it was estimated that about 17 new heroin laboratories had been set up by the inheritors of the Communist force in Kokang and in the CPB's former territories lying west of the Salween.[25] According to the U.S. State Department's annual International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), the former French Geopolitical Drug Watch (OGD), and even the Thai authorities, key military figures of various armed groups are strongly involved in the drug trade. These include Lin Ming Xian (alias Sai Leun in Shan, which in Burmese is mispronounced "Sai Lin") of the Eastern Shan State Army (ESSA), Wei Hsueh-kang (alias Prasit Chivinnitipanya in Thai) of the UWSA, Mong Sa La of the Mongko Defense Army (MDA), certain leaders of the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA, an organisation allegedly formed by Chinese drug barons of Kokang),[26] and finally, the Kachin Democratic Army (KDA).

On the other hand, some of these armed groups have pledged to eradicate the opium poppy from their respective regions, most notably the MDA, KDA and the MNDAA in 1997. Overall, however, there has been no significant effect on the ground. In fact, it would seem that only the Kachin have really implemented opium-free zones, although production seems to have resumed very quickly.[27]

Within the MNDAA, Pheung Kya-shin, known for having installed the first heroin refinery in the zone held by the CPB in the middle of the 1970s,[28] announced in 1999 that Special Region No. 1 of Kokang would soon be entirely free of poppy cultivation. This had already been partly achieved since by 2003 a 50 per cent drop in opium production had

occurred. But while MNDAA-held Kokang still remains a significant production centre, the Eastern territories of Shan State, under the control of the UWSA, experienced an increase in poppy cultivation as well as methamphetamine production in 2003.

The UWSA's alleged involvement in drug trafficking has been all the more easy to denounce, since after the surrender of Khun Sa and the MTA, the UWSA — among others — had taken control of the Mong Yawn region along the Thai border. This region has undergone an unprecedented transformation in only a few years, as the UWSA carried out a development plan valued at least at one billion baht (approximately 25 million euros). The general opinion is that its development had been directly financed by drug trafficking.[29] Thousands of Thai workers were engaged in the construction of roads, a dam, schools, a hospital and fortified towns in the south of the zone controlled by the UWSA between Mong Yawn and Mong Hsat, the former airport of the KMT. The UWSA, with Rangoon's authorisation, also planned to renovate the 150 km-long road along the Thai border and install bus services which, according to some observers, could facilitate drug trafficking and increase the likelihood of skirmishes at the border.[30]

As far as roads are concerned, Thai intelligence services affirm that Asia World, the company of Lo Hsing Han and his son Steven Law, is involved in the widening of the Muse-Mandalay road. The company is likely using the services of the Wa "entrepreneurs" and the advice of Chinese technicians to execute the largest road project in Burma. Again, according to the Thai intelligence services, Khin Nyunt, an active supporter of the UWSA, would want the road to end at the maritime port of Moulmein. In 2000, much work was done by Chinese technicians and Thai entrepreneurs on the Kengtung–Tachileck and Mong La–Kengtung roads, reportedly thanks to financing from the Wa.

Since 1996 the UWSA has taken up positions along the Thai border in a hilly region that is difficult for Bangkok to control, as innumerable routes and passes make it easy to slip across. The UWSA seems to have decided to control this region on a permanent basis, which they claim they legitimately won from the MTA. Ta Kap, the commander of the 894th brigade of the UWSA, declared that they would never give up Mong Yawn, which had been promised to them by the government of Burma in exchange for their military help against Khun Sa.[31]

CHAPTER 4

Methamphetamine Production and Traffic in Mainland Southeast Asia

The Explosion of Yaa Baa Production in the Golden Triangle

For some years now the Golden Triangle, an Asian region traditionally devoted to opium poppy cultivation,[1] has begun to see the intensive production of new kinds of illicit drugs — in particular, amphetamine-type stimulants or ATS, including methamphetamine or yaa baa. Amphetamine derivatives have long existed in the region and so are not really "new" drugs.[2] What is new about synthetic drugs in mainland Southeast Asia is the magnitude of increase in recent production and consumption levels of these illicit substances.

From a strictly geo-economic point of view, methamphetamine manufacturing leads to a radically new logic. This is because factors of production are not linked to illegal cultivation practices in a specific agricultural region, as is the case with illicit opium production, since Ephedra growing is not illegal. Localisation factors are even more different since ATS production is mostly conducted as close as possible to consuming areas (be they in North America, Europe, or Asia), something that is of course not possible with heroin consumption which depends heavily upon very localised opium production (in Asia or Latin America). Thus, ATS trafficking patterns, being rather local or sub-regional, differ significantly from those of heroin, which are more global. Consumer markets for synthetic drugs that first became a craze in the West have also emerged along with production areas in the region, where these drugs have become increasingly popular, particularly within the ranks of the younger generation.

The following discussion illustrates how the Golden Triangle emerged as a major production site, and mainland Southeast Asia as a consumption

region, for synthetic drugs. However, these developments signal perhaps not so much a changeover in the regional illicit drug economy as they do a diversification of it.

The Situation in Burma and Thailand

From the early 1990s, Southeast Asia has seen an explosion in methamphetamine production. Other designer drugs, defined here as substances obtained by manipulating the synthetic variants of a given chemical structure, have no doubt become popular in Thailand.[3] But compared to amphetamines, designer drugs are less important and not always clearly identifiable.[4] The diversification of illicit drug production and consumption in mainland Southeast Asia poses a key regional problem to the countries involved, one that involves issues of public health and safety and national security.

Regarding drug consumption in Thailand, opium addicts have shown a tendency to convert to heroin. This is partly due to the poppy eradication policy implemented in the country during the last few decades. By suppressing the traditional channels of opium supplies, authorities have simply shifted the demand to an opium alternative.

In the early 1980s around 50 per cent of the opium produced in the Golden Triangle was consumed in Asia, while 70 per cent of the remainder, transformed into morphine and heroin, was also consumed there. Figures of this magnitude would considerably limit the volume of drugs that could be exported beyond Asia.[5] In the mid-1990s, the Office of Narcotics Control Board calculated that 75 per cent of the opium harvested in the Golden Triangle was being transformed into heroin, thus indicating a marked change in consumption trends.[6] Considered piecemeal, however, the figures are contradictory.

According to the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI), an independent Thai research centre, the kingdom had approximately 500,000 heroin addicts in 1980–1. In 1990, habitual heroin users numbered anywhere from 150,000 to 335,000, out of a total population of 495,000 to 747,000 drug addicts.[7] For 1993 the same sources mention 214,000 opium and heroin addicts, without differentiating between them. But these figures have given rise to controversy. After calculating the figures by other extrapolation methods, researcher Anchalee Singhanetra-Renard estimated the number of cannabis, opium, and heroin addicts for 1990 to be 400,000.[8]

The debates over these competing estimates evoke the difficulties of

compiling scientific data on illicit drug use patterns in Thailand (or anywhere else). But one thing is certain: the real problem lies elsewhere. It is indeed methamphetamine that has become the most widely-used drug among Thais — that is, at least up until the recent highly controversial war on drugs waged by Thailand Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra in 2003. Methamphetamine use has risen considerably since the beginning of the 1990s, and even more so since 1996. That year saw the surrender of drug kingpin Khun Sa, a subsequent rise in the price of heroin, and the alleged sudden development of illicit activities of the United Wa State Army (UWSA), with some 400 to 600 million pills reportedly being produced within its territory in 2000.

The Thailand Development Research Institute estimates that in 1993, amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) addiction affected 257,965 people. Sixty-five per cent of ATS users were identified as farmers and six per cent as truck drivers; most reportedly used the drug to increase individual productivity.[9] But by 2000, the Office of Narcotics Control Board estimated that 1.2 million people had become yaa baa addicts, and reported that of the 600,000 adolescents in the country suffering from undetermined sources of addiction,[10] 260,000 of them regularly consumed methamphetamine.[11] At Bangkok's Thanyarak Hospital, a specialised treatment centre for addiction, the proportion of heroin addicts had decreased from 78 to 15 per cent of the total institutional population between 1996 and 2000, whereas that of yaa baa users had risen from 12 to 74 per cent for the same period.[12]

The use patterns of ATS drugs are very different from those of other illicit drugs. Alongside its recreational use, yaa baa is in fact partially a "labour" drug consumed by individuals everywhere from schools to fields. Alternatively, heroin, used by more marginalised sections of society, is clearly a drug far less "conducive" to work. A study carried out in 2000 by the Thai Farmers Research Centre on a sample group of 728 workers in Bangkok showed that 88 per cent of them regularly resorted to stimulants so they could work more and longer hours. Of the latter, 20 per cent acknowledged using methamphetamine. The UNDCP estimated that in the year 2000, some 200,000 to 300,000 Bangkok workers spent a total of almost one billion baht per year on yaa baa.[13]

Opiates and methamphetamine are one and the same in the minds of government officials, who consider them major threats to the country's internal and external security.[14] Hence it is significant that in August 2000 the three intelligence units of the Thai army posted at the frontiers of Burma, Laos and Cambodia[15] were ordered to refocus their activities

on border security and drug trafficking. Until then, the units had concentrated on obtaining political intelligence.[16]

The efforts undertaken in the fight against the two types of drugs should, however, be distinguished. They do not concern the same consumers and hence the same markets. The consumption of opiates, particularly in the Golden Triangle and its immediate periphery, is an old phenomenon. The opiate trade has no doubt evolved according to the demand and the profile of the consumers, but it is more localised than that of ATS such as methamphetamine and ecstasy.

Across Asia the illicit drug trade has evolved towards greater regional integration. China has large areas, such as Yunnan and Fujian, where Ephedra grows in the wild. Ephedra cultivation is also particularly developed in the Yinchuan plain in the north of Ningxia, as the plant helps to limit the expansion of sand dunes whose encroachment threatens the country's most fertile land. China has thus become the world's largest producer of ephedrine.[17] Drug traffickers based in Burma have naturally exploited this advantage, at the same time transforming suppliers into clients. In fact, the first regional methamphetamine laboratories were apparently established in the hilly Wa regions southeast of Pangshang around 1993.[18]

China, already very concerned by the increase in the trafficking and the consumption of opiates in its territory, threatened in 1997 to put an end to its food exports to Burma via the Wa region if the flood of drugs were not contained. This pronouncement came as a surprise, as it was in fact Beijing that imported Burmese rice, and not the other way around. But despite the recent increase in Burmese methamphetamine production, China's threat, as of 2004, has still not been carried out and trading still goes on between the UWSA's Special Region No. 2 and the Chinese province of Yunnan.

At the end of 1997, the first ecstasy laboratory in China was discovered in the autonomous region of Zhuang Guangxi. This gave Beijing reason to worry, especially because the central state-sponsored production and sale of ephedrine as a pharmaceutical was going on successfully.[19] The majority of ATS drug imports to China continue to originate from Burma, particularly from regions controlled by the UWSA. At the same time, suppliers established in Burma are literally flooding Thailand with yaa baa as well as ecstasy, drugs they can produce at three times lower the cost of European manufacturers.[20]

According to Thai estimates, 100 million methamphetamine pills were distributed in the Thai Kingdom during 1997 alone, out of which

24 million pills were seized. This already far surpassed the 9 million seized in 1996, when for the first time the drug topped the list of most widely-used narcotics in Thailand, but was still substantially less than the figure of 45 million pills consumed in 1999.

In Thailand the fight against opium addiction caused many users to resort to heroin, which became more difficult to obtain with the price increases that followed Khun Sa's surrender.[21] In 1996 the shifting patterns in illicit drug use caused an unprecedented rise in the consumption of yaa baa.

Then, in 1998, some methamphetamine consumers returned to heroin, whose price had again fallen in the wake of the yaa baa craze.[22] But overall, the impact was negligible. It is estimated that more than 400 million methamphetamine pills were distributed in Thailand in the year 2000, double the number distributed the previous year. This accounts for a huge share of Burma's total production potential of 600 million methamphetamine pills for the period under consideration.[23]

In 2000, Thai authorities estimated that Wa affiliated with the UWSA possessed around 50 illicit drug laboratories, a large number of them located around Mong Yawn (across the Thai border).[24] In March 2001, the 3rd Army, a Thai unit in charge of the country's northern region, estimated the number of such operations at 87, mainly situated between Pangshang (the UWSA capital, across the Chinese border) and Mong Yawn. Of these, 23 allegedly possessed the chemical production capacity to manufacture methamphetamine, while the others would have been used solely for packing pills.[25] Around 15 main routes were also identified that facilitated the export of methamphetamine to Thailand.

Each packing laboratory is presumed to have at least two machines capable of processing 7 pills per second, that is, more than 25,000 per hour. General Wattanachai Chaimuenwong, Commander of the 3rd Army at the time, estimated that between 800 million and one billion pills were produced in this zone in 2000.[26] Moreover, Thai authorities alleged that the UWSA managed ten laboratories around Tachileck and still others around their Sam Sao base, where two million pills per month would have been produced — ecstasy in particular. Khun Sa's family was also said to own some laboratories in a region southeast of Kengtung controlled by Lin Ming Xian, a.k.a. Sai Leun, of the Eastern Shan State Army (Special Region No. 4). One of Khun Sa's sons, called Sam Seun in Shan or Pairot Changtrakul in Thai, is speculated to have settled in Tachileck and become particularly involved in the drug economy.

Khun Sa, his family, and some members of the ex-Mong Tai Army

have thus likely continued their activities in the drug trade after Khun Sa's "retirement".[27] Another son of Khun Sa, Chang Weikang, has also been very active in Shan state, where he is thought to have opened a casino on the Thai border. At the beginning of 2000 the Burmese junta had even asked him to establish a new pro-Rangoon military force that, if necessary, could oppose the UWSA and various Shan armed movements such as the Shan State National Army.[28]

On China's border, Special Region No. 4, the fief of Sai Leun, is supposed to have become one of the main zones of methamphetamine production in Burma, benefiting from its proximity to both Chinese ephedrine and the Thai market.[29] But, for Thai authorities, it is still the UWSA that is pinpointed as the main methamphetamine producer. Indeed, in July 1999 again, more than one million pills were seized in Mae Sai, opposite Tachileck, after some individuals who were reportedly from the UWSA had just offered private customers five million pills in exchange for 40 four-wheel drive vehicles.[30]

However, other Wa not affiliated with the UWSA are thought to be involved in methamphetamine production as well. In 2000, Ban Homong, the former headquarters of the Mong Tai Army of Khun Sa, was under the authority of Colonel Maha Ja, who plays an active role in the local and regional drug trade. His brother Maha Sang commands 200 men of the Wa National Army (WNA), a force that is believed to ensure the security of both the Wa under his authority and of caravans of drug traffickers in the region. Ban Homong was already on its way to becoming a tourist destination since, as the previous headquarters of the MTA, it was of historical interest. The local hospital was being transformed into a hotel, and an increase in the capacity of the local hydroelectric power station — built on a dam dating from 1992 — was guaranteed when Burma's Energy Minister General Tin Tut visited there in 2000.

The Burmese junta reportedly gave its permission to the UWSA to repair the Mong Kyawt–Homong road in 2000 as part of their joint efforts against the Shan State Army (SSA), whose actions hindered drug trafficking. Around 800 soldiers of the UWSA are supposed to have been allocated to safeguard the road renovation work, since its completion could give the UWSA a strategic upper hand over the SSA. It is also thought that the reopening of this route could lead to a concomitant increase in the flow of drugs into Thailand.[31]

Burma is without question one of the world's largest centres of methamphetamine production, a fact Thailand never fails to publicise. However, with reason, Rangoon claims that its neighbour's territory is

not only a major regional consumption centre of ATS (hence stimulating production through demand), but also a privileged trafficking centre of the chemical precursors that allow illicit Burmese laboratories to function in the first place. Various cases point to the role that Thailand plays, directly or indirectly, in the drug industry. For example, in early November 1999 some 500 kg of chemical substances, meant for the production of ten million methamphetamine pills, were seized in a clandestine laboratory in Bangkok.[32] Then, in May 2000, according to the Phamuang Task Force of the 3rd Army, 1.2 tons of ephedrine meant for the laboratories allegedly operated by the UWSA were seized in the Thai district of Fang. This amount would have enabled the production of at least 500,000 yaa baa pills. Finally, during the first five months of the year 2000, 22 tons of caffeine were also confiscated in northern Thailand, where no industrial activity could justify such an import. Caffeine has become an important component of yaa baa production,[33] and may constitute as much as 70 per cent of the drug's ingredients.[34] The 22 tons that were seized could have enabled the production of almost 400 million pills.

Since then, transporting caffeine has been subject to strict supervision in six provinces of northern Thailand, namely, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Mae Hong Son, Tak, Nan and Phrae.[35] The first seizure of caffeine stock happened in November 1999 on the Thai side of the Tachileck–Mae Sai border and prompted the New Light of Myanmar, the official Burmese press organ, to deem Thailand a transit country for precursors meant for drug production in Burma. But the extent of methamphetamine-related activity going on in Thailand does not end there. From at least 1996 onwards Thailand has also had a few methamphetamine production laboratories on its own territory,[36] situated mainly in the provinces of Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Mae Hong Son in the northwest of the country.[37]

At times the increase in Burmese methamphetamine production has caused the Thai armed forces to consider crossing over into Burmese territory to pursue drug producers and traffickers there. No doubt the Thai army would have undertaken such action if it had allowed them to secure the arrest of Surachai Ngerntongfu, alias "Bang Ron", a Thai methamphetamine dealer who had reportedly taken refuge in Burma's UWSA territory after escaping the police in Bangkok during the seizure of 750,000 yaa baa pills at his home in the late 1990s.[38]

However, when nine Thai villagers were assassinated at Ban Mae Soon Noi in April 1999 by traffickers who were likely linked to the UWSA, Thai authorities launched a large-scale operation the following

July. The mobilisation involved eight hundred men from different branches of the armed forces and the Thai police; the operation itself took place on a 40 km by 3 km strip of the Burma–Thailand border extending from the districts of Mae Ai in Chiang Mai Province, to those of Mae Chan and Mae Fa Luang in Chiang Rai Province. The actions effectively closed off the frontier post of Ban San Ton Du and targeted trafficking of drugs, arms, and Burmese teak wood (Tectona grandis).

Thailand even obtained the consent of the Burmese government to pursue the traffickers and destroy their laboratories, although Wei Hsueh-kang, the UWSA's Southern 171st Military Region commander, and therefore a close ally of the junta, continued to have a few mobile production units in this region around Mong Yawn.[39] The methamphetamine traffickers responded by modifying their trafficking routes, following an old road used in the 1960s and 1970s by communist rebels of the Communist Party of Thailand.[40]

Again in July 1999, Thai intelligence services suggested that the Burmese junta and the UWSA were negotiating so the latter could make the region between Moulmein and Mae Sot "safe" and thus prevent a resurgence of the Karen National Union resistance. In exchange, the UWSA reportedly obtained permission to develop bus lines there — a privilege that had already been given to Khun Sa — as well as set up methamphetamine laboratories.[41] Given all this, the so-called UWSA laboratories would probably have replaced the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) installations that were there before. According to the Thai 3rd Army, about 57 production centres were operating in 1999 under the aegis of the DKBA at Myawaddy, opposite Mae Sot.

As far as the Karen are concerned, it is actually not the historical separatists of the Karen National Union (KNU) who control the illicit drug trafficking, but rather members of the DKBA, an organisation closely linked to the Burmese junta.[42] The DKBA was formed out of a Rangoon-orchestrated split within the Karen National Union, the KNU being the faction that is considered "historical" as it was founded in 1947 to defend the interests of the community. The junta exploited divisions between Karen Christian and Buddhist factions to its advantage. By splitting off from the KNU in December 1994, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Organization and its armed wing, the DKBA, made it possible for the Burmese army to gain control of Manerplaw, the headquarters of the Karen National Union.[43]

The Burmese junta itself does not present a picture of perfect unity. The struggle for power between Khin Nyunt and Maung Aye, the Commander-in-Chief of the Burmese military, also revolves around the UWSA. Khin Nyunt signed the 1989 cease-fire with the UWSA and is notoriously close to this organisation, while Maung Aye is alleged to be completely opposed to it.

In July 1999, when a senior officer of the Office of Narcotics Control Board declared that the Burmese government was "directly involved in the movement of millions of methamphetamine pills" since it supported exports of the UWSA,[44] he actually disregarded the role played by the junta in assisting drug traffickers of the DKBA.[45] As a matter of fact, the Naresuan Task Force, a part of the Thai 3rd Army, seized 7.7 million and 6 million methamphetamine pills respectively, and 5 kg of heroin in the Tak region (Phop Phra district) after two episodes of armed combat with the men of the DKBA during operations carried out in April 2001.

In fact, according to General Wattanachai Chaimuenwong of the 3rd Army, the caravans protected by the DKBA show that a strategic reconciliation took place between this Karen faction and members of the UWSA who were involved in producing methamphetamine.[46] Some independent reports also mention the existence of methamphetamine laboratories in the DKBA camps situated on the Burmese side of the Moei River, a natural frontier with Thailand.[47] Thus, many laboratories are reportedly managed by the DKBA, in addition to those of the UWSA along this tributary of the Salween River, from Shwe Kok-ko (the camp of the 999th brigade of the DKBA led by Commander Chit Thu north of Myawaddy), up to Waley in the south, and finally passing through Palu. On the Thai side of the frontier, the region extending from Tak to Phop Pra and including Mae Sot constitutes a major gateway for methamphetamine trafficking. Moreover, members of the Burmese military intelligence services (MI-15 and MI-25) were reported to be distributing pills throughout the area, particularly in Thai-based Karen refugee camps, at highly competitive prices.

In May 2000 the Commander-in-Chief of the Thai armed forces General Surayud Chulanond, previously in charge of intelligence services, expressed his frustration at the kingdom's inability to stem the flood of yaa baa. He also characterised the UWSA as posing the biggest external threat to Thai security. Meanwhile, General Watcharapol Prasarnrajkit, Assistant Commissioner of the Office of Narcotics Control Board, described the production, trafficking, and consumption of illicit drugs as "the most

dangerous problem" that ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) had to face.

Thailand is undoubtedly at the forefront of three aspects of the illegal narcotics problem: production, trafficking, and consumption.[48] By September 2000, with increased militarisation of the Burmese-Thai border, the situation had become so dire that authorities were seriously considering whether or not to accept American aid to boost efforts to suppress the illegal drug trade. The Director of the National Security Council, Khachadpai Burusapatana, affirmed that corruption and the drug trade were now the main threats to Thai national security, and would be included in the next plan of action for strategic security.[49]

In 2000, Thai officials pointed out that Khin Nyunt, the first secretary of the SPDC, was directly involved in the development of the UWSA and its alleged support of the drug trade.[50] General Surayud Chulanond was reported to have declared that Khin Nyunt treated the UWSA like "his own army", revealing the growing frustration of the Thai military.[51] However, authorities in Thailand were reported to have also used their own proxies in the fight against drug traffickers. The Thai Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs conceded that the government supported the sabotage operations in Burma. Thai intelligence sources indicate that the agents were ex-members of an elite British military unit, the Special Air Services (SAS), also known as the Counter-revolutionary Warfare Squadron. Members of this unit were said to have been recruited to train the Karen (probably originating from the Karen National Union) as special agents in the anti-narcotics fight on Burmese territory.

This discussion raises doubts about Thailand's passivity in the face of a longstanding inimical power whose "aggression" is deemed to be "narcotic".[52] Bangkok, which organises the major Cobra Gold military manoeuvres every year in collaboration with American troops as part of the broader Baker Torch American training program, has set up a special force in charge of the active fight against Burmese drug trafficking. This unit, named Task Force 399, is based at Mae Rim in Chiang Mai and is made up of one hundred men of special Thai forces and two infantry companies of one hundred men each, to which are attached hundreds of additional agents of the Border Patrol Police (the latter also an American creation). These troops were first assisted by 20 instructors of the U.S. Special Forces, 1st Group,[53] which reveals the interest of the U.S. in countering methamphetamine trafficking. Prior to this, U.S. authorities had focussed their international anti-drug strategy only on derivatives of cocaine and opium.[54]

Efforts to suppress cross-border drug trafficking between Burma and Thailand are therefore becoming more and more militarised. According to Thai sources, the United Wa State Army recently acquired Chinese HN-5N surface-to-air missiles (SAM), while Thailand has further equipped its border forces by obtaining two American Black Hawk helicopters. The anti-drug struggle could encompass much larger geopolitical dimensions than what appears at first sight; the presence of Chinese and American weaponry in Burma and Thailand may indeed be seen as part of a larger rivalry between China and the U.S. for regional and global influence. China is actually all the more attentive to this regional conflict because of a stronger American presence near its southern and western, or Central Asian, frontiers.

The Cases of Cambodia and Laos

Burma and Thailand, while at the centre of drug production, trafficking and consumption, are not the only countries of mainland Southeast Asia affected by the methamphetamine phenomenon. There is much cause for worry elsewhere in the region, particularly Cambodia, where illicit activities tend to escape any control and political instability helps drug production expand.[55] Cambodia's Koh Kong Province, already known for its cannabis cultivation, is likely the site of numerous methamphetamine laboratories, one of which was once thought to be run aboard a boat off the coast of a Cambodian island.[56] Methamphetamine production is probably also going on in other parts of Cambodia, particularly around Poipet and Pailin near the Thai border, as well as in the province of the capital, Phnom Penh.[57]

In Laos, 150,000 methamphetamine pills were seized in 1997, more than double the 70,000 seized there in 1996. In October 2000 Soubandh Srithirath, the country's Director of the National Commission for Drug Control and Supervision, denounced ATS trafficking and the country's burgeoning illicit drug use problems. At the same time, however, he also declared that there were no methamphetamine laboratories in the country.[58]

This last point is hardly credible. At least five laboratories had been identified in Laos' Luang Prabang Province in the mid-1990s,[59] and Thai reports from July 2001 note the tendency of laboratories allegedly owned by the UWSA to shift from Burma into Laos. Some 16 such "UWSA laboratories" were thought to have been moved from Burma to Laos' Bokeo province, something that is highly doubtful considering the lack of territorial control by the UWSA in Laos.[60]

In 2001 Thai police confirmed that such a shift of "UWSA laboratories" to Laos had taken place, and reported that many methamphetamine production centres had been set up east of the Mekong River not far from the Burmese frontier. The Laotian province of Bokeo is also important in the manufacture of yaa baa. Official Thai sources attribute this to the involvement of two groups: Thai and Burmese natives on the one hand, and Hmong Laotians affiliated with anti-Vientiane movements who are also associated with national traffickers, on the other.[61]

Whether as a result of these trends or simply due to increased trafficking from Burma, quantities of methamphetamine seized in Laos in 2001 had almost doubled in comparison to 2000 figures. However, one needs to acknowledge that laboratories are in fact very mobile and capable of being rapidly transferred from one side to the other of the Burma–Laos border, as demarcated by the Mekong River. Currently the laboratories are particularly numerous on the Burmese side, notably to the northeast of Tachileck in the region of Mong Pa Liao, an area historically reputed for its illicit drug trafficking and smuggling.[62]

It has already been noted that methamphetamine production in Burma, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand corresponds to a diversification rather than a changeover in heroin traffickers' sources of revenue. Although opium production in Burma reportedly decreased in 2002, it is apparent that methamphetamine production is not displacing heroin production; rather, it is likely a matter of new strategic opportunities for drug traffickers in regards to a booming regional market. Methamphetamine production is likely the result of organised criminal rings based in China taking advantage of what they perceive as new market opportunities. Opium poppy growers (even those of the Wa operating in UWSA-held areas) cannot reasonably turn themselves into methamphetamine producers overnight: indeed, poverty-stricken peasants are not profit-seeking chemists. Peasants generally turn to opium production to meet basic subsistence needs such as securing food for their families.

As for unconfirmed reports about methamphetamine being produced from benzaldehyde in Burmese sugar refineries, they indicate that methamphetamine production is not supplanting opium production, but rather is being undertaken in addition to it, as an aspect of market diversification. Benzaldehyde is already used legally for the production of ephedrine by the Indian firm Kreb's Biochem, but when integrated with the sugar refining process, it also enables production of illicit ATS. The same unconfirmed reports suggest that one of the biggest refineries in Burma is conveniently located near the Chinese border in Mongla, the capital

of Special Region No. 4, a zone controlled by the Eastern Shan State Army under the notorious drug trafficker Sai Leun.[63]

The ease with which synthetic drugs such as ATS are produced raises doubts about the efficacy of development programs, many of which are based on replacing illegal crops with legal alternatives. A substitution procedure is being carried out, but one can guess that "it is not the one that the international agencies had hoped for".[64] Indeed, in Burma, it seems that methamphetamine production has acted to diversify illicit drug manufacturing much more rapidly than any substitution measures achieved by alternative development projects.

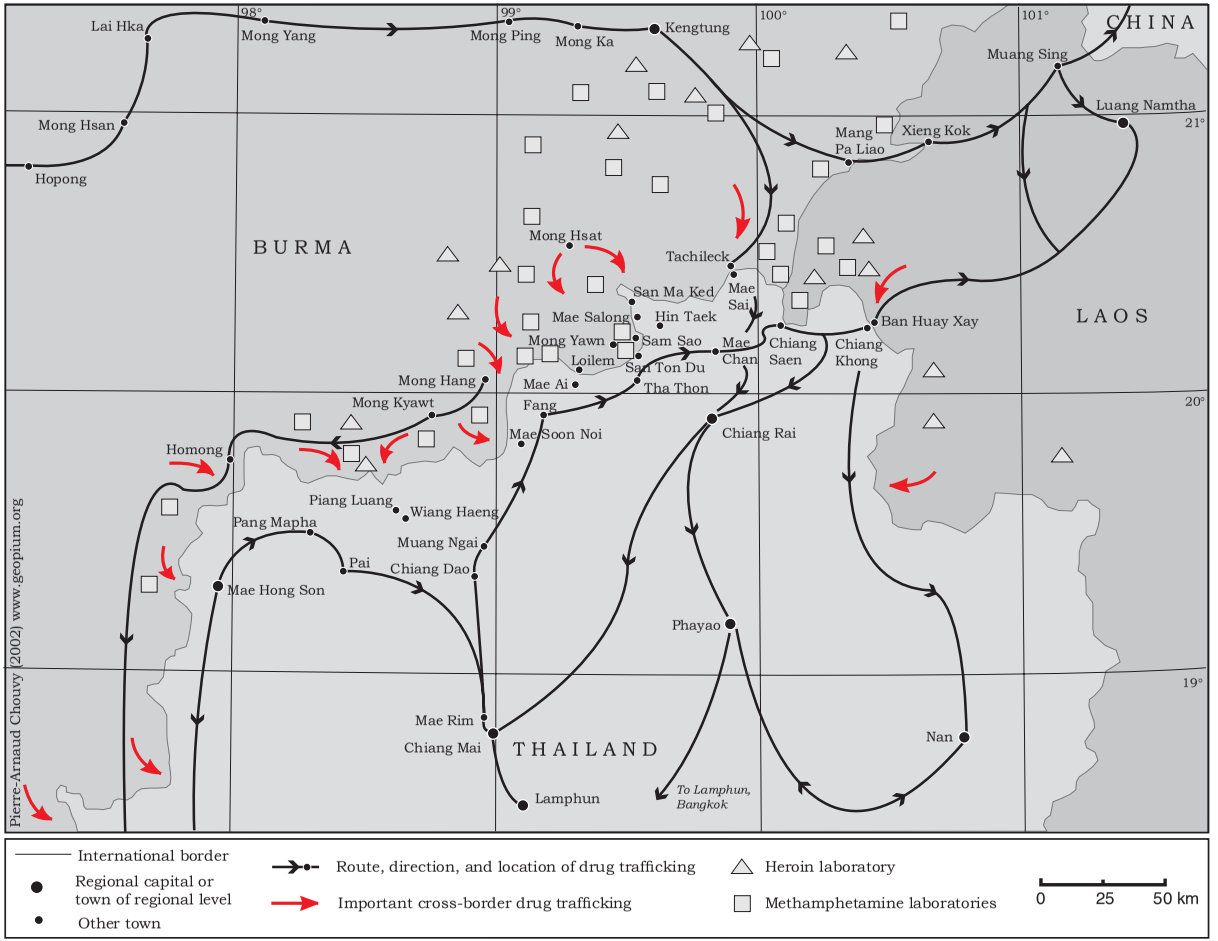
Chinese Production

In the early 1990s China became the main destination for exports of Burmese heroin. Since then, China has also become a significant ATS producer.[65] Indeed, contrary to the official line, if drug consumption and addiction have seen a massive increase in the country, this cannot be attributed solely to foreign production. The expansion of indigenous Chinese production of amphetamine and ecstasy during the year 2000 would thus account for a large part of the 26 per cent increase in the number of illicit drug consumers recorded in the country: according to official statistics, there were 180,000 ATS users out of an estimated 860,000 illicit drug consumers.[66]

The origins of methamphetamine production in China can be traced back to Japan. By the 1980s, Japanese methamphetamine producers were known to be operating in South Korea. They were forced to close down, however, because of the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul and the accompanying crackdown on crime in the country. Producers then opted to transfer their operations to Taiwan before that country, in turn, decided in October 1990 to put methamphetamine production and consumption on the top of the list of social problems to be eradicated.

The Japanese producers therefore moved their activities once again, this time to the Chinese province of Fujian. The province rapidly became a major drug production and consumption centre.[67] Indeed, in 1994, 7,357 kg of methamphetamine freshly unloaded from Fujian were intercepted in Taiwan; additionally, 2,600 kg of the drug were seized in Fujian Province in 1995.

Chinese authorities and the regional press have reported numerous cases of young people from the Special Administrative Region (SAR) of Hong Kong making forays into the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone



Principal Northern Drug Trafficking Routes of Mainland Southeast Asia

(SSEZ) to buy ecstasy and methamphetamine. The local market in Shenzhen is particularly profitable since ecstasy pills can be almost three times cheaper there compared to those of the Hong Kong market. The Shenzhen product is also reported to be more potent. These conditions created a golden opportunity for the young aficionados of rave parties organised in Shenzhen, particularly in the Better Ole and The Gate for Exotic Hunting nightclubs that were fashionable in 2000. Many Hong Kong ravers also bring ecstasy pills back home with them so as to finance their weekend activities by selling the drug.

Between 1998 and 1999 illicit drug seizures in Hong Kong from mainland China increased fourfold, and have continued to increase since then. According to official estimates of the Hong Kong police, the number of adolescents who used illicit drugs there increased by 40 per cent during the first three months of 2000.

Some 80 per cent of ATS consumers in the SAR still had recourse to heroin in 2000.[68] But if we track the composition of intercepted drugs, there is an uneven upward trend. In 1999, the quantity of heroin intercepted had increased slightly compared to the previous year,[69] while a full 16 tons of methamphetamine — ten times more than in 1998 — had been seized.[70] At the start of 2000, a series of raids in Hong Kong managed to break three previously existing records for drug interception there: 70 kg of heroin were intercepted in March, 18 kg of liquid methamphetamine in April, and 320,000 ecstasy pills in June. In April 2000, Hong Kong authorities intercepted 20 kg of Chinese methamphetamine meant for the Australian market, proving that methamphetamine production in China was not only meant for local consumers. It could also be exported to as far off as Australia and New Zealand, and even to Europe, as evidenced by a 2000 seizure in Switzerland.[71]

Circuits of Methamphetamine Trafficking in the Golden Triangle

The North Thailand Routes

The evolution of drug trafficking in the Golden Triangle has forged new transport routes in the region and has brought abandoned ones back into service, such as those previously used by communist guerrillas. Other pathways were never abandoned. Traditional caravaners such as the Haw of Thailand and the Hui/Panthay of Burma are very active in the regional illicit drug trade, and still use routes today that their forebears used at the end of the 19th century.

Having diverse origins and widespread networks, Haw and Hui/Panthay traffickers do not restrict themselves only to "traditional" opium transport. The diversification of illicit ATS production in the Golden Triangle has filtered down to their villages, as illustrated by the March 1999 seizure of more than one million methamphetamine pills in the Thai district of Hod in Chiang Mai province. This cargo, coming from Homong in Burma's Shan State, is thought to have been brought to Thailand via one or two Haw villages of Muang Ngai District in Mae Hong Son Province. The two Haw villages shelter former troops of the Kuomintang (KMT), which included many Haw, and were reportedly used as relays by a network of Haw drug traffickers. Quite significantly, 26 Haw villages were the main target of a large-scale border operation launched by Thai anti-drug forces in July 1999.[72]

Thus, more than 50 years after the KMT's defeat at the hands of the Chinese Communist party, the organisation's heritage still lives on through its trafficking networks. Likewise, routes between Burma and Thailand previously forged by the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) have been brought back into use by methamphetamine traffickers. For instance, in July 1999 operations were carried out to close the border zone stretching from Mae Ai district in Chiang Mai to Mae Chan district in Chiang Rai. In response, some traffickers resorted to the old mountain route of Wawi that was first opened by the CPT in the 1960s and used throughout the 1970s.[73]

The former Communist routes and those of present-day drug traffickers jointly function as passageways and as conventional communication axes that allow traffickers to avoid Thai patrols. One such example is the Three Pagoda Pass road, northwest of Bangkok. It was clearly brought back into service in 1999, particularly after the northern border post of Ban San Ton Du was closed. Methamphetamine from Burma was stocked there in the Mon village of Harok Kani before being transported up to Sangkhlaburi via the Three Pagoda Pass route. However, the closing down of Ban San Ton Du and its border zone did not prevent Ban Hin Taek (now Ban Therd Thai), previously a base of drug lord Khun Sa, from becoming a major Thai centre of methamphetamine trafficking.[74]

The Laotian Routes

As we have seen, Thailand is still the hub of drug traffic originating from the Golden Triangle, but other countries of the region — including China, Laos, Vietnam and India — have also become trafficking sites for opiates

and ATS. The intensifying fight against trafficking by Thai authorities, illustrated by border controls imposed by the Thai army, the NSC, and recently the ISOC, have forced traffickers to look for new routes.

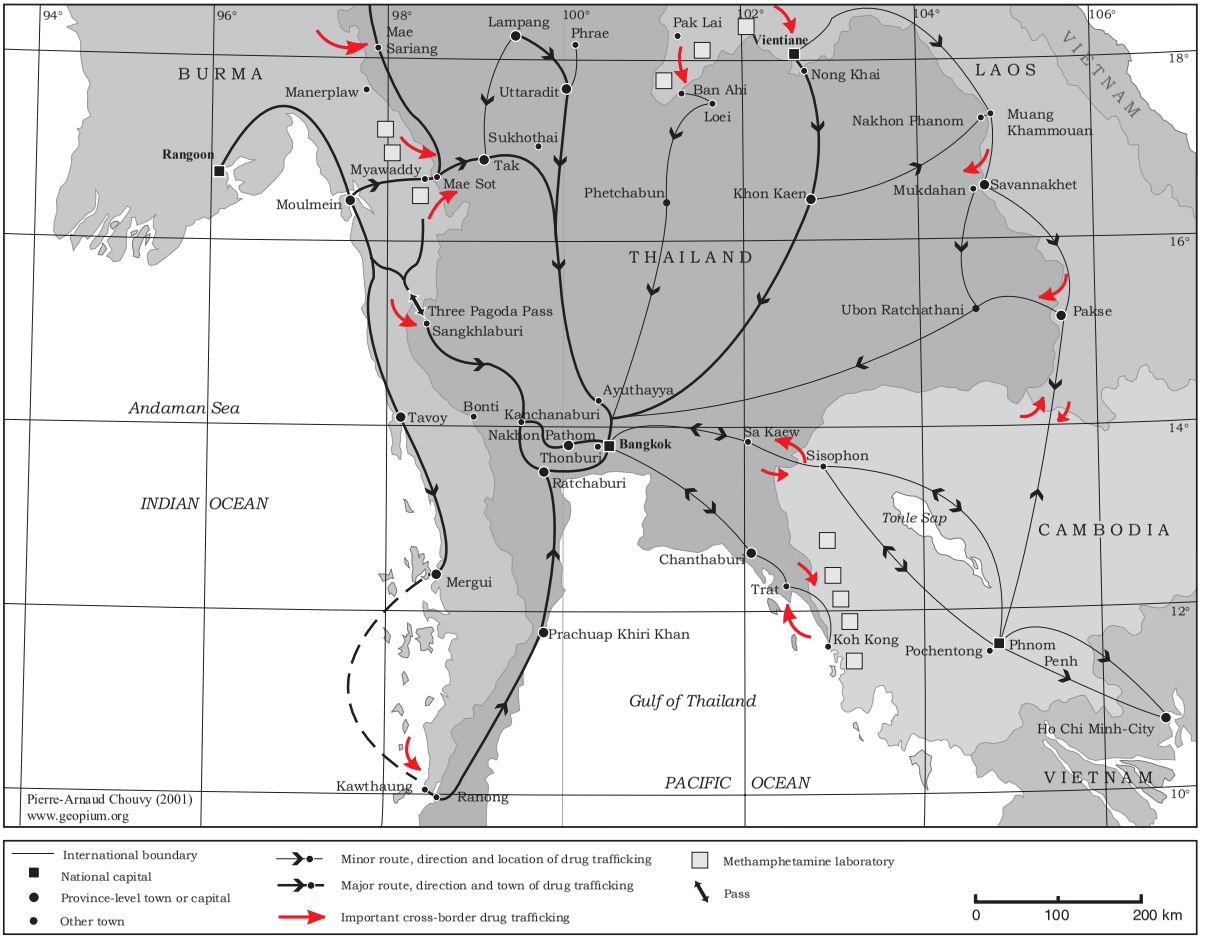
While in Laos local opium production is mostly for national consumption, the increasing international trafficking of opiates and ATS through the country is probably a direct consequence of tougher repressive policies in Thailand. Laos shares a 235 km border with Burma, while its borders with Thailand, China, and Vietnam measure 1,754 km, 423 km, and 2,130 km, respectively. The placement of Laos within the region thus facilitates the transit of illicit drugs from Burma to the other three countries.

But local consumption in Laos also serves as an important outlet for yaa baa produced in the region. Since the late 1990s, Laos has received increasing quantities of Burmese methamphetamine from Thailand, again pointing to the diversification and complexity of drug trafficking circuits.[75]

On 15 May 2000, Laotian police seized 398,000 methamphetamine pills in a truck in Muang Sing district of Luang Namtha Province. The three Laotians arrested declared they had obtained the stock from Laotian villagers, who in turn had bought it from Thai traffickers in southern Bokeo Province. Those arrested had intended to transport their load to the Laotian capital of Vientiane via the long, rough road that connects the Chiang Khong–Ban Houay Xay river border post to Muang Sing district.[76]

The Laotian towns of Muang Sing, on the road that links Burma to the Chinese frontier post of Zaho, and of Boten, on the same frontier to the northeast of Muang Sing, are two key transit points for smuggling and various trafficking activities between the two countries. To outsmart the Thai forces that maintain surveillance of the Thai-Burmese border, traffickers with illegal drug consignments increasingly detour through Laos and enter the Thai kingdom via the border towns of Chiang Khong, Nan, Loei, Pak Chom, Nong Khai, Nakhon Phanom (from Muang Khammouan), Mukdahan (from Savannakhet) and Ubon Ratchathani (from Paksé).

The Thai press described as follows one of the new drug traffic circuits that supplies yaa baa to the country through its northern frontiers. In June 2000, Thai traffickers were reported to be using the village of Ahi in Laos, 50 km to the northwest of Loei in Tha Li district, as a centre for transit and for stocking methamphetamine and arms destined for Thailand. Ban Khon Ta Pu, also in Laos and previously known for its cannabis plantations, was then an important village in the passage of



Principal Southern Drug Trafficking Routes of Mainland Southeast Asia

methamphetamine to Ban Ahi. Drugs and arms traffickers crossed the border by passing over the Huang River before delivering their stocks to warehouses in Ban Ahi. The latter's prosperity, as measured by such things as well-built houses and pick-up trucks, reflects the profitability of these ventures. A full 80 per cent of the population of Ban Ahi was then thought by Thai authorities to be involved in the trade or use of drugs. As of July 2000, the resulting violence of the illegal drug trade had already left 67 children in the village orphaned.[77]

The Cambodian Circuits

From Cambodia, it is also possible to transport methamphetamine to Thailand through routes such as that via Trat and Chanthaburi. Evidence for a new drug transit and production zone in the country came to light on 4 April 2000, when 200,000 pills were seized and Taiwanese chemists were discovered to be working there.[78]

In the post-war era, the endemic corruption of Thai military leaders inflated the cost of drug trafficking through the kingdom and pushed some drug traffickers to take alternative routes through Laos, where they could pay lower bribes. More recently, however, it is not corruption but the intensification of anti-drug operations in Thailand that has prompted drug barons to multiply and diversify their circuits through both Thailand and Laos to reduce the risk of seizure. Increasingly, drug barons now have traffickers pass through neighbouring countries such as Cambodia to outsmart surveillance at the doors of the Thai kingdom.[79] The 1999 increase in Thai border posts — from 100 to 269 — along the frontiers of both Laos and Cambodia reveals the extent to which traffickers and policemen have been trying to outsmart one another.[80]

Routes of Southern Thailand

Previously, Thailand was the most important thoroughfare for the export of opium and heroin within and from the Golden Triangle. Today it is no longer the only country in the region where drug trafficking occurs, yet it continues to be the central transit route. The country shares an 1,800 km border with Burma, out of which fewer than 60 km have been demarcated. This largely uncharted territory facilitates an uninterrupted flow of illicit drugs over the border, especially methamphetamine of Burmese origin.[81] Indeed, 80 per cent of the illegal drugs imported into Thailand are brought in via the northern routes.

New drug trafficking routes seem to appear continuously, however, as indicated by some important seizures in the south of the kingdom. Four million pills in transit from Kawthaung (Victoria Point) to Ranong were intercepted at Prachuap Khiri Khan in March 2000. After the Mae Sai and Moulmein routes, the Kawthaung route is one of the most important for the Burmese black market. This circuit particularly benefits from the sea connection of Kawthaung with the Burmese towns of Bokpyin, Mergui, Palaw, and Tavoy. Many types of smuggled goods have long transited through these areas, including natural rubber, wood, fishing products, and pulses in one direction, and sugar, clothes, cosmetics, tyres, lubricants, and cement in the other.[82]

Since at least 1998, the Andaman Sea has appeared to play an important role in the drug trade originating from Burma. It is on board a Thai fishing boat crossing this zone in January 2001 that one of the most important seizures ever carried out by the Thai authorities took place, netting 7.8 million pills of yaa baa and 116 kg of heroin.[83] Increasing quantities of heroin and methamphetamine are frequently transported via the Irrawaddy River from northeast Burma to Rangoon, at which point small boats forward the cargo up to the coastal town of Mergui and its drug laboratories. From there the processed goods return to the international waters of the Andaman Sea before entering offshore Thai territory. The "fishermen" stopped for questioning in January 2001 had already navigated 80 km west of Ko Surin, an island situated 100 km southwest of Ranong. One of the two fishing boats was transporting methamphetamine and the other heroin. Their crews had planned to offload their cargo on the Thai coast between Ranong and Satun, some ten km from the Malay frontier. From there the goods were to be transported via a land route to Bangkok, Malaysia or Singapore. The seizure carried out on board these two boats was due to the combined efforts of Thailand's Office of Narcotics Control Board, the American Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the Malaysian police.

Diversity and Complexity of Drug Trafficking Circuits

Currently, illicit drug circuits and cargo loads are multiplying so rapidly that traffickers now even make regular use of regional airports in Thailand. They also enlist a multitude of frontier-runners known as "mules" by customs and police authorities the world over. Collectively, the runners in Thailand, made up largely of cross-border minorities, are frequently referred to as an "army of ants". The growth in both transit routes and frontier-runners, each runner carrying anywhere between 30,000 to 50,000

methamphetamine pills, has made it more difficult for authorities to intercept trafficked drugs. Consequently, there has been a drop in the quantities of drugs seized.[84]

Movements of refugees and illegal immigrants employed in Thailand further add to the confusion and increase the illicit flow of merchandise, including drugs, wood, precious stones, consumer goods, and livestock. So swamped is the Thai police force that Thai authorities considered partially demilitarising the Laos frontier in order to relocate some troops stationed there along the Burmese border. This incited the displeasure of Laotian authorities in Vientiane, who feared a fresh outbreak of terrorist operations launched by the Laotian opposition from Thai territory. A similar move was observed along the Cambodian border, although the Thai provinces of Chanthaburi and Trat have been able to retain their personnel because they depend on the navy and not the army.[85]

To counter the ever-expanding drug traffic, police and army units in charge of the Thai borders have switched from fighting communists to fighting drugs. The Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC) has allied with the 3rd Army and the National Security Council (NSC) in this effort. The ISOC was created under the auspices of the very strict 1952 Anti-Communist Act, before this ruling was done away with on 3 June 2001. Subsequently a People's and State Security Protection Bill was voted in that defined a new role for the army in managing domestic threats.[86]

Still, in 2000, the 3rd Army launched its Territorial Defence Training Scheme to prepare 592 villages on the Burmese–Thai border for self-defence. The targeted villages were thought to run a high risk of foreign incursion from armed groups as well as drug traffickers.[87]

With the redefined role of the ISOC in anti-drug efforts, and drug traffickers now using what were once routes of communist insurgents, the entire Thai anti-communist military presence dating from the Cold War has finally been called into question. The defence system — inspired by and dating from the Cold War — is increasingly irrelevant in the context of the fight against the current regional threats of drug trafficking and related violence.

In Thailand, as elsewhere, the increase in the number of illicit drug transit routes has not only happened because traffickers are evading intensified controls. It has also occurred because there are generally more people, and more goods, on the move. For instance, the illegal trade in both licit and illicit goods, which includes cross-border trafficking in methamphetamine, is directly linked to the smuggling of Chinese ephedrine. Ephedrine traffic follows the same routes as those of heroin and opium.

If various products meant for the Burmese black market illegally cross the Chinese, Laotian and Thai borders, other types of trade also take place along these same routes. Notable here is the trafficking in human beings, particularly women, whose numbers swell the enormous regional prostitution market. Such traffic creates grave social, economic and health problems for all affected countries in the region. Today, 25 to 35 per cent of the total population of female prostitutes in northern Thailand are said to be of Burmese origin.[88] The spread of HIV/AIDS and various types of hepatitis in this population has assumed particularly alarming proportions.

To some extent, the refugee situation in Thailand also contributes to the transit of illicit drugs and other vice trades. In November 1991, about 55,000 Burmese people were living as refugees in 27 Thai camps along the Burmese frontier. It was estimated that 300,000 to 500,000 Burmese were residing illegally throughout Thailand at this time. Seven years later, in 1998, 80,000 to 100,000 refugees were counted in the Thai camps, with about 60,000 Karen in the Tak region, 20,000 Shan around Mae Hong Son, and more than 10,000 Mon in the province of Ratchaburi.

The armed violence and numerous human rights violations of the Rangoon junta and its army in Shan State have increased an already constant inflow of Burmese refugees into Thailand. During the last few years, more than 300,000 Shan emigrated to flee the population displacement imposed by the junta and, more recently, the UWSA. By 1998, it was estimated that approximately one million Burmese were residing and working illegally in Thailand. Possibly up to a third have been deported since then,[89] while, in 2001 alone, approximately 120,000 new refugees were expected to enter Thailand from Burma.[90]

Such a large population of refugees and illegal immigrants in the camps favours these groups' economic exploitation by unscrupulous employers, and enables their participation in an informal economy that is for the most part illegal. Not surprisingly, prostitution, smuggling, and drug trafficking flourish in the buffer zones. If the border not only affords some protection for the refugees who cross it, it can also help enrich those who do not travel "empty-handed". The flow of illegal immigrants who enter carrying some sort of merchandise or other has become so large that it raises serious questions about the efficiency of border controls.

But greater vigilance at the border is not necessarily desirable for everyone. Indeed, transgression may actually be "productive". Because clandestine border crossings are illegal, the increased risk of such actions

raises the value of both the people and goods that accomplish it.[91] This is especially so when the border crossed separates Burma and Thailand, two territories that are as different as possible from one another.

A veritable war economy prevails in some peripheral regions of Burma, where Rangoon's writ and control cannot reach. This obliges the state to transfer authority to local potentates, even if that means condoning their illegal practices or even granting them official legitimacy to reach a cease-fire. In any case, the situation in the country hardly makes it possible for anyone to undertake long-term investment or adopt a strategy of integrated development which could encourage such measures.[92] As for the vast Thai consumer market, it represents a pole of attraction for all types of goods produced in or transiting through Burma, among which illicit drugs rank of primary importance. The production and trafficking of drugs occurring on either side of the Burmese–Thai border therefore stems from a definite politico-territorial and economic logic.

The Socio-economic Context of the Frontier

Prostitution in Siam was placed under Royal monopoly as early as 1680; today, Thailand's prostitution sector still contributes a significant amount to the national economy. These conditions help explain why the negative effects of prostitution in spreading illicit drugs and sexually transmitted diseases rarely come under attack.

In Thailand, drug trafficking as well as prostitution can be interpreted as a means by which central Thailand exploits the economic potential of its peripheral mountainous regions. Opiates produced in the mountains are largely marketed to those residing in the plains and cities. These same northern and western regions supply most of the prostitutes to urban-based brothels; for example, many Thai prostitutes come from the northeastern Thai province of Isan.

Efforts to suppress illegal production and trafficking from the mountainous northern regions of Thailand have in many ways had the opposite effect of what they were intended to do. Policies of opium eradication drove a part of the population to switch from opium to heroin, thus fostering a new addiction. They also disrupted the traditional economy of the hill tribes, whom the Thais generally refer to as Chao khao.[93] The latter suffered the full impact of monetisation policies that were imposed on their economy, which were never accompanied by sustainable development measures. Some inhabitants therefore willingly took up the very lucrative business of drug trafficking instead.

Thailand's impressive economic growth during the 1970s and 1980s and the accompanying consumer craze spurred the development of illegal drug and sex markets. Subsequently the sudden, dramatic regional crisis of the late 1990s drove an additional part of the population to join the illicit economy as well. The "mountain folk" — whose citizenship and property rights are still not recognised today[94] — were least spared by these upheavals because of their economic vulnerability.[95] It was comparably easier for them to get involved in the drug economy because they already lived along the Thai–Burmese border. Thus the region's exclusion from development became an asset under these new conditions, when its inhabitants found themselves at the core of the flourishing illicit border traffic.

Consequences of the Regional Economic Crisis

Since 1988 a marked increase has been observed in occasional prostitution in Thailand, an activity spurred by consumption-driven economic choices made by a growing proportion of the female population. Similarly, a large number of women from ethnic minorities in these countries are resorting to prostitution as well, a development related to the fall in the value of the Thai baht, the hyper-inflation of the Burmese kyat, and the collapse of the Laotian kip. According to the results of a study quoted by David Feingold, today some 97 per cent of the prostitutes of Mae Sai are believed to have originated from the ethnic minorities of Burma and Thailand.[96]

The 1997 economic crisis notwithstanding, Thailand is still undisputedly richer and more stable than its neighbours. The lights of Bangkok and regional capitals continue to attract a growing number of migrants from neighbouring countries who are attempting to escape poverty or repression at home. Rising numbers of illegal immigrants help foster a parallel economy based heavily on prostitution and drug trafficking. Often in conjunction with gambling, these vice trades destabilise society as they fuel corruption. However, the amount of wealth amassed through such corrupt transactions has become too important for public authorities in the country to openly risk staunching its flow.

Besides enabling the development and reproduction of the system, corruption also ensures that cuts are taken at all stages of illegal trade circuits, a process that translates into an informal value-added tax that fuels the national economy. Those involved in corruption favour drug trafficking and illegitimate drug use because corrupt individuals and

groups benefit directly from such illicit activities. According to some experts, police corruption alone exerts such a constraint on the illegal economy that it at once stymies both the suppression of the illegal economy, and its evolution.[97]

In 1993, a team of economists from Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok led by Professor Pasuk Pongpaichit estimated that the illegal Thai economy could represent up to 20 per cent of the country's Gross National Product.[98] Trafficking of drugs, arms, and people, diesel smuggling, prostitution, and illegal gambling constituted 8 to 13 per cent of this figure, or 286 to 457 billion baht per year (7.15 to 11.4 billion euros). Gambling topped the list, ahead of prostitution, drug trafficking, and arms.

Estimates of Revenue from Thailand's Underground Economy, 1993–5

gambling	138–277 billion baht
prostitution	100 billion baht
drug trafficking	28–33 billion baht (prior to the boom in yaa baa consumption)
arms	6–31 billion baht
total	286–457 billion baht

The state's tolerance of such powerful illicit sectors undoubtedly favours the development of drug trafficking. As drug money is laundered, substantial sums can be reinvested in Thailand, thus contributing directly and indirectly to the national economy.

In any economy where illicit capital makes up a significant share of national product, legal investment practices gain from the presence of such markets. As Feingold points out, this is particularly true in countries where financial resources and credit mechanisms are not sufficiently developed to keep pace with increased investment.[99] Hence the Thai economy has long been fuelled by what is generally called "dirty money", whether in the context of accelerated economic growth (when capital growth fails to keep pace with expanding investment opportunities) or in the context of financial crisis (when the drastic reduction of credit cuts off major sources of financing). But the existence of such a parallel economy does not in itself explain the spectacular development of yaa baa. ATS markets have expanded rapidly thanks to the Golden Triangle's numerous producers and distribution networks, but also because of the plethora of potential consumers that are spread across Southeast Asia.

For their part, Burma's armed groups — encompassing non-state insurgents as well as regular military outfits — at first entered the drug trade to finance arms purchases in the fight for their cause, whether capitalist or communist. But for many of these armed groups, drugs are no longer only the sinews of war; they have also become its stakes.[100]

The synthetic drug industry has also benefited from a marketing system whose working mechanisms were already in place. In fact, major players in heroin trafficking could easily reposition themselves in this new ATS market, making use of people and methods that were already tried and tested. Notably, the jump in demand for yaa baa corresponded to the sudden increase in the price of heroin following the surrender of Khun Sa in 1996. Methamphetamine's technically easier and cheaper production techniques, compared to those of heroin, assured correspondingly larger profit margins.

In the context of the Asian crisis, the financial gains to be made at all stages of drug trafficking have been particularly high. The rise of the yaa baa market has been a very timely one. Methamphetamine consumption is not confined to a few socio-economical niches, as we shall see shortly. It transcends the divisions of Thai society, so much so that one can reasonably conclude the yaa baa economy has, at least for the time being, outstripped that of heroin in Thailand.

PART TWO

The Circuits of Yaa Baa: Methamphetamine Circulation and Use in Thailand

In 1998, Pino Arlacchi, Executive Director of the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), declared before the General Assembly of the United Nations that amphetamine-type stimulants could become one of the major problems of the coming century.[1] During the 1990s, the pace of growth of production and trafficking was higher for ATS than for heroin and cocaine. And, toward the end of the decade, even if one could observe signs of stabilisation in the demand for these small pills in the main Western European markets, the popularity of methamphetamine continued to increase in Asia. Out of the 14 nations of continental Europe that replied to the annual questionnaire of the UNDCP[2] in 2001, 11 reported an increase in the consumption of methamphetamine among their respective populations.[3] The influx of this psychotropic substance in Asia pervades not only India but also Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, China and Korea, which together form a homogeneous geographical continuum. The methamphetamine phenomenon also affects many neighbouring countries separated from the mainland of Asia by the sea, including Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan, Hong Kong and Brunei.

To understand the logic behind the outbreak of methamphetamine use in Southeast Asia, it is advisable to dwell on the case of Thailand, whose inhabitants evidence a longstanding familiarity with the drug, as well as much current popular demand. Thailand is surrounded by three less developed countries, namely, Burma to the west, Laos to the north, and Cambodia to the east; along with Thailand, the combined populations of these countries represent a considerable potential market for methamphetamine in mainland Southeast Asia. In November 2001, an enquiry by the Thai Health Ministry confirmed the magnitude of the problem. It recorded 2.65 million drug consumers in the kingdom, that is to say, 4 per cent of the Thai population, of whom 91 per cent were thought to have used methamphetamine at least once.[4]

CHAPTER 5

From the Producer to the Consumer

A Chain of Middlemen

It is not easy to describe the chain of middlemen that makes up methamphetamine networks in Thailand. Middleman practices differ according to the economic situation, the players, and market needs. For yaa baa to reach the Thai consumer from Burma, where it is most often produced, many different types of circuits are possible. Drugs might change hands numerous times; alternatively, they might be acquired at their source directly by the final user.

Hence, the outline given here is not a reflection of the reality, but of a reality. Inspired by the works of Nualnoi Treerat, Noppanun Wannathepsakul and Daniel Ray Lewis,[1] the following scenario presents a composite picture of the different categories of players.

Exiting the Border Areas

The first objective of traffickers is to cross the border. This short but dangerous mission is often entrusted to frontier runners. These people who are from the hill tribe minorities are known for their thorough mastery of their environment, with its torturous landscapes, and their determination to cross the border. As members of ethnic communities artificially broken up by lines of demarcation, the frontier runners share an inherent sense of both their region and themselves as trans-national. Hill minorities of the various countries of the region suffer from discriminatory policies that sometimes shade into persecution. For such individuals Thailand is a sanctuary exploited for economic rather than political ends.

Drugs are transported on foot, on the back of animals, and sometimes in vehicles that can cover rough terrain. Traffickers bring the merchandise

to small towns of the border area such as Mae Sot. They often make use of simple hiding places dug in the soil, or store the drugs in warehouses until an agent of the traffickers or a local wholesaler is ready to sell the stock. It is then transported to the customer through a drop-off point decided at the last minute. An impromptu drop-off point minimises the risks linked to the transfer. In concrete terms, it means that merchandise and money change hands in agreed-upon locations whose details are known only by the parties involved; this way, in case of a tip-off, only one link in the chain of intermediaries is arrested. This strategy is especially crucial when large quantities of drugs are involved.

However, not all drug stocks are necessarily transferred in the border towns. Several of the frontier runners who have been arrested during delivery operations well to the south were of Burmese nationality, suggesting they were on journeys to destinations in Bangkok or other important cities in the kingdom.

When the Burmese drug traffickers themselves do not transport the methamphetamine to the heart of the Thai territory, their hired men or transport agents paid by a big city wholesaler take charge of the merchandise. The Thai police estimate that every day, 5,000 trucks carrying greater or lesser quantities of drugs leave the north of the country for southern regions.

Individual traffickers lack the necessary inside connections with the police at every zone that must be crossed, making transit through Thai territory extremely risky. To outwit officials, those responsible for moving the drugs have become more and more inventive. Some have even staged a moving house charade, where an entire family is enlisted to hide drugs inside the household furniture.

The Influence of Wholesalers

Whereas middlemen drug marketing chains can be relatively simple in smaller locations, Bangkok's population size and urban density necessitate a complex distributing network for its drug traffic. Numerous wholesalers of significant means are therefore required to sell the pills. For the largest of these, turnover varies anywhere from 100,000 tablets per day to a more typical 100,000 tablets per week. Large wholesalers generally sell to medium wholesalers in batches of 5,000 to 10,000 tablets and use sophisticated networks of informers and agents for this purpose.

Large wholesalers generally command respect and influence, and may make use of links with police and politicians to do business. It is

difficult to bring charges against them as they cleverly mix legal and illegal activities. It seems that each wholesaler reigns over a particular territory in which he is the sole distributor of the drug. Illicit drug wholesalers thus rarely compete against one another.

Whether the territory they control is a locality of Bangkok or a provincial city, all large drug wholesalers are referred to as jao pho in Thai, which generally translates as "godfather". Originally the term was used to describe traders of Chinese origin whose local respectability had increased as their businesses became more successful.[2]

The jao pho, in the current accepted sense of the term, carefully cultivates his image as a man of high class and influence (phu yai). When necessary he uses his money, friends, and networks to neutralise and possibly usurp the power of the local bureaucracy, when he himself does not take on the responsibility of an elected post.[3] He can speed construction of a road or a bridge with the money he invests. His donations serve to maintain or expand temples complexes. He finances the big, costly ceremonies dictated by society such as marriages and funerals. He shows compassion towards those that he protects and who reside in the zone under his sway.

He is not, however, a moneylender from whom one borrows at prohibitive rates. The jao pho likes to give the impression of being generous, but strictly adheres to the rule of give and take — even if the return gift is only of symbolic value.[4] In exchange for his generosity, the jao pho demands the unflinching support of the population. He may thus pay a high price to ensure their silence about any of his illegal activities.

> A police officer laments that everybody around him, including his own superior, belongs to the clan of jao pho. "Each time there is a problem", he explains, "we go to see the jao pho. School has reopened but you don't have the money to pay? Go to him. Your wife is pregnant and will deliver soon, but you don't have the money to pay the hospital? Ask the jao pho. He gives you all the money you need. His influence is huge. Everybody is indebted to him up to their neck".
>
> Pasuk Phongpaichit and Sungsidh Piriyarangsang (1994), p. 85

The influence of the jao pho in politics is not limited to the local level. In regional or national politics, a jao pho will not hesitate to support several parties simultaneously if their policies defend his interests. These "godfathers" thus do not grant much importance to ideology, a common posture in the general population. Before the electoral campaign of 1986, one could observe the curious phenomenon of posters displaying together

a father and his son, each of whom was supporting a different political party. In this case (and others), family ties take precedence over political considerations. By buying votes, a common practice in Thailand, the jao pho can make or break career prospects of MP's or ministers.[5]

In the past, where the drug trade is concerned, there had been much bloodshed in the world of jao pho due to settling of accounts. In zones that were the most affected by trafficking, conflicts between local notables who were attempting to seize commercial opportunities and ensure their political pre-eminence often spilled over into gangsterism. For a while, places such as Petchaburi and Chonburi even became notorious for the drug-related social insecurity that prevailed there.[6] Deplorably, the jao pho implicated in such incidents have generally faced little retribution, no more so than that meted out to lesser wholesalers and independent dealers for their involvement.

One can speculate that the considerable growth of the market is responsible for the lessening volume of violent conflict one observes in the trade at the uppermost level of the middleman chains. Put very simply, the jao pho and their minions are evidently finding it more profitable to look for new clients than to covet those whose needs are already satisfied by others.[7] When this hypothesis is linked to the recent economic situation, it seems all the more plausible. The typical chain of middlemen in chronological order is shown in the following chart.

The Chain of Intermediaries in Methamphetamine Trafficking

STAGE	DRUG LOCATION	PHYSICAL CONTROL	OWNER
Chinese Laboratory		Producers of semi-legal precursors	
TRANSPORT	Diverse, depending on the precursors	Couriers	Burmese drug traffickers
Burmese Laboratory	At the laboratory	Employees of the laboratory	Burmese drug traffickers
TRANSPORT	On foot or car	Couriers (frontier runners), paramilitary groups	Burmese drug traffickers

STAGE	DRUG LOCATION	PHYSICAL CONTROL	OWNER
Border City	In warehouses	Sales representatives, shopkeepers	Burmese drug traffickers or border wholesalers
TRANSPORT	Car or pick-up	Independent transport agent	Burmese drug traffickers or independent operators
		Hired transport agent	Burmese drug traffickers or large wholesalers
At the Large Wholesaler's	Rented house	Underlings	Large wholesalers
TRANSPORT	On foot or car	Underlings	Medium wholesalers
At the Medium Wholesaler's	Rented apartment Drop location	Medium wholesaler	
TRANSPORT	Porterage or car	Retailer	
At the Retailer's	Hidden at home	Retailer	
TRANSPORT	From hand to hand	Dealer	
At the Dealer's	Hidden or on him	Dealer	
TRANSPORT	From hand to hand	Consumer	
Consumer	At his place or on him	Consumer	

Source: Nualnoi Treerat, Noppanun Wannathepsakul, and Daniel Ray Lewis (2000).

The Clandestine Work of Medium Wholesalers

In the supply chain of yaa baa, medium wholesalers are usually loyal to the larger wholesalers on whom they depend.[8] But medium wholesalers can occasionally turn to independent operators who transport

methamphetamine directly from the border.[9] The risk of using independent intermediaries is correspondingly greater as such actions short-circuit networks already in place and lack given levels of protection from local authorities. However, the existence of maverick supply lines fuels competition by diversifying supply, a prospect ultimately favouring the medium wholesaler.[10]

Medium wholesalers typically stock their drugs in locations beyond their immediate quarters, more often than not in rented apartments. They generally sell methamphetamine in batches of 200 tablets to numerous small retailers. If their market share increases, they respond by "authorising" an additional retailer on the same territory.

Like heroin, methamphetamine and its derivatives fall under Category 1 of the International Classification of Narcotics. Thai law stipulates that the production of amphetamine derivatives or their trafficking can, in some cases, justify capital punishment. Theoretically, the illegal trafficking of these tablets is punished according to the level at which the trafficker is placed — whether dealer, retailer, medium wholesaler, or wholesaler. Each one therefore tries to underplay his role in the trafficking. The consumer is protected from prosecution by the insignificant quantities of drugs in his possession, while the wholesaler is protected by his power.[11] It is therefore the medium wholesalers and the retailers who run the greatest risks. They lack sufficient influence to ensure their own protection, and the quantities of drugs they distribute are too significant for them to evade suspicion.

The transport stage is particularly crucial, and hence strategies of delivery are many. Medium wholesalers may meet directly with clients, but generally prefer to use a "drop-point" strategy or hire minors to deliver the drugs. Very young children are often used, as children under the age of seven cannot be taken to court according to Thai law. In this way those responsible avoid exposing themselves to the police, as transporting the drug is a clear proof of a suspect's involvement in a criminal network. The risk taken in drug transport and delivery is not only physical. It is also financial, if the invested capital is subsequently lost.

The Emergence of Retailers and Dealers from the Ranks of Consumers

Retailers can attain a distribution volume of up to 1,000 tablets per week, which they sell to small dealers.[12] Merchandise is sold in small batches according to demand, but never exceeding the entire packet (200 tablets). They also deal in retail by selling directly to the biggest consumers, those

that buy in lots of 10 or 20 tablets in order to get a better price. Unit sales are reserved for small dealers.

For dealers who typically sell about 50 tablets per day, competition is tough. As the drug circuit functions by direct sale, dealing necessarily implies a personal relationship with the consumer. Competition between dealers is therefore based on their own personalities and the level of personal trust established with customers. The degree of secrecy prompts the customer to patronise a supplier who will be his regular. The supplier has to use tested marketing techniques to become a regular by, for example, offering free samples to new potential users in order to stimulate demand.

By offering substantial discounts on the purchase of larger quantities, the dealers tempt consumers to buy more pills than they can actually use. So, consumers turn around and sell the excess to new customers, for whom they themselves become trusted suppliers. In fact, the yaa baa market spreads according to a principle of upwards social mobility. More often than not, one enters the yaa baa dealing trade by moving from the role of a consumer to that of a dealer, and then advancing to a retailer. The progression takes a certain amount of time — generally, one or two years to become a dealer and two or three more years to become a retailer.[13] But many dealers do not cross this last stage. Graduating to the complex role of medium wholesalers is much less common as it requires significant capital.

In light of the fact that most regular drug consumers have few alternative sources of employment, the temptation to become a small dealer is strong, as financial rewards are considerable. By dealing, the consumer will be able to pay for his own drug consumption. With a little luck, he will also earn a living. In Burma, each pill sells for 8 to 16 baht (20 to 40 euro cents) whereas the Thai wholesale price ranges from 20 to 25 baht (50 to 60 euro cents). The consumer pays 70 to 120 baht (1.75 to 3 euros).[14] To earn pocket money, youngsters sell the tablets in their schools, districts, or villages, as one can make a good profit by being the last to sell to the end user. This is because the final selling price is the result of a direct negotiation with the consumer.

Despite the margin obtained on each pill, the small dealer can never cherish the hope of dethroning the wholesaler who makes handsome gains from engaging in large-scale yaa baa transactions. The social mobility of dealers is real, but quickly reaches its limits. However, a person with no links to the police force who wishes to earn bigger sums of money has a simple but risky alternative: he can buy independently.

It is possible to source an independent supply by going to the northern part of the country to buy on one's own. A vehicle is necessary for such an undertaking to evade existing networks of middlemen — something not easy for an addict to obtain, as he is often unemployed with no permanent roof over his head. Employing couriers also poses a danger if the relationships are not dependable.

Once a drug supply arrives in Thailand, seven intermediaries separate the newly-arrived stock from the end consumer. These seven consist of the frontier runner; the shopkeeper of the border city; the main transport agent; the large wholesaler's lackey; the medium wholesaler; the retailer; and finally, the dealer. According to Nualnoi, Noppanun, and Lewis, as soon as one of the supply-chain middlemen acquires sufficient funds, he acts to ensure his own protection by dropping out of direct participation and designating a substitute to help him transport the drug instead. Avoiding the transport phase is of central importance so as to avoid the risk of being caught red-handed. This is why one must take care to distinguish the person in physical possession of the drug in the supply chain, from the actual owner of the illicit goods.

Traffickers look for support from state or local authorities for their businesses. There is likely regular contact between the traffickers and the police. The involvement of the latter can become useful at various levels. The police can supply information on future action of their units. They can also "look the other way" and ignore illegal activities of the trafficker. Policemen, judges, and politicians can also allow a trafficker to escape if such officials are threatened or bribed into doing so.[15]

Supplying Consumers throughout Thailand

Users, the final link in the methamphetamine chain, can obtain their supply of yaa baa quite easily. They generally avoid consuming drugs in public, and subpopulations of methamphetamine users tend to stay isolated from one another. But the large number of dealers makes it possible for users to procure the tablets for themselves quickly and easily.

Yaa baa is now a fixture on the party scene, where these pills have become as common and necessary as the bottle of local whisky.[16] It is also consumed in large quantities in discotheques, the only problem being that a consumer has to express his intention to buy as discreetly as possible. Thus, he often resorts to codes. By placing his hand over his mouth and pretending to gulp, he signals "I want yaa baa", explains Mr. Saichon, a social worker in a Bangkok hospital.[17] On the other hand, if the consumer "places his nail under his nostril" he is asking for

yaa kèè, that is to say, ketamine powder.[18] Long fingernails are common among both women and men in Thailand, making it easy for members of either sex to hide small quantities of the product underneath the nail.

Even if potential consumers cannot locate the urban or suburban house used as a den — a place for drug stocking and distribution by the traffickers — they can still obtain their drug supplies easily enough. Yaa baa is available in seemingly every nook and cranny of ordinary life in Thailand: in a restaurant, from grilled meat sellers in the street or with florists who sell garlands meant to protect drivers from road risks. The customer can also approach the local petrol station attendant, the travelling salesman who visits villages in his pick-up, the hawker who goes from sugar cane plantations to rubber plantations, the farmer, or the truck driver.[19] "In Bangkok, there are 10,000 small streets. You can buy yaa baa in each one of them", claimed a taxi driver recently.[20]

It is also easy to obtain methamphetamine in schools, zones that are relatively protected, but not always supervised. The school playground is a popular place for exchanging tablets. As yaa baa traffickers increasingly focus on younger populations, schools and universities have become the leading sites for large concentrations of dealers. In these highly competitive places, margins are suppressed and prices are correspondingly low.

The methamphetamine trade does not target urban regions exclusively, however. A study conducted by Aaron Peak gives excellent insight into rural-urban regional disparities in drug consumption based on local practices and the special characteristics of each region.[21]

The West

Two Thai provinces on the Burmese border, Mae Sot and Ranong, have a considerable number of ATS consumers. At Mae Sot, 70 companies employ 90,000 workers of primarily Burmese nationality, who live on the factory site and are not authorised to leave it except to return to the border. It is difficult to estimate the drug consumption of this population, as there are no health centres within these company ghettos. However, it seems that the major type of drug use in the factories has shifted from heroin to methamphetamine. At Mae Sot, prostitutes make up an alternative community of consumers. Some 70 per cent are reported to use yaa baa. Lastly, the region is known to be the scene of a rather rare practice of injecting drugs into the penis which, according to popular belief, increases the man's erectile capacity. In this case, however, methamphetamine is not one of the drugs commonly used.

Ranong Province, whose resources are mostly based on fishing, has approximately 27,000 fishermen. Between 1994 and 1996 the fishing industry flourished and 10,000 Burmese refugees easily found work on board fleets or in the canning industries. Then came the 1997 financial crisis, and many fishing concerns foundered. The workers they employed who were addicts were forced to switch from using heroin to the less-costly yaa baa.

Methamphetamine proved to be an excellent substitute, as it minimises feelings of deprivation. In Ranong, it is well known that ship owners force their crew to take a tablet every morning before the boats leave port. Though this practice may enhance the men's capacity to work, it is not very popular as many report that using yaa baa lowers their sexual performance.

The North

Whereas popular use of the drug category of opiates has almost disappeared in some central and southern regions of Thailand, opiates and ATS both remain in use in the north. For selected Chiang Mai neighbourhoods, available statistical data confirm that yaa baa use prevails among younger people, particularly those between ages 16 and 25, while opium consumers are generally older and range from 31 to 40 years of age. Among Chiang Mai users, opiates are generally injected. Yaa baa is as well, but not at rates that are noticeably higher than those found elsewhere in the country. Out of 1,366 drug consumers identified by a local health centre there, only 28 declared using this mode of administration for yaa baa. Yaa baa use can have direct financial benefit for those who take it if they are employed since it enables them to work harder and longer.

The province of Chiang Rai has the highest number of drug users in Thailand. As in Chiang Mai, the consumption of drugs in Chiang Rai is segmented according to age, with yaa baa popular among those below 35 years and opium or heroin for those above. However, in certain high-altitude villages such as those where Akha tribes live, it is common to find older as well as younger users injecting methamphetamine.

The district of Mae Sai is a refuge for ex-prostitutes who have returned from Bangkok. Many of them who have settled there made their "fortune" in the capital city, but had also acquired a drug habit there. In this province, heroin use is extremely rare. Yaa baa, on the other hand, is believed to be far less dangerous than heroin and is readily available in ethnic minority villages. The changeover from heroin to

methamphetamine among users in Mae Sai began some ten years ago, to the point where heroin use is now almost unknown.

The Northeast

Unlike the northern provinces, those in Thailand's northeast have only recently shifted from heroin to methamphetamine. The rate of heroin use there continued to climb towards the end of the 1990s, but it appears that in mid-1999 a radical changeover occurred in which many users switched from heroin to methamphetamine.[22] Currently, due to its price, heroin is reserved for more well-to-do sections of the population above 25 years of age. Younger people consume mainly yaa baa, which they report using during periods of intensive schoolwork as well as for more recreational purposes. They ingest it before outings with friends and inhale it for the pleasure it gives them. Tablets are generally sold by school drop-outs. The provinces of Khon Kaen, Maha Sarakham, and Kalasin have among the highest rates of yaa baa consumption in the country.

In this same region, fishermen living in the provinces of Amnat Charoan and Surin constitute a second group particularly affected by methamphetamine use. Finally, unemployed youth, another "at risk" population, engage in frequent use of many types of drugs: heroin and opium if possible, methamphetamine if those are not available, and glue if they run short of methamphetamine. In regions of northeast Thailand near the Mekong river, youngsters reportedly cross the river in small boats to obtain ATS from Laos to avoid doing so in their own country, where the police are more vigilant and more feared.

The South

The southern regions of Thailand have a fishing industry employing many thousands of refugees. Large areas there are also dedicated to rubber cultivation, necessitating abundant labour. The harvesting period for latex in the south signals a large seasonal influx of agricultural workers coming from northern parts of the country.

At the regional level, Narathiwat Province has the south's largest proportion of drug users, followed by the provinces of Pattani and Yala. However, for these areas the percentage of female users among populations consuming psychotropic substances is almost nil, or in any case, far lower than the national average. This factor is probably related to the social control exerted on women in these provinces where the majority of the population is Muslim.

Another regional characteristic of note is that heroin is still a drug very much in demand. In Pattani province, heroin remains the most consumed product among users, which is unique in Thailand. In the extreme south, up to 80 per cent of drug users are HIV-infected. Sungai Golok, a town situated on the Malaysian border, has the highest rates of HIV/AIDS cases in the country. This phenomenon scares off younger people in the region from injecting drugs, causing them instead to swell the already-substantial ranks of Thai methamphetamine consumers.

CHAPTER 6

Methamphetamine Use Among Workers and Low-income Groups

The average age of yaa baa consumers in Thailand is between 16 and 23 years. As it is so popular with youngsters, methamphetamine use is also dramatically expanding in schools. Methamphetamine consumption among students throughout the country more than doubled between 1994 and 1998, according to data from the Office of Narcotics Control Board (ONCB).[1] The figures follow an exponential trend, and are set to double once again within a year. For 1999, a figure of 463,184 drug addicts was advanced by the ONCB, which represented at the time an estimated 1.2 per cent of the total school population consuming drugs or associated with trafficking. The most intensive drug use occurs in public establishments, where, besides amphetamine-type stimulants, marijuana and other inhaled drugs were also popular.

While high drug consumption levels among Thailand's school population present a disturbing picture, it is also important to view this in an international context. Certainly, as the annual report of the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) indicates, Thai youngsters are significant drug users compared to their counterparts in neighbouring Southeast Asian countries.[2] On the other hand, Thailand is approaching the average consumption levels of European youngsters, and remains well below the rates found among North American youth and their fellow Australians.

The rapid growth in drug use, and therefore trends over time, give cause for alarm in Thailand. In 1990, for instance, only 97 cases of drug users were treated for methamphetamine addiction, whereas since 1995 addiction treatment centres have reached their maximum capacity. The explosion of methamphetamine use really took place in the mid-1990s.

In 1994, a study by the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) revealed that the demand for methamphetamine had overtaken that for heroin.[3] More recent sources reveal that there are 2.7 million occasional consumers of the product and 300,000 regular consumers, of which 90 per cent are adolescents.[4]

Age is probably the most obvious dividing line. Although not exclusively a young person's drug, yaa baa use is most prevalent among Thai youth compared to their adult counterparts. Another obvious division is that between well-to-do consumers and the less-privileged. The methamphetamine pill is a highly flexible product — in marketing jargon, it "transcends market segmentation". However, different users consume this psychotropic substance for different purposes.

Historically amphetamine first became popular with agricultural workers in Thailand who used it to stave off fatigue caused by intense physical activity; truck drivers also took advantage of the drug's ability to promote concentration for long periods of time. As methamphetamine became generally available on the market, its consumer base began to include younger people. Methamphetamines progressively replaced amphetamines without consumers even realizing it. All stimulants began to appear similar in their effects, no matter which of the two substances they contained. From very early on, amphetamine and methamphetamine had been grouped under the same popular but deceptive appellation yaa maa, which was then renamed yaa baa by official decree in 1996.

In 1997, the ONCB drew up an exhaustive list of yaa baa pills available on the Thai market. The results included 4 types of amphetamine pills, 11 types of ephedrine pills (unrefined), 3 pill types composed of Fenproporex, and 72 varieties of methamphetamine pills. All of the different preceding pill types were known under the same general name by consumers.

Given this blend of products, it becomes difficult to pinpoint sociologically who consumes what. This leads to a situation rare in the history of drugs. Most types of drugs, with their differentiated price, availability, and effects, tend to suit one category of users or the other. In the West, cocaine is popular with artists and celebrities; in South America, glue and inhaled substances are consumed by street children of the large capitals.

Thai yaa baa escapes this specialisation. It is not a drug consumed only by "people who have problems", explains Mrs. Pim of the ONCB, who is in charge of creating drug prevention messages for the media.[5] Accordingly, prevention efforts must reach a wide audience, including

youngsters seemingly "without problems" from the middle or upper class who are likewise not spared the risks of abuse.

Mrs. Lek, who runs an addiction treatment program, explained that rehabilitation centres that used to treat drug addicts of the lower classes exclusively now also deal with patients who might be students, children of doctors, or police officers.[6] If opiate users in Southeast Asia have generally been low-income, this is definitely not the case for ATS users currently.

> In a blue, modest building of the city of Bang Kla, adolescents from the wealthier sections of society are treated. [The goal is to help them overcome] their methamphetamine addiction. Whether daughters of businessmen, bankers, parliamentarians, or army officers, they are all "hooked" on what the Thais call yaa baa and Westerners call speed. Sister Rosaline Ngamwong is in charge of the Women's Rebirth Centre. She is still shocked to see young girls who have become dependent on the drug, which is most popular among the Thai working class. "They are young girls from good families, belonging to high society, people who are well-off and lack for nothing", she says. The country realizes that drug addiction has nothing to do with social barriers.
>
> "Thais Feel New Urgency to Stem Flow of Narcotics",
> Financial Times, 1 May 2001

According to Kaija Korpi, the large number of ATS users clearly indicates that the phenomenon is not limited to the less privileged.[7] Rather, it extends to all social classes in Thailand. Youngsters are the most affected, but the drug's effects are not limited to them alone. The poorest as well as the wealthiest are also not immune. Methamphetamine does not play on restricting social determinisms. Consumers attribute different properties to the drug, and use it for different purposes.

Two complementary approaches are used here to identify the social profiles of methamphetamine consumers. First, consumption habits of members of the lower classes in Thailand who were the first to use the drug on a widespread basis are examined. Then consumption trends of young people, a more recent but also more massive phenomenon, are taken into account. The distinction between the two groups is, however, far from absolute. Not all young consumers are from well-to-do sections of society, while the older ones are not uniformly poor. Street children account for some of the impoverished younger users, for instance, while prosperous middle-aged prosperous bureaucrats and other state security authorities make up part of the older contingent.

Fighting Fatigue, Boosting Energy: Methamphetamine as Fuel

A "Work Culture" of Stimulants

A 2000 study advanced the figure of 200,000 to 300,000 workers thought to be using yaa baa on a regular basis for Bangkok alone.[8] Thai society has become host to a "culture of stimulants" at many social levels, particularly that of the working class. If consumption of tea and coffee is excluded,[9] some 88 per cent of workers can be considered to use artificial stimulants.[10] Apart from yaa baa, they consume huge quantities of energy drinks. An attentive observer of a work site can easily spot, here and there, multitudes of small empty bottles of smoked glass with red and yellow labels whose motif suggests a luminous flash. This market in new kinds of stimulating drinks is shared by about ten brands. The drinks are classified by an international drug prevention magazine as belonging to the category of smart drugs.[11]

Smart drugs have closely followed the explosive outbreak of new synthetic drugs with stimulating effects. These products are not well-identified and stand midway between food supplements and medicines. The smart drugs market has been able to attract a population fringe of youngsters in the West and older groups in Thailand who wish to get the "buzz" of drug tripping without any major consequences to their health.

The moniker smart drugs actually refer to four varieties of drugs already in general circulation, more or less. Strictly speaking, smart drugs such as Piracetam, Vasopressine, and Hydergine — also called neo-tropic drugs — are first and foremost medicines to treat cerebral degeneration resulting from senility, Alzheimer's, or Parkinson's disease. However, some consumers also use them as mental stimulants. These products are mainly on sale over the Internet.

Smart drinks whose composition consists to varying degrees of taurine, antioxidants, vitamins A,B,C, or E, choline, lecithin, amino acids or phenolalanine, are technically food substitutes. They were initially developed by two NASA scientists, Duck Pearson and Sandy Shaw, who had previously created special food for astronauts in the organisation's space program. The scientists later came up with an entire range of food supplements sold in smart shops or by mail order. These products usually contain caffeine, extracts of Ginkgo biloba[12] and ginseng, the latter two supposedly able to slow down the aging process. Smart drinks rarely pose a risk for their consumers other than that of vitamin toxicity, a condition that can sometimes be fatal.

If smart drinks are tempting neuronal accelerators, smart products are more worrying. Originally smart products were used as substitutes for illegal drugs, likely to produce the same effects but in a harmless way. In this range, one finds for example Herbal Ecstasy or Explore. These products are highly stimulating. A majority of them pose hidden dangers in the dubious combination of certain herbs with ephedrine in their composition.

Finally, energy drinks would, in theory, seem to be a harmless component of the recent smart wave. Made from water, caffeine and vitamins, they are touted as energising drinks and sold in sports clubs. These activators of physical effort such as Black Power, Red Devil or XTC make reference to the universe of illegal drugs in their packaging and names, leading consumers to associate these legal products with illegal ones. Although these drinks are freely sold over the counter, by virtue of their names and the effects they are supposed to produce they can come to resemble other product ranges that are far less legitimate.

In Thailand the smart market is occupied by Krating Daeng (literally Red Bull, a synonym in Thai for tonic), M150, Lipovitan, and the recently introduced Carabao. An analysis of the composition of these products reveals the presence of taurine in some of them, especially the drink M150. This places such drinks midway between smart drinks and energy drinks. According to economists Nualnoi, Noppanun and Lewis, demand for these highly energising legal drinks suggests a breach in the traditional methamphetamine market. Energy drinks cost less than yaa baa pills.[13] They are sometimes even offered to drivers by gas stations attendants when drivers stop for petrol.

Since the beginning of aggressive prevention campaigns against methamphetamine, a new trend has begun taking shape. Some evidence shows that employees, drivers, and labourers are gradually substituting less harmful energy drinks for yaa baa. For instance, 42 per cent of labourers questioned in Bangkok by the Thai Farmers Research Centre claimed they use energising drinks regularly, rather than illegal stimulants.[14] But if they encounter pressure from their bosses or families that obliges them to increase their pace of work, 20 per cent of them admitted to switching over to yaa baa.

Generally speaking, all workers use yaa baa to escape fatigue. However, it is workers on a relatively fixed and limited daily or monthly income for whom yaa baa use can wreak the most havoc. Major one-time or occasional events such as a marriage or cremation, or purchase of a house or car, can tax the already meagre household incomes of employees or

independent workers such as taxi drivers or office workers. The worker therefore decides to put in more hours at work to compensate for additional expenses. Such conditions go a long way in explaining the socio-economic reality behind the "culture of stimulants" that has gradually taken root among the middle and lower-income classes in Thailand. There are three reasons for why such a culture has come into existence: a tenuous social control, an underestimation of the risks involved, and pressure from employers.

The social control exerted over labourers to dissuade them from using drugs is far more ambiguous for yaa baa than it is for heroin. If a member of the family resorts to the latter, he faces the disapproval of those around him. However, it is another thing to admit to methamphetamine use, when such use can raise one's tolerance for work and therefore prospects for greater income. This essential fact distinguishes the social consequences of methamphetamines from those of other hard drugs. Yaa baa is not perceived among the lower classes as a hedonistic pleasure to be condemned, but a tool for production to be increased. Consequently, those who resort to it are considered to be particularly heroic by their families.

The physical stamina acquired from using yaa baa confounds the image of the drug. Workers perceive it as less harmful than other drugs. Can yaa baa be so terrible if it enables one to bring home badly-needed income? From the outset, dangers posed by yaa baa have been underestimated; the TFRC survey revealed that many labourers do not realize its possible negative effects. They see it as a harmless stimulant that simply allows them to work longer. Some even think that they cannot become addicted, and many claim to know the "real methods" of avoiding side effects. Therefore this psychotropic substance does not induce much worry.

The rapid transition from an agricultural society to an industrial one has forced changes in work habits and the pace of work. Overnight, Thai peasants were transformed into labourers, but many have continued to experience difficulty in adapting to new conditions, explains Mr. Sorasit Sangprasert, General Secretary of the Office of Narcotics Control Board.[15] Workers have thus used stimulants to recalibrate their metabolisms to the demands of industrial labour.

Jacques Vincent, a Bangkok-based correspondent for a mainstream newswire service, observes that workers' consumption of stimulants underpins the "tendency by Thai bosses to treat workers like slaves on work sites".[16] Any European who is familiar with the struggles in France

to protect those without power would recognise the Thai working world as one where the principle "might makes right" prevails. In Thailand, workers' salary levels are not so much the result of negotiation as the outcome of a unilateral decision taken by the boss. The employer exercises a considerable influence over his employees, and his power remains uncontested. It is therefore difficult for workers to press directly for pay increases.

If a worker or an employee needs to earn more money, therefore, he simply works harder. He will content himself with giving more time to his work, increase his output, or undertake a second job. In Thailand, moonlighting is common and workers seldom balk at the prospect of doubling their work hours.

The construction sector in Thailand has notably high levels of drug use. Companies or sub-contractors employ clandestine Burmese or Cambodian workers who have no other option but to accept the conditions they are offered. Yaa baa is sometimes even foisted on workers by the employers themselves to increase workers' output.

> Shortly after midnight at Samut Sakhon, two men dressed in combat uniform wait in a dark corner of the fishing port of Maha Chai. They gesture to the labourers, who are in tatters. The workers weigh the fresh fish at around 1:00am. When the employees are gathered, one of the men takes a sheet of paper from his pocket and calls them by name. As the workers identify themselves, the man glances at his list and asks a labourer to confirm a figure: "Have you ordered 20 tablets?" The labourer indicates yes and the other dealer takes out 20 tablets from a paper bag and gives them to the labourer, while his colleague continues to confirm orders. The two uniformed men work for the fishery, and the tablets they distribute are methamphetamine. A close collaborator of the boss of the company states that the latter authorizes his staff to buy the pills wholesale and sell them to the other employees. "In the profession, this is not unknown to anyone. Each labourer would buy yaa baa at 80 baht per pill (2 euros). But they earn around 100 baht daily and spend 80 for a tablet! How could they manage to live on 20 baht per day?" To make it more affordable the employer might buy yaa baa at the wholesale price and sell it to his workers at "cost" — around 20 baht per pill. "They need these pills", he states. "Otherwise they would not be able to withstand the effort … without these pills, we could not finish in time and meet our commitment to our clients. All the fishermen on board, and not only the fishermen of this fishery, are 'hooked' on yaa baa".
>
> "New Amphetamine Epidemic", Bangkok Post, 16 March 1997

Thai employers have played a key role in promoting methamphetamine

at work. Some viewed this as a smart way to increase company productivity without raising salaries. This reasoning is clearly harmful for the employee, who is pressed into a regular consumption cycle to maintain productivity levels, thus risking his health and consequently, his job. But it is in line with a logic that considers labourers to be available, dispensable, and interchangeable. This logic is all the more convincing during periods of economic crisis when the number of unskilled people looking for jobs rises.

Industrial workers are not the only ones affected by methamphetamine consumption, and the situation is far from being limited to urban areas. It extends to agricultural workers, peasants and the entire rural population. Yaa baa is transported to the most remote areas, where peasants dissolve it in a bottle of water from which they drink while working in the fields.[17]

Near the Burmese border, drug consumption levels are particularly alarming. According to a report of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 80 to 90 per cent of people in the age range 14 to 35 are thought to be consumers and/or dealers of yaa baa in these areas. The fact that many refugees from Burma live in this region is no coincidence.[18]

Social Risks

Ingesting an unreasonably large number of yaa baa tablets can cause damage to the individual, with resulting negative social consequences. But the cases of methamphetamine-related dementia that have been identified are usually explained by multiple drug reactions, as when yaa baa is taken with alcohol or heroin. Methamphetamine is certainly not harmless, but when used moderately it is unlikely to cause social disruption. Workers, drivers and employees who do use it regulate their consumption — for their own safety as well as to keep their job.

Truck drivers find methamphetamine to be indispensable to their work, but tend to consume it in small doses, as in a quarter of a pill at a time. Referring to a study carried out by Yothin Sawaengdi and Monphan Issawaphak and commissioned by the Thai Development Research Institute, Pasuk Phongpaichit et al. state that regular consumption among truck drivers is most often limited to one pill per day.[19]

According to the ethnolinguist Bernard Antoine, the central Thai city of Lampang was formerly notorious for its unusual number of road accidents: "There used to be many accidents there because, from Chiang Mai to Bangkok, it was at this point that the effects of the yaa maa [i.e. yaa baa] pill wore off."[20] The effects of methamphetamine recede suddenly,

leaving the driver in the grip of sudden and overwhelming fatigue. Hence, road risks associated with yaa baa use are quite high. The TDRI study shows that 82 per cent of drivers interviewed believe that methamphetamine allowed them to increase their income, but that 89 per cent thought that the risk of being a victim of — or responsible for — road accidents would correspondingly decline if they were to do without it.

If methamphetamine has social costs, it also has very definite financial advantages. It is difficult to measure the benefits of the extra hours worked by the drivers thanks to active support of the drug. By allowing them to carry out many journeys in a short period of time, drivers who take yaa baa reduce their employers' costs. They themselves profit in the bargain, as their pay is calculated in terms of a fixed salary, in addition to a commission that varies in relation to the number of trips they make. This remuneration system obviously encourages the use of stimulants.

The Poverty Drug

Labour Sources for Drug Trafficking

Methamphetamine, largely used for reducing fatigue and the pain associated with overwork, can also help the less privileged forget their daily misery. Being cheap, it is within the means of the poor. Among such users it is often taken in conjunction with heroin and when that is the case, is generally taken intravenously.

The increase in yaa baa consumption can be partially attributed to a change in behaviour of heroin consumers. If the production of yaa baa is most often found at opiate production sites, and if the distribution of yaa baa has long relied on routes used for opiate trafficking, one can speculate that the overlap of the two drug worlds extends right up to the consumer himself. Heroin addicts are so taken in by methamphetamine that some observers are convinced an addict's consumption of the latter can increase without his giving up previous addictions. It has, however, been noted that some heroin users who lack money will turn to yaa baa as a cheaper substitute.

Poverty lies at the heart of the yaa baa distribution system. The squatter district of Klong Toey in Bangkok, with more than 100,000 inhabitants, is a gigantic hub through which transits the essential stock of methamphetamine meant for the capital. It is estimated that every day, 25,000 amphetamine pills are sold in this district. The majority of yaa baa dealers in the capital are recruited from here.[21]

Klong Toey was first formed in the 1950s when operations that were located in the country's rapidly-growing capital needed to attract rural labour. The first residents came on foot or by tramway from Blampee, in the Samut Prakan region, and constructed cardboard shacks there. Other people learned by word of mouth that they could find work in Bangkok and settle in Klong Toey. Over time, the shanty-town became known as a place that housed the underprivileged, and could offer its inhabitants access to the urban impetus that would enable them to find a job. But eventually the community was hit by a wave of evictions following huge road and construction projects in the urban areas. The resulting increase in the unemployment rate in this district is a recent phenomenon.

Mrs. Nong, the project head of Klong Toey's Duang Prateep Foundation, suggests that some local politicians have open relations with drug traffickers there.[22] During election time politicians generally buy the votes of the inhabitants, who sell them willingly. A year prior to the latest elections for local representatives, drug traffickers had financed 300 new households to settle in Klong Toey. At election time, the votes of the new inhabitants had naturally been bought.

There are few large traffickers in Klong Toey. Mrs. Nong reports there might be four or five who live in the district only sporadically, and move often. Their role is to bring in the drug and to persuade the poorest to sell it. Large traffickers exploit the weaknesses of the credulous and uneducated, transforming children into dealers by using a simple formula: "Ten pills sold and you get one free". They also use young girls, who are less suspect than boys in the eyes of the police. The girls transport the drug over long distances, sometimes even from Chiang Mai to Bangkok.

> I know two sisters aged eight and twelve years. The traffickers succeeded in convincing the younger one to travel. They took the child with them to the north. Even though she was always accompanied, it is she who carried the drug with her on the way back. While leaving, the traffickers telephoned their contacts in the army or the police to know if the checking was strict. As there was a danger, the trafficker and the little girl halted at a hotel. It is there that the children often first become victims of rape and are infected with AIDS. Back in Klong Toey, the little girl arrived, covered with gifts, dolls, and toys. The elder sister had only one desire: to also follow this man. On their return, the traffickers often get rid of the children. They sell them in the brothels of the district. There are ten of them here.
>
> Interview with Mrs. Nong on 5 July 2001

Hoping to escape from poverty, slum inhabitants are also tempted by fabulous riches promised them by lotteries and, especially, gambling. Drug traffickers therefore use the latter as a means of recruiting dealers, according to authors Nualnoi, Noppanun, and Lewis.[23] When losers can no longer pay their debts, they must mortgage their shack to the traffickers. Debtors are sometimes forced to pay daily interest on the money lost in gambling. If they cannot come up with the money, they are obliged to hand over their children to the traffickers, who use them to deliver drugs to consumers. Those debtors who refuse to do so are beaten up and have to leave their homes.

When there is no child to be "held hostage", wives or girlfriends of the unlucky gamblers can also become victims of the trafficker. According to Susanne McGregor, sex work, drug use, and drug trafficking are closely linked in a complex way.[24] A common scenario is that of a drug user who lacks funds, a drug trafficker who is in debt, or a gambler who is unlucky, whose female companion is then put at risk. She, the companion, then enters into prostitution out of financial necessity to help her partner repay his debt.

Thais are generally debtors. From the gambler to the taxi driver to the small trader, everyone is perpetually in the process of repaying their debts little by little, meanwhile contracting fresh ones before the old ones are paid off. If the truck driver takes yaa baa to fight against fatigue, it is also because he has to work harder for money to pay his monthly car instalments.

> My Thai friends take loans at 20 per cent from money lenders. However, were they to wait for one month to make their purchases, they could pay without borrowing. But what is important for them is to have a small sum available in case of unforeseen circumstances. They love having a small sum of money, right there, before their eyes. It gives them the impression that they are secure. In Thailand, one must always put aside a little amount of money because one learns the date of the tamboon (a religious donation organized by the monks) only at the last moment. And one must always have money available for the tamboon because during the ceremony, the donors are listed. And one loses face if one has been stingy.
>
> A Thai proverb says: "One must always have a second shirt that one can sell to save his face". It means that when friends arrive unexpectedly, one has to face unforeseen expenses. If there is no "second shirt" to sell, one would also lose face as one would have to sell the one that one is wearing. Therefore, the Thais say that it does not pinch to pay one or two baht per day, one hardly feels it. One or two baht are hardly anything at all, even if one takes twice as much time to repay it".
>
> Interview with Bernard Antoine on 15 July 2001

The habit of taking credit creates a social link, a point that the traffickers well understand. Credit puts the borrower under an obligation. Making use of an already widespread cultural practice, traffickers have implemented a system of exchange involving the interdependencies of all participants in the drug supply chain. The link with credit ensures that no participant can leave the "milieu" without difficulty. Most often, it is only for the first purchase from the large wholesaler, medium wholesaler, or retailer that one must pay in cash.[25] Once a relationship of trust is established in drug transactions, credit is used. As each trafficker is both creditor and debtor, he remains a prisoner of the market, where there is no clear exit strategy.

From Worker to Unemployed

When the financial crisis struck Southeast Asia in 1997, many Thai workers found themselves without a job. They left their work sites, but many retained the habit of consuming yaa baa, which had allowed them to endure a full day of hard work. Paradoxically, if while working labourers take only one tablet in the morning and another in the evening, they are tempted to considerably increase their dosage when they are out of work. The unemployed generally look for friends with whom to share their yaa baa. Together they forget the humiliation of being poor, which is particularly difficult to do in Thailand where, according to Mrs. Nong, prosperity is by far the main source of social distinction. "Being rich" is a sign of the merit that one has acquired in a previous life. Thus, when one has money, one should consume amply, tip generously, and in general act to display one's good standing. "In this society, the poor do not have a place. Nothing seems to be within their reach. The media never takes an interest in the inhabitants of Klong Toey, but they are far more interested in the life of those who live in rich localities".[26]

As Vincent de Gaulejac points out,[27] poverty is humiliating when factors such as the following are present: degrading conditions of mental and physical existence; stigmas and norms that result in the less well-off being scorned and rejected; and a feeling of degradation by those who are on the lower rungs of the social ladder or on a downward social trajectory. The poor in Thailand would seem to experience all of these conditions.

Thailand follows the pattern intrinsic to capitalism development according to which wealth and autonomy go together. To fulfil onself, one must be professionally and in particular financially successful. On the contrary, to be excluded from the competition, or to drop out of it, is to

be judged a failure by the preceding criteria. For sociologist Robert Castel, the "useless of the world" are those who lack financial autonomy and are incapable of providing for their needs.[28] They are therefore perceived as failures. If there is no "pressing reason" such as a mental handicap, religious choice, historical circumstance, or health problem to justify this state, it is the person himself — and only himself — who is perceived as being responsible for his situation and is therefore scorned.

In Thailand the question of working life and mental well-being should, however, be understood in context. The link between job and income is quite loose. Not all types of work allow one to live above the poverty line, but despite this, a huge majority of the active working population manages to get by. Men and women do paid work whether or not it is declared, and whether or not the working conditions resemble those of formal employment. The country's actual unemployment level is probably not much beyond five per cent, suggesting that the criteria for unemployment bear closer inspection.

Nevertheless, workers in many types of jobs remain unsatisfied. Taxi drivers and travelling salesmen complain of too much competition. The recession following the crisis of 1997 had contradictory effects.[29] On the one hand it caused a wave of underemployment, or one might say "bad employment". This generated a level of social frustration that favoured increased methamphetamine consumption by those affected. But by restricting available income, the crisis also limited people's ability to consume. The net result of these contradictory effects seems to have been a general reduction in the price of yaa baa. In poor localities, for instance, one can typically buy a methamphetamine pill for 50 baht (approximately 1.5 euros).

Homeless Children

Children as well as adults in Thailand are implicated in the undeniable link between drugs and poverty. Street children are employed by traffickers. In slums, barely-educated parents far from their native place lose their links with the system of rural values to such an extent that sometimes they "rent" or "sell" their children to others involved in drugs. Drug traffic naturally relies on the poorest to accomplish the most dangerous missions. Traffickers exploit the cultural poverty of the down-and-outs to entice them, and exploit their indigence to control them.

Primary and secondary school education in the country is supposed to be a right, but is only one in theory. Thailand has ratified the United

Nations Convention on the Rights of Children, which stipulates that all children who are born or living in the territory should have access to education. The reality, however, is less generous. Children older than six are supposed to be educated in the village where their family officially resides. The government has overlooked the fact that the huge rural migrations of the 1970s and 1980s, particularly from the northeast, had forced many children to accompany their parents to urban areas. As migrant families did not settle in the city legally, it was impossible for their children to attend school. Children of labourers who live on work sites, where employment is transitory, are also denied access to education and many remain illiterate.[30]

Additionally, many children from refugee families lack both education and a permanent home. According to journalistic sources, Thailand had 15,000 street children before the economic crisis.[31] In its aftermath, the number of street children is estimated to have increased by 15 per cent, with many working as rag dealers, petty thieves, or prostitutes. If they lack money to buy yaa baa, they can earn a salary to do so by making deliveries. Often used as couriers for supplying drugs, these street children begin using psychotropic substances themselves from early on. They take yaa baa in conjunction with cheaper drugs such as glue or other inhalants.

Prostitutes and Victims of the Flesh Trade

Prostitution is widespread in Thailand. One study shows that in the north of the country, 73 per cent of conscripts in a selected military contingent had had their first sexual relationship with a prostitute, and of this group, 97 per cent did not limit their encounters with prostitutes to this "rite of initiation".[32] While the conscripts generally found nothing wrong with this practice, such attitudes have been also found among married men, many of whom also frequently consort with prostitutes. A "guys' night out" typically includes sharing a meal and beer — and female company.

Some women, as well as the occasional man and child, resort to occasional prostitution as a "sideline", as compared to "direct" prostitution that constitutes an individual's main livelihood. Between 1996 and 1999, according to a survey of the Health Ministry, there was a decrease in the number of brothels and "official" prostitutes observed. On the other hand, the number of beer bars, massage parlours, and restaurants or karaoke places offering sexual services increased. Trends indicate that places where prostitution can be found are mushrooming.[33]

Undoubtedly the most obvious link between drugs and prostitution

is financial. Some methamphetamine-dependent consumers spend 300 to 600 baht per day on their habit. To obtain this sum, young men generally prefer drug-dealing and young women prostitution. Only occasionally do members of either sex resort to stealing to finance their drug habit.

Paradoxically, the number of young people who have resorted to prostitution under pressure from the traffickers seems to have decreased, while the numbers of people doing so voluntarily for pragmatic reasons has risen. Young girls of 14 who have completed their primary education have fewer livelihood options than young boys. Among employment alternatives for girls, prostitution is particularly lucrative.[34] Offering oneself to a man in exchange for money is not perceived as a lasting work identity. As a consequence, the dangers of this practice and the stigmas associated with it are often ignored.[35]

Twenty years ago, most of the prostitutes in Thailand were of rural origin and sent a large part of their income to their families who had stayed back in the village.[36] Lured by dreams of a better life in the city, many young girls voluntarily left the village to earn money and pass on the benefits to their family. Since then the influx has not stopped — far from it — but over time female migration between the city and countryside has become less frenzied. Concomitantly, the urban misery associated with yaa baa has come to play an increasing role in the dynamics of prostitution.

Voluntary prostitution should not mask the fact that significant numbers of people, especially young women and children, are victims of the flesh trade being held against their will. David Feingold, who has studied this phenomenon in the regions of Upper Mekong, notes that many women and children who are sold do not participate in the sex trade but work as slaves in tapioca plantations. All the same, in the urban areas, there are many sexual slaves. Around 10,000 prostitutes of Burmese origin, often members of ethnic minorities, are thought to be forced to participate in the Thai sex industry every year.[37] They are locked up, at least until the sex workers can reimburse the person who has bought them from the trafficker.

Refraining from sex during menstrual periods — during which time Thai prostitutes are traditionally excused from working — is not always allowed for prostitutes of Burmese origin. In Thailand, Burmese sex workers must submit to physical relations that are sometimes violent and often unprotected, whether they consent to them or not. These young women are particularly vulnerable as they are handicapped by their mediocre knowledge of the Thai language. Moreover, their presence in

Thailand being illegal, they lack access to medical treatment and cannot claim any rights.

A young woman explains that due to the pain, she can hardly bear to have intercourse more than five times a day. By using methamphetamine, she can withstand the pain far more easily.[38] The use of yaa baa here is closely linked to the desire to forget physical and psychological pain.

Refugees and Immigrant Workers

Refugees often come from the same regions as victims of the traffic in human beings. Chased from their homes by repression or misery or very simply lured by what they perceive as an El Dorado of Thailand, all refugees share similar linguistic difficulties and illegal status. Compared to victims of trafficking, however, refugees have generally arrived in the Thai kingdom of their own free will.

In Thailand, clandestine workers are often accompanied by their family. Men generally work in agriculture harvesting rubber or cultivating rice or sugar cane, or in fishing, construction, or factories. The most painful, tiring or dangerous tasks, such as work in toxic environments, are given to them. To complement household income, children of the migrant workers are often asked to contribute from the age of twelve.[39] Some cannot find a job near their parents. They are therefore entrusted to other families to become household help, or to restaurant owners to work as waiters. They can also be found in gas stations, where they find ways of making themselves useful.

Once they are far from their family of origin, working children are more prone to exploitation in such things as the timing and conditions of work and demands for "sexual services" to be thrown in. Employers also urge child workers to use yaa baa to cope with adverse working conditions and fight fatigue. Many refugees who have worked as prostitutes recall being in situations such as these.

CHAPTER 7

Yaa Baa's Prime Target — The Youth

In 1993, the Thailand Development Research Institute estimated that less than 300,000 people regularly consumed methamphetamine. Peasants and agricultural labourers represented 65 per cent of this population, while the inhabitants of shantytowns made up only seven per cent. The general belief that the drug was consumed mainly by truck drivers was not confirmed, as they represented only six per cent of users. The Institute's study of yaa baa consumption excluded "youth" as a separate category, although it did mention an "increasing tendency" to take stimulants among young people.

According to the Thai Farmers Research Centre, the average demand for yaa baa among labourers just seven years later in 2000 represented a market worth 100 million baht per year (2.5 million euros).[1] But workers constituted only a very small minority of consumers, and for Bangkok alone the methamphetamine market was about one billion baht per year (25 million euros).

Figures representing the volume of any illegal market must always be treated with caution, given the inherent margins of error in such measurements. However, these estimates at least give some idea of how patterns of methamphetamine use in Thailand in recent years have undergone a complete inversion. In 1993, yaa baa was taken mainly by labourers to boost their ability to work. Today it has become a recreational drug targeting another category of consumers — namely, adolescents.

The dramatic increase in the number of young consumers has completely transformed patterns of yaa baa consumption in Thailand.[2] In 1997, the TFRC conducted a study across 66 public and private secondary schools and Catholic schools in Bangkok. Researchers interviewed 610 teachers, 926 parents, and 1,243 students, and the results showed that a majority of teachers (64 per cent), students (68 per cent),

and parents (62 per cent) were aware that significant numbers of secondary school students had already tried methamphetamine.

The United Nations Economic and Social Council has noted the global prevalence of high rates of drug consumption among young people.[3] In a number of countries, drug consumption rates for this sector of the population can be three or four times higher than that of the general population. It is therefore essential to distinguish between those who experiment with drugs because of their age, and those — much fewer in number — who have long-term chronic drug addiction. Drug habits that begin at a young age are, in any case, considered a factor predicting future addiction. This point is particularly troubling, given drug use patterns in Thailand where, according to Mrs. Nong, some school children start using yaa baa from the age of seven.[4]

Bonding through Methamphetamine: Group Dynamics of Thai Youth

Any discussion of yaa baa's popularity with young people in Thailand must first begin with a definition of just who should be included in the category "youth". In accord with the definition given by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, the term "children" generally refers to individuals younger than 18 years, while the term "youth" is less clearly-defined.[5] The Council designates in this latter category individuals anywhere from ages 15 to 24. By contrast, the World Health Organisation takes "adolescence", which covers all individuals from 10 to 19 years of age, as the relevant category. Naturally, it is difficult to base these classifications on clear-cut empirical distinctions since changes across the different stages of life can be gradual or abrupt, depending on the individual.

Adolescence is a period when a person is confronted with questions of existence. Coinciding with the physical changes of this life stage, an adolescent also struggles to come to terms with the reality of becoming an adult, and therefore of growing older. Faced with serious but unanswerable questions about the meaning of life and death, adolescents often look for solutions outside the home. They may look to adults who are not their own parents, whom the sociologist Patrick Pelège refers to as re-pères (referential fathers) or re-mères (referential mothers). However, it is almost always among peers that an adolescent constructs a future as an adult.[6]

Peer Group Identification Processes

Western theories depict the adolescent as a human being who feels the need to seek differentiation from others in order to exist. If being an adult means being on the right side of the law, the European, and North American adolescent tries to break the law. If for older individuals adulthood is the age of reason, then the adolescent tries to be unreasonable.[7]

According to the Thai Farmers Research Centre, Thai adolescents are not unaware of this logic, but rather than rebelling, they are more likely to simply want to be different — that is, to have what others do not have, and to attempt to do what others would not try.[8] It would be wrong to think that this is individual behaviour; rather, it is a process of collective differentiation. A Thai adolescent is never alone. He is always with a group of friends. It is within a group context, rather than an individual one, that young Thais seek to differentiate themselves from the rest of the world.

Thai adolescents are seldom motivated to first experiment with methamphetamine because of natural individual curiosity. It is the group context that influences them to try it. Recounts of drug experiences among young users typically begin, "The first time, I was with friends. I wanted to try [it] …"[9] For the individual, trying something once does not necessarily mean inevitably progressing to sustained use. A young person who becomes hooked on yaa baa has likely not done so alone, but rather has fallen into a consumption trap in league with his peer group.

Here, perhaps, is the qualitative explanation for figures that show an exponential increase in the number of young yaa baa consumers in the country during the last decade. We surmise that in Thailand the propensity to imitate others' behaviour is particularly strong. Every young yaa baa user belongs to a group of friends who also consume the drug. "The group of friends is so important that when one of them does something, the others dare not be different, for fear of displeasing the one who takes the lead. It is a spirit of forced companionship. Great strength is needed to resist the group."[10]

Young drug users exemplify this dependence on a group. An individual group member cannot choose whether or not to partake. Any escape from illicit drug use become closed off very quickly. "In the beginning, I was taking only three or four [tablets] per day", explains a young woman. "[Alone], if it's not at hand, I don't take it. But [in a group], it is very difficult to say "no". When you are with friends … when they offer

it and press it on you … it is very easy to find yourself with a pill."[11]

A former user who is now under the care of an association for treating addiction reports: "I was 12 years old. Family problems and friends forced me to begin taking it."[12] His statement indicates he was not aware of the addictive nature of yaa baa. "I didn't hesitate because I didn't know the harmful effects it could have."

This ignorance is partly due to the absolute confidence an adolescent has in his friends, especially ones that are older. Out of respect for those older than him, the young user willingly ignores the possible consequences of regular consumption. The seniors are the ones who sell it to their juniors, who are not supposed to worry about the risks involved. Besides, raising doubts about the drug's beneficial effects might mean jeopardizing ties that bind friends in the group. The group exercises such an overwhelming pressure over its members that "one does not have a choice", confirms Mr. Suchaat, who is in charge of an association dedicated to social development. "If the group takes it and you are a part of the group, you too have to take it."[13] Using substances taken by the rest of the peer group is necessary for one's identity formation. Among Thai adolescents, yaa baa is an inevitable component of collective drug-taking practices that allow people to belong to and identify with the group.

Just for Fun?

A large majority of yaa baa consumers in Thailand are youngsters aged 14 to 25.[14] Most are boys, but the methamphetamine phenomenon is less gender-specific than heroin use.[15] According to the Office of Narcotics Control Board, young Thai females are becoming increasingly involved in the yaa baa market.[16]

Girls sometimes take the drug in groups with other girls and at other times with male peers or boyfriends. If they lack money to buy the substance, some resort to prostitution. According to Mr. Saichon, a social worker, young girls often deliberately choose dealers who will not require them to pay at all for their yaa baa.[17]

Regardless of gender, Thai youngsters typically reserve yaa baa consumption for special occasions such as going out with friends or to a disco party. As it enhances physical stamina, the drug is very popular with those who want to dance. "You don't become tired, so you can stay out all night", explains a 15-year-old.[18]

Girls associate yaa baa with seduction, but it is all about ego as far as young Thai males are concerned. Many believe that yaa baa boosts

their competitive energy when they vie with one another in competitive situations. "When we [used to take] yaa baa, we had motorbike races or fights among groups."[19] When different gangs meet, youngsters use yaa baa to pump themselves up before activities such as snooker or motorbike races. (In Bangkok as elsewhere, the two-wheelers are often tampered with to increase acceleration and make a deafening noise.)

For most users, consuming yaa baa is not an end in itself. Methamphetamine use complements other activities such as meeting one's friends in cafes, going to fashionable discos, or defying death on two-wheelers. Taking it prior to sports activities gives the necessary "zing", while using it for watching sports makes for an equally suitable occasion. Pills are exchanged when friends meet to watch a football match on television and root for their favourite British teams. (The Thais are great supporters of Liverpool and Manchester United football clubs.) Thanks to yaa baa, the match will be celebrated in a fitting manner whether it ends in victory or defeat for the team they support.

Often amphetamine-type stimulants are used in combination with other permitted stimulants, particularly spirits and beer. But whatever the combination of drugs and activities, the single common denominator is that all permutations involve group activities. Yaa baa can therefore be termed as a premier social drug.

Yaa Baa: Unifying Element of an Age Group

Speaking of his friends, a 14-year-old notes, "They say that with methamphetamine they feel [more] alive, more cool, and that they are more at ease with their friends."[20] "Often, when we take yaa baa, we have fun. Boys go fishing on the bridges of the Chao Praya.[21] There they smoke. I take it at home, often with my friend", explains a young woman, Ms. Koong. She adds, "I like yaa baa because it is stimulating. We are active, we talk, and it's fun."[22] A project executive at the Duang Prateep Foundation who is a leading observer of the drug scene reports, "They always take it when they are with friends, at the office or at home. There are very few people who take it while they are alone."[23]

People who take drugs in Thailand are likely to be marginalised when they show signs of addiction. Signs of excessive drug-taking may be physical or social.[24] A display of irresponsible attitudes and uncoordinated gestures tend to make one suspect. Just as drinking alcohol by oneself elicits disapproval from others, neither do people take kindly to an individual who cultivates a drug habit in solitude.

However, yaa baa permits one to evade these negative associations. Its consumption does not immediately affect the physical condition of those who take it regularly. Instead, methamphetamine paves the way for users to be further socialised into their peer community. Injecting heroin, an act often done on one's own, reveals personal and social tensions within an addict; using methamphetamine is the result of youthful curiosity combined with peer-group persuasion, and taking it is generally done for fun. Yaa baa acts as a bond between group members. A drug that is used on such a group serves to symbolise and concretise the friendships that bond its members together.

In the West, the drugs ganja (also known as cannabis) and ecstasy play a unifying role similar to yaa baa. Each serves to construct community-based relationships. For instance, ganja is shared. Joints are "passed around", establishing a friendly link between those who give and those who receive them. Smokers thus initiated are protected by an imaginary boundary distinguishing them from the "others", the uninitiated. Small groups of experienced cannabis users bond with one another as they smoke together. Bonds are further strengthened by individuals' mutual satisfaction of having overcome a "fear of cops", whether by direct or vicarious experience, says the sociologist Mélanie Roustan.[25]

In contrast with ganja, the drug ecstasy is more accessible to the uninitiated.[26] As with yaa baa, ecstasy use is also particular to certain age-groups, but the latter is characterised by its affiliation with individuals from a particular subculture. Youngsters who take ecstasy as part of their rave party experience far outnumber those who share a joint among friends. But ecstasy also carries with it a wealth of social significance. It conveys images of techno music and elaborately coded dress styles, all aspects of a Thai youth subculture derived from a global youth subculture.[27] The United Nations Economic and Social Council observes that messages implicitly encouraging the use of drugs are often conveyed by hit song lyrics, films and advertisements, and the behaviour of artists and celebrities.[28]

In Thailand yaa baa occupies a place more or less midway between ganja and ecstasy. Like cannabis, it is shared among members of small groups whose bonds are enhanced by consuming it together. The peer circle, with yaa baa as the common factor, defines the limits of the group of intimate friends. On the other hand, unlike cannabis, methamphetamine does not isolate its users from non-consumers. Like ecstasy, it appeals to younger populations regardless of their ethnic or social origins.

Yaa baa is thus an inherently social drug that binds young users together without excluding them from others in their age group. Like ecstasy, it is meant to be taken in public places where it symbolises "fusion", the common denominator of identity-making processes of an entire generation. Drugs can exert a unifying influence similar to the cohesiveness that comes from socialising together in fashionable places. During an earlier period when Bangkok's night-time entertainment was still free from regulation, young members of Bangkok's middle class frequented "with-it" discos in large numbers. They preferred Royal City Avenue (RCA), an entertainment district known for its discos opening out onto the street that offered free entry and affordable prices to members. Since July 2001, however, access to discos has been regulated. The minimum age is 20 years and closing hours are fixed.

The fight against illicit drugs and anti-social behaviour figures prominently in measures taken by the government of the current Thai Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra. However, similar to ecstasy users, young yaa baa consumers do not consider themselves to be delinquents or addicts. Within the youth subculture, methamphetamine is positioned as an affirmative component of ritualised celebrations. As many young Thais use methamphetamine only occasionally, they have an impression of "being in control", as opposed to being drug-dependent or running the risk of addiction.[29]

Today it is evident that youth in industrialised countries are no longer the only ones who have developed their own subcultures centred on drug use. Just as with ecstasy in the United States and Europe, certain populations in Southeast Asia share convictions and values that serve to legitimise the consumption of yaa baa from their viewpoint. Any consideration of the lifestyle of contemporary Thailand's urban youth must acknowledge a great similarity to behaviour patterns observed in the West. Young Thais have access to a nightlife culture of the same international standards as in New York, Paris, London or Sydney.

The success of the Hard Rock Café restaurant chain beyond the boundaries of the U.S. and Europe marks the globalisation of a musical culture. As in the West, the spread of "techno" music and dress styles related to the symbolic world of this consumerist subculture parallels the increasing use of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS). However, adoption of this so-called universal style continues to meet with legal and cultural obstacles at the local level. In Thailand, rave parties are tolerated only on certain islands reserved almost exclusively for Western tourists, especially Ko Pha-Ngan or Ko Tao. Elsewhere in Thailand, it is still impossible to

imagine a large-scale event or show at which obvious drug-taking would be condoned.

Lacking the sub-cultural tradition of rave parties, Thais do not exclusively associate drug-taking with the "techno" musical culture to the extent that their Western counterparts do. In a sense this disjuncture helps to insulate young Thais from the worst excesses of yaa baa abuse. When a subculture is too explicitly structured around a drug, its members tend to minimise — if not completely ignore — its secondary effects. However, risk factors in Thailand are still numerous. "Pals" are very important, and youngsters often move in groups. Everywhere there are cultural signals that equate certain types of drug use with wealth, fashion, and success. This can make ATS become attractive rather than frightening in young people's eyes, as studies have confirmed.

A Ritualised Consumption

In Thailand, methamphetamine may be consumed in the following ways:

Swallowing: This is the conventional form of administration practised by villagers and truck drivers.

Smoking: Accomplished by reducing the tablet to powder so that it can be rolled into a cigarette.

Sniffing: The drug is first reduced to powder, then ignited and the smoke inhaled through a straw. This is the most popular method among students and younger consumers, who refer to it as "capturing the dragon".

Dissolving in water and then injecting intravenously: Generally people employing this method add heroin or sedatives to the substance. People who are very addicted to psychotropic drugs combine amphetamine with heroin or tranquillisers and inject themselves with this mixture. The effect is immediate, whereas a tablet needs 20 minutes to take effect.[30]

Yaa baa tablets can also be dissolved in soft drinks, and the mixture is then consumed like an ordinary beverage. This is undoubtedly the most discreet method, especially in public places like discos where there can be a significant police presence.[31]

Confirming the decline of heroin and emergence of ATS in Thailand, the Thai Office of Narcotics Control Board observes that methods of administering the drugs are constantly evolving. Receding numbers of users sniff or inject drugs, while techniques of ingesting orally or, in particular, inhaling fumes from the powdered substance that has been set alight, are on the increase.[32] Even if yaa baa can be dissolved and injected

or drunk, or simply swallowed, the most popular method of consumption among pleasure-seeking young people is to inhale the fumes.[33] Injection seems to have become almost the exclusive privilege of those who consume heroin along with yaa baa.[34]

In Thai schools, yaa baa consumption has become something of a collective ritual. Most student users share it with others to reduce costs. They may take it in the toilets in the morning before the flag is raised or between classes, during lunch breaks, or after school in isolated places or on the roofs of school buildings.[35] Once by themselves, group members start their small ceremony. Typically yaa baa is passed around within groups of three to five. The pills are first reduced to a powder that is placed on a piece of aluminium foil shaped into a spoon or a small boat.[36] This is heated from underneath with a lighter, and the smoke is inhaled through a plastic straw or alternatively, a cigarette paper straw. Users inhale the smoke through the nose or mouth.[37]

According to Jirapan Tritipjaras of the Centre for the Prevention and Correction of Drug and Aids Problems under the Ministry of Education, once students have acquired the skills and possess the necessary materials to start their "cooking session", the ritual takes very little time — some three to five minutes.

Drug or Medicine: [En]snared by Representations

The drug yaa baa was previously known as yaa maa in Thailand. Authorities renamed it in 1996 to discourage its popularity among peasants, who were then its primary users. According to government spokesman Somsak Prisanananthakul, the wording yaa maa (literally, "medicine horse") led people to believe that it was a simple tonic that enabled one to "work like a horse".

Peasants turned to yaa baa following an established practice of taking analgesics containing caffeine as stimulants. Amphetamine consumption first spread among those who cut sugarcane or harvested latex from rubber trees. The changeover began after the sale of analgesics was banned by the Health Ministry.[38]

In contrast with Thai peasants, young people who currently use yaa baa in Thailand are under no misunderstanding that what they take is anything but a psychotropic product. However, the idea that this drug is less dangerous than other products is prevalent. According to Thomas Bellais and Jefferson Derolin, synthetic drug users typically experience some confusion over whether they are ingesting a drug or a type of

medicine.[39] This is one major reason why psychotropic products are so popular. Novice consumers are not restrained by any psychological barriers and take naturally to this new type of drug.

As yaa baa is available in tablet form, it adheres to the conventional and symbolic regulation of products beneficial for health. The chemically-synthesised tablets resemble something medicinal and therefore "safe". Disguised as medicine, methamphetamine tablets are free of the stigma attached to other addictive substances. The tablets bear a pharmaceutical stamp and label attesting to their origins in chemical synthesis and laboratory research. Young consumers thus consider them to be modern and therefore trustworthy products. At the very least, the familiar imprinted tablet form of yaa baa evokes a sense of safety and reassurance.

Young people's views comparing methods of ingesting yaa baa are particularly revealing. They reflect an actual experience coupled with an imaginary one that is rich and at times paradoxical. Even if the swallowed tablet produces less potent results than those of other methods, consuming the drug in this manner is believed to be more toxic than alternative methods of ingestion. "Yaa baa can be swallowed, but taken in fumes it is better [because] it is less serious, as nothing enters the body. It is worse to take it orally", says Ms. Koong, a young consumer.[40]

In accordance with the principle of incorporation put forward by Claude Fischler, we become what we eat, whether on a real or imaginary level.[41] The act of "consuming" food, in the broad sense of the word, crosses the line between the world and our body, between the outside and the inside. Thus eating carries a risk in itself. Inhalation is also a passage from the external to the internal world, but only symbolically, because inhaled air is exhaled and so signifies a lesser risk.

As previously noted, in 1997 the Office of Narcotics Control Board (OCNB) had already listed 90 available types of yaa baa tablets; since then, many more have likely been added to the list. Available most often in an orange-brown colour but also in white, green, red, blue, these pills have slightly different compositions depending on the laboratories from which they come. There is no guarantee that two of the same type of tablets, made at different times from the same laboratory, will have exactly the same composition. Users, however, place their trust in familiar colours or markings.

In general, orange-coloured pills are thought to be the most powerful.[42] The symbol "WY" is also taken as a sign of quality.[43] In 1997, the ONCB collected 301 yaa baa samples from 50 provinces, and found 27 different colours and 20 different markings. Common knowledge holds that green

pills are usually best. The green ones have different names such as khiaw morakot (emerald green), khiaw pak thung (dustbin-liner green), maa morakot (emerald horse), or marutayu see khiaw (satanic green). Some tablets are tasteless while others taste repulsive. Some are good to inhale while others are better to inject because of their complete solubility. Yet still other types are preferably inhaled or smoked. Within each category, some types of tablet are thought to be more "powerful" than others.[44]

The main effect of yaa baa, like most stimulants, is to increase energy levels and physical endurance. Consumers confirm the reality of these effects. The National Commission for Primary Education reports that students interviewed who took yaa baa and tried to stay awake all night succeeded in doing so.[45] But this increase in physical stamina makes sense only if it is understood in the context of cultural norms that prevail among young Thais. They love to party together and have fun. Correspondingly, yaa baa is welcomed as an asset that can extend the life of the party to the wee hours. Nightlife lends "fresh enchantment" to daytime. "We feel our heart beating. It stimulates the brain and everything else is forgotten. We are happy and that helps to forget. We don't sleep any more", explains a young user.[46]

Moreover, students use yaa baa to stimulate their minds. As school-leaving and entrance examinations for university near, competition becomes very stiff. Unable to face the pressures "alone", students take to stimulants, without which they believe they would fail. Hence in Thailand, stimulant use levels rise with the approach of final examinations.[47] According to student users, methamphetamine serves to increase their mental concentration and thus their ability to study.

Says one student, "Yaa baa is not all that different from cigarettes, except that if you smoke amphetamine, you become hardworking, whereas if you smoke cigarettes you feel exhausted."[48] While Nat was reading architecture, his friends explained that yaa baa could help him concentrate. They said, "There is no risk, it will help you draw better." So, quite naturally, he took it.[49]

The preceding comments demonstrate that yaa baa elicits positive associations among social users of psychotropic drugs, who tend to underestimate the dangers.[50] "I don't worry about yaa baa but I worry about heroin or hashish. Moreover, I know my limits", says a young girl.[51] The fact that she feels no ill effects leads her to think that she is invincible. At times, she smokes three or four ground tablets per day. "My yaa baa consumption is not serious, because I can do without it. For me it is nothing. I am not sick." The anthropologist Jirapan Tritipjaras, who

completed a thesis on consumption of yaa baa in a Thai school, confirms that methamphetamine has a surprisingly positive image among the students there, whether or not they use it themselves.[52]

Yaa baa seems to enhance users' sense of generalised understanding and empathy. It boosts their self-confidence and helps them shed their inhibitions. Consequently young girls going through an awkward stage of life may use the drug to try to regain some self-esteem about their body, in part because methamphetamine kills the appetite and thus functions as a diet aid. A 15-year-old girl thinks that "it helps her slim down". Another girl says she doesn't take it for that reason but has friends who did so. However, she acknowledges that "it wasn't bad to slim down [as she herself] went down from 90 to 60 kilograms because of yaa baa".[53] Alternatively, males tend to consider yaa baa as an aphrodisiac and sexual stimulant. Young men who are in relationships and who take yaa baa report feeling more confident about physical relations with their partners. Says one 18-year-old, "My friends say that it lets them enjoy sex and the sex lasts a longer time."[54]

Where sports are concerned, yaa baa also comes into play. Young people who train for hours on football grounds or takrao fields do not hesitate to use it to overcome fatigue and boost energy levels.[55] The same is true for motorcyclists, who take it before street-racing in Bangkok, or those who play snooker, who frequent parlours well-stocked with the drug.[56]

The general perception of amphetamine-type stimulants among the young in Thailand is that they are an all-round remedy. "Smoking [methamphetamine] allows you to forget your pain. It makes you feel good", explains a 16-year-old student.[57] Jirapan Tritipjaras observes that if a young person has lost his energy or his curiosity, or is bored or suffering, the solution is very often to take yaa baa. In short, according to Mr. Suchaat, a social worker, the young feel that yaa baa helps them manage their problems.[58] Today, it is part and parcel of a lifestyle. The drug allows students to study for long hours and then go to discos. Young people find life more amusing under the influence of yaa baa, and, at least for the short-term, think it is good for them. So they take it without being perturbed about its long-term effects.

Nevertheless, these representations need to be modified in accord with the social realities of how yaa baa is actually used. Many of the drug's effects are difficult to identify, even by users themselves. One might take methamphetamine several times during a party in addition to doses taken before or afterwards. As a result, it is difficult to distinguish the

effects of the drug from those generated by the ambience or other stimulating caffeine drinks or alcohol. Additionally, the use of yaa baa is also closely correlated with cigarette-smoking.

Methamphetamine in Thailand: Not All That New

We have already noted that Thai peasants, the original users of yaa maa, tend to have a certain detachment towards it and treat the drug as an ordinary stimulant. Ms. Koong, whose parents are in Isan in the northeast of the country, says that her father "just told her not to take too much of it, to go slow and to be careful".[59] The notion that yaa baa in itself is not bad has been transmitted by the pioneer users to the next generation, who willingly take to it. According to Bernard Antoine, the consumption of ganja (one of the vernacular names of cannabis) was unregulated 30 years ago, when no one considered it a drug.[60] The idea that foreign substances can enhance bodily strength or stamina is nothing new for ordinary Thais. Youngsters refuse to admit the risk of methamphetamine addiction; yaa baa does not trouble them. Why should they be afraid? Haven't peasants, drivers, and workers consumed it for years? Anything so familiar cannot be very dangerous. Added to this is evidence of veteran yaa baa users who have apparently suffered no ill effects.

> On a wall behind a moto-taxi stand in their locality, Nat and one of his friends observed graffiti "Yaa baa sold here". Nat decided to check it out. The wall overlooked a poultry slaughterhouse where the workers were provided amphetamine pills. They worked very late so that fresh chicken could be delivered in the early hours of the morning. Seeing their unfamiliar faces, the dealer approached them. He sold them three tablets at 55 baht each (around 1.4 euros). The normal price was only 30 to 40 baht each but they paid more because they were newcomers.
>
> Cabrera Jaime and Vanaspong Chitraporn, "Confessions of a Young Yaa Baa Addict", Bangkok Post, 16 March 1997

Nat's statement is telling it shows that there is no real difference between the drug "for workers" and "for youth". Reassured by the fact that their elders also consume it, younger people today use it with few if any misgivings.

Nevertheless, these widespread impressions suffer from two limitations. First, older users of amphetamine, especially peasants and drivers, appear to have been quite moderate in their consumption. The earlier practice was to divide the tablet into portions so as to take just enough to finish the work. Bernard Antoine recalls the 1970s when "workers using yaa baa

did not take more than half a tablet and worked more than six hours continuously". Second, on account of the product's very nature, the risks taken by truck drivers with amphetamine in earlier times are small compared with those faced by young people today who take methamphetamine, which is a more potent psychotropic drug.

Counter-productive Prevention Policies

As part of its primary drug abuse prevention policy, the ONCB has printed anti-drug posters and put them up in the vicinity of shantytowns all over Thailand. The goal of such posters can be summarised in just two words: promote fear. A severed hand cautions workers against using yaa baa in the workplace. A torn family photo warns the young that a drug habit might cause them to break off ties with their family members. A handcuffed and shackled adolescent gives insight into the conditions of life in prison for users who have been arrested. A picture of a child being strangled drives home the fact that yaa baa can cause one to go insane. A deadly cobra or a skull is superimposed upon a photograph of pills. The slogans are equally alarming. "Yaa baa's effects are poisonous", "Yaa baa — death for nothing", "Hundreds of consumers, thousands of families suffering", as well as "Yaa baa — a danger of death".[61]

Provincial village authorities endorse strong anti-drug messages that target the young, but by and large such frightening messages fail to achieve the desired results. Drug prevention campaigns generally do not attain their objectives. The strategy aiming to scare off "hoodlums and minor delinquents" has failed, acknowledges Mrs. Pim, who heads the department of the OCNB that creates media messages about drug abuse prevention.[62]

According to one young female user, "The posters for prevention are not frightening".[63] On the contrary, they offer a sense of reassurance to this young woman who perceives herself to be "far from that situation" — that is, from the stage of addiction where she might take life-threatening risks or feel in danger. She knows "very well that [her] boyfriend who takes more [than she does] is also not so far gone". When the effects that people actually experience from taking yaa baa bear little resemblance to the publicised effects of such psychotropic drugs, anti-drug messages lose their credibility. A young consumer explains that he "saw posters that described yaa baa as bad for health and dangerous for the body", but as he had already experimented with it, he felt "that it was false [because he] knew that it made him happy. So [he] continued" to use it.[64]

The Thai Farmers Research Centre confirms that it is common in Thailand to exaggerate the risks in order to discourage consumers from taking illicit products. The danger here is that such messages can undermine the credibility of the authorities or sponsoring organisations involved, as consumers themselves know the actual effects of yaa baa.[65] Another perverse result is that these alarmist campaigns tend to further stigmatise individuals who are already addicts. While the over-dramatised messages of the chosen prevention policy paradoxically serve to reassure regular yaa baa consumers, they nevertheless cultivate fear among all sectors of the population that do not use the drug. "The people of Thailand have really been afraid the last three years. The government and the authorities are scared. There is fear at the street level too. It is enough to read the newspapers that report atrocities caused by taking yaa baa. They are afraid of the syndrome of a 'sacrificed generation' just like the one caused by the AIDS epidemic", says Jacques Vincent, the Southeast Asian correspondent of an international press agency.[66]

Sometimes the police do arrest young users. The individual is then taken to a civil or military treatment centre where he will undergo a rehabilitation programme designated as secondary if he only "deserves" a moral lecture and tertiary if he requires medical assistance. These rehabilitation programmes focus on socialisation and education. Even if such programs have beneficial results for some young people, they are not exempt from undesirable effects. According to Jirapan Tritipjaras, rehabilitation centres require people with very different drug use histories and patterns to live together in close proximity, which can be quite harmful to the mental balance of certain users. Some individuals are addicts while others are only occasional users. Some have been hooked on heroin for a long time while others have tried only marijuana. Treatment centres tend to become places where individuals build connections with one another that can lead to future involvement with drug trafficking networks.

An End of Addiction Story

Before starting on yaa baa, some youngsters have already experienced other addictive substances that prepare them for new products. By definition — on account of their age — their experience is limited. Generally they start with cigarettes and cannabis and then proceed to methamphetamine, notes Mrs. Lek, who is in charge of a rehabilitation centre for young people.[67]

> I am the youngest of a family of seven. I finished primary school at Muang School at Pai Nathong and then I started my secondary schooling at Pattana Witthaya School, also at Pai Nathong.[68] At high school, my life changed because I started smoking cigarettes in my first year and then cannabis in the second year. In the second quarter, I came to know about yaa baa and I started taking it.
>
> Statement of a young boy published on website of United Nations Drug Control Programme, Regional Centre for Southeast Asia, <http://www.undcp.un.or.th/>

Regular yaa baa users may have had prior experiences with other drugs, sometimes for short periods only. It was in the second year of high school that Nat tried marijuana secretly "just to have fun" because his friends had been talking about it. "I didn't really like it", he says, but he became a smoker anyway. "I only smoke occasionally", he told himself. After high school, he went on to accountancy school. During that time, he met up with a cousin who used methamphetamine himself but did not allow Nat to try it.[69]

Nat finally did manage to get some yaa baa. Others made it their business to supply it to him. Individuals who use cigarettes and cannabis can become dissatisfied and reject them as too common. Surprisingly, yaa baa is often taken not in addition to cigarettes or cannabis, but as a substitute for them.

"At first, we started with ganja. Well, that wasn't habit forming — no risk!" says a young female consumer. Yaa baa provided her with far more stimulation while increasing her sense of risk-taking. The moderate effects of cigarettes and cannabis can function as a launching pad to yaa baa. Their effects help socialize the user into the early stages of drug consumption, but are not sufficiently potent for the process to be judged satisfying. More moderate substances can therefore pave the way for an eventual shift to yaa baa.

Here is the main paradox of methamphetamine consumption. First of all, yaa baa "veterans" tend to downplay its effects. For them, yaa baa (or yaa maa) is not a new product, but one already long-known and considered nothing more than a simple "energiser". This representation is also generally shared by young urban consumers who, as previously noted, tend to underplay the potential negative effects of taking yaa baa. While for some the drug evokes the attractive risk of forbidden fruit, it nevertheless does so without seeming to pose any great danger. The "innocuous" view of the drug allows users to indulge in it almost guilt-free.

At the same time, however, drug abuse prevention campaigns of the ONCB serve to demonise the product and invest it with danger. And danger proves to be another magnet of attraction for young people in Thailand, whose peer groups are especially cohesive social entities.

Dependence on the Substance and the Dealer

School-going yaa baa users who evolve into illicit drug retailers first induce others to become their clients by giving them free trials of the product, then later lead them into addiction. A 17-year-old student explains to Jirapan Tritipjaras that he started using the drug when his friends brought it to his home. One day when he lacked money to repay a debt, one of his friends suggested that he sell methamphetamine. "He suggested that I use some and sell the rest to other students. That's what I did and that fetched quite some money. I realised that I could hide the pills underneath my clothes and on arriving very early, I could easily smuggle them into school." He adds that he paid around 70 baht for each tablet (1.75 euros). On a typical day he would sell seven tablets at 100 to 200 baht each, thus making a profit of 300 to 400 baht. On good days he could sell up to 30 pills.[70]

Generally an adolescent enters the vicious circle of drug use and drug dealing when he cannot control his own habit anymore. Very often this leads to loss of financial control. The dealers offer a neophyte his first tablets; once hooked, they offer him credit. Unable to honour the debts thus contracted, the novice user is caught in a financial trap that he can only exit by entering the dealer circuit himself.

Like other illegal products, patterns of methamphetamine use and dealing can create dangerously escalating situations, especially in environments such as schools. It pushes every new consumer to become a dealer and thus increases the demand, which naturally sets off a chain reaction. The easy money earned by dealers enables them to finance their own consumption, and the rest is often wasted on gambling, petty entertainment, or ostentatious consumption.

> Without his being aware of it, the trap began to close behind Nat. Playing truant from school, he spent his time figuring out how he could get hold of his daily quota of yaa baa and the greater part of his day in the company of other consumers. His family found out that he no longer attended classes. To escape official checks, he went from apartment to apartment, spending one day with one friend, another day with another. Slowly Nat's social circle restricted itself to those whom he befriended to get a supply of methamphetamine.

> The police arrested him while he was in the company of a dealer, though he did not have a single pill on himself. Nevertheless, he was forced to sign a statement to the contrary. The door had closed once and for all behind Nat. In his own eyes and his family's eyes, he was no longer a student. He now had a different face, that of a drug addict.
>
> Cabrera Jaime and Vanaspong Chitraporn, "Confessions of a Young Yaa baa Addict", Bangkok Post, 16 March 1997

Often relationships based on trust form between different intermediaries in the yaa baa marketing chain. The dealer does not see a competitor in the customer whom he initiates into the trade. He will convince the new consumer to become a dealer in his own right, but one at a lower level than himself in the marketing chain. He can reasonably assume that this change will only end up increasing his — the original dealer's — own earnings.

> The retailer at the poultry slaughter-house began to trust Nat and permitted him to take more tablets. Nat could make a profit of 20 baht (around 59 euro cents) on each pill that he could sell at 70 baht. In addition, he received free tablets for his personal consumption. Most of his customers were adolescents who had already tried it. He learnt from other dealers how to act in total safety. He started selling methamphetamine tablets in the evenings to drivers who were waiting to deliver chicken at the market. He hid his reserves in a truck tyre. His income varied from 3,000 to 5,000 baht per week depending upon the number of dealers and the type of pills that he sold.
>
> Cabrera Jaime and Vanaspong Chitraporn, "Confessions of a Young Yaa baa Addict", Bangkok Post, 16 March 1997

As with other psychotropic products, regular yaa baa use finally led young Nat into a state of general addiction. As the methamphetamine effects diminished he felt weak and exhausted, and took more. He quit school because he was no longer interested in anything but his quest for selling and using the drug. At this stage, the consumer has lost control over his consumption. He can no longer do without yaa baa and suffers from a sense of deprivation when he cannot get it.

Ms. Koong's boyfriend is also a yaa baa consumer. In his family's opinion, he is already in a vicious circle from which he cannot extricate himself without help. Ms. Koong and her stepfather advised him to meet with a social worker. According to Ms. Koong, he was taking at least ten pills a day, sometimes perhaps as many as 20. Given the prolonged effect of a tablet, estimated at four to six hours depending on the method of

absorption, it is highly probable that Ms. Koong's friend is in a state of permanent medication and hence addiction.[71]

Appearance of Secondary Effects

We often speak about the risk-taking behaviour of adolescents. To a sociologist, there is no a priori difference between "normal" and "pathological" behaviour. Actions are loaded with socially-generated meanings, yet are still rooted in the actor's own individuality.[72] The clinical and hypothesised effects of given actions are thus distinguished from the actual and imagined effects as they are experienced or felt. Thus, the voices of the young users themselves constitute a valuable interpretive element of the "social fact" of which they are a part.

Unprompted accounts by users about the secondary effects of yaa baa are rare. This is because methamphetamine, admittedly a "drug", is able to pass off as a "miracle pill" free of any undesirable effects. Student users maintain this myth. They grudgingly acknowledge the drug's more toxic effects only after interview questions have been rephrased to elicit information on items such as yaa baa's "harm to the body" after long-term use.

As part of his research on methamphetamine use, Jirapan Tritipjaras interviewed a scrawny young boy who admitted, "My arms and legs have become thin. It hurts when I move. If you don't take it, you have no energy but only pains and cramps." "We give the impression that we are emaciated", says a young woman.[73] "Look at me, aren't I ugly? It is lousy to have to stand like this, to be stared at by people, to know that they will always have a shocking image of us." The woman, a physically weak habitual user, says she is "always afraid that people will hurt me".

An individual in an advanced state of dependency on the drug can also develop paranoid tendencies, seeing himself as a victim or a scapegoat. Even the slightest physical contact may be perceived as aggressive. Yaa baa consumption also leads to sudden and unexpected mood swings. Wavering between choices about what to do with his life, Nat decided to change course and study architecture. Being admittedly suspicious, his aunt had difficulty in understanding his sudden change of mind. Nat had promised her in all sincerity, that he would "stop the business". But the next day he went out to meet his old friends who owed him money and finally "took the plunge" all over again.[74]

Adds an 18-year-old student: "You become irritable more easily than before."[75] "My nature changed, I became angry very easily and was hot-

blooded", confesses a young girl being treated at the Niwattana New Life Project. Says another, "The first time I wanted to stop yaa baa along with my boyfriend, we could not help quarrelling whenever we had a problem. So we started taking it again."[76] In certain cases, abuse of yaa baa can lead to violence. Some users "behave like mad people when they are told something they do not agree with", says a 17-year-old student describing his friends.[77]

> It had become serious. I was taking ten pills per day and I wanted to have more and more. I continued this dose for two months. But I started developing a fear of everything and everybody. I was becoming paranoid. Once, I didn't sleep for four days and finally when I slept, nothing or nobody could wake me up. As I did not respond when my name was called out, my mother and aunt became frightened. My mother took a stick and began to hit me. And only then I woke up with a start. Seeing that I was being beaten up, I ran into the kitchen, got hold of a knife, and wanted to kill my mother. Luckily, my cousin who was around prevented me. It was not difficult because I had become thin and weak. They took me to a hospital to be given a sedative.
>
> Interview with Mr. Boonsen, a former user treated by the Duang Prateep Foundation, on 11 July 2001

It is not by chance that the drug has earned the nickname "madness pill". Nevertheless, methamphetamine-induced behavioural crises are atypical. Such episodes arise only among users who are hypersensitive or in an advanced state of drug abuse; among those who combine the drug with other psychotropic substances such as alcohol or heroin; or among users who use severe methods of self-administering the drug. Generally, it is users who inject themselves with yaa baa more than once or twice a day that are the ones prone to develop psychosis and truly violent behaviour.[78] These incidents, though rare, are over-publicised by the media when they do occur. This is not only because the public laps up such news, but also because reports about yaa baa's violent side-effects are in synergy with the government's policy of projecting it as a diabolical drug.

Stigmatisation, or the Beginning of Ostracism

Statements in which users admit to experiencing true yaa baa deprivation are rare. This is explained by the shameful character accorded to this state, which is condemned in Thailand, as elsewhere.[79] An individual's deficiencies and "abnormalities" are often deemed the outcome of actions

he himself has committed, or those of his family or peers. Naturally this perception justifies how the individual is consequently treated.

Such is the case with all those who are labelled "addicts" in Thailand. The addict archetype is the heroin consumer whose "pathological" behaviour is more individualistic than social, more sick-inducing than recreational, more habitual than occasional, and more compelled than voluntary. But significant methamphetamine abuse also leads to indisputable patterns of addiction whose signs become visible over the long run.

As discussed earlier, the occasional use of yaa baa has long been socially sanctioned in Thai society. Society does not condemn the peasant, worker, or truck driver who is a typical methamphetamine user because taking the drug allows him to increase his household income. But the moment he loses control over himself — as when he experiences hallucinations or displays telling signs of abuse such as puncture marks or weight loss — he is subject to collective disapproval, and isolated as someone who does not conform to socially acceptable norms.[80] And, given that those who consume large quantities of the drug are rapidly forced to enter dealer circuits, they become recipients of an even more derogatory status. Thus deemed "traffickers", these individuals are subject to intense discrimination.

Bernard Antoine observes that in Thailand a drug addict is considered "dirty",[81] "… so he is somewhat despised. Of course he is pitied, but most of all, he is despised". Dealers are held in even greater contempt. "All the people in the neighbourhood know that we sell yaa baa", states Ms. Koong, whose friend is also a dealer.[82] Although there are dealers who have the necessary police protection and hence are not troubled by the stigma, they cannot lead a completely normal life either. They lack the respect accorded to other livelihoods that are above the law. "I feel that people look at us askance, that they are scared of us", concludes Ms. Koong.

According to the sociologist Vincent de Gaulejac, the sense of shame experienced by the drug user is an essential tool of social control. It constitutes the victim's logical response to condemnation. All people try to reduce the gap between their prescribed identity, their desired identity, and their acquired identity. It is the need to be recognised by the community that is the key element in the sense of shame, and it is this shame that prevents the subject from cutting himself off from the norms and values that establish the social contract.[83]

But the subjective sense of shame may vary according to the status of the individual being shamed. The "shame of being a drug-addict" can be much more devastating than the "shame of being poor", as noted earlier, because the addict can be reproached as responsible for his condition. Worse yet, while yaa baa allows the user to shed his inhibitions while under the effect of methamphetamine, the shame experienced by an abusive user only increases his inhibitions and cultural difficulties with self-expression and communication. He may compensate by increasing his yaa baa consumption, precisely to avoid feeling ashamed of being so dependent on the drug. Thus he finds himself in an inextricable double bind in which the drug is used to allay the sense of shame it engendered in the first place.[84]

Ms. Koong wishes she could stop taking yaa baa because she knows the risks involved. She had begun to seek the help of a social worker whom we met in her company. There are puncture marks on her arms where the veins are prominent that are the physical stigma of a "drug addict". She also carries the social stigma of shame. Unable to look at us directly, she turns her face away while she speaks. When we address her, she looks down. Of course, in Southeast Asia this body language is typical of someone who thinks of herself as inferior, and might also be interpreted as a mark of respect to a farang.[85] But these explanations become less convincing when we note that she continued to address our interpreter directly. We could sense her embarrassment and general lack of self-esteem.

The shame of being a drug-addict not only affects the abusive user; it noticeably involves the rest of his family as well. While meeting with family of an addict, Mr. Saichon, a social worker, carefully tries to "save face" on behalf of the father[86] who was ashamed of having an "addicted" child.[87] According to Nucharat Kanchanaroj, who directs the "treatment" section of the Office of Narcotics Control Board, many parents cannot acknowledge or accept the fact that their children are addicts.[88] When they do, they feel helpless.

Researchers at the Thai Farmers Research Centre who study the social consequences of yaa baa addiction note that the responses of some family members to the situation almost border on the Manichean.[89] Parents may perceive the drug as "disgusting" and wish to disown any of their children who take it. "I had friends and a family who liked me a lot and who were a great comfort to me. But when they came to know that I was taking drugs, their attitude towards me changed, they stopped

showing any interest in me and they did not love me as before. In their eyes I had become a foreigner, a suspect."[90] This young girl's account shows the family's need to distance itself from the drug addict by reproof and condemnation, so as not to be associated with his deviant behaviour. Thus very often the compassion that an addict needs so crucially is reduced to that from a handful of social workers and a few friends whom the sociologist Erving Goffman describes as "confidantes". They are different from "ordinary people" in that they likely experience a lesser phobia of the stigma against both drug dependence, and association with drug addicts.

Whether as a habitual user or a dealer, every day the addict becomes increasingly separated from human relationships that are the hallmark of normal life. Social pressures stigmatise him as someone different, an outcast. He has few alternatives other than to be content to live in seclusion and associate with only those who distribute and deal the drug.

PART THREE

Sociological Context of the Explosion in Methamphetamine Use in Thailand

CHAPTER 8

A Difficult Legacy for the Younger Generations

A Tradition of Political, Economic and Social Control

In many Western countries emerging capitalism brought in its wake values such as individualism, liberalism, and by extension, democracy. From the outset, the capitalist system that developed in the West was opposed to absolutism. In Thailand, however, an aristocracy was able to co-exist harmoniously with capitalism.[1] Thus over time, the Thai population had to use means other than those of liberal democracy to assert its social demands and struggle for greater freedom.

When Ayutthaya was still the capital of the Kingdom in the 18th century, exports were considered a royal privilege.[2] International pressure from rice-importing countries finally broke this monopoly, and Siam's external trade developed rapidly in the second half of the 19th century.[3]

At the same time, the peasants of the central plain who were formerly confined to economic self-subsistence began to increase areas under cultivation and reap greater harvests. Eventually aristocrats were no longer the sole beneficiaries of overseas trade; merchants, mostly Chinese traders in collaboration with Western partners, also took advantage of increased opportunities. Though agriculturalists could produce much more than what was needed for their consumption, they failed to develop into a local bourgeoisie or a bourgeoisie with local capital holdings, as was the case in Europe. The Thai peasantry never really developed into a middle class.

During the reign of King Chulalongkorn from 1868 to 1910, the monarchy succeeded in overcoming local powers and influential networks, and proceeded to centralise and professionalise the government machinery. A salaried bureaucratic class and professional army were established.

These invariably led to a caste of high-level bureaucrats devoted to government service, whose existence was predicated on being educated overseas. The monarchy sent many promising young plebeians and aristocrats abroad to receive training. Freshly qualified from British and French universities, those bound for the Thai civil service returned home with great optimism, a fascination for European democracies, and — for some — a host of progressive ideas.

From among these foreign-educated bureaucrats emerged a group that, from afar, began to view the land of their birth with new eyes. The movement was powerful enough to question royal domination and force King Prajadhipok (r. 1925–35) to transform the absolute monarchy into a constitutional monarchy in 1932. And yet, the arrival of this young civil and military force did not have the impact on the society one might have expected. Until the end of the 1970s, Siam (which became Thailand in 1938) continued to be an essentially rural nation subject to distinctly hierarchical social organisation.

It was a major student uprising in 1973 — in some ways a legacy of the 1932 movement, but one strengthened with radical demands in relation to its time — that finally brought reformist ideas to power. The real democratisation brought about by students who participated in this historical event was tragically cut short by the military coup d'etat of 1976, which was accompanied by bloody repression.

But the foundations of social reform had been laid, and above all, a real middle class of bureaucrats, merchants, and businessmen (often of Chinese origin) had emerged.[4] Aspiring to greater liberty, the middle classes wanted to do away with the military control that had been imposed with the blessings of the aristocracy. Many of them were descended from a generation that had experienced war, and had become disillusioned with fascism. They sought to construct a more open society that could offer better economic prospects.

Nevertheless, this orientation met with great resistance. Since the coup d'état of 1932 up until very recently, the generals in the country have dominated Thai national politics.[5] The army traditionally enjoys the relative support of peasants, who regard it as a fortress against commercial exploitation.[6] This support helps explain the Thai military's continual proximity to political power.

In the 1950s the army was given the responsibility of restoring order to a nation suffering from financial difficulties and an incipient Marxist insurrection. During the Cold War era, interests converged between the anti-communist United States and the Thai military government. As a

result, Thailand benefited from a good deal of military support — as well as three billion dollars of financial assistance — between 1951 and 1975.[7] Washington's only terms of agreement were that the state's military-industrial capitalism, based on a system of monopoly, was unacceptable and would need to be replaced. Prime Minister Sarit Thanarat came to power in Bangkok in 1958, and from the outset he cooperated with the injunctions of the Kennedy administration to open the door to foreign investments.

1960–90: Helplessness of the Salaried Class, Radical Protests and the Emergence of a "Middle Class"

The closing decades of the 20th century were marked by profound socio-economic change in Thailand. Agriculture, which in 1960 still accounted for 40 per cent of GNP and 83 per cent of exports, was by 1990 reduced to only 14 per cent of total economic activity and 22 per cent of export revenue.[8]

A remarkable increase in GNP was only one consequence of this shift. Industrialisation was also accompanied by rapid urbanisation and a massive rural exodus, leading to great disorientation and anomie in a population unaccustomed to such mobility.[9] Intact families were split up, and individuals who had become separated often had to recombine with different family members to form new households, a process that disrupted norms of social control. The very rules that had long governed work and social distinctions were fundamentally transformed. Prompted by the changed conditions and a general sense of unease, people confronted new identities and came into association with others of the same identity in groups based on new norms and demands.

The beginning of industrialisation in the 1930s saw the appearance of a Thai labouring class, a new social entity. However, it would be much later before worker-based class consciousness would appear. The first truly popular political movements started only after 1972 with the lifting of restrictions on trade union organizations. Workers' demands at that time originated with the public sector employees' unions, and slowly spread to private-sector labourers. All pressed for better salaries and improved working conditions. In 1972 some 8,000 labourers protested in 34 labour strikes; the following year there were 501 strikes involving 120,000 labourers.

These strikes received strong support from a student movement that was inculcated with Maoist ideology. In 1973, a trade union was created

with the objective of rallying workers, students, and peasants all under one banner. On 14 October 1973, the army proceeded to brutally suppress the demonstrators, which led to the fall of the military government. However, the strikes did not stop. Protests against the American presence, capitalist exploitation, and corruption continued, now subsumed under the trade union umbrella of the Labour Coordination Centre of Thailand (LCCT).

In 1974, student activists reproached the civil government for continuing to sanction tacit military control. They also joined protests organized by private sector workers. A common march was organised under the LCCT banner on Sanam Luang, the Royal Esplanade of Bangkok near Thammasat University, an event that brought together 20,000 to 30,000 people over five days. To put an end to the strike the government decided to introduce a guaranteed minimum salary. The new provisions, however, excluded certain categories of workers, in particular tourism sector employees.

The workers, most of whom were from a rural milieu, had scant experience in negotiating or in organising protests. They lacked a unifying base and needed resources and assistance to form one. It was the Thai students who helped the workers construct a framework to press for general welfare demands and create pressure groups to publicise their grievances.

The year 1975 sounded the death knell of the golden age of the LCCT, which became a victim of dissension among the student unions that were involved. This provided an opportunity for some employers to withdraw employee benefits. By converting workers' base pay to piece rate, many employers evaded new legislative measures regarding paid leave, sick leave, overtime, and severance pay. These were essential elements of the fragile new social contract. A bomb was set off in the midst of striking workers at a textile company at Thonburi, an act that symbolically marked the return to an earlier balance of power. Increasing numbers of industrial employees who dared to protest were fired. During the first nine months of 1975, 8,100 workers were retrenched across 1,931 companies. The right to strike was restricted and thereafter, a prior notice of eight days had to be given to warn the company of impending actions.

On 4 July 1976, students and workers organised a major strike against companies representing the American-Taiwanese-Japanese presence in the country. Protesters shouted slogans condemning what they termed a "capitalist takeover" of the economy, one carried out under the pretext of an imaginary communist threat. The police used violent means to

suppress the strikers, and the LCCT eventually collapsed. From then on, student demonstrations were broken up and their leaders arrested. In October of that year the law granting the right to strike was abolished, and between 2,000 to 3,000 students had to flee to countryside, forests, and neighbouring countries. Any progressive ideas that had inspired the protests were thenceforth considered tantamount to communism and hence illegal.

This was the end of an epoch. When the students who had gone underground came out of hiding a few years later, their society had been transformed. The emerging middle classes no longer dreamt of liberty or social reform, but only of the economic growth and prosperity they might achieve.

In 1978, General Kriangsak Chomanand became Prime Minister. He himself was credited for the military patronage of the Federation of Labour Unions of Thailand, a body that brought together workers and other salaried employees in large public enterprises associated with transport, utilities, and tobacco. When he took over as prime minister, Kriangksak Chomanand decided to annul all other existing trade union organisations.[10]

A group of young officers nicknamed the "Young Turks" gained increasing influence in Thailand between 1973 and 1976. The appellation was borrowed from a movement of the same name that had introduced democratic values into the Ottoman Empire at the start of the 20th century. The Young Turks of Thailand fought in the Vietnam War alongside the Americans, who had trained them in anti-guerrilla warfare. They arrived on the political scene at a time when the discredited army had lost ground to civilian politicians.

The young officers tried to repair the image of the army by feigning an interest in the country's social problems — a message that met with general approval, as their civilian rivals showed a troubling propensity to mix public interest with personal goals. This tendency had grown to such an extent that the ordinary Thai citizen was likely to perceive a soldier to be less corrupt than an elected politician. Although the Young Turks were able to get help from the remaining trade unions and student associations which they managed to control, they were never able to accede to power directly. The Thai King continued to oppose them, and the next fifteen years were marked by the mutual opposition of the two political forces.

Meanwhile, individuals in the reigning civilian-military caste that had been in power almost continuously since 1932 remained allied to the

aristocracy. But increasingly, they were confronted by the Thai middle classes, who between 1973 and 1976 had started to wield power as they gained in strength from continued economic growth.

In 1981, the right to strike was restored. Fifty-four strikes involving 22,000 workers subsequently took place. Trade unions reappeared, and by 1983 there were 413 such organisations.[11] But the power to retrench continued to be a discretionary weapon in the hands of employers, and activists, naturally, were its main victims. Employers continued to suppress those who dared challenge the status quo, until all threats or protests were virtually done away with. Conditions for workers in Thailand thus began an era of long-term decline. During the 1980s, politicians and businessmen extended privatisation measures to businesses across several of the country's economic sectors.

Meanwhile, the fight against communism continued. The communist "threat" at the borders was always deemed to be present, all the more since counterinsurgency assistance from the American army had declined considerably after the Vietnam War. The government decided to recruit and train young people to form paramilitary units to counter a possible armed insurrection. Organisations such as the Volunteers for National Defence, Forest Guards, Red Guards, and Village Scouts were just some of the paramilitary units in which young Thais who today, in 2000, are between 30 and 35 years of age, received training in combat fighting at the time. By 1985, membership in these units numbered some three million young people.[12]

On the social front, a 1988 study of 110 companies in Bangkok showed that 232 union leaders were among the 1,531 employees who were retrenched during that year. Employers would not hesitate to close down a factory and dismiss all employees when its workers threatened to go on strike. Subsequently, the employer would start recruiting new workers for the same jobs with different contracts, often with reduced benefits. Unions survived, but most often in clandestine fashion.

Employers generally continued to increase the number of fixed period, or temporary, contracts. The proportion of jobs characterised by precarious employment rose to 90 per cent in some sectors such as the textile industry. In 1990, another study estimated that 44 per cent of Thai workers were paid less than the legal minimum wage. Only white-collar workers were spared during this employment restructuring. The shortage of qualified white-collar labour during the country's growth period from the early 1980s until 1995 served to strengthen the position of the middle classes.

Coups that have taken place in Thailand one after another since the 1970s have all been justified by the need to safeguard the country's three pillars — nation, religion, and the monarchy — against the "communist threat". The reason for the 1991 coup d'etat was somewhat different. The "threat" from communism having virtually disappeared, those mounting the coup claimed to be doing so to counter the "threat" of generalised corruption, which they alleged to be a necessary counterpart of parliamentarism. From the perspective of those who support putsches, such actions are necessary to slow the pace of the democratisation, as well as fight "revolutionary" militants (i.e. the Young Turks). The military acted as if it held power unreservedly, pretending to have "everything under control except the moon and the stars", but their efforts failed to counter even street-level resistance and the coup attempt failed.

Born out of popular student protests in the 1970s and strengthened by the economic growth of the 1980s, the urban middle class was eventually in a position to form what is generally called "public opinion". Unionists, politicians, businessmen, bureaucrats, teachers, religious authorities, writers, and artists soon took over the reins of the Fourth Estate. These groups were able to do so simply because they were responsible for what was said in the media, what was written in books, or what was taught in school. They were thus able to create the myths, knowledge, and other common opinions of the time.

Along with economic growth, educational trends also contributed to the expanding influence of the middle class. Access to tertiary education became a universal right in Thailand. However, many students of the 1973–6 generation did not follow the usual paths to a bureaucratic career. Rather than heading for administration after graduation from the universities, one can find them today in 2000, aged 45 years or so, holding down jobs as secretaries, accountants, or commercial agents. Many have distanced themselves from values propagated by the civilian-military elite that had caused Thai society to stagnate rather than evolve. By their very actions and life choices, members of the 1973–6 generation succeeded in introducing the ideals of civilian society and democratic debate into Thai society.

A large number of associations for human rights, economic development, environmental protection, and freedom of expression were formed. By defending life and environment in the villages, urbanites were able to associate themselves with villagers. Thus united, urban and rural alike formed the essence of the new political force of the 1980s. Artists relayed the messages of this grassroots "NGO movement" in their creations.

Musical groups such as Carabao defended the environment and railed against injustice, while Asanee Chotikun denounced corruption, prostitution, and urban exploitation.

The Decline of Politicisation and Growth of Cynicism

Two decades of repression in Thai society acted to limit the extent of politicisation among members of the earlier "coming-of-age" generation in Thai politics. Many were sufficiently disillusioned by events in the 1970s to leave politics altogether, and chose instead to make use of opportunities to start business in the economic climate of increased foreign investment.

The trend away from politics is even more marked for the following generation. Educated in the 1980s, many of this group opted to study engineering and management and, as of the year 2000, are holding key posts in industries, services, tourism, and public transport and works. Far from the idealism that fired their more senior counterparts during their student days, members of the 1980s generation today are more likely to have individual aspirations. They have become adults at a time when a fascinating culture of consumerism has emerged in Thailand, one promoted more by television than by educational theories. These young people are less interested in social reconstruction than they are in the construction of new condominiums, malls, and other fast track schemes. Cynical about politics, their only genuine interest appears to be ascending the ladder of social mobility. When the 1980s generation took to the streets in May 1992, they were not protesting against the arrogance of the military and loss of democratic practices, but rather against the limits to their personal success they feared would be imposed on them by a monopolistic elite.

Students of the late 1990s generation, whose preference for yaa baa is so marked, are therefore inheritors of an eventful history. The Thai military's partial or total consolidation of power over seven decades served to bring about the end of communism in the country, but also effectively killed off all other alternative ideals. Members of the current cohort in 2000 stand completely apart from their parents, the latter belonging to the student generation of 1973–6 that experienced the agonies of a society created in protest and suppressed by violence. Members of the current generation of young people are also unlike the generation of their immediate seniors, who became caught up in the dynamism of economic growth of the 1980s and succumbed to the excitement it generated.

The spell of economic success was broken by the shock of 1997, precisely the moment when the student generation of the 1990s was either anticipating or actually preparing to enter the job market. In July of that year, the baht lost nearly 40 per cent of its value against the dollar, revealing over-confidence and bad management.[13] Foreign investors embarked on a massive capital withdrawal. The construction sector was especially hard-hit, leaving millions of workers unemployed.[14] The government was forced to take drastic economic measures, and the King personally insisted that all Thais should accept the sacrifices imposed by the situation.

Three decades have thus now passed since the first glimmerings of democratic awareness in the country. In the period following, Thai society was wracked by confrontation. It has now been over a decade since the 1992 establishment of an authentic parliamentary democracy. Today, however, social demands are no longer on the agenda. Apart from the NGO movements, Thai civil society evidences a distressing lack of social infrastructure.[15]

Deprived of the prospects brought about by the economic growth of the 1980s, young Thais today have few other ambitions except to be entertained and seek enjoyment. "Fun" is the watchword of a generation lacking in prospects, a generation which prefers to disdain — rather than take to heart — any social criticism directed at it. The craze of Thai youth for ATS allows individuals to "look at life through rose-tinted glasses", a social syndrome highly evocative of this particular historical moment in Thai society. Taking a long-term view of the making of modern Thailand, then, we can surmise that the political, social, economic, and cultural conditions of the country in the late 1990s have been extremely conducive to the methamphetamine boom.

The current period, though one of disillusionment, is also one of peace and relative social permissiveness. Despite current drug laws, in actual practice youngsters are generally free to use yaa baa as they wish. The product suits them because it embellishes their vision of the world. Perhaps naïvely, they use it in excess without worrying about possible consequences. Short-term interests dictate their choices. One young man named Nat confirms that "adolescents consume drugs only because they want to have fun" and to enjoy "the energy given by drugs".[16] Such is the game. Yaa baa is taken for the fun of it, consumed alongside other useless and superfluous products because to do so is amusing (sanuk). In truth, the prime motivating factor among drug-taking young Thais is not

so much a desire to break the law as it is the desire to have a good time together.

"Any prohibition is glamorised by the transgression it targets."[17] Patrick Pelège observes that in order to be different, adolescents in the West frequently try to break away from their families. They provoke, contradict, question their parents, and test the limits of what is permitted and prohibited in the real world.[18]

However, while adolescents in the West take to addiction because of their rebellious attitude, this is not the case for young Thai addicts. Jacques Vincent, a journalist present at the student revolts of May 1968 in France who also witnessed the emerging methamphetamine boom among Thai youth, emphasizes the differences between the two. Young Thais, he observes, are not revolting against the consumer society, but are instead longing for access to it.[19] Bernard Antoine's analysis confirms that "youngsters are not consuming yaa baa to transgress what is forbidden".[20] Not having experienced military repression, members of the current younger generation feel relatively unconstrained with respect to the law.

Young Thais' drug-taking practices are not done in solitude. Yaa baa users must follow the group in Thailand, which guarantees a feeling of security. Thai youth has given itself over to sanuk, a traditional value which means "to act only by virtue of what gives pleasure and what is pleasant". Their indulgence in risk-taking by using drugs to excess or becoming intoxicated underscores a game-like approach to the world. This game culminates in yielding relative — though not complete — control over oneself vis-à-vis the outer world: relative enough to experience a sense of freedom without incurring the social stigmatisation that results from becoming an advanced user.

David Le Breton explains this as "losing your bearings", in other words, creating a temporary disorder of the coordinates that control day-to-day existence in a social and cultural environment governed by precise rules. The player gives himself up, at least partially, to the intoxication of the senses. He wishes to "have a ball".[21]

Mr. Suchaat continues, "Yaa baa is modern because it is a chemical pill. It is in vogue. Yaa baa is very fashionable. It is taken because it is more cool than natural substances."[22] A report of the National Commission for Primary Education reveals that many school-age young people are up all night enjoying "the Western lifestyle" that has become so popular among middle class youngsters.[23] Thai youth try to imitate what they imagine is the behaviour of their Western counterparts.

Such actions never fail to alarm older Thais, who, like adults everywhere, disparage the values and identity crises of the younger generation. "Society is sick. We have to reconstruct the system of values and teach youngsters how to … find their self-esteem."[24] According to Mrs. Pim, "they drift and have false values. They are not sure of their identity, of what they are and the path that they take".[25]

In reality, the youngsters are not without values, but rather adhere to values consonant with a consumer society. Mrs. Nucharat Kanchanaroj observes that young Thais need their pagers, mobile telephones, video games, television, and music systems.[26] Access to these symbolic consumer items is "necessary for existence" when one belongs to the wealthy or middle-income classes. It also holds true for those of more modest standing, provided they have the spending power. Children — including those of illegal workers — have a penchant for methamphetamine because it offers them entry into what they perceive as the modern world. In the lyrics of one of Carabao's hit songs, "Thais are scared of being left behind".[27] A major concern among the young is not being "fashionable", and since an authentic and modern Thai fashion sense has yet to emerge, what comes from abroad is thought of as "fashionable". (The song lyrics reveal a paradox, however. Numerous "fashionable" consumer items are manufactured in Thailand, but if they are sought after it is only because they have been sent abroad to be labelled "Paris" or "New York".)

In the current computer age, young people easily learn about how the wealthy live and desire a foretaste of it, says a journalist.[28] Individuals who are far from being well-off will sell methamphetamine, not to generate income to pay for the basic necessities of life, but to enjoy luxury products and expensive goods.[29]

Of course, this phenomenon is not entirely new. Jacques Vincent remarks that young Thais have long gravitated toward the "disco-techno-pop-star" culture.[30] But the tendency has grown considerably. Discos are more frequented than ever before. And as for student prostitution, it is common knowledge that "some girls are capable of going into prostitution just to get a mobile telephone or the latest L'Oréal product".[31]

Given the above, what used to be inaccessible has now become as indispensable as what is vital. Herein is an essential element of the new hedonistic culture: the youth of Thailand know that they no longer want the rigid morals of the old, but are unsure of what an alternative would be. Under these conditions, money becomes the standard that allows one to measure oneself against others. Depending on the individual, one aspires for the latest-model Mercedes or a gadget from a chic boutique.

Even the less fortunate who cannot afford to buy things from shopping malls satisfy themselves by entering to look around in wonder and enjoy the air-conditioned atmosphere.[32]

According to Patrick Pelège, when one is a part of a society where image is of primary importance and appearances are highly valued, it is a great risk to be fat when the norm is to be thin. And a society whose dominant value is appearance tends to instil childish mentalities in its members. The learning processes of education, autonomy and responsibility depend on the ability of a society to lead (ex-ducere) its members beyond primary dependences. At root it is education, in the sense of "being conducted outside of", and not seduction (se-ducere), that enables this maturation process to take place.[33]

But increasingly, the Thai social model is based on collective self-seduction. A player is defined in near totality once he has expressed his status or function. And for the youth who has neither the former nor the latter, it is only his articles of consumption that serve as a visiting card. The image conveyed by a person confirms that he "holds" his status. To ensure that his "right" worth is properly assessed, an individual must make regular display of his credited worth. The very rich in Thailand will organise a sumptuous reception or finance a charity that also accords them religious merit. For a man, the quest for recognition can be expressed through bold acts of virility meant to impressive his peers. Such behaviour is all the more impressive if it is carried out in a flagrant and ostentatious manner.[34]

Surprisingly, the limitless desire to belong to a society of consumption in Thai society among young people does not generally give rise to acts of delinquency.[35] Young Thais do not adopt a confrontational, nihilistic, or anarchist stance which refutes social values, even if doing so might give one the upper hand. For instance, theft is considered unacceptable and is never tolerated.[36] Students from a very young age are taught this principle in civics classes in government schools. It is also covered in Buddhist teachings. Negative social sanctions against theft are rooted in social norms of respecting others and their possessions.[37] But above all, the fact that a consumer society can emerge without a corresponding increase in behaviour that transgresses the law is proof that the rules of the social "game" are thoroughly respected. Young people in Thailand have not lost all their values, as some would claim. They have simply adopted new values and superimposed them on the older ones.

For older generations, the current yaa baa phenomenon is difficult to understand. Why do young people take the drug in such large quantities

when their lives are free of the physically demanding tasks that produce insurmountable or unavoidable fatigue? By adults' reckoning, the concept of a recreational drug, one taken "just for pleasure", is abnormal. According to Margaret Mead, in a world of perpetual change, man becomes an "immigrant in time".[38] This is indeed the case in Thailand, where educating children about drugs is becoming a problem. The cultural gap that divides generations in Thailand today is of such magnitude that many parents are at a loss about how to even begin to tackle it.

CHAPTER 9

Youth, Drugs, and Thailand's Institutional Culture

Individuals in Thailand who become monks, or Buddhist educators, come from a great range of professions and livelihoods. They might be hermits here, village priests there, developers elsewhere, astrologists, healers, miracle-workers, preachers, scholars, or teachers and educators. The sangha (Buddhist community) that was founded to live a life of detachment from the world is in fact attached to it — certainly as regards food and money, but also in spiritual and intellectual ways.[1] From the early centuries of Siam's history, young boys' education was the responsibility of the monastery, and since the educational reforms introduced by King Chulalongkorn in 1887, monks have overseen some aspects of girls' primary education as well.

However, due to lack of adequate or qualified personnel, individual monks were unable to manage the full load of teaching in schools where they had taken charge. Very soon they had to call on lay teachers. The general demand for teachers in the country increased as Buddhist institutions began to compete with the expanding public and private school sector, a development over which the Buddhist educators had no control.

Today Buddhist schools still coexist with secular institutions, and thanks to this dual system Thailand can boast of a remarkable literacy rate. Schools are inseparable from religion and citizenship; in Thailand, Buddhism is one of the pillars of the nation. As the forthcoming discussion will show, teaching in government schools consists mostly of imparting religious values to students — or more precisely, the government's interpretation of religious values. The following discussion draws heavily

on the works of the anthropologist Neils Mulder, who has analysed Thai culture based on a study of school textbooks.[2]

School: A Lax Education against a Rigid Background

School Syllabi: Stratification and Dependence

The moral precepts conveyed to students in Thai schools tend to be very simplistic. Educators use Manichean distinctions to classify all actions as "black" or "white", and all individuals as "good" or "bad". In the category of "good", one's parents take precedence above all others. According to the teachings, a Thai father and mother are presumed to act always for the benefit of their children. "Undoubtedly they love their children, even though they [may] show it awkwardly at times", cautiously adds one textbook author. One's teachers are likewise held to be intrinsically virtuous and of a high moral order, appearing just after parents in this pantheon of goodness. After teachers come one's elders, superiors, and all those who give financial support to the family.

Alternatively, there exist those who create disharmony: individuals who follow nothing but their ambitions and desires, causing such disruption that neither their families nor society can enjoy peace and happiness in their presence. The "bad", with their quarrelsome tendencies, are held up as negative examples. Children learn in school that all conflict is to be avoided. Individuals must safeguard themselves from the harmful effects of differences and disagreement. All social problems are the consequence of differences of opinion or of social change. The key to happiness lies in the willingness to accommodate oneself to any situation through acts of giving, personal sacrifice, and self-effacement.

The image of drugs conveyed by the textbooks is also Manichean. Somewhat realistically, and at the risk of tarnishing the idyllic model of family usually depicted in the readings, one author ventures the opinion that at times boys — and only boys — may use drugs to prove their masculinity to each other. Drugs, it is said, are children's recourse against the anxiety generated by quarrels between parents, mothers who are compulsive gamblers, or fathers who drink or come home late because they have a mistress. Among the drugs listed are cigarettes, identified as the first step leading to consumption of more serious drugs, a sequence that may end in eventual imprisonment or death. Eventually the Manichean classifications of the text shift into outright condemnation. Young "drug addicts" are singled out for special blame. All drug-related anti-social

behaviour is supposed to reflect addicts' own "dirty" environment. Such individuals are accused of destroying society and threatening national stability.

One textbook reports the story of an unhappy family whose members are addicted to drugs or alcohol. After they reform themselves, their life turns happy and profitable. The readings hold that it is possible to quit drugs, but only by one's own willpower. The moral is explicit: a person is not a victim of drugs but rather a culprit if he consumes them. He has only himself to blame. This orientation is one of the main obstacles to rehabilitation programs for drug addicts. Addicts are stigmatised, and in Thai culture such individuals are denied a second chance. In part because current economic conditions are so precarious, society's judgements are harsh and unforgiving. It is all the more difficult for the addict to reform as he must challenge not only his addiction but also the disapproving attitudes of others.

The Thai family is made up of a hierarchy of roles which should command respect. This requires family members to cultivate virtues of politeness, respect, honesty, magnanimity, and cooperation, declares one textbook. Children should always be grateful for parental love. Their behaviour should be irreproachable, and they should never question paternal authority. Teachers, too, should always be taken at their word because of their higher knowledge. Thus Thai children are judged by their behaviour towards generous and helpful elders (phu yai — adults).

Once children enter school, textbooks and teaching begin to extend the model of hierarchy and mutual obligation that children first learn about in the family to society as a whole. The family model is transposed to the three "pillars" of Thai society — the nation, religion, and King — occupying the top of the hierarchy. They learn that Thai adults are subject to the same rules as those that place children in the family hierarchy. The need to display gratitude and obligation towards those to whom one is indebted is so central to the construction of society that it is presented as a mantra in every textbook.

However, some messages are ambiguous. One textbook describes how a rich family squanders its wealth on ostentatious goods because its members follow the dictates of their desires. This family's experience is compared to the actions of a more modest family. Because of its members' ability to be guided by ethics, moral values, and capacity to follow norms, the modest family subsequently prospers and so attains happiness. What should children infer from this? On the one hand, wealth does not bring about happiness, but on the other hand, happiness brings wealth. The text

upholds principles of hard work and perseverance, yet the worthiness of these things is still measured according to a scale of wealth

Such ambiguities notwithstanding, textbooks continuously exhort the student to respect norms that allow one to "live in good social harmony", even if doing so may impair students' creative inspiration, sense of initiative, and imagination. "When many people live together (in school for example), the community should set itself rules, conventions and order. If everyone follows rules, then schools become a haven of peace, whereas if everyone is allowed to express himself and follow his own inclinations, then schools become absolutely chaotic", cautions one textbook.[3]

Students' education is not meant to enhance their creativity, nor to encourage them to take responsibility for themselves, as that might lead them to challenge certain principles of community life. Education, in short, is the process by which students should acquire irrefutable and inevitable knowledge. Teaching more advanced students to be critically analytical may lead them into anti-social behaviour. At all levels, it appears that Thai school students are encouraged to memorise rather than understand.

A resulting paradox is that while docility is universally held in high regard, Buddhist teachings also stress the values of independence and autonomy. But looking more deeply into what these terms mean and how they are interpreted reveals a contradiction. According to the textbooks, a child is "independent" when he is capable of taking care of his body, mind, and personal belongings (as in to dress, to wash, to wash his clothes, do household jobs, and make intellectual effort) without asking others to help him solve his problems until he himself has tried to solve them.[4]

Thus the concept of independence is quite different from what we might find in a country such as France, where similar values are framed within a different social environment. According to Swiss sociologists Jean Kellerhals and Cléopâtre Montandon, "Parents of the working class insist more on obedience, conformity and caution whereas those belonging to the bourgeoisie place more emphasis on autonomy, creativity and self-regulation."[5] Thai schools cultivate what would be regarded as an everyday understanding of the term "independence" in Western societies. In this respect it differs from its meaning in modern Western schools, where the objective is to give students an independence that is synonymous with emancipation.[6]

In Thailand, it is often said that a young child is "king", or as Bernard

Antoine puts it, he is "too spoilt, too molly-coddled". Evidence supports this view. As a Thai child is considered a dependent, he receives help from others no matter how trivial the task. The female senator Prateep Ungsongtham Hata echoes this observation by saying that many overprotected children are incapable of reasoning and taking their own decisions, which in fact causes them to have low self-esteem.[7]

A chronic state of "being helped" does nothing to encourage young children to gain autonomy. One yaa baa user who had undergone three years of detoxification says that he continues to feel handicapped by this history of external control. "When we are children, we are over-protected." Presumably for their own good, "parents think and do everything for their children". But later on, "someone always has to do the needful".[8] An education limited to reproducing what is taught will not help students face life.

This state of affairs in the Thai educational system continues all the way through university. At that level, all disciplines — including nationalism, which is considered a legitimate subject for higher academia — are taught according to a rigid framework. Thus the system teaches students how to "love the nation", even going as far as specifying the appropriate ways to express patriotism.[9] As with other ideas, the concept of nationalism is similarly not open to criticism or analysis. While venturing an independent opinion on such matters in Thai society today is no longer considered an act of rebellion, doing so is still frowned upon.

Secondary Schools: An Open Door to Yaa Baa

The following statements by young users demonstrate how yaa baa consumption can become a positive part of their school experiences. This in turn helps explain how methamphetamine infiltrates a school environment. A former user declares that the first time he tried the drug, "it was in the toilets of the school. It was not complicated, everybody saw and knew who sold it. The toilets were the meeting places of the small-time hoodlums of the school. … you only had to ask for it, because in the beginning they offered it to you."[10] A Thai school student has access to yaa baa even if he does not really want it and can sample it "just to try" without having to pay. For a student to resist this kind of temptation would take an unusual degree of self-discipline.

The sociologist Jirapan Tritipjaras spent three months in a Thai secondary school observing the norms of daily school life.[11] The structure of the institution conformed to a well-defined hierarchy. Here, the director

exercised full control. Teachers could not question or debate the school's prescribed rules, and teachers themselves were often very strict. In the rule book, regulations for the school dress code alone covered many pages. Yet despite these institutional restrictions, teachers were given a free hand with their students and generally wielded complete authority in the classroom. Corporal punishment was common.

A sixteen-year-old student from the school lamented, "For example, we had to put a cross in the questionnaire and if it did not fill the whole square they would beat us. They would beat us if we were late or absent or if we could not submit our homework. Even if we had valid reasons they would not listen to us." The disapproval of some colleagues failed to deter those teachers who were very strict. "Many of them hit the students on their calf muscles. They say that they have done that year after year, even on senior-most students. Sometimes the traces are visible", said a teacher sadly. Others slapped students or boxed their ears. Talkative students' mouths were shut with tape and once, when some students came dressed in defiance of the rules, a teacher tore their clothes and left them in only their sarongs (pah kao mah). One teacher even punished male students by shaving their heads and "drawing a shameful symbol like a cross or wide band at the back of the head".

The weighty consequences of these abusive acts by teachers manifested themselves in student behaviour. As students were subject to extensive control within the school premises, once outside they tended to express rage towards school authorities and at the institution itself. Absenteeism was high during school days, and it is not difficult to see why students turned to drugs as a means of escape. From a psychological point of view, even if the relation between ragging and addiction has not been scientifically proven, it is highly probable that the relatively large number of yaa baa consumers in this school is due to the institution's highly disciplinarian environment.

Despite the teachers' strict adherence to institutional rules, it was actually relatively easy for students to carry methamphetamine onto school premises for eventual use or sale to others. Tablets could be stuffed into straws whose ends are closed and folded, after which the straw was hidden in socks; they could be rolled into the neck of the socks; covered in a paper napkin and kept in shoes; hidden in secret pockets stitched into sleeves, skirts or trousers; concealed behind shirt buttons with adhesive tape; hidden in pants — in short, alternatives abounded. In addition to clothes, students' personal belongings offered numerous hiding places as well: inside their books, pencil boxes, make-up pencils, lipsticks, tampons

and sanitary napkins. The top portion of a school bag could also be ripped off and stocked with tablets.

The ease with which students snuck yaa baa onto the grounds of what was supposed to be a highly controlled institution seem to mimic similar goings-on in the adult world between drug smugglers and customs officials. It so happens that the buildings of the school had the appearance of a fortress, but as we have seen, the fortress proved to be a badly-defended one whose severe rules belied the fact that it was very fragile. The fortress certainly lacked any ramparts against drugs.

In Thailand, schools, like monasteries, are often situated at urban crossroads where they may end up serving as thoroughfares for drug traffic as well as human traffic. This was certainly the case with the secondary school under discussion. It was encircled on the east and south by small canals that connected it to a poor locality with ramshackle houses. There were walls surrounding the grounds, but during the day open doors allowed free passage to anyone in the locality. Therefore unauthorized persons could enter without much difficulty. Such individuals could either sell the drugs directly on the premises or take the goods behind a wall situated at the back of the school near the toilets and wait for students to climb over.

> While students' toilets were located both inside and outside these buildings, most of the indoor ones were closed due to disrepair. The school's complicated physical structure offered plenty of hidden areas for students to skip class and hang out in, away from teachers' eyes. The crucial spot was the students' outside toilet buildings, which were divided into many little cubicles. The buildings themselves, which stood apart from the main buildings, were rather dark and well hidden from sight by wooden partitions, trees, large water tanks and piles of construction materials. It was there that many students bought, sold and used amphetamines most freely. Students also used the roofs and basements of some classroom buildings for drug-related activities.
>
> Jirapan Tritipjaras, cited by Wipawee Otaganonta,
> "A Picture of Abuse", Bangkok Post, 13 September 2000

It is difficult to supervise students in Thai schools because no specialised personnel have been allocated to this job. In primary and secondary schools, supervision duties fall upon the teachers. Jirapan Tritipjaras notes that teachers at the school he observed were overloaded; with a large number of students enrolled, each teacher was responsible for handling 20 to 24 classes per week, on average. This left them with very

little time and energy to supervise students' activities and assure their well-being. Teachers typically did not know their students by name and very often had to identify them by the name badge sewn onto their shirts.

Given this, it was easy for anyone dealing or buying drugs to hide their displayed names with an adhesive strip. External suppliers, some of whom were former students, could enter the institution and pass unnoticed by wearing a uniform with a fictitious name badge.

Arriving at the same conclusions as Jirapan Tritipjaras, the Thai Farmers Research Centre emphasizes the urgent need to increase the number of teachers in Thai schools so they can render indispensable extra-curricular supervision.[12] It is obvious that school security in its present form poses no barrier to yaa baa. It could even be said that schools have become one of the main hubs of the methamphetamine trade in Thailand.

Competition and Selection: Recourse to Methamphetamine

The study of orientations "chosen" by students after their final examinations reveals surprisingly regular patterns. Admission to university depends upon the results of the university entrance examinations, which follow school finals. If a student does well he may enrol in science courses, but if he is average he must be content with an arts concentration. Accountancy, social sciences, and humanities receive students of second and third-order placement.[13] In short, one's academic concentration is not determined by choice but by results.

The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations observes that rapid social and technological change that cause society to become increasingly competitive tends to make children and young people place a high premium on success.[14] This is clearly the case in Thailand. In the view of Mrs. Nucharat Kanchanaroj, the morals and ethics of urbanites have changed. Many young people today hope to become wealthy in as short a time as possible.[15] In this vein, a Thai expression that has been translated by Bernard Antoine is particularly apt: "We [have no choice but to] grit our teeth and [elbow] our way through."[16]

Occupational positions in the country that were assured in the past must be earned today, at least in part. Well-recognised qualifications are necessary to ensure access to a good profession. Young people in Thailand perceive university-level education as a fulcrum that will help them ascend the social ladder through competition, rather than a means of intellectual development or self-discovery.

Yaa baa plays a strategic role in two phases of this all-out race to success. First, the drug has become an indispensable ingredient for university examination preparation. As it stimulates intellectual capacities and physical endurance, yaa baa has become an essential part of the learning process. Second, if efforts to pass the exam are not ultimately successful, the drug helps the student face the consequences of his failure, and makes the humiliation of having to give up his ambitions easier to bear.

Senator Prateep Ungsongtham Hata remarks that middle class families in particular suffer when children fail at university level.[17] Having chalked out a path for children's success, parents are tempted to exert strong pressure on offspring to fulfil the family's ambitions. Problems emerge when the children realize that they cannot rise to the occasion. Normally, only 20 per cent of those who pass school exams gain admission to university. Therefore an inevitable 80 per cent must face what society considers failure. Disoriented and sometimes broken, these young Thais might enter professional schools or teacher training schools out of frustration. Frequently they simply withdraw and give little more thought to serious study.[18]

According to Dr. Panpimol of Child Mental Health Centre, all depends upon how parents perceive their progeny.[19] Many wish to overlook the fact that children have their own aspirations and preferences. Only performance counts, and as we have seen, parents tend to evaluate their children's performance according to only one scale.

In Thailand, the education system neglects individual development.[20] Winners in the system know how to stand out, but those who are not able to adapt themselves to this competitive environment have few other options and hence often take to yaa baa. The temptation is all the more pronounced because the drug is already a known quantity, as the student would have most likely depended on yaa baa to get through the revision process in the first place. Akin to the situation of a labourer whose drug habit while working becomes a pastime when unemployed, the failed student's own study companion can easily change into a companion of despair.

When they suffer, students can sometimes find "solace in yaa baa", confirms the journalist who had interviewed Nat.[21] As was noted earlier, the financial crisis of Southeast Asia acted to break the ardent spirit of a promising student generation. Since that time, explains Bernard Antoine, yaa baa is no longer only a labour pill or recreation pill. It is also a solace pill for "all those who want to forget".

The sociologist Patrick Pelège observes that in the West, one must perform at school, in one's sex life, in the driver's seat of a car, and in society as a whole. If they fail to achieve the required results, many adolescents simply accept that they do not have a place in this world.[22] A society where speed and strength are the order of the day naturally produces what David Le Breton calls "the passions of risk". Boredom and disappointment are so intense that one is inclined to flirt with death. The failed student whose sense of frustration and shame are extreme can end up committing an irreparable act.

Although there is insufficient evidence to establish a scientific correlation between educational failure and suicide rates in Thailand, the country has attained one of the highest suicide rates in the world, and the majority of the victims are young people excluded from the educational system.[23] For David Le Breton, the act of suicide by a young person indicates the lack of a social "holding place" for him. The troubled individual has difficulty entering society and perceiving that there is a future in it for him. Such a mindset reveals a lack of answers to questions about the meaning of existence.[24] More concretely, it also shows a lack of communication within the family.

Family Restructuring and the Increase in Addiction

A Representative Social Structure

Family, community, and society in Thailand are all based on the same model. The family is considered a fragment of the community, and individuals are considered parts of one larger "whole". Accordingly, a Thai child is led to believe that he is nothing but a cogwheel in a big machine. If the machine is well-oiled and if the wheels work together, then the whole works well.[25] This is a functionalist[26] representation in which interdependent elements are at the centre of society, while qualities of individual independence and autonomy that a person might use to his advantage are pushed toward the margins.

In Thailand it is more common to refer to "community" than to "society" because the former is less easily divisible; it reflects the unbreakable bonds that unite those who must share the same space.[27] Hence the Thai population is treated as a vast, necessarily stratified community held together above all by the mutual dependence and goodwill of its members.

This vision easily finds its counterpart in the rural areas, where social

structure is organised primarily on the basis of family relationships. Most village inhabitants are interconnected in some way or other, and individuals receive mutual aid and assistance from the village. Men and women work together in the fields and the gender division of labour is based on functional criteria.[28] Rural communities where people know one another and care about their neighbour are characterised by interdependent ties that may easily disappear if individuals shift to an urban milieu. As explained by Kaija Korpi, it is not therefore by chance that drugs affect mainly city dwellers in Asia and elsewhere.[29] As we have seen, if methamphetamine consumption is widespread in rural Thailand, the country's urban sector populations are even more inclined to use it.

As pointed out by the geographer Jean Baffie, however, to compare "rural solidarity" to "city individualism" is to over-simplify.[30] In Thailand's ethnic map, Thais of Chinese heritage form a good proportion of city dwellers — between 10 and 20 per cent, according to estimates.[31] Having arrived in Thailand in successive waves from the 13th century onwards, they have since been involved in all major events of the kingdom to such an extent that the ruling dynasty today is partly of Sino-Thai origin. The Chinese brought their hardworking culture along with them, and were duly recognised for their capacity to labour during the country's period of rapid development in the 19th century. Reputed for their trading skills, many Chinese immigrants became wealthy and occupied an increasing number of responsible economic, administrative and political posts. Today a significant number of the country's leaders are of recent Sino-Thai origin.

As the Sino-Thai value system became integrated into urban life, it compelled others, for whom work was a traditionally less important value, to adjust their behaviour. Such values helped to shape new demands upon labourers to conform to daily schedules and work discipline. Likewise, the progressive economic integration of Thailand into the world system obliged workers to conform to a capitalist work order. Thus it was that Thai labourers struggled to meet the work requirements that had been set by the most competitive sectors of the population, and from the middle of the 20th century onwards, it was amphetamine that provided the indispensable aid for "native" workers.

With every new generation, however, the values and social pre-conceptions associated with a particular social formation must undergo a process of levelling and re-evaluation, and this happened in Thai society as the 20th century came to a close. The prosperity of the 1980s and early 1990s in Thailand served to open doors to new middle classes of all ethnic

origins, while correspondingly the country's privileged Sino-Thai youth, unlike their predecessors, no longer presumed an automatic link between hard work and success. The dual function of methamphetamine as both labour drug and recreational drug acted to bring together "native" youth and Sino-Thais, of both urban and rural origin, by virtue of its mass appeal.

Family Mobility: An Element in the Spread of Yaa Baa

In Thailand the rural exodus accelerated greatly during the 1960s. Hence cities are today largely populated by recent inhabitants who spent their childhood in villages. Most urban migrants in the country continue to maintain close ties with their parents, who have remained in the villages.

The urban-rural relationship is ambiguous, and it is typical for urbanites to show a certain disparagement of villagers, whom they refer to as baan nok (country bumpkins). Yet if Thailand was able to withstand the financial crisis of 1997 without major social clashes or revolts, this was largely due to the social cohesion generated by ties established between city migrants and the rural family home.

During difficult times, those under duress leave the city and return to their provincial villages. There they "tighten their belts" and ride out troubles with the mainstay of family support. In Thailand there seems to be no insurmountable shame in returning to a village without having made one's fortune in the city, as is the case for returned urban migrants in certain African countries. Even those Thais who are able to hold onto their jobs in the city during hard times remain nostalgic about their place of origin, which they conceive of as friendly and welcoming. Many urban-dwellers willingly invest in building a home for themselves in the village in case they later return, and save money so that they can send some to those who stayed behind.

Urbanites' attachment to their rural roots generates much to-and-fro movement between city and village. During festival season, holidays such as songkhran or loy kratong[32] compel urbanites to return home. Bus, train, and air tickets are reserved months in advance, and it becomes impossible to travel as the city of Bangkok empties out.

This marked geographical mobility has not been without consequences for the explosive increase in yaa baa use. On returning to their village, young urbanites are inclined to propagate drug habits among their rural counterparts. Yaa baa takes root there all the more easily because of rural youths' well-known fascination for urban ways.

In addition to holiday visits, seasonal labour migration also encourages the spread of methamphetamine in the provinces. Every year during the dry season the labouring population of Bangkok increases by about ten per cent.[33] This is the period when there are fewer jobs in agriculture and correspondingly, when the urban construction sector — whose activities are generally scaled back during the rainy season, where agricultural activity is at its maximum — experiences the greatest demand for unskilled workers. It would be surprising if this seasonal migration of peasants and labourers did not contribute to the spread of methamphetamine in the rural areas.

Yet another factor that brings yaa baa into the countryside is the weekly or monthly migrations of Thai schoolchildren. This involves students who come from villages but are educated in residential schools away from their families. This educational exile is not always mandatory, but parental logic holds that if their children are enrolled in the "best" schools, their chances of success can be optimised. Often pupils leave the village as early as the age of eleven for their secondary schooling. If students are to take up a more prestigious curriculum, they must often leave their native province altogether.

Once the children are away from home, the family loses control over them. Having arrived in urban zones where yaa baa is in circulation, the recently-arrived student migrants are rapidly susceptible to its use. Even the country's most prestigious schools are plagued by methamphetamine use, notes Mr. Suchaat, head of an anti-drug association.[34]

New Family Equilibrium in an Urban Milieu

Families that settle in cities often become restructured into nuclear units of only parents and children, if they do not end up disintegrating altogether. The rural exodus, while offering economic hope, is also a source of instability. Thus a metropolitan zone that in theory should offer a better range of social services to its inhabitants frequently makes these services inaccessible to newly arrived, many of whom are individuals that have lost their connection to the traditional mutual aid networks of the countryside.[35]

In an urban milieu, conventions that govern relations between parents and children are also subject to question. Familial norms of deference and submission are slowly giving way a Western-influenced model of dependence and independence. In the system of traditional Thai values, a child should show his gratitude towards his parents no matter what the

circumstances. But as they come under the sway of presumed notions of Western values such as "emancipation" and "independence", the young tend to leave behind gestures of gratitude and parental respect.

> States a young yaa baa user, "I was born in Lopburi province. There are seven people in my family including my father and mother. I am the oldest child. I completed Primary 6 but I did not study further. Later I went to work in Bangkok for about a year, and then returned to help my parents with work at home". On his return, his family was surprised to see how he had changed during his stay at Bangkok: "I did not help my parents work, but only went out to have fun and use drugs".
>
> Interview recorded by the Regional Centre of United Nations Drug Control Programme, 2001

In rural Thailand, raising and caring for children is generally the responsibility of not just the parents, but the community as a whole. A child from an extended family residing in a close-knit community is supervised, reprimanded, and guided by those in the fields as well as the home.[36] Under conditions such as these, parents are only partly responsible for the child's upbringing. Uncles, aunts, and neighbours serve as adult authority figures as much as parents, so the child grows up learning to give his elders the respect they are due according to cultural norms.

This model of collective upbringing may fit the structure of rural community life, but does not hold fast in the new reduced family — the nuclear family — in an urban milieu. The upbringing of youngsters in the city resembles patterns of the more traditional upbringing in the sense that mainly "others" provide it; parents continue to delegate authority. But the community no longer exists, and even if it did, its unity of place would be lost. With urban-based social relations scattered across the four corners of the city, family life takes place in a context that is more an association of individuals than a cohesive community.

It is not only urban-dwelling families of humble means that depend on others to bring up their progeny in a "nuclear" set-up. Delegation in general is an essential characteristic of Thai modernity.

> Beep, beep. Geng pulls his Tamagotchi out of his pocket. It cries with hunger, so the chubby boy feeds his virtual pet its favourite food — hamburger and ice-cream — and gives it a pat. Beep, beep. Tamagotchi is full and happy. While he is stuffing his cyberpet, Geng doesn't realise that he himself is a Tamagotchi to his parents. Wah, wah. Geng's parents look up from their work and see him. He wants a new computer game. So they buy him one. Wah, wah. Geng is hungry. His mother orders him a home-

> delivered pizza and coke. Wah, wah. Geng fails maths. His father hires a tutor for him. Geng's story is not extraordinary. It is the lifestyle of many city kids: one of endless consumerism and parents who are always too busy. Take Ja-oh for example. Her parents make her take so many tutorial lessons each day that she never has a chance to read a good children's book. Meanwhile, Pang's mum and dad are chronic workaholics and she says she's seen Sailor Moon and Doraemon more often than her parents' faces. Like Geng, Ja-oh and Pang, many other Thai children are like their parents' Tamagotchis: to be satiated whenever they whine.
>
> Teerawichichainan Bussarawan, "The Tamagotchi Generation", Bangkok Post, 10 January 1998

The Bangkok Post journalist who authored the above "Tamagotchi Generation" associates this scenario with the Western family model, which he criticises for parents' tendency to neglect their children. But on the contrary, what is being described here reflects longstanding practices of child-raising in Thailand. These urban parents retain the same attitude towards their children as they would have held in previous times. The only difference is that they can no longer count on the help from the larger community.

Under the conditions of the isolated nuclear urban family, parents do not always realise that they are the only ones capable of filling the void in children's lives created by contemporary societal developments. Provided they have the means, parents are content to pay to have children entertained or baby-sat, or by extension, pay for services such as home delivery or private tuition that serve similar functions. Most of these activities leave the child to learn on his own, especially through television. As a result the child is exposed to the gamut of opinions and practices offered in excessive quantity by this mass medium.

Professor Somphong Jitradub of Chulalongkorn University confirms that such changes are taking place. "Today we no longer have the support of grandmothers, uncles, and aunts who earlier used to live under the same roof. The neighbourhood no longer has social control over children."[37] If parents are not able to set a good example, then children are forced to invent their own models. Thus they can end up with a confused understanding of moral rules and traditional values. The shortcomings of the contemporary Thai family partially explain tendencies toward drug-taking among the very young. As pointed out by the research of the Thai Farmers Research Center, the younger Thai population displays a number of problematic symptoms.[38] Drugs are only one of many issues plaguing this generation, a generation that engages in much more conflict-ridden behaviour than previous ones. For instance, until a few years ago,

it would have been unimaginable for children to "bunk classes"; such an act would have been considered a supreme insult to both teachers and parents.

In the system of community upbringing, children may come and go as they please without their bad behaviour causing excessive worry. Wherever they are, there is always an adult nearby to take charge if necessary. Transposed to city life, this apparently harmless practice of leaving the child to come and go as he pleases takes a different turn. There are many youngsters between 14 or 15 years of age who are solely accountable to themselves to plan their activities. These children tend to embark on methamphetamine use earlier than others young drug-takers, observes Mr. Suchaat.[39]

Other conditions besides rural-urban migration help explain the trend towards parents' abdication of responsibility for supervising children. As Mrs. Nucharat Kanchanaroj remarks,[40] in Thailand as elsewhere, life in the city compels more and more women to take up jobs outside the home. Currently almost all parents leave their houses to work and so are less available for their children. Noting that this trend results in "less family warmth than before", Mrs. Kanchanaroj's comment seems to echo some parental dissatisfactions of her own.

Some adults recognise that their children can find solace and a sense of belonging among friends and peers that the parents themselves have been unable to kindle. But how realistic is it for parents to expect to create a "warm" relationship with their children home, given current conditions? Are they willing to talk with their children, and if so, might they still be apprehensive about broaching certain issues?

"My mother knew that I was taking yaa baa," states a young user. "Even though she knew, we never talked about it. I have never talked with my mother about yaa baa. She knew what it was but she never spoke about it."[41] Certain subjects are taboo, as confirmed by a user who refrained from talking about yaa baa with her friend, whom she knew was also taking it. She says, "I don't know how much he is taking. It is not something that we discuss."[42]

This lack of communication is explained not only by the embarrassment caused everywhere by "painful subjects". In Thailand a hierarchical structure obliges those in families and in society at large to show deference and submission to others in their relationships. Can this ever allow for a relationship of equals between children and parents, or between spouses or lovers, that nurtures confidence? Such an interaction appears possible only among peers.

To avoid the ever-present threat of government censure for speaking out, Thais who wish to express criticism have long turned to tales and stories as a means of conveying their message. This custom continues today in Thai society. Stories are both readable and entertaining, features that make them accessible to the public and appealing to young people.

Botan's short story titled Yüa portrays a husband and wife who, unable to continue their studies, have resolved to work hard. The mother manages a shop from ten in the morning to eight at night. Her daily commute totals some four hours. The father has a three-hour bus ride to his office in the city, and is often away on business for some weeks every month as well. The couple has two teenage children who are given to gambling and motorcycle racing and who like to fight. In the parents' absence a young woman takes care of the household work. She is also responsible for the boys. The woman, a distant cousin, comes from the village and is not well-educated.

The parents in the story attempt to recreate the familiar extended family structure in their new urban milieu. However, the young woman who keeps house for the couple lacks control over the boys, precisely because they are from the city and she is a village woman. The boys threaten her and take the household money she has been allocated so they can use it to gamble. Rather than complain to the parents, the young woman blames herself instead and says nothing until the day the boys beat her up, at which point the parents at last come to learn of the situation.

The author's description of how the parents respond to the crisis is provocative. At the outset the parents are relieved to hear that their two children are not — or not yet — involved in drugs, which they view as the ultimate problem. The husband and wife mutually decide "not to reprimand the children because that would not have any effect, they would continue anyway", but instead secretly inform the police about the existence of an illegal gambling den in the locality. The parents use the pretext of a "wicked" environment to avoid directly confronting their children.

In the aftermath of the beating incident the parents ponder how to keep their children at home, away from danger. (The teenagers are not attending classes since their school was damaged by floods.) Underlying the parents' formulation of the issue is a representation of home as a haven of peace and free of bad influences. However, in the absence of a community of adults who could exercise control over the boys, this attitude proves to be an error in judgement.

To entice their children into staying home, the parents dip into their savings to buy a VCR. The boys soon tire of the cassettes bought by their parents, but become increasingly mesmerized by numerous violent and pornographic cassettes that they borrow from their friends. At the end of the story, the boys turn on their housekeeper-cousin by first raping and then killing her. Afterwards the parents again lament their misfortune and try to sort out what caused it, finally determining that videos and other products imported by foreigners were at fault. Once again, environment is blamed rather than the teenagers' own irresponsible actions.[43]

This short story illustrates the apparently implacable attitude of the individual in the face of provocation. To respond to provocation in Thai culture is unacceptable because it shows a loss of self-control, an outcome unworthy of a "good" parent. Of prime importance is to refrain from generating social troubles. A person who is capable of practising this civic attitude is respectable and respected. An individual who exercises self-control, whose behaviour is always decent, and who is never given to excess, has found the ideal path. He has reached the positive freedom eulogised by Thai culture.

Such a fully acculturated person does not let himself be easily shaken by adversity or the judgements of others. He has succeeded in mastering the art of accepting his own problems with equanimity. The expression mai pen rai ("it's nothing", "it doesn't matter"), used everyday by Thais, allows the individual to feel involved and detached at the same time.[44] Thais seek peaceable relationships with others and try to avoid showing anger at all costs. This orientation explains Thai adults' remarkable tolerance[45] of children's misbehaviour as long as it does not threaten public order — an attitude akin to the social permissiveness regarding yaa baa as long as it is taken in sufficiently moderate quantities so as not to create social problems.

But let us return for a moment to the account of Mr. Boonsen, who sought help for his yaa baa addiction at the treatment centre of the Duang Prateep Foundation at Chomphon. His concern over how Thai children are "over-protected" has already been noted. Mr. Boonsen continues, "The Foundation taught me to think and to learn by myself. When I realised how much effort and work are necessary to earn a baht, I started crying. Yes I did realise." He discovered that methamphetamine helped him to leave the world only by making him economically dependent on his parents, who were in fact financing his addiction habit. "At that time, a yaa baa pill used to cost 40 to 50 baht (around 1 euro) and I spent easily 1000 baht (about 25 euros) every two days."[46] Although the experience

of overcoming a serious and painful situation such as this can hasten an individual's entry into adulthood, it is surely not a solution which can be prescribed as a general social model. The gap between the need for funds to support a drug habit and the capacity to mobilise the necessary means simply grows too large.

"Now, I am helping my boyfriend's parents. I have an office job", says Ms. Koong.[47] "But this is not really a profession because I work when I want to. My boyfriend does not have a real profession either, he just helps his father. But it is the same thing, he sleeps throughout the day. I don't feel I'm ready to have children. I need stability for that. We are seriously thinking of giving up (the drug). What I would like is a fixed salary, a real job. But first of all, we must stop all this."

In the future Ms. Koong thinks she can take on the responsibilities of an adult, but she does not yet feel ready to do so. Her yaa baa consumption stands in the way. Yet the situation is not beyond hope, and statistics are encouraging. According to an observation made by the United Nations Economic and Social Council, once youngsters who have used illegal drugs reach a certain level of maturity they often abruptly renounce their habit, and can do so without any apparent irreversible damage.[48]

From the viewpoint of an "empathetic Westerner", Jacques Vincent notes that the juvenile character of many Thai adults is reflected in their tendency to want to have fun and read Japanese manga until the age of 40.[49] This puerile attitude should be considered in context: by prolonging childish candour, members of the contemporary generation of middle-class young adults have found their place in Thai society. Their immaturity confers a collective social identity upon this generation, one achieved despite the burden of a history which dissuades its members from making strong demands or taking initiative. Young Thai's proclivity to have fun and to enjoy themselves — perhaps long after one might expect such behaviour to recede — proves to be a way out of a historical dead-end. Such an orientation is necessary for them to be able to put up with the pressures of contemporary life that are a heritage from the past.

The Sangha and Thai Values

Limitations of the Monastery

In Thailand, Buddhism is taken as a guide to an ethical way of life that reveals the Right Path. Its rules should be disseminated to become part

of each individual's personal and incontestable qualities.[50] Religious proverbs are frequently used in Buddhist teachings to stress the importance of obedience, discipline, and hierarchical relationships.

The Buddha himself questioned ideas that were not proved or illustrated by experience. He sought to make his teachings known through his experiences, his discipline, and his path. Following upon this orientation, Buddhism gives more credence to something done well because one has deeply understood it, over something well-stated because one has given it much thought, remarks Louis Gabaude.[51] Because of the domination, exclusivity, and convictions of the Theravada order of Buddhism in Thailand, even now devout Thais are rarely able to freely "think" about their religion and thus test their own ideas by comparing them with those of others.

Debates among those in the Theravada community are discouraged, if not prohibited, because Buddha was supposed to have said everything once and for all. What is important is not giving free rein to thoughts but rather holding them on a leash, the latter by virtue of appropriate mental exercises. Hence the community of Thai Buddhist monks (the Sangha) is defined not by its ideas or its doctrines but by its rules.

The Buddhist religion bans the use of psychotropic substances, and monastic rules are particularly strict in this respect. However, even as an exemplary society the community of monks is also exposed to contemporary social currents. To counter this, members of the monastic community must sometimes take pains to remember and reinforce the principles upon which it was founded. While Thai Buddhism today has not yet reached a full-blown crisis, its representatives are nevertheless going through a turbulent period.

In accordance with the fifth precept of Buddhism, monks are in principle forbidden from using spirits and all intoxicating substances. This ban extends also to smoking cigarettes and chewing fermented tea leaves.[52] However, Bernard Antoine observes that quite a number of monks smoke. More worrying is the fact that in the last few years, a sufficient number of drug addiction cases have been noted in monasteries to warrant changes in the law. Since 1998, monks may be subjected to urine tests, and in accordance with a law proposed by the former Education Minister, Akhom Engchuan, candidates aspiring to the status of monk may also be required to undergo drug detection measures.

There is no doubt that serious drug abuse exists within the Thai monastic community. According to Bernard Antoine, some Thai monks have longstanding addiction to drugs. "Fifteen or twenty years ago, the

monks — who could not be searched — used to smuggle in Burmese heroin and opium. Under their robes, they could hide large amounts of drugs."[53]

The Department of Religious Affairs recently acknowledged that out of 30,000 Buddhist monks in Thailand, some ten per cent were thought to be using yaa baa.[54] Mr. Suchaat, head of an anti-drug abuse association, suggests that such figures can be explained by the fact that the police do not have jurisdiction over the monasteries.[55] A more plausible explanation would hold that the monks were taking yaa baa even before entering the monastery. "A number of novices are very young. And even if they wear monks' robes, they behave like ordinary people, so yaa baa enters easily", says Mr. Suchaat.

The Buddhist temple in Thailand is not an entity closed-off from society; far from it. A great number of young Thai males circulate in and out of the temple community. Thais consider it good for a young man to spend sometime "away from the world" as a monk, though he may never take his final vows. Even if very temporary, the ordination of a son allows his parents to enjoy social esteem, particularly in the villages.[56]

However, the influence of religious orientations and worldly ones is not a one-way street. Upon "leaving the world", young people entering the monastery also cause "a world to enter" the religious community. Though separated from their roots, Buddhist novices do not necessarily give up all their existing habits. Were they accustomed to using yaa baa before entering, they are naturally inclined to continue, once inside. They might even encourage their new friends to try it, should the occasion arise. Just as migrants' geographical mobility during the economic crisis of 1997 served to bring new kinds of recreational drug use to rural areas, "religious mobility" thus constitutes another social vector for the spread of yaa baa.

There is much talk in Thailand about the erosion of religious sentiments. Shifts in religious attitudes are presumed to have happened in association with changes brought about by the economic and social revolution of the last half-century. Yet it is not certain that these ostensibly new mindsets necessarily account for why more and different kinds of people in Thai society are turning to yaa baa.

For example, the fatalistic attitude attributed to Thais is assumed to stem from the notion of karma.[57] By this reasoning, young Thais' relative lack of interest in the cycles of birth and rebirth would thus help explain what we have termed as "the increase in a sense of meaninglessness" and the associated phenomenon of addiction among members of this

generation. Apparently, because a person is less worried about his karma (a factor relatively difficult to control, no doubt, since it is based on all his previous births), he is correspondingly less concerned about the quality of his socialisation. And since he does not feel obliged to prepare for his future, he is therefore interested only in making the most of the present.

All this is undoubtedly true, to a certain extent, but it must be remembered that in Thai religious practices the acquisition of "merit" is due less to everyday ethics and more to ritualised practices such as one's donations to temples or participation in particular ceremonies. Here as elsewhere, it is indeed the case that larger economic and social contexts determine the salvation strategies of individuals.

What Cultural Identity?

The presumed loss of religious bearings among young people and adults in contemporary Thailand is exacerbated by what is seen to be Thais' ambiguous grasp of their own culture. Historically and at present, Thai culture is considered to be somehow inferior to the Western cultural model. For instance, the Thai Kings Mongkut (r. 1851–68), Chulalongkorn (r. 1868–1910), Vajiravudh (r. 1910–25) and subsequently the Thai strongman of the 1930s, Plaek Phibunsongkhram, all partially subscribed to the concept of modernisation as conceived in the West. They not only helped their country develop but also introduced, explicitly or otherwise, the idea that traditional practices were outmoded, primitive, barbaric, and not in keeping with modern times. At the time of European colonisation, when the presence of foreigners at the doors of the Thai kingdom posed a threat, these rulers had no choice but to introduce the germ of a collective inferiority complex in order to preserve national independence.

The above succession of leaders obliged people to change their clothing styles[58] and personal hygiene practices to prove their country could achieve a degree of civilisation equal to that of the West, without an imperialist power coming to "civilise" them. The ambivalent nature of what this statement implies is perfectly clear. On the one hand, Thais were encouraged to be proud of their country for having resisted foreign invaders; on the other, they were asked to sacrifice an indigenous identity deemed contemptible and outmoded.

Even now, Thais seem to forget how rich in culture they actually are. They worry over how their country can find its own models, and they

critically analyse their self-construction as a society. They speak of Buddhist wisdom and of lost values, and find it difficult to adapt these things to contemporary conditions.[59] The crisis of 1997 brought members of Thai society some way out of their tendency to ruminate, however, by partially invalidating the idea that a blind imitation of Western models would unquestionably lead to social prosperity and even to collective happiness.

An often-heard refrain in this discourse is that Thailand could find a way to follow its own history of development if members of Thai society thought more about their roots and used more knowledge derived from ancient traditions. However, this common view is more of a nostalgia-induced moral opinion than an actual alternative model for the country. Folklore and the pseudo-authentic cultural shows that go with it may be entertaining for tourists, but what future can they offer the Thai people?[60] In Thai society at present, no serious alternative to consumerism seems to be in the offing.

CHAPTER 10

Types of Methamphetamine Users: An Attempt to Define Models

Ideal Types

Every individual is unique, but individuals are also products of cultural and social environments. They adopt social routines and learn to respect rituals and codes that make their behaviour more predictable than it might appear to be at first glance. Therefore a single individual's behaviour can be compared to that of many others. From the diversity of human actions, sociologists try to bring out patterns in individual behaviour that have an internal logic. With the help of a model, they attempt to impose order upon what appears as disorder.

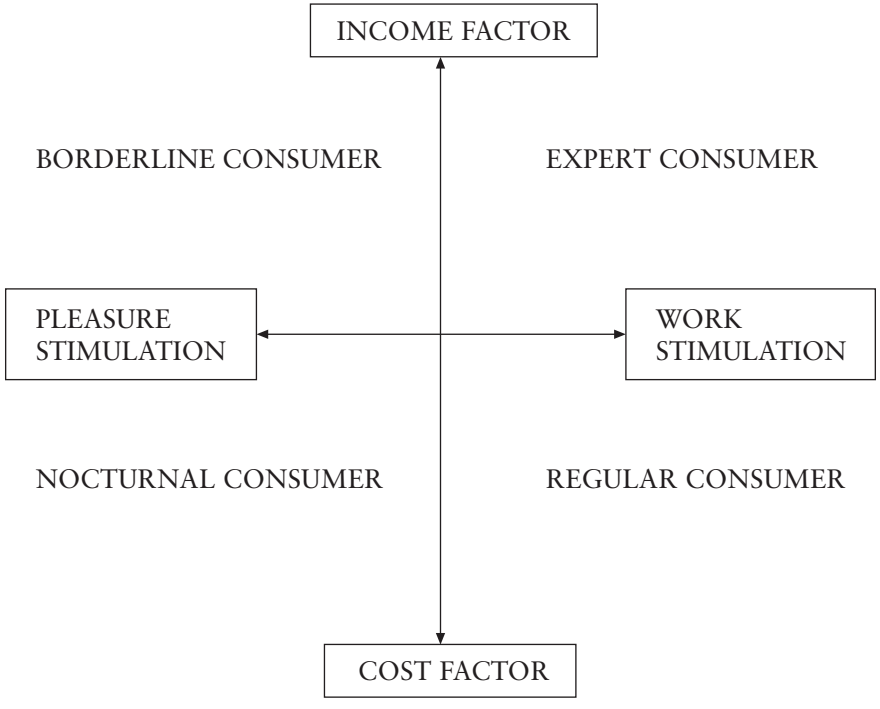
In the preceding chapters we have tried to give as realistic a description as possible of the consumption patterns of amphetamine-type stimulants in Thailand. This corpus of information now needs to be organised to create a model that can be used to both summarise the Thai situation and place it in broader perspective. We shall use a tool called the "ideal type",[1] the existence of which we owe to the sociologist Max Weber. The ideal type enables us to construct a composite profile of yaa baa users based on certain "characteristic traits". Once arranged in chart form, these characteristics make possible an operative synthesis that can simplify reality without misrepresenting it. The procedure allows us to find order in the apparent disorder without deviating too significantly from the empirical given.

The framework of our model consists of two variables that structure alternative yaa baa consumption patterns. The horizontal axis denoting stimulation differentiates two primary motivations for yaa baa consumption: that for recreational pleasure, and that for work. The vertical axis

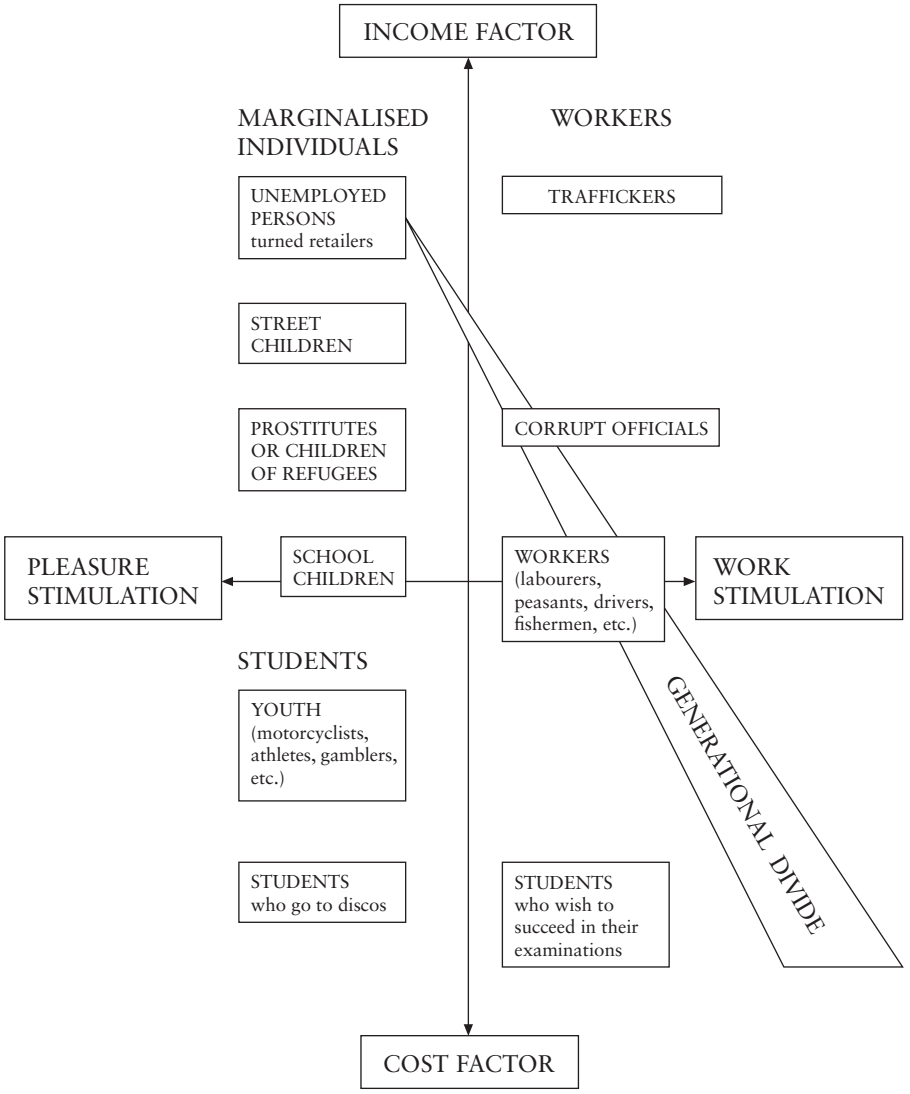
corresponds to consumers' interest regarding their involvement with the yaa baa trade. Interest is negative for those whose consumption is a cost factor and positive for those deriving income from it. These intersecting axes yield four distinct situations corresponding to "strong profiles" of consumers and to "philosophies" of consumption. The four profiles by which all consumers are more or less distinguished include the regular consumer, the nocturnal consumer, the borderline consumer, and the expert consumer.

A regular yaa baa consumer looks for stimulation to increase his physical capacity to resist fatigue. He may need this capacity to continue working, complete a task, or acquire knowledge. Whatever the pursuit, the ideal-type regular player finds himself in a race against the clock. Even if his income increases by the time the race is finished, the income thus derived is not obtained directly from yaa baa because the regular consumer is not involved in its trade. The regular consumer is in this sense a fighter who seeks to increase his perseverance against his enemy, the passage of time, to which the consumer's productivity and efficiency are linked.

Four Ideal Types of Methamphetamine Consumers



Three Principal Categories of Methamphetamine Consumers



Yaa baa is consumed by regular users for its stimulating capacity alone and can be replaced by a legal stimulant. The regular consumer is the only one who uses yaa baa in solitude.

The nocturnal consumer uses yaa baa as a form of recreation for an evening's entertainment with friends. Stimulation gained from its use is for no other motive than to enable the user to prolong a pleasurable situation. Time loses its value completely; the user can either be "caught

up" or "lost" at will, depending on the orientation. Similarly, money poses no problems while under the influence — though it most likely will the following day. The cost of yaa baa is an expense the nocturnal consumer is quite willing to cover. His sense of belonging to the group gives meaning to his drug consumption, and serves to justify it.

Yet under the cover of entertainment, the nocturnal consumer, through his act of consumption, participates in an encounter that is less routine than that of the regular consumer, but one no less competitive. The nocturnal consumer perpetually seeks opportunities for ostentatious display, and the methamphetamine tablet itself proves that he knows the "right way" to be fashionable. His consumption is more impulsive and occasional than regular. Yaa baa is a necessity, but for the nocturnal consumer its consumption is ritualistic as opposed to functional.

The borderline consumer[2] likewise seeks stimulation through drug consumption, but his means of doing so are generally less pleasure-focused and time-specific than those of the nocturnal consumer. Even if the borderline user's practice is social, the drug-taking behaviour itself is motivated by the individual user's psychological state that is troubled or anxious. The borderline consumer typically turns to yaa baa in difficult times, such as after losing a job or failing an examination. Under circumstances such as these, yaa baa comforts, consoles, and reassures. In the absence of alternatives, it dawns upon the borderline user that selling yaa baa would allow him to build up a small nest egg with minimal effort and finance his own consumption at little cost. Methamphetamine here plays a functional role by helping the user cope with adversity in daily life. Despite failure or troubles, he can maintain self-esteem. He needs the buoyant effect of yaa baa to retain a foothold in life and keep from sinking into a marginality that could bring about social stigmatisation.

The borderline consumer is not yet a full-fledged expert in the underground world of yaa baa. He is still "on the margins", occupying the boundary between legal and illegal livelihoods. The borderline consumer is an ideal type of neither-here-nor-there. Neither young nor old, neither employed nor unemployed, the choice between a legal existence and an illegal one is one that the borderline consumer has yet to make.

As against this, the expert consumer has truly entered the world of trafficking and illegal activities. His passage into the underground economy renders him highly stigmatised and with few opportunities to return to a legitimate existence. This being the case, the expert accepts his marginality. He becomes a yaa baa professional wherein trade is his main source of income and his social network is restricted to other players in the

underground system: friends, acquaintances, those who prescribe the drugs, and protectors. This is a dangerous position in Thailand since illegal trafficking can incur a sentence of capital punishment. To experience yaa baa under these circumstances is no longer a means of pleasure, but a tool for work-related stress management that comes with being a dealer, allowing the user to stay alert to the threats of vengeance, denunciation, and repression that characterise encounters in the underground drug world.

These profiles are valid only for describing the essence of distinct behavioural patterns. They are pure constructions but as we will see, constructions that come to life when applied to the everyday realities and career paths of actual yaa baa users. Through first charting these concepts as they are actually lived, and then comparing them, we can obtain a dynamic table of methamphetamine consumption.

Comparing Ideal Types and Profiles of Actual Consumers

A variety of consumers have profiles similar to the ideal typical regular consumer. They could be students who are playing it safe in their quest to pass exams, or peasants, drivers, labourers, or fishermen who push themselves to work harder in order to supplement their income. The regular yaa baa consumer is a worker who fears, above all, that the effects of fatigue could thwart his plans.

The ideal typical nocturnal consumer resonates with the multitudes of young peer groups in contemporary Thai society who aspire only "to be together", a companionship achieved through conversing, competing, quarrelling, or simply going out to a disco together.

The ideal typical borderline consumer reflects the reality of those who live on "small jobs" between periods of employment and unemployment; homeless children too young to be real dealers and too poor to attend school, who "peddle" drugs; and refugees who take to prostitution and risk psychological and social decline in hopes of attaining a better standard of living.

The borderline consumer is a decisive stage that can foreshadow passage into the underground economy. The full-fledged expert, on the other hand, has fully come to terms with his status of "trafficker". Professional yaa baa dealers, retailers, distributors, and stockists, as well as government servants who benefit by supporting such illegal activities,[3] are close to this ideal type. Their experience of yaa baa as users is intertwined with extremely lucrative trading activities.

Thus, superimposing profiles of actual yaa baa consumers upon the ideal typical ones reveals three populations of users, namely, students, workers, and the poor.

A Dynamic Perspective

If we can pin down ideal type profiles of yaa baa consumers at a single historical moment, then how might we begin to understand the development and interconnections of such profiles over time? It is difficult to speculate about long-term historical trends from what is in essence a ten-year-old phenomenon; the outcome of paths being tread by present-day yaa baa consumers in Thailand and elsewhere is still uncertain. Nevertheless, despite the absence of long-range historical data, we can transform this static chart of those involved with yaa baa into a more dynamic one through extrapolating from the limited data available and surmising from what we have already determined to be the main conceptual types. A dynamic table enables us to identify possible passages from one ideal type to another, and differentiate between those with "exits" and those without, between those who are condemned to continue with their consumption and those who are not.

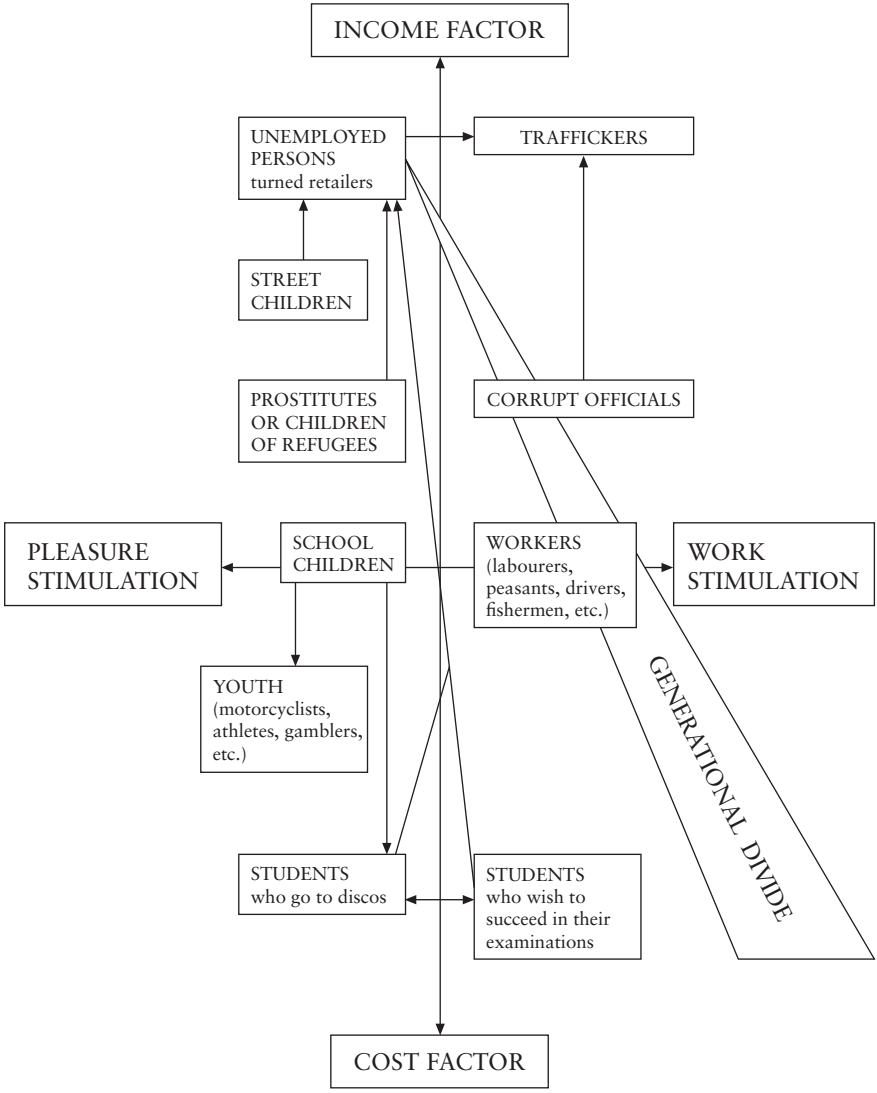
For instance, both the empirical data and the ideal type profiles acknowledge that a generational divide separates young consumers from the older ones — two user populations mostly unaware of the other's existence. Old and young seldom interact except when both inhabit the world of the borderline consumer, a profile where the dividing line between generations tends to disappear. If we are trying to understand the development of particular careers among yaa baa users, then the data and ideal typical models that we already have would discourage us from assuming that a 45-year-old worker who today takes yaa baa to fight fatigue would have been a former "young" consumer of the drug.

As a first step in constructing the dynamic chart, we can observe possible movements from one status to another. In Thailand a school-goer will aim to become a university student, failing which he will seek an existence outside of the university by cultivating ties with a close-knit peer group. In any case, if he is already using yaa baa while in school, his habit can continue as such afterwards. The only question is whether he will continue to do so under the auspices of a "stable" job or not, and if not, whether the alternative will be falling in with a group of unemployed or otherwise marginal persons who have become dealers.

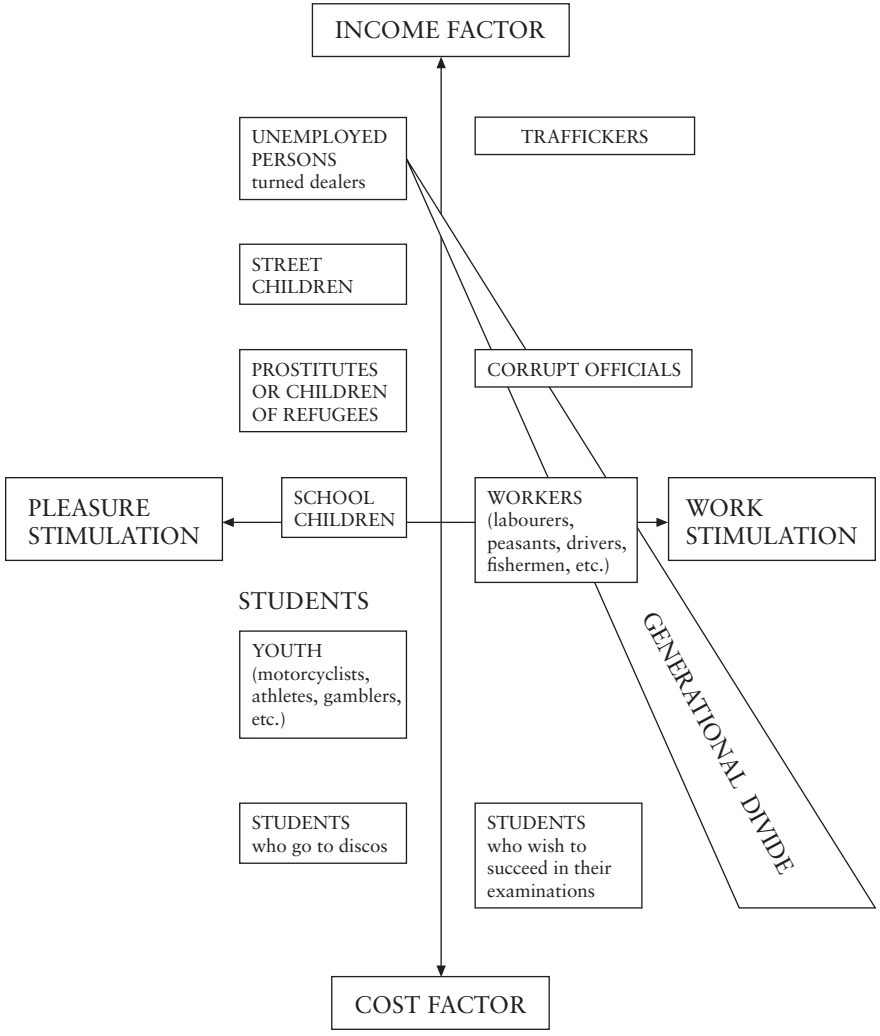
Young Thais who have finished school risk being tempted into becoming borderline yaa baa users. For them, as for people of more

marginal social identities such as uneducated street children, prostitutes, refugees, or heroin addicts, the regularities of existence as a small-time dealer can seem appealing as such individuals face questions of what to do with their lives. The threat of unemployment, a prospect that many workers faced during periods such as the 1997 crisis in Southeast Asia, can also propel individuals who have jobs into drug-dealing activities of the borderline consumer.

Passage of Users from One Status to Another



Ability to Exit from the Yaa Baa Circuit



A player in the yaa baa trade who occupies the position of borderline consumer is caught in a current heading toward escalating levels of illegality. The borderline player has only partially mastered the codes of the illegal market. He straddles the intersection of the two systems, and his social and economic circumstances largely determine whether and how he will experience the passage from a semi-legitimate world to a fully-illegitimate one.

At the borderline level, the consumer still has hope of one day exiting from the "yaa baa system". But the longer he remains a borderline player, the more likely it becomes that he will have a long "career" in the underworld economy by ascending to an important position in the hierarchy of dealers and thus becoming a professional yaa baa trafficker. The eventuality of borderline individuals turning professional is all the more probable as Thailand's methamphetamine economy continues to expand.

Young school graduates and others on the margins of society are not the only populations prone to cross from borderline to professional involvement in the drug trade. Those in government administration are also vulnerable. If a corrupt official has compromised himself and risks being exposed, he has no alternative but to enter the "system" and place himself at the service of the professional yaa baa trade. Even if he can retain his administrative position by seeking protection from higher-level corrupt bureaucrats or elected officials, any career hopes must now be hitched to the underground economy; ahead of him lies the prospect of illegal trade of even larger proportions.

The ease or difficulty of extricating oneself from yaa baa use depends on one's position in the consumption chart. The motivation to quit can be created when, for instance, the user is somehow made aware of the danger of taking yaa baa. A colleague's road accident, a university friend's addiction or a parent's warning are factors that can cause a truck driver, a college student or secondary school pupil to give up the habit. An exit is made all the easier if the user's involvement with yaa baa reaps no financial rewards. Alternatively, foregoing involvement with yaa baa becomes difficult when its consumption is connected to the user's direct economic dependence on its sale.

Scope and Limitations of the Model

Extrapolating the Model to Three Bordering Countries

The preceding model is based on an analysis of the methamphetamine economy of Thailand. Admittedly, some aspects of it are speculative and not based on detailed research that would undoubtedly permit more concrete results. Nevertheless, the model provides a point of departure for further analysis of a phenomenon central not only to Thai society, but also to the surrounding areas of the Golden Triangle — and beyond — that play a key role in the production and distribution of the drug.

Following is a preliminary effort to evaluate in what measure it is possible to apply the Thai model to Cambodia, Laos and Burma.

Cambodia

During the late 1990s, Cambodian society experienced a significant increase in ATS consumption. This change was closely related to the expansion of yaa baa in Thailand, according to one observer, because methamphetamine was originally imported into Cambodia from there.[4] However, trade flows of the drug were later partially reversed, with Cambodia becoming a producer for the Thai market. Given increased supplies of the drug for a foreign market, this naturally also led to an increase in local demand. As in Thailand, the expansion of the yaa baa trade in Cambodia extended to numerous sectors of the population, including students, "pleasure merchants", and labourers, with significant numbers of the educated showing use as well.

Jacques Vincent notes that in Phnom Penh we can currently observe the "gilded jackets", that is, groups of youngsters coming from well-to-do families who swagger around Phnom Penh and are much more in evidence than before.[5] But the nightclub culture associated with drug use in Thailand is far less common in Cambodia because of the virtual lack of any significant middle class there.

Cambodia's economy is in ruins. Only 20 per cent of the urban population and 12 per cent of the rural population has access to potable water.[6] With a per capita income of less than 300 dollars per annum, and with nearly four out of ten people living below the poverty line, the country is one of the poorest nations in the world. The adult literacy rate is less than 40 per cent. Less than one out of two children completed a primary school education[7] and it is likely that this proportion will decline even further as government funding for education continues to wane.

Compared to Thailand, the yaa baa phenomenon in Cambodia emerges out of the general context of poverty, a social condition favouring the consumption of psychotropic drugs. For thousands of women there who work in brothels, injecting methamphetamine is now a favoured alternative to heroin. Heroin, a formerly popular drug, has now become too costly for many impoverished users. It would seem that a large proportion of Cambodian ATS consumers are of the borderline consumer ideal type rather than the pleasure-seeking nocturnal user, the latter of which accounts for a major share of Thai consumers.

Methamphetamine is still a marginal phenomenon in Cambodia because the range of available and affordable drugs there is not limited to ATS variants alone. Other drugs, such as inhalants, are popular among both homeless children and villagers. One study indicates that more than 75 per cent of street children regularly sniff glue. Inhalants also face competition from other products, preferably those that can be injected. An example of the latter is "blackwater opium",[8] a muddy residue obtained during the process of extracting opium from poppies. Though considered a waste product, it is nevertheless said to produce effective results for the price. The popularity of substances such as these reveals the extreme poverty afflicting an increasing share of Cambodia's population, a situation that continues to favour the rapid expansion of the market for stimulants.

The pyramid-shaped diagram representing Cambodia's population breakdown by age group reflects the heavy price that its inhabitants have had to pay for the war and subsequent auto-genocide during the Khmer Rouge regime (1975–9). Currently some 45 per cent of the population is between one to fourteen years old, and only three per cent of inhabitants are aged 65 years or older.[9] For drug traffickers, such a youthful population represents an invaluable supply of potential consumers. According to one observer, the major drug problem now taking shape in Cambodia centres around methamphetamine. Major risk groups are no longer small cliques of marginalised persons disdained by society, but rather substantial populations of primary and secondary school children. Paradoxically, the fact that these children are generally too poor to afford drugs is the only thing that dissuades traffickers from making inroads into this huge potential market.

Burma

Even the regional delegation of United Nations Drug Control Programme based in Rangoon admits that currently little is known about the state of amphetamine-type stimulants in Burma. According to a January 2000 government census, 31 per cent of 86,000 known drug consumers in the country were thought to be using heroin.[10] However, this estimate was apparently obtained from projections using figures from 1974, and hence can hardly be said to accurately reflect the current situation.

More credible sources from the World Health Organisation suggest that the total number of psychotropic substance users in Burma is nearer to 300,000. It is likely that heroin consumers would account for a large

share of this number since they represented 98 per cent of the patients who received treatment at a medical centre in Rangoon. This assumption is all the more probable because heroin is very cheap in Burma, itself a heroin-producing country. Opium, which was common in the past, has been almost entirely supplanted by heroin. Nevertheless, locally-produced ATS pills are also available on the market in Burma, judging by recent major drug seizures.

A 1995 study revealed unequal concentrations of drug-using zones in the country. Urban zones such as Rangoon, Mandalay, or Sagaing were more involved in the yaa baa trade than rural zones, except for the border regions of China, Laos, and the Shan or Kachin states in Thailand. Drug consumption in the latter areas is due to the presence of the mining industry there, where the seasonal workers employed depend heavily on stimulants.

Recent journalistic sources confirm that jade mines such as Hpakant, to the west of Myitkyana, exploit thousands of Burmese in conditions of near-slavery. To survive these deplorably unsafe conditions, miners have no prospect other than to seek amelioration through heroin. Injections are taken every day with as many as 800 persons sharing the same syringe.[11]

The principle of coerced labour established by the military junta is more widespread than ever, even if it is not acknowledged. It arises from the collectivist logic behind labour mobilization for national construction projects. In actual practice, Burmese who are forced to execute "public utility services" — which we can call "forced labour" — are in definite need of artificial stimulants to withstand the hard work and exhaustion.

These consumers belong to the profile of the ideal typical regular consumer. For them stimulants provide considerable physical help and can assuage fatigue. In the absence of opium, workers who must toil under relentless conditions of forced labour rely on methamphetamine tablets. Compared to Thai workers, the regular Burmese user lacks significant control over his yaa baa consumption because he is obliged to take it as a part of his work, and receives it free of any direct cost.

Laos

Methamphetamine made its first appearance in Laos only very recently. For a long time the country remained on the periphery of an issue that was central to the neighbouring countries of Burma and Thailand. Thailand took measures to safeguard its borders and waged a continuous battle to

prevent transit of the drug through its territory. This caused traffickers to turn to Laos as an alternative. Traffickers were subjected to increasing repressive measures in the vicinity of the Bangkok port, formerly a much-favoured stopping place in the methamphetamine trade.[12] They then looked for alternative routes through the neighbouring countries, particularly China, and also Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. In May 2002, Laotian police seized 120,000 pills along with one million fake 500-baht notes (12.5 euros).[13]

Nevertheless the Laotian yaa baa trade remains epiphenomenal given current social and economic conditions there. The benefits of ATS for users in Laos are relatively few compared to conditions in Cambodia, where users are impoverished, or Burma, where they are subjects of an oppressive regime. David A. Feingold has observed that the economy in Laos was not as affected by the 1997 Asian financial crisis as Thailand because of the former country's low level of involvement in the international financial system.[14]

Laos is not wealthy, but its agricultural economy remains strong. Unlike many other neighbouring countries, Laos has not experienced a rural population exodus and thus its village social structures have been preserved. Given the lack of access to quality education — the literacy rate in Laos is among the lowest in the world — youngsters rarely experience difficulties integrating themselves into society after leaving school. In this respect they differ from their counterparts in Cambodia, where many children from the shantytowns of Phnom Penh have been rejected by their parents and left homeless. Neither are they like children in Thailand, who are often left to fend for themselves. Laotian families still need their children to work in the fields, and this factor helps socialise young people into the larger society. The social fabric of Laotian society remains close-knit, and any degree of methamphetamine use is subject to scrutiny from one's immediate family, peers, and local authorities. Users whose consumption is excessive or indiscreet will quickly be stigmatised.

On weekends, many young Laotians living on the banks of the Mekong River prefer to cross the river to attend a pop music concert in Thailand rather than stay in their villages and listen to traditional songs.[15] It is likely that in doing so they discover yaa baa. But it is much more difficult for young Laotians to make the passage from casual to habitual user. Laotian youth are neither idle nor isolated. As victims of real poverty who lack access to even basic infrastructure facilities and suffer from an evident lack of education, the Laotian people are endowed with the most efficient weapon in the fight against the drug menace: social control.

The model constructed to account for the yaa baa economy in Thailand is therefore not well-suited to the Laotian case. While a model for Laos would also need to distinguish urban from rural methamphetamine use, it appears that the relevance of the urban sector in the country declines in areas west of the Mekong, given current conditions there.

The Arrival of Ecstasy: A Social Distinction and a New Division

At first glance it seems doubtful that a phenomenon such as the use of illicit drugs, which appears to be limited to particular subcultures of society, could possibly have implications for how society works as a whole. And yet this is indeed the case if we consider it part of the social process of distinction, an analysis developed by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu conceptualises society as a symbolic struggle for prestige and power between dominating and dominated classes. The weapons of this struggle are economic and cultural capital, and the objective to be achieved is "distinction", in two senses of the term. The first is the capacity to determine symbolic differences between objects of consumption. The second is to differentiate oneself from others with regards to taste, judgement, and cultural capabilities.[16] This social and cultural struggle for domination is essential for how a given society is established and maintained. Thus the two opposing parties — the distinguished on one side and the ordinary on the other — can only exist in relation to one another. It is their relationship that, even when contentious, gives meaning to cultural practices such as the consumption of illicit drugs.

Illicit drug use is in fact not uncommon in this symbolic fight. Such practices enable some people to distinguish themselves from others and assert their superiority, which in turn provokes others to contest the first group's claim to power and prestige.[17] The struggle is generally turbulent, as the socially-recognised value of objects and behaviour undergoes continuous change. What was "in" yesterday is "out" today, when an item of consumption or a behaviour becomes commonplace.

Until very recently, yaa baa was the only ATS available in the Thai market. The fact that the stimulant had long been used by ordinary people such as drivers and labourers gave it a reassuring image. Searching for new means of distinguishing themselves, elite youngsters who wanted to experiment with drugs had no other option but to try it. As we have seen, however, although yaa baa pills are of varying colours and shapes, these variations do not reflect actual differences in a standardised manufacturing

process that could distinguish the product according to discriminating registers of price or effect. Thus methamphetamine carries little symbolic value in the distinction process and cannot in itself function as an element of social stratification. As a youth phenomenon, yaa baa has spread to young Thais en masse, without delineating concomitant social distinctions among its users.

However, the unanimity with which Thai youth have taken to ATS has been shaken by the very recent appearance of a new product in the country — ecstasy. This psychotropic drug, imported from Europe, is sold at a much higher price than yaa baa and carries none of the latter's mass appeal. Ecstasy is targeted exclusively at consumers belonging to the well-to-do class.

Yaa "e", the Thai name for ecstasy (pronounced with an "i" as in English) conveys an image of popular consumption as fashionable as Miu Miu apparel or Oakley eyeware.[18] Local consumers do not believe this drug is dangerous because it is imported from the West. "My friends and I would never take yaa baa", swears Yuri, 27, a young Bangkok photographer and ecstasy user. But does he mean he would never take it, or "never again"? He does not elaborate. But it is certain that claims about one substance being safer than another — as if ATS were produced under ISO norms of Afnor, the French association for standardisation — are very often used to justify a switch between types, for instance, moving to yaa "e" after having sampled yaa baa. Giving up yaa baa for ecstasy is most likely done to show that one has exclusive tastes and the means to afford them.

Such displays are made possible by the relatively high visibility of ecstasy tablets on the nightclub scene in Thailand. In discos, imported yaa "e" has a more prominent reputation than that of local yaa baa. The drug acts to generate admiration from one's peers as well as heighten the sense perceptions of the person who consumes it. Thus ecstasy is most popular among young individuals seeking recognition from the group.

It is now possible to return to Bourdieu's theory to place the above in perspective. The desire for distinction among those who use illicit drugs tends to make one substance obsolete in favour of another newer, more fashionable drug. Some observers think the arrival of ecstasy in Thailand could lead to a rapid decline in the market for yaa baa. If this is the case, the yaa baa "epidemic" may be nothing but a fad and so likely to die out.[19] Whatever the case, individuals' proclivity to use psychotropic drugs will never disappear altogether. One product simply drives out the other, a process that occurs in piecemeal fashion because it is largely the

discriminating price of the drug deemed fashionable that makes it popular with consumers.

The fact that young people in Thailand are constantly moving from one trend to another is indisputable. They might be shifting from one drug type to another, or one kind of social behaviour to another. Whatever the case, their ostensibly non-conformist actions reveal conformist preferences at work. It was not so long ago that opium was very much in vogue on Thai territory. When the government took measures to eradicate it, opium was replaced by heroin. Then, with the appearance of methamphetamine, consumption practices changed once again. Each time the preceding wave generates some residual users who remain attached to a product, but the overall movement between products continues.

The formation of an "ecstasy elite" within the general market segmentation of psychotropic drugs points to new social class polarisation in Thailand. Referring to the organisation of Western societies, Alain Touraine suggests that vertical society — one's position in a top-and-bottom structure of social classes — is giving way to horizontal society, or one's placement in relation to the "fashionable centre" or the "unfashionable periphery".[20] Applying this conceptualisation to the Thai case yields organization that is both vertical and horizontal. One form is not giving way to another; rather, the society is a product of the cumulative effects of each.

In Thailand, rank and status hierarchies continue to be important pillars of social structure. Simultaneously, young Thai's adherence to a single fashion — the latest — represents a sense of belonging to a centre, a sole reference point. The horizontal organisation of Thai society is subject only to the disparity between city and countryside, which remains quite marked despite the mobility of the population. A young Thai now intensely experiences two worlds at once. He belongs to a rigidly-identified vertical class based on dominant and subordinate relations, and also aspires to the middle range of a horizontal axis of culture where extremes are considered negative and where an urban "modern" lifestyle is preferable to a rural "traditional" one.

ATS is perfectly in keeping with this dual logic. Yaa baa has enabled one younger generation of Thais to distinguish itself from the rest along a vertical axis of rank and class. And if ATS has united this section of the population, the recent arrival of ecstasy shows that these products can also reinforce status-based social distinctions.

However, the yaa baa pill, a product of "modern chemistry", also symbolises the habits and fashions of the West for young Thais that can

be measured along a horizontal axis of centre and periphery. Experiencing the effects of the drug, users have a feeling of participating in Life with a capital L, of having a hold on the world. As a perceived "global" product, methamphetamine is perfectly suited to a population that measures itself on a scale of global consumerist values. Yet this perception is ironic given that yaa maa, the antecedent of yaa baa, was first used by labourers in the country's sugarcane fields — an irony that seems to be lost on members of Thailand's current younger generation, whose ability to acknowledge their ties to the past is weak at best.

Conclusion

From a geopolitical point of view, this study has chronicled how the explosive growth of methamphetamine consumption in Thailand has been made possible by production of the drug in Burma, on the other side of an 1800-km mountainous frontier that divides the two countries. The configuration of such a frontier region makes it difficult, if not impossible, to exercise strict control over any type of trafficking that occurs through it. But political boundaries, veritable backbones along which drug traffic is organised, also owe their porosity to circumstances. In the present study these include the Burmese geopolitical context on the one hand, and tense bilateral relations between Rangoon and Bangkok on the other.

Burma can nevertheless hardly be considered a "narco-state" whose officials hold unchallenged power to plan, guide, and monitor an illegal drug economy.[1] Rather, Burma's drug economy is the result of political compromise that, in the context of a war economy, requires the state to negotiate its power-sharing with competing forces. By suppressing the democratic aspirations of the Burmese people, the ruthless military dictatorship in power in Rangoon sustains a conflict-ridden environment that allows private drug-trafficking armies to flourish. To protect itself from separatist forces that are strengthened by the government's very own repressive policies, the junta in power has no other strategic choice than to enter into regular agreements and cease-fires with these insurgent armies. Various insurgent groups control the drug traffic, to greater or lesser extent; consequently illicit drugs, formerly the sinews of war, have become its stakes.[2]

While Burma can be deemed a physical, political and juridical "outlaw" territory conducive to the development of an illegal drug economy, drug trafficking to and within Thailand also owes much to the longstanding willingness of Bangkok authorities to create a buffer zone on the country's western frontier. The assistance rendered by forces affiliated with the Kuomintang Nationalist Army (KMT) has been especially important in this effort. The enormous size and scope of Thailand's illegal and informal

economy — including illegal labour migration from Burma, prostitution, and trafficking in wood and precious stones, among other things — adds to the country's national economic growth and is therefore tolerated to a great extent. This orientation has long facilitated drug trafficking and, more recently, has helped expand the scope of ATS consumption.

Thus the illicit drug economy in Burma and Thailand continues because of the profits it generates, directly or indirectly, for state authorities and selected players. But methamphetamine traffickers also benefit enormously from pre-existing opium networks in the region. It is here in the heart of the Golden Triangle, this quasi-mythological area given over to drugs, that methamphetamine production has taken root; and it is in Thailand, the site of opium consumption and transit par excellence in the Golden Triangle, that the yaa baa market has literally exploded.

The influx of yaa baa into Thailand's illicit drug market creates a completely new state of affairs there, from a sociological point of view. Already in long use because of its ability to stimulate physical effort and minimise fatigue, employers continue to supply ATS to workers in agriculture, transport and fishing. But methamphetamine is also a "chameleon" drug whose ever-changing effects are able to suit the situation at hand. Capable of numbing the senses of a prostitute who is forced to service too many clients, it also intensifies the thrill young people experience while they watch a show, compete in a race, or gamble. Whether financially — by its sale — or psychologically — by its effects — yaa baa can boost the morale of a person who has lost his job or who has little hope of finding one. Methamphetamine may propel a student towards academic success, or, alternatively, help him face the "shame" of failing exams.

Depending on the situation, there are as many different expectations of the drug as there are effects. The varied qualities attributed to it by users make it a drug for all occasions. Above all, yaa baa serves to reduce the tensions arising out of social interactions and inhibitions caused by Thailand's culture of respecting "face" and its rigid social hierarchy in which everyone is assigned a rank. The culture of compromise that characterises Thai society prevents individuals from succumbing to direct confrontation.

The country's major social institutions offer young people few bulwarks against the encroaching temptations of yaa baa. Schools fail to cultivate young people's ability to perceive society on their own terms and find their place in it. A functionalist vision conditioned by hierarchies predetermines the role of individuals, that is, if circumstances even permit them to find a role in the first place. Deprived of the prospect of acting

on their destiny, and subject to educational and family pressures that demand success without providing the means of achieving it, many young Thai youths take to yaa baa as an alternative.

The means of consuming this psychotropic product generally take the form of a ritualised collective phenomenon. Sharing a common "condition", youth peer groups bring together individuals of similar status and origins. The drug binds the group together and its potential dangers are overlooked because of the comforting presence of one's peers. Methamphetamine has long been used in Thailand by older generations of workers. This, along with the fact that it is a chemically synthesised pill, confers a reputable standing upon it among younger people now experimenting with the drug. Yaa baa is in perfect synergy with current modes of living and perceptions of time brought forth by pervasive notions of modernity.

From mid-century through the mid-1980s, Thailand's long years of military control and economic development acted to set a host of social rigidities in place. Then suddenly the social climate changed abruptly — and with little preparation — into a permissive society of consumption. Yet such relative material abundance could not compensate for the shrinking prospects that resulted for many young Thais. Fast-eroding Buddhist values have had to make way for imported consumerist ones that by and large fail to deliver what they promise. Many young Thais' own reckoning of their personal value is based on a game of conspicuous consumption through which they assert their identity, but this "alternative" model to adult society is hardly any guarantee of a meaningful future.

Much is at stake because Thai society as a whole is undergoing changes that have forced young people to become more independent. Following the push to industrialise during the last half-century, many new city-dwellers have experienced the difficult transition from an extended to a nuclear family arrangement whose emergence is related to an urban way of life. Away from their community of origin, parents are not always successful in shouldering alone the responsibility that was earlier shared by all the members of the community. Added to this is the social impact of the regional crisis of 1997 that, while difficult to measure precisely, has led to a further loss of social bearings. Without question, the massive increase in yaa baa usage is part and parcel of these combined circumstances.

Amidst these changes Thailand's younger generation must now cope with social problems brought about by modernity, while continuing to shoulder the burden of their country's troubled recent history. This can be a daunting prospect for young people, one not always acknowledged

by the larger society. A new Thailand is in the process of emerging. Yet within this new landscape of modern social tensions and widespread illicit drug use, young Thais' indulgence in yaa baa corresponds only in part to that of their Western counterparts, the latter of whom use illicit substances as part of a larger agenda to test the boundaries of what is permitted and forbidden, and between what is legal and illegal.

Methamphetamine plays a complex role in Thai society by seeming to mark a dividing line between what is acceptable and not acceptable, and therefore determining one's entry into society or one's exclusion from it. These statuses are powerful predictors of an individual's future in a society such as Thailand's that offers "losers" no second chance. Illicit drug use can quickly progress to a prison sentence for young Thais who, thinking themselves unencumbered by the social conventions that guided the actions of previous generations, assume that the values of their peer group built around yaa baa at the core can replace all others.

This book has offered an account of the production, traffic, and use of methamphetamine in mainland Southeast Asia, with particular reference to Burma, the principal producing country of the region, and Thailand, the principal consuming country. But there is absolutely no doubt that the passion for yaa baa transcends Southeast Asian borders. Evidence indicates that networks of narcotics traffickers are reaching far beyond the region all the way to Western Europe. The arrest of 102 members of an Asian trafficking network by the Swiss police and the seizure in Europe of 450,000 methamphetamine tablets originating from the Golden Triangle during the summer of 2001 indicate traffickers' determination to push the geographic boundaries of the yaa baa market ever outwards.

Methamphetamine traffickers have no doubt been motivated by the drug's unprecedented success in Thailand and its popularity in the U.S.; the spread of similar developments in Europe is not inconceivable. The popularity of ecstasy among young Europeans suggests that few barriers are currently in place to prevent a subsequent influx of methamphetamine there. Alarmed by its appellation as a "madness drug", national and trans-national organisations across Europe are bracing themselves for its arrival. If authorities dread the prospect of battling widespread methamphetamine use — and this appears to be the case if one believes the Federal office of the Swiss police which designates it as "extremely dangerous" — this is first and foremost because of ignorance about the drug's effects.[3]

As a substance still as yet unknown in some regions of Europe, the prospect of a yaa baa influx indeed has the capacity to frighten. The

French monitoring centre for drugs and drug addiction (Observatoire français des drogues et des toxicomanies, or OFDT) is conducting an "internet vigil" by tracking drug-related messages over the electronic network. OFDT authorities realised in September 2001 that various incidents and information about yaa baa traffic were rarely covered by the media, in part because people did not have sufficient information about the drug to identify its effects and estimate its dangers.

In fact, far from being a new drug, methamphetamine has long been known in many quarters for its psychotropic effects. It is classified in the group of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) represented mainly by ecstasy, to which it can be compared. Only its nickname "madness drug" is exotic. As previously noted, this name was given to it by authorities in Thailand to discourage individuals from taking it. However, the onset of actual insanity linked to methamphetamine use is rare, and is generally implicated only in cases when yaa baa is taken in conjunction with other psychotropic products.

Undeniably attractive to young people, methamphetamine gained rapidly in popularity in Thailand through the decade of the 1990s. In less than ten years yaa baa has become the main drug on the market there. It has overcome the usual market segmentations delineated by cultural preferences and the propensity of status-seekers to distinguish themselves through exclusive "designer" drug use. The yaa baa craze is intrinsically connected to Thailand's own socio-historical conditions, and to study the social construction of the methamphetamine experience there demands an understanding of Thai user's own perceptions of the drug and its effects. For "ordinary" users in Thailand, the properties of yaa baa are nothing exceptional and the drug itself is not endowed with the extraordinary potential for enticement that the Western media would like to attribute to it. If methamphetamine use has indeed taken off in Thailand, particularly so among young people, this explosive growth is due to a combination of local factors not present in Western societies.

If illicit drug users across Europe were to become seriously interested in this "new" product, methamphetamine would necessarily have to compete with other psychotropic drugs already available on the market there. Methamphetamine thus lacks the potential to appeal to a widespread and diversified clientele there, as has happened in Thailand. And even if the drug were to achieve some degree of popularity with European users, this does not mean that Asian yaa baa producers and suppliers would necessarily be involved. Like ecstasy, methamphetamine can be synthesised and produced very near to European drug markets. Its producers can

operate free of the constraints of space and cultivation that their counterparts in the opium industry must face. Thus while the possibility of Asia-produced methamphetamine pills flooding the European market is highly unlikely, it is equally apparent that the production and consumption of yaa baa will remain a prominent and worrisome feature of societies throughout mainland Southeast Asia and beyond.

Notes

Preface

1 Bangkok-Paris: IRASEC-L'Harmattan, 2002.

Introduction

1 "Yaa Maa is now 'Madness Drug'", Bangkok Post, 19 July 1996. "Old Habits Die Hard", Bangkok Post, 6 Dec. 1998. "Yaa baa, la pilule qui rend fou", Gavroche, July 2000.

2 "Border Supplies Compound the Problem", Bangkok Post, 23 Nov. 1998; "Junta Gets Blame for Drug Threat", Bangkok Post, 18 Mar. 2000.

3 Jean-Marie Pelt, Drogues et plantes magiques (Paris: Fayard, 1983). Pharmacognosy is a "descriptive pharmacology dealing with crude drugs and simples" [Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition (Springfield: Merriam-Webster, 1995)].

4 Regarding addiction to sports practice, refer to Claire Carrier, "Approche clinique du dopage" Revue Toxibase No. 3 (Sept. 2001): 11–4.

5 J.-M. Pelt, Drogues et plantes magiques, p. 14. Also refer to Antonio Escohotado, A Brief History of Drugs: From the Stone Age to the Stoned Age (Rochester: Park Street Press, 1999), p. 161.

Chapter 1

1 Denis Richard and Jean-Louis Senon, Dictionnaire des drogues, des toxicomanies et des dépendances (Paris: Larousse, 1999), pp. 44–5, 405–6.

2 Mark H. Beers and Robert Berkow (eds.), The Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy, 17th Edition (New Jersey, 1999). Section 15, "Psychiatric Disorders", Chapter 195, "Drug Use and Addiction", website reference at <http://www.merck.com>.

3 Richard and Senon (1999), Dictionnaire des drogue, p. 45.

4 Correspondence with Michel Hamon, Research Director at INSERM and Director of 288th Unit (Neuro-psycho pharmacology) of INSERM CHU Pitié Salpêtrière at Paris, Sept. 2001.

5 Alain I. Leshner, "Treatment: Effects on the Brain and Body", paper given at the National Methamphetamine Drug Conference, 28–30 May 1997, (Omaha: Office of National Drug Control Policy, 1997), pp. 17–24, website reference at <http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov>.
6 Brookhaven National laboratory, "Researchers Document Brain Damage, Reduction in Motor and Cognitive Function from Methamphetamine Abuse" (2001); website reference at <http://www.bnl.gov/bnlweb/pubaf/pr/2001/bnlpr030101.htm>.
7 Correspondence with Michel Hamon in Sept. 2001.
8 Michel Hamon, "Amphétamines", in Encylopaedia Universalis, Multimedia Version 5, 1999.
9 Richard and Senon (1999), Dictionnaire des drogues, pp. 129–42.
10 A long-continued or excessive dilatation of the pupils of the eye.
11 Relatively rapid heart action.
12 Koch Crime Institute, website reference at <http://www.kci.org>.
13 A continuous succession of involuntary slow and writhing movements of the hands, feet, and other body parts.
14 Unlike amphetamine, methamphetamine is a metabolite of a drug used to treat Parkinson's disease, which is characterised by a deficiency of dopamine in the brain in the extra-pyramidical structures. Its prescription enables the release of dopamine, and treats the symptoms but does not cure the disease (interview with Michel Hamon, Sept. 2001).
15 Beers and Berkow (1999), The Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy.
16 Christian Ratsch, Les plantes de l'amour, les aphrodisiaques et leurs usages (Paris: Editions du Lézard, 2000), pp. 29, 57, 193–7.
17 Correspondence with Michel Hamon in Sept. 2001.
18 Richard E. Schultes and Albert Hofmann, Les plantes des Dieux (Paris: Editions du Lézard, 1973), p. 10.
19 Richard and Senon (1999), Dictionnaire des drogues, p. 45.

Chapter 2

1 Jean Bruneton, Plantes toxiques, Végétaux dangereux pour l'Homme et les animaux, ed. Lavoisier (Paris: Tec & Doc, 1996), p. 61.
2 United Nations Drug Control Programme, Amphetamine Type Stimulants: A Global Review, Technical Series No. 3 (Jan. 1996): 35.
3 Vienna: United Nations, 1971.
4 Also called ice, shabu, crack, or crystal meth; in Thailand, yaa baa or yaa maa.
5 Phenethylamines are the classification to which amphetamines belong, as a sympathomimetic substance derived from phenethylamine. Phenethylamines are present in numerous plant species and by extension in some of their derived products. Cocoa contains an average ratio of 3 to 12 mg/kg. It significantly increases the rate of noradrenaline in the hypothalamus and therefore has a stimulating effect on the brain [Jean Bruneton,

Pharmacognosie, phytochimie, plantes médicinales, ed. Lavoisier (Paris: Tec & Doc, 1999), pp. 711–4]. Regarding cocoa, consult the website of Nestlé at <http://www.chocolat.nestle.fr/az/sant/sante8.html>.

6 The complete classification is Lophophora williamsii Lemaire (ex-salm-Dyck) Coulter.

7 Cathinone and a derivative, methcathinone, are frequently sold as methamphetamine in the United States. See Richard and Senon, Dictionnaire des drogues, p. 255.

8 Michel Favre-Duchartre, "Gnétophytes", in Encyclopaedia universalis, Multimedia Version 5, 1999.

9 Erica McBroom, "Ephedra (Ma Huang)", in Ethnobotanical Leaflets, Southern Illinois University Herbarium, 2001. See <www.sie.edu/~ebl/>.

10 Ay Leung, "Chinese Medicinals", in Jules Janick and James E. Simon, eds., Advances in New Crops (Portland: Timber Press, 1990), pp. 499–510. See <http://newcrop.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/proceedings1990/vl-499.html>.

11 Mormons drank, and still drink, a decoction of Ephedra since the community proscribes consumption of tea and coffee. Native Americans in the west of what is today Texas and northwestern Mexico consumed Squaw tea or Desert tea mainly to treat renal diseases and even probably syphilis, although the latter without any proven effect (hence the name Ephedra antisyphilitica Berlandier ex-Meyer).

12 Scot Petersen, "Ephedra: Asking for Trouble?", in Ethnobotanical Leaflets, Southern Illinois University Herbarium, 2001, see <http://www.siu.edu/ebl/>.

13 Ralph Stefan Solecki, Shanidar: The First Flower People (New York: Knopf, 1971), pp. 176–7. Also see Richard Rudgley, The Lost Civilizations of the Stone Age (London: Arrow Books, 1999), pp. 218–9.

14 United Nations Drug Control Programme (1996), p. 52.

15 Ibid., p. 50.

16 Methcathinone is produced from ephedrine. Its structure is identical to that of methamphetamine and cathinone, the latter being the psychoactive principle of khat, or Catha edulis. The substance was called "ephedrone" in the Soviet Union when it was produced by clandestine laboratories in Leningrad in 1982 [OGD, Atlas mondial des drogues (Paris: OGD, 1996), p. 226].

17 OGD, The Global Geopolitics of Drugs 1997/1998 (Paris: OGD, 1999), p. 15.

18 Philippe Courrière, "Ephédrine", in Encyclopaedia Universalis, Multimedia Version 5, 1999.

19 Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2000 on the application of Section 12 of the 1998 United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Bangkok: Office of Narcotics Control Board, 2000).

20 In France, medicine containing P-2-P, such as some but not all products of the Actifed and Demoral category, for example, were withdrawn from counter sales in 2001 following confirmation of four cases of internal bleeding. Henceforth they can only be bought upon producing a non-

renewable medical prescription. Refer to the site of the AFSSAPS (The French Agency for Medical Product Safety) at <http://afssaps.sante.fr/>. In a similar episode involving a different substance, the Bush administration halted the sale of all products containing ephedra in December 2003 in what was an official U.S. ban on an over-the-counter nutritional supplement. The ban came after reports of over 16,000 adverse side effects and 155 deaths.

21 Koch Crime Institute, Manufacturing of Methamphetamine, see <www.kci.org/meth_info/making_meth.htm>.

22 "Les laboratoires illicites de drogue sont à cours de produits chimiques", in Rapport, INCB, Communiqué No. 5, 23/03/1999, see <www.incb.org/f/press/1998/f_rel_05. htm>.

23 For more historical, botanical and legal details, refer to "Ephedra: A potential precursor for D-Methamphetamine Production", United States National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC), 1996, website reference at <www.usdsoj.gov/> and Mark Blumenthal, Mahuang: Ancient Herb, Ancient Medicine, Regulatory Dilemma, 1995, see <www.healthy.net/>.

24 See, for example, a website originating from Ohio in the United States at <www. dopequest.com> and the page Methamphetamine Frequently Asked Questions at Lycaeum.org (particularly the latter's Lycaeum Entheogen Database) at <http://leda.lycaeum.org>.

25 The inverted commas are used here because narcotic literally means "which dulls, numbs the sensitivity", which is of course not the case with the effects produced by stimulants, particularly those of methamphetamine. Opiates are true narcotics, but not cocaine or ATS.

26 "Falling Prices Fuel Spread of Addiction", Bangkok Post, 11 June 2000.

27 Vienna: UNDCP, 1996, p. 59.

Chapter 3

1 Concerning the geo-history and the geopolitics of the Golden Triangle, see Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy, Les territoires de l'opium: Conflits et trafics du Triangle d'Or et du Croissant d'Or (Geneva: Olizane, 2002).

2 Jacques Barrau, Lucien Bernot, Isac Chiva, Georges Condominas, "Foreword", Etudes rurales, no. 53–6 (1974): 10.

3 Moshe Yegar, "The Panthay (Chinese Muslims) of Burma and Yunnan", Journal of Southeast Asian History 7, 1 (1966): 75.

4 Frank M. Lebar, Gerald C. Hickey and John K. Musgrave, Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files Press, 1964).

5 Andrew D.W. Forbes, "The "Cin-Ho" (Yunnan Chinese) Muslims of North Thailand", Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs, 1986. Also refer to Andrew D.W. Forbes and David Henley, The Haw: Traders of the Golden Triangle, People and Cultures of Southeast Asia (Bangkok: Teak House Publications, 1997).

6 The trade actually involved jadeite, which was more sought after than the less-valuable nephrite. For jadeite, jade, and its trade, see Jill Walker, "Jade: A Special Gemstone", in Roger Keverne, Jade (London: Lorenz Book, 1995), pp. 18–41; Robert Frey and Bertil Lintner, "Jade in Burma: The Major Jadeite Source. The Jade Trade in Burma", in Keverne, Jade, pp. 266–71.

7 Mya Maung, The Burma Road to Poverty (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991), pp. 210–5.

8 Bertil Lintner, Burma in Revolt: Opium and Insurgency Since 1948 (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), and communication with the author in Mar. 1998.

9 CIA agent William Young, quoted in Alfred W. McCoy, The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade (New York: Harper & Row, 1991), p. 247.

10 Desmond Ball, Burma's Military Secret: Signal Intelligence (SIGINT) from 1941 to Cyber Warfare (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1998), p. 205.

11 Martial Dassé, Les Guérillas en Asie du Sud-Est (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993), p. 165. On the Communist Party of Thailand and the role of the army in its disappearance, also refer to Arnaud Dubus and Nicolas Revise, Armée du peuple, armée du roi-Les militaires face à la société en Indonésie et en Thaïland (Bangkok-Paris: IRASEC-L'Harmattan, 2002), pp. 99–114.

12 Historical references to developments which follow have been taken from various sources, including Ball, Burma's Military Secret; Dassé, Les Guérillas en Asie du Sud-Est; Lintner, Burma in Revolt; McCoy, The Politics of Heroin, and Martin Smith, Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity (London: Zed Books, 1991).

13 Bertil Lintner, "Velvet Glove", Far Eastern Economic Review, 7 May 1998.

14 According to the U.S. State Department's annual International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), the SSA could also actively be participating in the trafficking of methamphetamine in cooperation with the UWSA; and this despite the numerous clashes between the two armies (see issues from 1998, 1999 and 2000). Similarly, a report of the former French Geopolitical Drug Watch (OGD) estimates that the SSA of Yawd Serk at most levies "taxes" on the cargo in transit in the regions where it operates [OGD, La Géopolitique mondiale des drogues 1998/1999 (Paris: OGD, 2000)], p. 60.

15 "Raid Triggers Burma Offensive", Bangkok Post, 27 Sept. 2000.

16 "Rangoon-backed Wa Army Moves into Shan Region", Bangkok Post, 3 Dec. 2000; "Magic Pills Cast a Spell of Evil", Bangkok Post, 28 Dec. 2000.

17 Rodney Tasker and Bertil Lintner, "Danger: Road Works Ahead", Far Eastern Economic Review, 21 Dec. 2000.

18 An ex-protégé of the dictator Ne Win, the figure behind the military coup of 1988, Khin Nyunt is one of the 21 leaders of the former SLORC.

19 Two million dollars was offered by Washington in June 1998 for any clue likely to lead to his capture.

20 The site was so named by the Thais after the transformation of Brigade 361 to 46.

21 "TV Crew Fingers Junta", The Nation, 21 June 2001.

22 Ibid.
23 "Burma: Shifting of Refineries and Laboratories", Lettre internationale des drogues (Bulletin de l'Association d'études géopolitiques des drogues-AEGD) No. 2 (Nov. 2000) : 5–6.
24 Ibid.
25 Bertil Lintner, "Drugs, Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Burma", in John J. Brandon, Burma: Myanmar in the Twenty-First Century: Dynamics of Continuity and Change (Bangkok: Open Society Institute, Thai Studies Section, 1997), p. 212.
26 This is according to the correspondents of the OGD in Burma, Dépêche Internationale des Drogues, No. 92 (June 1999).
27 This is according to a report of the Kachin Independence Organization, Current Status of Drug Eradication in Kachin State, 1996, quoted by D. Bernstein, L. Kean, "People of the Opiate: Burma's Dictatorship of Drugs", The Nation (New York), 16 Dec. 1996.
28 Lintner, Burma in Revolt, p. 293.
29 "Junta Firms Ties With Drug Army", Bangkok Post, 31 Oct. 1999.
30 "Wa Move Drug Labs to Border", The Nation, 14 July 2000.
31 "We've earned it … We've lost over one thousand soldiers in the battle for this land with Khun Sa … we're here to stay. For the first time in years we are able to settle down. I don't want to hear even one more gunshot … The Burmese tried to back down after we won, but after eight years of battle and one thousand lives lost, we're determined to stay" (Ta Kap, quoted in "Wa Army Tries to Build an Empire with Drug Money", Bangkok Post, 1 Mar. 1999).

Chapter 4

1 As previously noted, large-scale commercial opium production in the area now covered by the Golden Triangle likely began only at the beginning of the 19th century. The example of Burma is revealing, since the first edicts against opium use there only began to appear during the period when the British were promoting its consumption.
2 Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy, "Drug Diversity in the Golden Triangle", Crime and Justice International 15, no. 33 (Oct. 1999): 5, 6, 18; see that article and others at <www.geopium.org>.
3 "Nexus" for example, an amphetamine derivative presented in two forms, 2CB and 2CD, began to be included in Schedule 1 in late June 1999; see "Ban to be Slapped on Designer Drugs", Bangkok Post, 24 June 1999.
4 These distinctions are noted in publications of the Office of Narcotics Control Board (ONCB), the Thai body in charge of suppressing illicit drug consumption and eradicating drug production.
5 These estimates were calculated on the basis of 600 tons of opium produced in 1981. André McNicoll, Drug Trafficking: A North-South Perspective (Ottawa: The North South Institute/ L'Institut Nord-Sud, 1983), p. 23.

6 Pasuk Phongpaichit, Sungsidh Piriyarangsan and Nualnoi Treerat, Guns, Girls, Gambling, Ganja: Thailand's Illegal Economy and Public Policy (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1998), p. 89.

7 Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI), 1991, quoted by Lamond Tullis, Unintended Consequences: Illegal Drugs and Drug Policies in Nine Countries (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), pp. 54–5.

8 Estimate for 1980–1 according to the International Narcotics Control Board (1981: p. 72) quoted by McNicoll, Drug Trafficking, p. 22. The figure cited by the Thailand Development Research Institute of exactly 214,180 addicts for 1993, is quoted in Phongpaichit et al., Guns, Girls, Gambling, Ganja, p. 91.

9 Pasuk Phongpaichit et al., Guns, Girls, Gambling, Ganja, p. 101.

10 "Addiction" here also means "dependence".

11 "Heroin out of Fashion as 1.2 Million Addicts Opt for Pills", South China Morning Post, 18 Nov. 1998; "Thailand Battles Deluge of Drugs", Associated Press, 15 July 2000; "Drug Related Crimes Soar", Bangkok Post, 16 Dec. 1999.

12 "Speeding up Solutions to Speed Crisis", Bangkok Post, 8 Apr. 2001.

13 "Methamphetamines: Situation Worse, Says Report", Bangkok Post, 25 Sept. 2000.

14 "A Major Security Threat called 'Yaa Baa'", The Nation, 22 July 2000.

15 These are Army Military Intelligence Units 311, 309, and 315, respectively.

16 "Army Spies Steer Clear of Politics", Bangkok Post, 10 Aug. 2000.

17 More than 100 tons of ephedrine, that is to say, almost half of total national production, originates each year from the Huesho County Ephedrine Factory of the Chinese prefecture of Bayangol (or Bayingoleng Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture).

18 Bertil Lintner, "Speed Demons, Asia's Newest Drug Scourge: Mass-Produced Stimulants", Far Eastern Economic Review, 8 May 1997. Refer also to "A Major Security Threat called 'Yaa Baa'", The Nation, 22 July 2000.

19 The military-industrial conglomerate 999 allows the People's Liberation Army to control 10 per cent of the Chinese pharmaceutical and chemical industry, i.e. 400 factories, according to the 1998 report of the Observatoire géopolitique des drogues (Paris: OGD, 1999), p. 60.

20 "Cheap Ecstasy Making Inroads", Bangkok Post, 25 Apr. 2000.

21 Bertil Lintner, "Drug Buddies: the Heroin Trade Fights Back — With Official Help", Far Eastern Economic Review, 14 Nov. 1996.

22 This is according to Banpote Piamdi, Director of the Northern Department of the Office of Narcotics Control Board. The switch back to heroin could also be due to side effects caused by chloroform, which is sometimes added to yaa baa to increase profits. See "Users Switch Again to Cheap Heroin", Bangkok Post, 22 June 1998.

23 This is according to the Thai Farmers Research Center and the Narcotics Suppression Bureau. See "400 Million Pills to Flood Streets of Thailand", Bangkok Post, 17 Apr. 2000; "Flood of Speed Pills from Burma Expected This Year", Bangkok Post, 16 Mar. 2000.

24 Rodney Tasker and Shawn W. Crispin, "Thailand: Flash Point", Far Eastern Economic Review, 1 June 2000.
25 This information was given during a national conference on drugs held at Chiang Rai by the Thai government on 10–11 Mar. 2001.
26 "Drug Special; Three Major Gangs, 87 Production Plants", The Nation, 10 Mar. 2001.
27 This is according to Pinyo Chaithong, Director of the Office of Narcotics Control Board, quoted in "Ex-Druglord Khun Sa Back in Business", Reuters, 22 July 1999.
28 "Junta Turns to Militia to Help Subdue Shan", South China Morning Post, 25 Apr. 2000.
29 OGD, The Global Geopolitics of Drugs 1997/1998, pp. 65–9, 76.
30 "Speed Seizure Linked to Red Wa Stockpile of Five Million", Bangkok Post, 10 July 1999.
31 "Myanmar Lets Ethnic Army Build Road on Thai Border", Reuters, 14 July 2000.
32 "Police Seize Chemicals for Ten Million Speed Pills", South China Morning Post, 5 Nov. 1999; "A Major Security Threat called 'Yaa Baa'", The Nation, 22 July 2000.
33 The thermogenic effects of ephedrine are in fact considerably enhanced when it is consumed with caffeine, according to E. McBroom, "Ephedra (Ma Huang)", in Ethnobotanical Leaflets, Southern Illinois University Herbarium (2001), see <http://www.siu.edu/~ebl/>.
34 United Nations Drug Control Program, "The Drug Control Situation in the Union Of Myanmar, A Compilation of UN Data and Sources Prepared by the UNDCP Office for Myanmar" (2000), <http://www.undcp.org/myanmar/report_2001-0221_1_page004.html>.
35 See also the following articles published in the Bangkok Post: "Police Seize Precursor", 30 Nov. 1999; "Controls on Caffeine Tighten in 6 Border Provinces", 26 Feb. 2000; "Precursors of 500 Million Pills Seized", 13 May 2000; "Border Villages to Get Priority", 14 May 2000.
36 One such laboratory, located between Nakhon Pathom and Ratchaburi, was discovered and destroyed ("Fourteen Speed Pill Firms Rule the Roost", Bangkok Post, 26 Oct. 1998).
37 "Border Raids Ordered on Drug Plants", Bangkok Post, 29 June 1999.
38 See the following articles published in the Bangkok Post: "Thais Move to Snare Bang Ron", 30 Oct. 1998; "Army Rules Out Cross-Border Operation", 3 Nov. 1998; "Bang Ron Likely in Burma", 30 Nov. 1998; "Bang Ron Reported to be with the Red Wa Army", 29 Dec. 1998.
39 "Drug Gangs Targeted in Joint Sweep", Bangkok Post, 15 July 1999.
40 "Gangs Dodge Troops with Million Pills", Bangkok Post, 22 July 1999.
41 W. Barnes, "Junta Let Tribe Open Narcotics Factory in Return for Fighting Rebels", South China Morning Post, 21 July 1999.
42 "Authorities Told to Stop Inflow of Drugs via Tak", Bangkok Post, 27 July 1999; "Burmese Border Factories Wreaking Havoc", Bangkok Post, 24 May 2000.

43 For more details on these events refer to Bertil Lintner, Burma in Revolt, Opium and Insurgency Since 1948 (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994); Robert I. Rotberg, Burma: Prospects for a Democratic Future (Washington: The World Peace Foundation, 1998); and Martin G. Smith, Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity (London: Zed Books, 1991).

44 "Rangoon's Troops Active in Drug Trade", Bangkok Post, 25 July 1999.

45 "Authorities Told to Stop Inflow of Drugs via Tak", Bangkok Post, 27 July 1999.

46 "Army Seize Speed Pills after Clash with Karen Guerrillas", Bangkok Post, 19 Apr. 2001; "Third Army Seize 7.7m Pills in Tak", The Nation, 19 Apr. 2001; "Army Task Force Halts Drug Caravan, Seizes Pills and Heroin After Gun Battle", The Nation, 26 Apr. 2001.

47 "Karen dissidents: new traffickers and junta allies", Geopolitical Drug Newsletter No. 5, Feb. 2002, Centre for geopolitical drug studies, website reference at <www.geodrugs.net>.

48 "Drug-producing Wa Army Seen as Top External Security Threat", Bangkok Post, 12 May 2000; "Thailand at Risk from Rising Crime", Bangkok Post, 25 June 2000.

49 "Plan Thailand: Counter-narcotics Aid to Bangkok", Stratfor, 22 Sept. 2000; "Drugs a Losing Battle, Warns a Security Chief", The Nation, 23 Sept. 2000; "Planners to Target Graft and Drugs", Bangkok Post, 12 Nov. 2000.

50 These officials included Generals Surayud Chulanond and Anu Sumitra of the 3rd Army as well as the Home Minister, Sukhumbhand Paribatra.

51 Rodney Tasker and Shawn Crispin, "Thailand: Flash Point", Far Eastern Economic Review, 1 June 2000.

52 The term "narcotic aggression" is gaining currency not only in Thailand, but also in Tajikistan, where drug trafficking has developed very rapidly over the last decade. Politicians increasingly use the expression with reference to countries such as Burma or Afghanistan.

53 Rodney Tasker and Bertil Lintner, "Nasty Job for Task Force 399", Far Eastern Economic Review, 19 Apr. 2001.

54 The American Anti-drug Czar, retired General Barry McCaffrey, declared in summer 2000 that methamphetamine represented the most serious drug menace currently existing in the United States, Southeast Asia, and the rest of the world ("US says Speed is Worst Drug Menace", Associated Press, 23 June 2000). Seizing an opportunity, Thailand then officially requested Washington to put methamphetamine on the international anti-drug agenda of the U.S. ("US Urged to Include Speed on Target List", Bangkok Post, 24 June 2000).

55 "War on Drugs Cries Out for Shot in the Arm", Bangkok Post, 3 Mar. 1998.

56 "Cambodge: Il y a quelque chose de pourri au royaume du Kampuchea", Dépêche Internationale des drogues, no. 91 (May 1999) : 1–4.

57 Ibid.

58 "Traffickers Divert their Curse to Laos", Bangkok Post, 28 Oct. 2000.

59 French Geopolitical Drug Watch, "La Géopolitique mondiale des drogues 1998–1999, Annual report" (Paris: OGD, 2000), p. 69.

60 "Wa Rushes Methamphetamine Over Border Before Plants Shift to Laos", Bangkok Post, 14 July 2001.

61 "War on Drugs: Chiang Rai Yaa Baa Seizures 'Doubling'", The Nation, 9 Aug. 2001; "Yaa Baa Labs Shift to Laos to Beat Crackdown", The Nation, 1 Sept. 2001.

62 "Intelligence", Far Eastern Economic Review, 20 Dec. 2001. It was at Mong Pa Liao, in Burma's former Kengtung State, that 5,000 soldiers of the Burmese army and 20,000 Chinese communist troops attacked the KMT headquarters in Jan. 1961, causing the nationalist troops to flee to Luang Namtha Province in Laos.

63 Although Mongla has recently been turned into a bustling casino town, its sugar refinery has long been abandoned — that is, if it had ever been used in the first place.

64 French Geopolitical Drug Watch, The Global Geopolitics of Drugs 1997/1998, p. 72.

65 "Triangle Opium Crop Slumps, 'Yaa Baa' Booms", The Nation, 4 Mar. 2000.

66 "China Faces Uphill Battle Against Narcotics", Xinhu, 9 Feb. 2001; "Report: China Drug Addiction Soars", Associated Press, 9 Feb. 2001, and "Drug Addiction in China up 26 per cent", BBC, 9 Feb. 2001.

67 Zhou Yongming, Anti-Drug Crusades in Twentieth-Century China: Nationalism, History and State Building (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), p. 127.

68 All following articles are from the South China Morning Post: "Cross-Border Drug Takers Targeted", 15 Mar. 2000; "Teens Defy Warnings for a Night of Ecstasy", 20 Mar. 2000; "Drug Raves Draw Young Teens", 13 June 2000; "Teenage Drug Abuse Jumps 40 Percent", 27 June 2000; "Rave Parties Drive Up Ecstasy Use", 28 July 2000; "Disco Drug Slaves", 11 Jan. 2001; and "Rave Youths Held in China Drug Centers", 11 Jan. 2001.

69 "Heroin Seizures Rise", South China Morning Post, 17 Dec. 1999.

70 "Newspaper: China to Step Up Anti-drug War", Reuters, 22 Mar. 2000.

71 All following articles are from the South China Morning Post: "Police Net Huge Drugs Haul", 3 Mar. 2000; "Customs Make Biggest Liquid Drug Seizure", 6 Apr. 2000; "Ecstasy Worth $96m Seized in Record Haul", 22 June 2000; and "$10m 'Ice' Haul Seized", 21 Apr. 2000.

72 See the following articles from the Bangkok Post: "Haw Held on 2.1kg. Heroin Charge", 24 June 1998; "Speed Pills 'Brought via Haw Village'", 19 Mar. 1999; "Major Anti-drug Drive Launched in North", 30 June 1999; and "Drug Gangs Targeted in Joint Sweep", 15 July 1999.

73 The passage of some one million pills attracted the attention of the Thai authorities ("Gangs Dodge Troops with Million Pills: Traffickers turn to Former Communist Insurgents Corridor", Bangkok Post, 22 July 1999).

74 "Drug trade Resumes at Khun Sa's Ex-bastion", Bangkok Post, 3 July 2000. Also see Chouvy, "Drug Diversity in the Golden Triangle", Harok Kani is a Mon village on the Burmese side of the Three Pagoda Pass under Burmese

military control and is used as a transit point for heroin and methamphetamine: "Drug Gangs Shift to Khmer Border", Bangkok Post, 7 Mar. 2000.

75 "Rash of Speed Pills Alarms Laos", Bangkok Post, 12 Jan. 2000.

76 "Laos: Amphetamine Haul Sign of Drug Flood", South China Morning Post, 2 June 2000; "Lao Seizure", Bangkok Post, 2 June 2000.

77 "Drug Trade Flourishes in Border Village", Bangkok Post, 26 June 2000; "Town of Orphans and Addicts", Bangkok Post, 26 June 2000.

78 "Drug Gangs Shift to Khmer Border", Bangkok Post, 7 Apr. 2000.

79 This was indicated in reports by the Ministry of the Interior and the Royal Thai Police: "Crackdown Fails to Halt Inflow of Drugs", Bangkok Post, 9 Feb. 2000.

80 "Checkpoints Increased on Borders: Lao and Cambodian Routes Monitored", Bangkok Post, 6 Dec. 1999. The National Narcotics Operation Center (formed in 1998) has stepped up its vigilance since 1999. In 2000, ten units specializing in countering drug trafficking were assigned to monitor 109 frontier villages suspected of involvement in the illicit drug trade. "Border Villages to Get Priority", Bangkok Post, 14 May 2000; "Six Measures Launched for Dodgy Areas", Bangkok Post, 16 May 2000. As mentioned above, the 3rd Army had also put a program in place to give military training to inhabitants of 592 border villages that were thought to run a high risk of being infiltrated by traffickers: "Army Gives Villagers in Remote Volatile Areas Military Training", Bangkok Post, 14 May 2000.

81 The territorial claim made by Burma in May 2001 to a part of the mountainous border area of Doi Lang, Thailand, underscores the importance of demarcating the common border of these two countries.

82 Mya Maung, The Burma Road to Poverty, p. 211.

83 "Massive Drug Haul in the South", Bangkok Post, 9 Jan. 2001; "Andaman Becomes Major Drug Route", The Nation, 12 Dec. 2001.

84 "They try not to confront us so as to avoid casualties. Since we increased our patrolling they have reduced the size of methamphetamine shipments per trip across the border". These words from the General of the Soomboonkiat Division of the Thai Army were quoted in "Curfew Planned to Curb Drug Trafficking", Bangkok Post, 2 Apr. 2000. See also "Air Officials Accused of Aiding Drug Lords", South China Morning Post, 10 Jan. 2000; "Drug Traffickers Change Route", The Nation, 7 Jan. 2000; and "Pills Brought in by 'Army' of Couriers", Bangkok Post, 27 Nov. 2001.

85 "More Troops to be Moved to Protect Burmese Border", Bangkok Post, 25 Aug. 2000; "Burma is Given Top Priority", Bangkok Post, 30 Aug. 2000; and "Thailand Ignores Rebels in Effort to Fight Drug War", Stratfor, 26 Aug. 2000.

86 "Isoc Likely to Take on Drugs Role", Bangkok Post, 10 Nov. 1999; "Isoc to Play Key Role in the North", Bangkok Post, 31 Mar. 2000.

87 This program was implemented as a result of the assassination of nine villagers of Ban Mae Soon Noi in April 1999. It was also in response to an upsurge in methamphetamine trafficking and the development of United Wa

State Army bases on the border, including that of the 614th Brigade of Wei Hsueh-kang. "Army Gives Villagers in Remote Volatile Areas Military Training", Bangkok Post, 14 May 2000.

88 David A. Feingold, "The Hell of Good Intentions; Some Preliminary thoughts on Opium in the Political Ecology of the Trade in Girls and Women", in Where China Meets Southeast Asia: Social and Cultural Changes in the Border Regions, ed. Grant Evans, Christopher Hutton and Kuah Khun Eng (New York: St. Martins Press, 2000), pp. 183–203.

89 Thérèse M. Caouette, Burmese Refugees in Thailand (unpublished manuscript), presented at the conference Burma (Myanmar): Challenges and Opportunities for the 1990s, Joint FCO/ASIAN Studies Center, St. Antony's College, Oxford, England, 13–15 Dec. 1991; "UN Backs Thai Approach to Dealing with Burmese Refugees", Bangkok Post, 4 Oct. 1998; Supang Chantavanich, "Mouvements de population en Thaïlande, 2 décennies d'incertitudes et de problèmes non résolus", in Thaïlande contemporaine, ed. Dovert, pp. 249–73.

90 "Shan flee Burma as Junta Moves Wa on their Land", Bangkok Post, 1 Feb. 2001; "Army Worried over Influx of Shan", Bangkok Post, 6 Feb. 2001. Concerning forced movements of populations by the SLORC/SPDC in Shan State, see reports from the Shan Human Rights Foundation in Chiang Mai, Thailand at <http://www.shanland.org>.

91 William van Schendel and Itty Abraham, Beyond Borders: (Il)licit Flows of Objects, People and Ideas, Discussion Paper (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2000).

92 Feingold, "The Hell of Good Intentions", p. 198.

93 Yves Goudineau and Bernard Vienne, "L'Etat et les minorités ethniques: la place des "populations montagnardes" (chao khao) dans l'espace national", in Thaïlande contemporaine, ed. Dovert, pp. 143–74.

94 A commission was recently created for studying the living conditions and status of minorities, some of whom live in Thailand but have never been able to obtain Thai nationality. The laws of 9 August 2000 and 28 August 2001 stipulate that children of those who entered the country before 1985 may take Thai citizenship, but in reality the complex official procedures seem to be more a means of deterring than of assimilating those who apply. See Matichon, 2 May 2002, article translated by Emilie Testard and reproduced in Gavroche, June 2002.

95 However, it should be noted that the national prosperity of the last decade also had very negative social effects for the population living in the mountains in Thailand. See David A. Feingold, "Sex, Drugs and the IMF; Some Implications of 'Structural Readjustment' for the Trade in Heroin, Girls and Women in Upper Mekong Region", in "New Cargo: The Global Business of Trafficking in Women", Refuge 17, no. 5 (Nov. 1998).

96 Feingold,"Sex, Drugs and the IMF".

97 Pasuk Pongpaichit et al., Guns, Girls, Gambling, Ganja, p. 263.

98 Ibid., pp. 7–8.

99 Feingold, "Sex, Drugs and the IMF".

100 Alain Labrousse and Michel Koutouzis, Géopolitique et géostratégie des drogues (Paris: Economica, 1996), p. 32. See also Pierre Clastres, Archéologie de la violence, la guerre dans les sociétés primitives (Paris: Editions de l'Aube, 1997), pp. 68, 75.

Part Two

1 General Assembly of the United Nations, "Amphetamine-Type Stimulants — in Full Haste Towards the New Millennium", in Publication of the Information Department of the United Nations Organization, Extraordinary Session for the Global Problem of Drugs, from 8–10 June 1998, electronic publication consulted in July 2001 at <http://www.un.org/french/ga/20special/featur/>.

2 United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, Studies on Drugs and Crime — Global Illicit Drug Trends 2001 (New York: United Nations Publications, 2001), pp. 260–1.

3 The report of the United Nations Drug Control Programme reports eleven countries of East or Southeast Asia having experienced an increase in the consumption of methamphetamine, but only ten countries are listed in the report. These include Hong Kong, Indonesia, and Brunei (the three countries reporting the steepest increases), along with Thailand, Burma, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, South Korea, and Japan. For countries that did not reply to the questionnaire, other sources allowed the authors of the report to affirm that China, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam are faced with a similar increase in consumption, even if these countries have started from a base level of methamphetamine use that is very low.

4 "Drug Tests for Thai Schoolchildren", BBC News, 10 Jan. 2002.

Chapter 5

1 Nualnoi Treerat, Noppanun Wannathepsakul and Daniel Ray Lewis, Global Study on Illegal Drugs: The Case of Bangkok (Bangkok: UNDCP/UNICRI, 2000) (preliminary version), p. 84.

2 Pasuk Phongpaichit and Sungsidh Piriyarangsan, Corruption and Democracy in Thailand (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1994), p. 58.

3 Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, Thailand — Economy and Politics (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press 1995), p. 336.

4 The universality of the gift that gives rise to a return gift had been theorised by Marcel Mauss, "Essai surle don — Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques", in Sociologie et Anthropologie (Paris: PUF, 1950), pp. 145–284. In Thailand, even offerings to the temple (tamboon) require something to be given back in exchange. Symbolically, at least, this transaction permits one to acquire merit.

5 On electoral practices and the role of the jao pho, refer to Jean Baffie, "La politique en Thaïlande depuis la seconde guerre mondiale", in Thaïlande contemporaine, ed. Dovert, pp. 83–142.

6 Phongpaichit and Baker, Thailand — Economy and Politics, p. 336.

7 Nualnoi Treerat et al., Global Study on Illegal Drugs.

8 It should be noted again that the number of intermediaries is not fixed, as it is proportionate to the volume of the population living in a given geographical zone under traffickers' control.

9 It appears simple enough to procure large quantities of the drug in the northern part of the country. The transport is sometimes taken care of by small traffickers who decide to try their luck. This stage of the supply chain is particularly competitive, but can also be lucrative. Any "wages of fear" received for such ventures generally reflect the degree of risk taken. Independent operators lack inside connections to individuals in the police or Thai bureaucracy who could come to their help in case of arrest.

10 The wholesaler remains loyal to the same supplier network, regardless of the prices proposed by independent dealers. His logic consists of ensuring the confidence of all those who surround him and preventing competition among them. This is typically the attitude of the jao pho, but not that of the medium retailer who gives less importance to his social "glory" and lives more in the shadows. However, the competition between independent dealers makes it possible to maintain relatively low prices of yaa baa.

11 Commander Raymond Harel, member of the French Central Office for the Repression of Illicit Trafficking of Narcotics (OCTRIS) was a judiciary police officer deputised to the French Embassy in Thailand. In an interview with the authors on 3 July 2001, he reviewed the list of punishments for drug trafficking and possession in Thailand:

- Possession of more than 100g (around 1,000 tablets): life term or capital punishment.
- Possession of between 20g to 100g: five years in prison to life term, accompanied by a fine of 50,000 to 500,000 baht.
- Possession of less than 20g: from one year to 10 years in prison accompanied by a fine of 10,000 to 100,000 baht.
- Consumption without possession of drugs: from six months to ten years' imprisonment, accompanied by a fine of 5,000 to 100,000 baht.

For this last category of crime, it is important to note that the law was amended in 1991. Most often, simple consumers are now only obliged to stay in one of the rehabilitation centres managed by the Ministry of Justice. This was done to encourage the addicts, who are considered patients and not criminals, to free themselves from their addiction by making them aware of the danger. After being examined by sworn officers, they can freely exit the centre without incurring a police record. However, in case of relapse they have to face other severe legal measures.

12 Nualnoi Treerat et al., Global Study on Illegal Drugs, p. 97.

13 Ibid., p. 98.

14 "New Amphetamine Epidemic", Bangkok Post, 16 Mar. 1997.

15 Transparency International ranks Thailand in 60th place in the world in the index for perceived levels of corruption — on par with Ethiopia and Columbia. 10 to 20 per cent of Thailand's annual budget (100 billion to 200 billion baht) is reportedly spent on bribes, according to "Corruption, le grand déballage", Gavroche (a French monthly magazine published in Bangkok), Jan. 2001, pp. 33–8.

16 "Yaa baa, la pilule qui rend fou", Gavroche, July 2000.

17 Interview on 11 July 2001.

18 Denis Richard and Jean-Louis Senon, Dictionnaire des drogues, des toxicomanies et des dépendances (Paris: Larousse, 1999), p. 254. Ketamine is a veterinary and human anaesthetic and analgesic likely to produce hallucinogenic effects. Sold in the form of tablets under the "ecstasy" label, it is often associated with substances or medicines such as Ephedrine or Selegifine in the U.K. Known by the appellations Ket or Ketty, it is sniffed for its hallucinogenic effects at rave parties. Ketamine has been very often implicated in users' near-death experiences under the name "Vitamin K" or "Special K". The uncontrolled use of ketamine can cause loss of consciousness as well other mental disorders (anxiety, panic attacks), neurological disorders (temporary paralysis), and digestive disorders (nausea, vomiting). See the French Inter-ministerial Mission for the Fight against Drugs and Drug Addictions (MILDT), at website reference <http://www.drogues.gouv.fr>.

19 Thai Farmers Research Center (TFRC), "Amphetamines: Danger to Economy and Society", report on 17 Mar. 1997. See <http://www.tfrc.co.th/>.

20 "Yaa baa, la pilule qui rend fou", Gavroche, July 2000.

21 Aaron Peak, "Drug use and HIV/AIDS in Thailand in the Year 2000 — Asian Harm Reduction Network Report", in Family Health International (Asia Regional Office, 2000), pp. 13–43.

22 Ibid.

Chapter 6

1 Nualnoi Treerat et al., Global Study on Illegal Drugs, p. 34.

2 UNDCP (2001), pp. 260–1.

3 This study was also mentioned in the report of the UNDCP (2001), p. 261.

4 "Smuggling Unabated", Bangkok Post, 22 Aug. 2001.

5 Interview on 13 July 2001.

6 Interview with Mrs. Lek on 11 July 2001. She is in charge of a rehabilitation center for youngsters at the Duang Prateep Foundation.

7 Kaija Korpi, Drug Control and Urban Governance (Bangkok: UNFDAC Regional Center for East Asia and the Pacific, 2001). See <http://www.unodc.un.or.th/factsheet/druggovernance.pdf> [Oct. 2001].

8 Thai Farmers Research Centre (TFRC), "Amphetamines: A Social Hazard Costing the Economy over bt100 Billion", synthesis of 11 Apr. 2000 on <http://www.krc. co.th/>. The TFRC team carried out a survey on a sample of 728 workers in the region of Bangkok.

9 In Thailand people drink coffee hot or cold. Workers generally take it with milk and lots of sugar.
10 See the TFRC (11 April 2000) on the website <http://www.krc.co.th/>.
11 "Synthesized Drugs: A New Challenge for Prevention", Peddro, no. 1–2 (Feb. 1998): 15–6. (Peddro is a quarterly publication of UNESCO and the European Community.)
12 This is a tree belonging to the sub-branch of Gymnosperms and the family of Ginkgoaceae (Ginkgo biloba L). See PLANTS Database, United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (2001) at <http://plants. usda.gov>.
13 Nualnoi Treerat et al., Global Study on Illegal Drugs, p. 28.
14 Thai Farmers Research Centre, 11 Apr. 2000.
15 Quoted in "New Amphetamine Epidemic", Bangkok Post, 16 Mar. 1997.
16 Jacques Vincent is the pseudonym of a press correspondent who was then based in Southeast Asia. Interview on 10 July 2001.
17 Phongpaichit et al., Guns, Girls, Gambling, Ganja, p. 102.
18 Hervé Berger and Hans van de Glind, Children in Prostitution, Pornography, and Illicit Activities — Thailand, ILO-IPEC, n.p., 1999 (preliminary version).
19 Phongpaichit et al., Guns, Girls, Gambling, Ganja, p. 102.
20 "Bernard Antoine" is French. He was born in Vietnam, grew up in Laos, and has a good command of the Thai language. His Asian origins allow him to pass as a genuine Thai. The name is a pseudonym, as the individual concerned preferred to keep his identity secret. Interview on 15 July 2001.
21 Sompong Chitradub, "Rapid Assessment of Child Labor in the Production and Trafficking of Drugs in Thailand, Bangkok", n.p. (1999), in Nualnoi Treerat et al., Global Study on Illegal Drugs, p. 23, preliminary version available at <http://www.unodc.un.or.th/material/document/Thailand.PDF>.
22 Duang Prateep is an association of people united in the fight against AIDS. Interview on 15 July 2001.
23 Nualnoi Treerat et al., Global Study on Illegal Drugs, p. 36.
24 Susanne McGregor, "Women and the Health and the Social Consequences of Drug Use: Implication for Policy and Practices", speech given at the Gender Drugs and HIV symposium at Nanning International Hotel, autonomous region of Guangxi, People's Republic of China, from 22–24 Feb. 2001. Website reference consulted in November 2001 at <http://www.undcp.un.or.th/factsheet/woman%20and%20health.pdf>, p. 17.
25 There are two exceptions to this rule of credit purchase. At the border, when the foreign supplier and the independent traffickers are in contact, transactions apparently require cash. Conversely, when children are used as couriers by the retailers, the credit system can be put into place immediately.
26 Interview on 15 July 2001.
27 Vincent de Gaulejac, "Les sources de la honte", in Sociologie clinique (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer 1996), p. 83.
28 Robert Castel, Les métamorphoses de la question sociale (Paris: Fayard, 1995).

29 "La Crise Thaïlandaise, Fortuite ou Prévisible?", in Thaïlande contemporaine, ed. Dovert, pp. 345–70. According to author Marie-Sybille de Vienne, between 1996 and 1998, the monetary instability of the yen coincided with a critical phase of the stock market cycle. This disastrous situation caused Thailand's financial system to implode.

30 Supang Chantavanich, "Mouvements de population en Thaïlande", pp. 249–73.

31 "Les ravages du yaa baa sur les enfants", L'Humanité [a daily newspaper owned by the French Communist Party], 3 July 1999.

32 "Sense about Sex", The Economist, 8 Feb. 1992, p.33; "Flower Sellers Bloom", Far Eastern Economic Review, 8 July 1993, p.36.

33 Berger and van de Glind, Children in Prostitution.

34 Ibid.

35 Kritaya Archavanitkul, "Trafficking in Children for Labor Exploitation Including Child Prostitution in the Mekong Sub-Region" (Bangkok: ILO-IPEC, 1998b), see <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec/publ/childtraf/index.htm>.

36 "The 'Patriotic' Prostitute", The Progressive, Feb. 1985, p. 36.

37 Feingold, "The Hell of Good Intentions".

38 Quoted in Kritaya Archavanitkul, "Combating the Trafficking in Children and their Exploitation in Prostitution and Other Intolerable Forms of Child Labor in Mekong Basin Countries" (Nakhon Pathom: Mahidol University, 1998a), see <http://www. seameo.org/vl/combat/>.

39 Kritaya Archavanitkul, "Combating the Trafficking in Children".

Chapter 7

1 Thai Farmers Research Centre, 11 Apr. 2000.

2 Thai Farmers Research Centre, Amphetamines: Danger in Educational Institutions, synthesis of presentation on 29 May 1997 displayed on <http://www.krc.co.th/>.

3 United Nations Economic and Social Council, World Situation with regard to Drug Abuse, with Particular Reference to Children and Youth (Vienna: Commission on Narcotic Drugs, 2001), 44th conference held on 20–9 Mar. 2001. Regarding Point 5b of Provisional Agenda, Report number E/CN7/2001/4, see <http://www.unodc.org:80/pdf/document_2000–12-06_1.pdf>.

4 Interview on 5 July 2001.

5 United Nations Economic and Social Council, World Situation with Regard to Drug Abuse, with Particular Reference to Children and Youth (Vienna: Commission on Narcotic Drugs, 2001).

6 Patrick Pelège is director of CRAES-CRIPS [The Rhone — Alps Health Education College, Regional Center for Information and Prevention of Aids (France)], and his speech was given at the Lycée Français (French Grammar School) in Singapore on 16–18 Apr. 2001.

7 Ibid.
8 Thai Farmer's Research Centre (11 Apr. 2000).
9 This was in fact how our interview with Ms. Koong began on 11 July 2001.
10 Interview with Bernard Antoine on 15 July 2001.
11 Ms. Koong is a 25-year-old yaa baa consumer who is attempting to break her habit.
12 Interview with Mr. Boonsen on 11 July 2001. He was 20 years old when the interview was conducted. Previously he was a yaa baa user himself. After three years of treatment, he is now employed at the office of the Duang Prateep Foundation.
13 Interview with Mr. Suchaat on 4 July 2001. Mr Suchaat's association works on reconciliation and democracy issues in Burma. He himself regularly acts as a consultant on geostrategic issues.
14 Sompong Chitradub, "Rapid Assessment of Child Labor".
15 Nualnoi Treerat et al., Global Study on Illegal Drugs, p. 31.
16 Office of Narcotics Control Board, Annual Report 2000 (Bangkok: ONCB, 2001).
17 Interview on 11 July 2001.
18 "A Picture of Abuse", Bangkok Post, 13 Sept. 2000.
19 Interview with Mr. Boonsen on 11 July 2001.
20 "A Picture of Abuse", Bangkok Post, 13 Sept. 2000.
21 Chao Praya is the river flowing through the city of Bangkok.
22 Mr. Saichon is a social worker who helped us meet Ms. Koong on 11 July 2001.
23 Interview with Mrs. Nong on 5 July 2001.
24 Nualnoi Treerat et al., Global Study on Illegal Drugs, p. 2.
25 Mélanie Roustan, "De l'intérêt d'une approche dynamique des concepts de marchandise et d'authenticité: une illustration par la consommation de cannabis", in Consommations et Sociétés, Cahiers pluridisciplinaires sur la consommation et l'interculturel, vol. 1 (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001), pp. 11–24 and Mélanie Roustan, Roulez jeunesse — Une approche ethnologique de la consommation de cannabis, DEA [Master's Thesis] on Cultures and Social Behaviour under the direction of Dominique Desjeux, Université Paris-V Sorbonne, unpublished manuscript (1999).
26 Peddro (1998), p. 3 indicates that certain apparently contradictory features are found that give rise to or are associated with ecstasy use. These include relations between science or medicine and law, between the necessities for leisure and for social success, and between belonging to a mass society and to reconstituted circles or elites. As summarised by the sociologist Patrick Mignon, ecstasy finds a place in the ideology of a safe drug that is good for both the individual and for the society, something akin to a clinical achievement of democratic ideology.
27 "Subculture" refers to all those elements that characterise an age group of a particular class that are defined as cultural solutions to the problems of social adjustment.

28 Social and Economic Council (2001), p. 6.
29 Peddro (1998), p. 17.
30 "Speeding up Solutions to Speed Crisis", Bangkok Post, 8 April 2001.
31 Nualnoi Treerat et al., Global Study on Illegal Drugs, p. 101.
32 Aaron Peak, "Drug Use and HIV/AIDS in Thailand in the Year 2000", Asian Harm Reduction Network Report, 2001: 13.
33 "A Picture of Abuse", Bangkok Post, 13 Sept. 2000.
34 Nualnoi Treerat et al., Global Study on Illegal Drugs, p. 32.
35 This information is taken from the minute observations made by Mrs. Jirapan Tritipjaras, who is a member of the Centre for the Prevention and Correction of Drug and Aids Problems. Her thesis in social sciences is on the consumption patterns of yaa baa among the students of a school. Her conclusions are reported in "A Picture of Abuse", Bangkok Post, 13 Sept. 2000.
36 "Confessions of a Young Yaa Baa Addict", Bangkok Post, 16 Mar. 1997.
37 Interview with Mr. Boonsen on 11 July 2001.
38 Phongpaichit et al., Guns, Girls, Gambling, Ganja, p. 102.
39 Thomas Bellais and Jefferson Derolin, L'économie de la drogue, Mémoire de maîtrise AES (Caen: University of Basse-Normandie, 1999).
40 Interview on 11 July 2001.
41 Claude Fischler, "L'homnivor", in Sciences Humaines, ed. Odile Jacob (Paris, 1999), p. 66.
42 Nualnoi Treerat et al., Global Study on Illegal Drugs, p. 323.
43 "Speeding up Solutions to Speed Crisis", Bangkok Post, 8 Apr. 2001.
44 "Confessions of a Young Yaa Baa Addict", Bangkok Post, 16 Mar. 1997.
45 Interview with Mr. Boonsen on 11 July 2001.
46 Ibid.
47 Peddro (1998), p. 3.
48 "A Picture of Abuse", Bangkok Post, 13 Sept. 2000.
49 "Confessions of a Young Yaa Baa Addict", Bangkok Post, 16 Mar. 1997.
50 See the study by Marie Choquet, Les résultats descripitifs de l'enquête Lycoll, report ORS, No. 60 (Dec. 1999). The Lycoll study questionnaire was given to 3,762 secondary school and high school students across 57 institutions in Charente-Maritime, France. The results show that fewer than 15 per cent of regular users of illegal drugs acknowledged that their drug consumption was "a problem for them". These figures dropped to seven per cent for those who used drugs less frequently, on a weekly basis. As against non-consumers, a large number of regular users tended to inflate the number of fellow users, when asked to estimate such numbers. The author concludes that the general lack of awareness about dangers associated with illicit drug use, as shown in her study, indicates that illicit drug use prevention methods need to be reconsidered.
51 Interview with Ms. Koong on 11 July 2001.
52 "A Picture of Abuse", Bangkok Post, 13 Sept. 2000.
53 Interview with Ms. Koong on 11 July 2001.
54 Ibid.

55 Takrao is a team sport in which a wicker ball is kicked over a net with any part of a player's body except the hands.
56 "Yaa baa, la pilule qui rend fou", Gavroche (July 2000).
57 "A Picture of Abuse", Bangkok Post, 13 Sept. 2000.
58 Interview on 4 July 2001.
59 Interview on 11 July 2001.
60 Interview on 15 July 2001.
61 Translations by Chalida Kanwiwat of the IRASEC.
62 Interview on 13 July 2001.
63 Interview with Ms. Koong on 11 July 2001.
64 Interview with Mr. Boonsen on 11 July 2001.
65 Thai Farmers Research Centre, 11 Apr. 2000.
66 Interview on 10 July 2001.
67 Interview with Mrs. Lek on 11 July 2001.
68 In Thailand, compulsory primary schooling (pathom) has six levels up to the age of 12. Secondary schooling (mathayom) has another six levels and normally ends at the age of 18.
69 "Confessions of a Young Yaa Baa Addict", Bangkok Post, 16 Mar. 1997.
70 Ibid.
71 Interview on 11 July 2001.
72 David Le Breton, Passions du risque (Paris: Métailié, 2000), p. 22.
73 "A Picture of Abuse", Bangkok Post, 13 Sept. 2000
74 "Confessions of a Young Yaa Baa Addict", Bangkok Post, 16 Mar. 1997.
75 United Nations Drug Control Programme (Vienna: UNDCP, 2001).
76 Interview with Ms. Koong on 11 July 2001.
77 Interview conducted by Jirapan Tritipjaras reported in the article, "A Picture of Abuse", Bangkok Post, 13 Sept. 2000.
78 Phongpaichit et al., Guns, Girls, Gambling, Ganja, p. 103.
79 Erving Goffman, Stigmate — Les usages sociaux des handicaps (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1975), pp. 7, 13, 20, 44, 59, and 163.
80 A group of individuals share certain values and conform to a set of social norms which are related to conduct and personal attributes. Those who do not share these values and do not conform to these norms may be defined as "deviating" (or as "deviants" according to Goffman) and this character as "deviation".
81 Interview on 15 July 2001.
82 Interview on 11 July 2001.
83 de Gaulejac, "Les sources de la honte", p. 302.
84 Serge Moscovici, Psychologie sociale, PUF, coll. "Fondamental" (Paris, 1984), p. 16. Double bind also refers to the notion of discord, which is recognised in psychology. When a person has two opinions or projections of the same thing, if these are inter-related or concord with one other, then satisfaction is experienced. On the contrary, if the two elements do not go together, or if they stand in opposition to one another, then there is discord and the person is prone to anxiety.

85 The term farang refers to Westerners, and includes all foreigners who are fair-skinned.

86 It is not only in Asian societies where primary importance is given to the concept of "face". According to Erving Goffman, all of us try to preserve an identity or picture of ourselves that we project for others. To lose one's face is to suffer from public degradation of one's own image. Erving Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (New York: Doubleday, 1959).

87 Interview on 11 July 2001.

88 "It's All in the Mind", Bangkok Post, 30 Mar. 1997.

89 Thai Farmer's Research Centre (11 Apr. 2000).

90 United Nations Drug Control Programme (2001), see <http://www.youthzone.un.or.th/chillout.htm>.

Chapter 8

1 Siam became Thailand in 1939. It was called Siam again between 1946 and 1949, and from 1949 onwards only Thailand.

2 Niels Mulder, Thai Image — The Culture of the Public World (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1997), pp. 12–5.

3 James C. Ingram, Economic Change in Thailand, 1850–1970 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971).

4 Having sent their children to Thai schools, the Chinese have undergone a constant process of assimilation into local Thai culture since 1932. Unlike the situation in the 19th century, by the 1970s the Chinese were no longer considered as foreigners.

5 Dubus and Revise, Armée du peuple.

6 Phongpaichit and Baker, Thailand — Economy and Politics, p. 410.

7 Ibid., p. 126.

8 Stéphane Dovert, "'La Thaïlande prête pour le monde' ou l'usage intensif des étrangers dans un processus de construction nationale", in Thaïlande contemporaine, ed. Dovert, p. 237.

9 Amara Pongsapich, "La famille thaïlandaise, passé et présent", in Thaïlande contemporaine, ed. Dovert, pp. 39–60.

10 Phongpaichit and Baker, Thailand — Economy and Politics, p.197.

11 Ibid., p. 200.

12 Ibid., p. 313.

13 Jean-Christophe Simon, "Transformation et industrialisation en Thaïlande: 50 ans de croissance et développement économique", in Marie-Sybille De Vienne (2001), pp. 313–44 and 345–70.

14 "Corruption: le grand déballage", Gavroche (Jan. 2001): 33–8.

15 The world of associations has become very opaque, in the sense that there is no single cause where it has not taken root. Even police officers, soldiers, and parliamentarians have set up their own interlocking movements, so much so that in the present situation talking about the "NGO movement"

does not really make sense anymore. The anthropologist Niels Mulder observes that these associations no longer constitute a united global protest movement [Neils Mulder, Inside Southeast Asia: Religion, Everyday Life, Cultural Change (Chiang Mai: Silkworm, 1996), p. 132].

16 "Confessions of a Young Yaa Baa Addict", Bangkok Post, 16 Mar. 1997.

17 For some individuals, prohibition is a form of temptation. They strive to know themselves by testing the boundaries of things or actions that are off-limits. All such transgressions enhance the power of the person who dares do it. This is especially so if the action concerns something most forbidden, such as endangering one's life, according to the analysis in Breton, Passions du risque, p.57.

18 According to Patrick Pelège, the adolescent tries out alternative identities through frequent changes of opinion, intentions and appearances, as expressed through clothing, hairstyles, and other accessories, until he accepts the irreversible physical traits that make up his identity. An individual reaches the phase of adulthood only when he realises that he is an equal of his peers, and is able at the same time to be different from them. Prior to that, he may act out his inner conflicts through deviant or excessive behaviour such as drunk driving or illicit drug use. The adolescent struggle involves ridding himself of the idea that being adult means "to know everything"; rather, it means "to be different". The adolescent mind tends to misinterpret the process of becoming an adult as one progressing from a state of "powerlessness" to that of "all-powerful" (Pelège, 2001).

19 Interview on 10 July 2001.

20 Interview on 15 July 2001.

21 Breton, Passions du risqué, p. 22.

22 Interview on 4 July 2001.

23 "Thai Students in Grip of Crazy Drug", BBC News, 9 Feb. 2001.

24 "Alive and Kicking", Bangkok Post, 13 Feb. 2001.

25 Interview on 13 July 2001.

26 "It's All in the Mind", Bangkok Post, 30 Mar. 1997.

27 Guido Franco (ed.), Thaïlande, les larmes de Bouddha, Autrement, Série Monde, No. 43, 1997, p. 34.

28 "New Amphetamine Epidemic", Bangkok Post, 16 Mar. 1997.

29 As already mentioned, it also allows the dealer access to cheaper — or free — drugs.

30 Interview on 10 July 2001.

31 Imported L'Oréal products are considered luxury items in Thailand.

32 Wanich Jarungidanan, "Bangkok, produit de la classe moyenne", in Thaïlande, les larmes de Bouddha, ed. Franco, pp. 30–2.

33 Patrick Pelège, "Famille, lien social et autonomie", lecture in Jan. and March 2000 on addiction patterns at the Department for Promotion of Health and Social Action for students of the Educational Office (Rectorat) of Lyon, 2000.

34 Mulder, Inside Southeast Asia, p. 114.

35 Statistics of the Royal Thai Police (<http://www.police.go.th/stat43.htm>) show that for the year 2000 there were 58,435 thefts without violence, 2,032 thefts with violence, and 790 thefts carried out by organised criminal associations. As a proportion of Thailand's total population (61.7 million) these figures are considerably low. An international comparison of crime undertaken by the Taiwan Home Ministry in 2000 shows that Spain, the U.S.A., and France, respectively, possess the three highest rates of theft with violence, ranging from 144 to 169 cases per 100,000 inhabitants. Taiwan is clearly situated on the lower rung of the ladder, with only 14.35 violent thefts per 100,000 inhabitants. If we construct an index for violent theft in Thailand based on these statistics, we would arrive at the extremely low rate of 4.6 per 100,000 inhabitants (<http://www.moi.gov.tw/W3/stat/english/etopic/89criminal.htm>).

36 There is a large empirical gap between the relatively rare incidence of theft in Thailand and the extensive preventive measures taken to counter it. But it is not uncommon to fight against what is most feared rather than what is most threatening.

37 The notion of respect in the modern consciousness of Thai youth is outlined in Ekavidya Na Thalang, "Développement et adaptation de la culture thaïlandaise", in Thaïlande contemporaine, ed. Dovert, pp. 61–81.

38 Margaret Mead, Le fossé des générations (Paris: Denoël, 1979), p.125, arrives at this provocative declaration: "We should realize that we no longer have descendants and that our children do not have parents."

Chapter 9

1 Louis Gabaude, "Approche du bouddhisme thaï", in Thaïlande contemporaine, ed. Dovert, pp. 3–37.

2 Niels Mulder, Thai Images — The Culture of the Public World (Bangkok: Silkworm Books, 1997).

3 Cited in Mulder, Thai Images, p. 34.

4 Ibid., p. 34.

5 Jean Kellerhals and Cléopâtre Montandon, "Les styles éducatifs", in La famille, L'état des savoirs, ed. FranVois de Singly (Paris: La Découverte, 1992), pp. 194–203.

6 What is sometimes misunderstood is that "independence" in the West does not mean being alone in the world. According to Donald Winnicott's definition, an independent man or woman is one who can choose his or her dependents and support them without feeling threatened or attacked by the ties thus established (as discussed in a series of talks on addiction patterns by Patrick Pelège titled "Famille, lien social et autonomie", held in Jan. and March 2000 at the Department for Promotion of Health and Social Action for students of the Educational Office [Rectorat] of Lyon).

7 "Alive and Kicking", Bangkok Post, 13 Feb. 2001. Senator Prateep Ungsongtham Hata is also the founder of the charitable association which bears her name.
8 Interview with Mr. Boonson on 11 July 2001.
9 Mulder, Thai Images, p. 166.
10 Interview with Mr. Boonson on 11 July 2001.
11 "A Picture of Abuse", Bangkok Post, 13 Feb. 2000.
12 Thai Farmers Research Centre, "Two Essential Elements for Thai Youth in the Millennium Year", <http://www.tfrc.co.th/> [6 Jan. 2000].
13 Mulder, Thai Images, p. 250.
14 United Nations Economic and Social Council, World Situation with Regard to Drug Abuse, with Particular Reference to Children and Youth (Vienna: Commission on Narcotic Drugs, 2001), p. 23.
15 Cited in "It's All in the Mind", Bangkok Post, 30 Mar. 1997.
16 Interview on 15 July 2001.
17 Quotes from Senator Prateep Ungsongtham Hata were collected by the Bangkok Post and reprinted in the article titled "Alive and kicking", Bangkok Post, 13 Feb. 2001.
18 Mulder, Thai Images, p. 250.
19 "The Tamagotchi Generation", Bangkok Post, 10 Jan. 1998.
20 Nualnoi Treerat et al., Global Study on Illegal Drugs, p. 38.
21 "A Picture of Abuse", Bangkok Post, 13 Sept. 2000.
22 Pelège, "Famille, lien social et autonomie".
23 Mulder states that as of his writing, Thailand had one of the ten highest suicide rates of all countries in the world. See Mulder, Thai Images, p. 251.
24 Breton, Passions du risqué, p. 119.
25 Mulder, Thai Images, p. 80.
26 Functionalism postulates that a society can be compared to an organism whose divisions play an important role in the whole. Talcott Parsons developed the idea that a society and its culture form an integral system whose constituent parts accomplish a given set of functions.
27 Mulder, Thai Images, p. 82.
28 Pongsapich, "La famille thaïlandaise", pp. 39–60.
29 Korpi, Drug Control and Urban Governance.
30 Interview on 20 Dec. 2001.
31 Barbara Leitch Le Poer (ed.), Thailand, a Country Study (Washington: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989), p. 76. The author classifies the distribution of ethnic-linguistic groups in Thailand as follows: Thais constitute the major linguistic group, out of which we can identify four sub-groups, namely: the Thais of Laos, northern Thais, central plain Thais, and the Thais of the south. The populations of other ethnic groups in the country are in the minority. The Chinese constitute the main ethno-linguistic minority. These Chinese immigrants (they hesitate to integrate themselves completely) are Sino-Thais, and occupy the urban centres. They are present in large numbers in Bangkok and its neighbourhoods. A Sino-Thai presence is found in the south of the

country as well. Among the other ethnic-linguistic minorities are Cambodians on the Cambodian border, Vietnamese along the route of the Mekong that serves as a natural border with Laos, Karens in the region of the Burmese frontier, and Malays along the Malaysian frontier. Ethnic groups whose populations are fewest in number include the Lahus, Shans, Hmongs, Yaos, Akkhas, and Khmus. They are all found in northern Thailand. The Mons, supposedly the earliest inhabitants of the central plains, still reside there today.

32 Songkhran is the Thai New Year. Loey Kratong is the festival of lights, originally dedicated to the goddess of the rivers, which is celebrated on the first full moon of the 12th lunar month.

33 Phongpaichit and Baker, Thailand — Economy and Politics, p. 198.

34 Interview on 4 July 2001.

35 Korpi, Drug Control and Urban Governance.

36 Pongsapich, "La famille thaïlandaise".

37 "The Tamagotchi Generation", Bangkok Post, 10 Jan. 1998.

38 Thai Farmers Research Centre, 6 Jan. 2000

39 Interview on 4 July 2001.

40 "It's All in the Mind", Bangkok Post, 30 Mar. 1997.

41 Interview with Mr. Boonsen on 11 July 2001.

42 Interview with Ms. Koong on 11 July 2001.

43 Translated by Mulder, Thai Images, p. 256.

44 Neils Mulder, Inside Thai Society: Religion, Everyday Life, Change (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2000), p. 66.

45 Thaïlande contemporaine, ed. Dovert, pp. 171–248, considers the quality of tolerance to be a prime asset of the Thai citizen.

46 Interview with Mr. Boonsen on 11 July 2001.

47 Interview with Ms. Koong on 11 July 2001.

48 Economic and Social Council, 2001, p. 24.

49 Interview on 10 July 2001.

50 Mulder, Thai Images, p. 37.

51 Gabaude, "Approche du bouddhisme thaï", p. 8.

52 Interview with Bernard Antoine on 15 July 2001.

53 Ibid.

54 The Straits Times (Singapore), 20 Apr. 2001.

55 Interview on 4 July 2001.

56 Ekavidya Na Thalang, "Développement et adaptation", pp. 68–9.

57 Karma is a fundamental principle of Indian religions whereby one's present life is considered to be a single link in a chain of lives (samsara). It is believed that each person's destiny is determined by actions accomplished during the previous birth and lifetime.

58 Indigenous Thai dress practices are governed by complex codes that associate certain colours with particular days of the week: yellow on Mondays, pink on Tuesdays, green on Wednesdays, orange on Thursdays, blue on Fridays, mauve on Saturdays and red on Sundays. However, very few Thais continue to uphold this tradition today.

59 In this connection Ekavidya Na Thalang's article is particularly interesting (see Thaïlande contemporaine, ed. Dovert, pp. 61–81).

60 A "guarantee of authenticity" is the best proof that this folklore has actually been rediscovered and adapted to fit present-day situations. This analysis comes from the work published under the direction of Jean Pierre Warnier titled Le paradoxe de la marchandise authentique-Imaginaire et consommation de masse (L'Harmattan, Paris: collection "Sciences humaines et sociales", 1994) showing that demands for authenticity are paradoxical. For example Elsa Ramos' article in "La deuxième vie de l'objet ancien dans la ferronnerie d'art et la brocante", in Le paradoxe de la marchandise authentique, ed. Warnier, pp. 61–75, portrays the wrought-iron craftsman or the old furniture dealer as archetypes of this paradox. Their profession is to manufacture "authentic"-looking objects that are much in demand as a result of the pressures of commercial modernity, that is, exactly the opposite of what could really be termed "authentic".

Chapter 10

1 According to Max Weber, "the ideal type is a concept of reasoning, it is neither historical reality nor especially 'authentic' reality … [it has no other ambition than to be] a limited concept, purely ideal, on which we measure reality to clarify the empirical content of some of its important elements and with which we compare it". The ideal type is a means of making data that has been collected intelligible by clarifying its consistencies and differences. For instance, in the following analysis, no single yaa baa consumer is precisely represented in one or in another of the described constructions. Weber arrives at his method by assembling data into types gleaned from a multitude of distinct phenomena that may occur in wide-ranging or subtle formations. Sometimes there is a wealth of examples upon which to base a given type, other times a lesser amount, and still other times none at all. Using one or several consistent viewpoints, Weber extrapolates from the actual or presumed phenomena to formulate types. Such concepts are then used to link the phenomena under study, and to eventually construct a homogeneous table of reasoning. Nowhere will we find the exact empirical reality that reflects all types represented in such a table, as they are purely conceptual. It is a utopia. [Max Weber, Essais sur la théorie de la science (Paris: Plon, 1992), p.172.]

2 According to Michel Crozier, La phénomène bureaucratique (Paris: Seuil, 1963), "borderline consumer" is defined as the identity a player who positions himself at the intersection of diverse spheres of belonging. The term "surcodeur" (super-encoder) would also be appropriate here, following Lucien Sfez, Critique de la décision (Paris: Presse de la fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1981). The "surcodeur" maintains thorough knowledge of the code of each of the social spheres that come into play.

With one foot in and one foot out, in this respect the identity "surcodeur" corresponds to that of "borderline consumer".

3 There is scant evidence of methamphetamine use by government servants involved in its trafficking. However, it could plausibly be occurring, especially among policemen involved in the seizures.

4 Peter Lunding, Cambodia Country Profile (United Nations Drug Control Programme, Regional Centre for East Asia and the Pacific, Report Number 1: 2001), see <http://www.undcp.un.or.th/>.

5 Interview on 10 July 2001.

6 The source for this and all statistics cited in the following discussion can be found in Peter Lunding, Cambodia Country Profile (United Nations Drug Control Programme, Regional Centre for East Asia and the Pacific, Report Number 1, 2001), see <http://www.undcp.un.or.th/>.

7 Ibid., p.10.

8 Ibid., p.17.

9 Ibid., p.8.

10 United Nations Drug Control Programme (Burma Delegation), Burma Country Profile, see <http://www.undcp.un.or.th/> [2001], updated site at <http://www.unodc.org/pdf/myanmar /myanmar_country_profile_spf_2002.pdf>.

11 "A la source des pierres du paradis", Courrier International, no. 585 (Jan. 2002): 17–23.

12 Nualnoi Treerat et al., Global Study on Illegal Drugs, p. 100.

13 The Nation, 31 May 2002.

14 Feingold, "Sex, Drugs and the IMF".

15 "Le sauvetage d'une culture", Courrier International, no. 571 (Oct. 2000): 11–7.

16 Pierre Bourdieu, La Distinction (Paris: Edition de Minuit, 1979).

17 "The Lure of Ecstasy", Time Asia 156, no. 19 (Nov. 2000): 13.

18 Ibid.

19 Nualnoi Treerat et al., Global Study on Illegal Drugs, p. 13.

20 Alain Touraine, "Face à l'exclusion", in Citoyenneté et urbanité, ed. collectif (Paris: Esprit, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1991), pp. 165–73.

Conclusion

1 Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy, "L'importance du facteur politique dans le développement du Triangle d'Or et du Croissant d'Or", in CEMOTI, no. 32, June–Dec. 2001, dossier "Drogue et politique", pp. 69–86.

2 Labrousse and Koutouzis, Géopolitique et géostratégie des drogues, p. 32; Clastres, Archéologie de la violence, pp. 68–75; Chouvy, "L'importance du facteur politique".

3 Information note of the Federal Office of the Swiss police dated 14 Aug. 2001, see <http://www.bap.admin.ch/f/archiv/medien/2001/08141.htm>.

Glossary

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ATS	Amphetamine-type stimulants
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (USA)
CPB	Communist Party of Burma
CPT	Communist Party of Thailand
CSOC	Communist Suppression Office Command (Thailand), renamed Internal Security Office Command or ISOC in 1973 (see entry below)
CRAES-CRIPS	The Rhone-Alps Health Education College, Regional Centre for Information and Prevention of Aids (France)
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration (USA)
DKBA	Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (Burma), the armed wing of the DKBO
DKBO	Democratic Karen Buddhist Organisation (Burma)
ESSA	Eastern Shan State Army (Burma)
GNP	Gross National Product
HIV/AIDS	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus/Acquired Immune-deficiency Virus
ILO-IPEC	International Labour Organisation-International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour
INCSR	International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (USA)
INSERM	National Institute of Health and Medical Research (France)
IRASEC	Institut de Recherche sur l'Asie du Sud-Est Contemporaine — Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia (France)
ISOC	Internal Security Operations Command (Thailand), established 1973 to replace the CSOC
KDA	Kachin Democratic Army (Burma)
KIA	Kachin Independence Army (Burma), the armed wing of the KIO

KIO	Kachin Independence Organisation (Burma), previously known as the KNO (Kachin National Organisation)
KMT	Kuomintang (China-Taiwan)
KNU	Karen National Union (Burma)
LCCT	Labour Coordination Centre of Thailand
MNDAA	Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (Burma)
MTA	Mong Tai Army (Burma)
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration (USA)
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NSC	National Security Council (Thailand)
OCRTIS	Office central de répression du trafic international de stupéfiants (France) — Central office for the repression of international narcotics trafficking
ODCCP	United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention
OFDT	Observatoire français des drogues et des toxicomanies, the French monitoring centre for drugs and drug addiction
OGD	Observatoire géopolitique des drogues (France) — The Geopolitical Drug Watch
OICS	Organe International de Contrôle des Stupéfiants (United Nations) — International Narcotics Control Board
ONCB	Office of Narcotics Control Board (Thailand)
Peddro	(European Union — UNESCO) Prévention, EDucation, DROgues, organization for drug prevention education
RCA	Royal City Avenue (Bangkok, Thailand)
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council (Burma), renamed SPDC in 1997 (see entry below)
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council (Burma)
SSA	Shan State Army (Burma)
TDRI	Thai Development and Research Institute (Thailand)
TFRC	Thai Farmers Research Centre (Thailand)
UNDCP–UNICRI	United Nations Drug Control Programme–United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Institute
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFDAC	United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
UWSA	United Wa State Army (Burma)
WHO	World Health Organisation
XTC	ecstasy (MDMA)

Bibliography

Amara, Pongsapich, "La famille thaïlandaise, passé et présent", in Thailande contemporaine, ed. Stéphane Dovert, Bangkok–Paris: IRASEC–L'Harmattan, 2001, pp. 39–60.

Assemblee Generale des Nations Unies, "Stimulants de type amphétamine – A toute hâte vers le nouveau millénaire", Publication du Département de l'information de l'ONU, Session extraordinaire consacrée au problème mondial de la drogue, 8–10 June 1998, <http://www.un.org/french/ga/20special/featur/>.

Association pour l'etude Geopolitique des Drogues, "Birmanie: déménagement des raffineries et des laboratoires", Lettre internationale des drogues (Bulletin de l'Association d'études géopolitiques des drogues – AEGD), no. 2 (Nov. 2001): 5–6.

Baffie, Jean, "La politique en Thaïlande depuis la seconde guerre mondiale", in Thailande contemporaine, ed. Dovert, pp. 83–142.

Ball, Desmond, Burma's Military Secrets, Signal Intelligence (SIGINT) from 1941 to Cyber Warfare, Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1998.

Barrau, Jacques, Lucien Bernot, Isac Chiva, and Georges Condominas, "Avant-propos", Etudes rurales, no. 53-6 (1974): 10.

Bellais, Thomas and Jefferson Derolin, L'économie de la drogue, Mémoire de maîtrise AES, Caen Université de Basse-Normandie, 1999 (n.p.).

Berger, Hervé and Hans van de Glind, Children in Prostitution, Pornography and Illicit Activities – Thailand, Geneva: International Labour Organisation — International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour, 1999 (preliminary version).

Bourdieu, Pierre, La distinction, Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1979.

Brandon, John J., Burma: Myanmar in the Twenty-First Century: Dynamics of Continuity and Change, Bangkok: Open Society Institute, Thai Studies Section, 1997.

Brookhaven National Laboratory, Researchers Document Brain Damage, Reduction in Motor and Cognitive Function from Methamphetamine Abuse, Upton, NY: Brookhaven National Laboratory, 2001, <http://www.bnl.gov>.

Bruneton, Jean, Pharmacognosie, phytochimie, plantes médicinales, Paris: Lavoisier, Tec & Doc, 1999.

_____, Plantes toxiques: végétaux dangereux pour l'Homme et les animaux, Paris: Lavoisier, Tec & Doc, 1996.

Caouette, Thérèse M., "Burmese Refugees in Thailand", presented at Burma (Myanmar): Challenges and Opportunities for the 1990s, Joint FCO/ASIAN Studies Centre Conference, St. Antony's College, Oxford (England), 13–15 Dec. 1991 (n.p.).

Carrier, Claire, "Approche clinique du dopage", Revue Toxibase, no. 3 (Sept. 2001): 11–4.

Castel, Robert, Les métamorphoses de la question sociale, Paris: Fayard, 1995.

Choquet, Marie, Les résultats descriptifs de l'enquête Lycoll, Observatoires régionaux de la santé, no. 60 (Dec. 1999).

Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud, "Drug Diversity in the Golden Triangle", Crime and Justice International 15, no. 33 (Oct. 1999): 5–18.

_____, Les territoires de l'opium. Géopolitique dans les espaces du Triangle d'Or et du Croissant d'Or, Thèse de doctorat de géographie, Université Paris I – Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris, 2001, 2 volumes (n.p.).

_____, "L'importance du facteur politique dans le développement du Triangle d'Or et du Croissant d'Or", CEMOTI, no. 32 (June–Dec. 2001): 69–86, entry "Drogue et politique".

Clastres, Pierre, Archéologie de la violence, la guerre dans les sociétés primitives, Paris: Editions de l'Aube, 1997.

Conseil Economique Et Social Des Nations Unies, Situation mondiale en ce qui concerne l'abus de drogues, en particulier parmi les enfants et les jeunes, Conférence à Vienne held 20–29 March 2001 – Commission des stupéfiants (quarante-quatrième session) – Point 5b de l'ordre du jour provisoire – Report no. E/CN7/2001/4, <http://www.undcp.org/pdf/document_2000-12-06_1_fr.pdf>.

Courrière, Philippe, "Ephédrine", in Encyclopaedia universalis, Multimedia Version 5, 1999.

Crozier, Michel, Le phénomène bureaucratique, Paris: Seuil, 1963.

Dasse, Martial, Les guérillas en Asie du Sud-Est, Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993.

Department of State, United States of America, International Narcotics Strategy Report, 1998, Washington D.C., Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, Department of State, 1999, <http://www.state.gov>.

Dovert, Stéphane (ed.), Thailande contemporaine, Bangkok–Paris: IRASEC–L'Harmattan, 2001.

_____, "'La Thaïlande prête pour le monde' ou de l'usage intensif des étrangers dans un processus de construction nationale", in Thailande contemporaine, ed. Dovert, pp. 177–248.

Dubus, Arnaud and Nicolas Revise, Armée du peuple, armée du roi – Les militaires face à la société en Indonésie et en Thaïlande, Bangkok–Paris: IRASEC–L'Harmattan, 2002.

Ekavidya Na Thalang, "Développement et adaptation de la culture thaïlandaise", in Thailande contemporaine, ed. Dovert, pp. 61–81.

Escohotado, Antonio, A Brief History of Drugs from the Stone Age to the Stoned Age, Rochester: Park Street Press, 1999.

Evans, Grant, Christopher Hutton and Kuah Khun Eng, Where China Meets Southeast Asia : Social and Cultural Change in the Border Regions, Bangkok and Singapore: White Lotus Press and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000.

Favre-Duchartre, Michel, "Gnétophytes", in Encyclopaedia universalis, Multimedia Version 5, 1999.

Feingold, David A., "Sex, Drugs and the IMF: Some Implications of 'Structural Readjustment' for the Trade in Heroin, Girls and Women in the Upper Mekong Region", in Refuge – New Cargo: The Global Business of Trafficking in Women 17, no. 5 (Nov. 1998).

_____, "The Hell of Good Intentions: Some Preliminary Thoughts on Opium in the Political Ecology of the Trade in Girls and Women", in Where China Meets Southeast Asia: Social and Cultural Change in the Border Regions, Grant Evans et al., Bangkok and Singapore: White Lotus Press and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000, pp. 183–203.

Fischler, Claude, L'homnivore, Paris: Odile Jacob, coll. "sciences humaines", 1990.

Forbes, Andrew D.W., "The 'Cin-Ho' (Yunnan Chinese) Muslims of North Thailand", Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs 7, no. 2 (1986): 173–86.

Forbes, Andrew D.W. and David Henley, The Haw: Traders of the Golden Triangle, People and Cultures of Southeast Asia, Bangkok: Teak House Publications, 1997.

Franco, Guido (ed.), Thaïlande, les larmes de Bouddha, Paris: Autrement, Série Monde no. 43, 1997.

Frey, Robert and Bertil Lintner, "Jade in Burma, The Major Jadeite Source: The Jade Trade in Burma", in Jade, ed. Roger Keverne, London: Lorenz Book, 1995, pp. 268–71.

Gabaude, Louis, "Approche du bouddhisme thaï", in Thailande contemporaine, ed. Dovert, Thailande contemporaine, pp. 3–37.

Gaulejac, Vincent de, Les sources de la honte, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, coll. sociologie clinique", 1996.

Goffman, Erving, Stigmate – Les usages sociaux des handicaps, Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1975.

_____, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, New York: Doubleday, 1959.

Goudineau, Yves and Bernard Vienne, "L'Etat et les minorités ethniques: la place des 'populations montagnardes' (chao khao) dans l'espace national", in Thailande contemporaine, ed. Dovert, pp. 143–74.

Hamon, Michel, "Amphétamines", in Encyclopaedia universalis, Multimedia Version 5, 1999.

Ingram, James C., Economic change in Thailand, 1850–1970, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971.

International Narcotics Control Board, Précurseurs et produits chimiques fréquemment utilisés dans la fabrication illicite de stupéfiants et de substances psychotropes, Rapport de l'Organe international de contrôle des stupéfiants pour 2000 sur l'application de l'article 12 de la Convention des Nations unies contre le trafic illicite de stupéfiants et de substances psychotropes de 1988, Vienna: INCB, 2000, <http://www.incb.org>.

Kaija Korpi, Drug Control and Urban Governance, Bangkok: Programme des nations unies pour le controle international des drogues (PNUCID), Regional Centre for East Asia and the Pacific, 2001, <http://www.undcp.un.or.th/>.

Kellerhals, Jean and Cléopâtre Montandon, "Les styles éducatifs", in La famille, l'état des savoirs, ed. François de Singly, Paris: La découverte, 1992, pp. 194–203.

Kopp, Pierre, "Les analyses formelles des marchés de la drogue", Revue Tiers Monde 33, no. 131 (1992): 565–79.

Kritaya Archavanitkul, Combating the Trafficking in Children and their Exploitation in Prostitution and Other Intolerable Forms of Child Labour in Mekong Basin Countries, Institute for Population and Social Research, International Programme of the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), International Labour Organization (ILO), Nakhon Pathom: Mahidol University, 1998a, <http://www.seameo.org/vl/combat/>.

_____, Trafficking in Children for Labour Exploitation Including Child Prostitution in the Mekong Sub-Region, Bangkok: Institute for Population and Social Research, International Programme of the Elimination of Child Labour, International Labour Organization, 1998b, <www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec/publ/childtraf>.

Labrousse, Alain and Michel Koutouzis, Géopolitique et géostratégie des drogues, Paris: Economica, 1996.

Lebar, Franck M., Gerald C. Hickey and John K. Musgrave, Ethnic Groups of Mainland Southeast Asia, New Haven: Human Relations Area Files Press, 1964.

Le Breton, David, Passions du risque, Paris: Métailié, 2000.

Le Poer, Barbara Leitch (ed.), Thailand: A Country Study, Washington D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1989.

Leshner, Alan I., "Treatment: Effects On the Brain and Body", Office of National Drug Control Policy, Proceedings of the National Methamphetamine Drug Conference, Omaha, Nebraska 28–30 May 1997, <http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov>.

Leung, Ay, "Chinese Medicinals", in Advances in New Crops, ed. Jules Janick and James E. Simon, Portland: Timber Press, 1990, pp. 499–510.

Lintner, Bertil, Burma in Revolt: Opium and Insurgency Since 1948, Boulder: Westview Press, 1994.

_____, "Drugs, Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Burma", in Burma: Myanmar in the Twenty-First Century, Dynamics of Continuity and Change, ed. John J. Brandon, Bangkok: Open Society Institute, Thai Studies Section, 1997, pp. 245–97.

Lunding, Peter, Cambodia Country Profile, Bangkok: Programme des nations unies pour le controle international des drogues (PNUCID), Regional Centre for East Asia and the Pacific, Report no. 11, <http://www.undcp.un.or.th/>.

McBroom, Erica, "Ephedra (Ma Huang)", Ethnobotanical Leaflets, Southern Illinois University Herbarium, 2001, <http://www.siu.edu/~ebl/>.

McCoy, Alfred W., The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade, New York: Harper & Row, 1991.

McGregor, Susanne, Women and the Health and Social Consequences of Drug Use: Implications for Policy and Practice, Allocution au colloque intitulé "Gender Drugs and HIV", Nanning International Hotel (Guangxi), République Populaire de Chine, 22–24 February 2001, <www.undcp.un.or.th/factsheet/woman%20and %20health.pdf>.

McNicoll, André, Drug Trafficking: A North-South Perspective, Ottawa: L'Institut Nord-Sud, 1983.

Mauss, Marcel, "Essai sur le don – Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques", in Sociologie et anthropologie, Marcel Mauss, Paris: PUF, 1950, pp. 145–284.

Mead, Margaret, Le fossé des générations, Paris: Denoël, 1979.

Montandon, Cléopâtre, "Un mécanisme de contrôle social: la honte", Revue européenne des sciences sociales 20, no. 62 (Droz, Genève 1982): 23–61.

Moscovici, Serge, Psychologie sociale, Paris: PUF, coll. "Fondamental", 1984.

Mulder, Niels, Inside Southeast Asia: Religion, Everyday Life, Cultural Change, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1996.

_____, Thai Image: The Culture of the Public World, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1997.

_____, Inside Thai Society: Religion, Everyday life, Change, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2000.

Mya Maung, The Burma Road to Poverty, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1991.

Nualnoi Treerat, Noppanun Wannathepsakul and Daniel Ray Lewis, Global Study on Illegal Drugs: The Case of Bangkok, Bangkok: Programme des nations unies pour le controle international des drogues (PNUCID), Regional Centre for East Asia and the Pacific, 2000 (preliminary version, n.p.).

Observatoire Geopolitique des Drogues, Atlas mondial des drogues, Paris: PUF, 1996.

_____, La géopolitique mondiale des drogues 1997/1998, Paris: OGD, 1999.

_____, La géopolitique mondiale des drogues 1998/1999, Paris: OGD, 2000.

Office of Narcotics Control Board, Annual Report 2000, Bangkok: ONCB, 2001.

Office of National Drug Control Policy, The National Methamphetamine Drug Conference, 28–30 May 1997, ONDCP, Omaha (Nebraska), <http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov>.

Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, Thailand: Economy and Politics, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Pasuk Phongpaichit and Sungsidh Piriyarangsan, Corruption and Democracy in Thailand, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1994.

Pasuk Phongpaichit, Sungsidh Piriyarangsan and Nualnoi Treerat, Guns, Girls, Gambling, Ganja: Thailand's Illegal Economy and Public Policy, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1998.

Peak, Aaron, Drug Use and HIV/AIDS in Thailand in the Year 2000, Asian Harm Reduction Network Report, Family Health International, Asia Regional Office, 2001.

Pelt, Jean-Marie, Drogues et plantes magiques, Paris: Fayard, 1983.

Peterson, Scott, "Ephedra: Asking for Trouble?", in Ethnobotanical Leaflets, Southern Illinois University Herbarium, 2001, <http://www.siu.edu/~ebl/>.

Programme des nations unies pour le contrôle international des drogues (Délégation en Birmanie), Burma Country Profile, PNUCID website consulted in October 2001 at <http://www.undcp.un.or.th/>.

Programme des nations unies pour le contrôle international des drogues (publié en anglais sous le sigle ODCCP "Studies on Drugs and Crime"), Global Illicit Drug Trends – 2001, New York: United Nations Publications, 2001.

Programme des nations unies pour le contrôle international des drogues, Amphetamine-Type Stimulants: A Global Review, Technical Series no. 3, Vienna: Programme des nations unies pour le controle international des drogues, 1996.

Ramos, Elsa, "La deuxième vie de l'objet ancien dans la ferronnerie d'art et la brocante", in Le paradoxe de la marchandise authentique – Imaginaire et consommation de masse, ed. Jean-Pierre Warnier, Paris: L'Harmattan, coll. "Sciences humaines et sociales", 1994, pp. 61–75.

Rätsch, Christian, Les plantes de l'amour – Les aphrodisiaques et leurs usages, Paris: Editions du Lézard, 2000.

Richard, Denis and Jean-Louis Senon, Dictionnaire des drogues,des toxicomanies et des dépendances, Paris: Larousse, 1999.

Rotberg, Robert I., Burma, Prospects for a Democratic Future, Cambridge: Brookings Institute, World Peace Foundation – Harvard Institute for International Development, 1998.

Roustan, Mélanie, Roulez jeunesse – Une approche ethnologique de la consommation de cannabis, mémoire de DEA Cultures et comportements sociaux (sous la direction de Dominique Desjeux), Paris: Université Paris-V Sorbonne, 1999 (n.p.).

_____, "De l'intérêt d'une approche dynamique des concepts de marchandise et d'authenticité : une illustration par la consommation de cannabis",

Consommations et sociétés, Cahiers pluridisciplinaires sur la consommation et l'interculturel, no. 1, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001: 11–24.

Rudgley, Richard, The Lost Civilizations of the Stone Age, London: Arrow Books, 1999.

Schendel, Willem van and Itty Abraham, Beyond Borders: (Il)licit Flows of Objects, People, and Ideas, Social Science Research Council Discussion Paper, New York: Social Science Research Council, 2000.

Schultes, Richard E. and Albert Hofmann, Les plantes des Dieux, Paris: Editions du Paris, 1973.

Sfez, Lucien, Critique de la décision, Paris: Presses de la fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1981.

Simon, Jean-Christophe, "Transformation et industrialisation en Thaïlande: 50 ans de croissance et développement économique", in Thailande contemporaine, ed. Dovert, pp. 313–44.

Singly, François de (ed.), La famille, l'état des savoirs, Paris: La découverte, 1992.

Smith, Martin, Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity, London: Zed Books, 1991.

Solecki, Ralph Stefan, Shanidar – The First Flower People, New York: Knopf, 1971.

Sompong Chitradub, Rapid Assessment of Child Labour in the Production and Trafficking of Drugs in Thailand, Bangkok, 1999 (preliminary version, n.p.).

Sulkunen, Pekka, A la recherche de la modernité: Consommation et consommateurs d'alcool en France aujourd'hui – Le regard d'un étranger, Helsinki: The Social Research Institute of Alcohol Studies, 1988.

Supang Chantavanich, "Mouvements de population en Thaïlande, deux décennies d'incertitudes et de problèmes non résolus", in Thailande contemporaine, ed. Dovert, pp. 249–73.

Thai Farmers Research Center, Amphetamines: a Social Hazard Costing the Economy over Baht 100 Billion, Bangkok: TFRC, 11 April 2000, <http://www.tfrc.co.th/>.

_____, Amphetamines: Danger to Economy and Society, Bangkok: TFRC, 17 March 1997, <http://www.tfrc.co.th/>.

_____, Amphetamines: Danger in Educational Institutions, Bangkok: TFRC, 29 May 1997, <http://www.tfrc.co.th/>.

_____, Two Essential Elements for Thai Youth in the Millennium Year, Bangkok: TFRC, 6 January 2000, <http://www.tfrc.co.th/>.

Touraine, Alain, "Face à l'exclusion", in Citoyenneté et urbanite, collectif, Paris: Centre Georges-Pompidou, Edition Esprit, 1991.

Tullis, Lamond, Unintended Consequences: Illegal Drugs and Drug Policies in Nine Countries, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996.

United Nations Economic and Social Council, World Situation with Regard to Drug Abuse, with Particular Reference to Children and Youth, Vienna: Commission on Narcotic Drugs, 2001.

Viard, Jean, La société d'archipel, La Tour d'Aigues: Edition de l'Aube, 1994.
Vichai Poshyachinda, Vipa Danthamrongkul and Usaneya Perngparn, "The Major Changes in the 1990's Substance Abuse Scenario in ANASE Countries", Journal of Psychiatric Association Review 43, no. 2 (Bangkok, Apr.-June 1998): 43–5.
Vienne, Marie-Sybille de, "La crise thaïlandaise, fortuite ou prévisible?", in Thailande contemporaine, ed. Dovert, pp. 345–70.
Walker, Jill, "Jade: A Special Gemstone", in Jade, Roger Keverne, London: Lorenz Book, 1995, pp. 20–41.
Wanich Jarungidanan, "Bangkok, produit de la classe moyenne", in Thaïlande, les larmes de Bouddha, ed. Guido Franco, Paris: Autrement, Série Monde, no. 43 (1997): 30–2.
Warnier, Jean-Pierre (ed.), Le paradoxe de la marchandise authentique – Imaginaire et consommation de masse, Paris: L'Harmattan, coll. "Sciences humaines et sociales", 1994.
Weber, Max, Essais sur la théorie de la science, Paris: Plon, 1992.
Yegar, Moshe, "The Panthay (Chinese Muslims) of Burma and Yunnan", Journal of Southeast Asian History 7, no. 1 (1966): 73–85.
Zhou, Yongming, Anti-Drug Crusades in Twentieth-Century China: Nationalism, History, and State Building, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.

Press Agencies

Associated Press, New York, <http://www.ap.org>
BBC News, London, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>
Dépêche internationale des drogues, Observatoire géopolitique des drogues (OGD), Paris, <http://www.ogd.org>
Reuters, agence de presse, London, <http://www.reuters.com>
Stratfor, dépêches quotidiennes d'analyse géopolitique, Austin, <http://www.stratfor.com>
World Report, <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/home.htm>
Xinhua, agence de presse, Beijing, <http://www.xinhua.org>

Periodicals

Bangkok Post, Bangkok daily, <http://bangkokpost.net>
Courrier International, Paris weekly, <http://www.courrierinternational.com/>
Far Eastern Economic Review, Hong Kong weekly, <http://www.feer.com>
Financial Times, London daily, <http://news.ft.com/>
Gavroche, French monthly, Bangkok, <http://www.gavroche-thailande.com/>
Lettre internationale des drogues, monthly of l'Association d'études géopolitiques des drogues (AEGD), Nantes, <http://www.geodrugs.net>
L'Humanité, Paris daily, <http://www.humanite.presse.fr/>
South China Morning Post, Hong Kong daily, <http://www.scmp.com>
The Economist, London weekly, <http://www.economist.com/>
The Nation, New York monthly, <http://www.thenation.com>
The Nation, Bangkok daily, <http://www.nationmultimedia.com>
The New York Times Magazine, New York daily, <http://www.nytimes.com/>
The Progressive Magazine, Madison monthly, https://secure.progressive.org/>
The Straits Times, Singapore daily, <http://straitstimes.asia1.com.sg/home>
Time Asia, Hong Kong weekly, <http://www.time.com/time/asia/>

Index