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# The Dynamics of Sex Tourism: The Case of Southeast Asia

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## I. INTRODUCTION

There seems to be a strong correlation between the development of the tourist industry and the rise of prostitution in the Third World (Cohen 1982; O'Grady 1981; Stol 1980; Bond 1980; Ech & Rosenblum 1975), a familiar example being the publicity given to sex tours in sex magazines and travel agency brochures. Although prostitution is an ancient phenomenon, and services catering to travellers date back for centuries, today it has reached a stage where services are fully packaged and sold on a vast scale. In 1982 for example, more than one million Japanese tourists visited Thailand, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong on tours called 'trips for men only' which explicitly include visits to brothels (*Sunday Times* 13.2.1983: 20). An estimated 60 per cent of the two million tourists visiting Thailand each year are allegedly drawn by bargain-priced sex (*Time* 10.5.1982: 31).

For sex tourism to have reached this order of magnitude, there must be a supply of the necessary facilities, i.e. transport, accommodation and entertainment, and a large number of women willing (or forced) to enter the trade. Moreover, sex tourism involves travel across national boundaries. To operate on a mass basis, it must benefit from systematic organization and cooperation between a number of institutions, thus minimizing the uncertainties faced by the tourists in the countries of destination.

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This article started as a joint effort between H.L. Theuns and myself, and I have benefited greatly from our many discussions. However, I am entirely responsible for the views expressed here. I would like to thank George Irvin for his very helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

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This paper attempts to set out a basic framework within which the growing body of empirical material on prostitution and mass tourism can be analyzed. Section II distinguishes specific forms of female prostitution, considers how these have evolved historically, and looks at the forces underlying the demand for, and the supply of, prostitutes' services with specific reference to Southeast Asia. It is argued not only that the process of capitalist economic development entails increased 'commoditization' of sexual services (in a manner similar to any other form of labour power), but that certain specific features of this process are of key importance. Demand may be thought of as conditioned primarily by the growing geographical and occupational mobility of single males, ranging from migrant workers, corporate professionals and military servicemen; while increased supply can be conceptualized in terms of changing social relations of gender. Empirical evidence is adduced to show that although the 'commoditization' of female sexual services may be accompanied by a high rate of exploitation (in the sense of the prostitute retaining only a small part of the value of her services), net earnings are still likely to be higher than in other unskilled occupations. Section III investigates the dynamics of mass tourism and relates these to the development of 'package tour' prostitution, while conclusions are set out in Section IV. The argument in Section IV concerns the conditions under which prostitution has become an 'internationally traded commodity', the salient point being that the growing integration of the tourist industry linking airlines, hotel chains and package holiday firms is a crucial 'enabling factor', allowing spare capacity in aircraft seats and hotel beds to be matched to a growing metropolitan demand for esoteric and competitively-priced sexual services offered at particular tourist destinations, particularly in Southeast Asia. Finally, it is argued that while conventional reactions to sex tourism, including efforts to have it banned, have mobilized considerable public attention and some support for the women concerned, there is a danger that such reactions may be counterproductive unless efforts are made to examine the issues within the wider context of developmental problems. Legislation to protect prostitutes, and to improve their working conditions and occupational health, is preferable to legislation that would deprive them of their livelihood.

## II. THE MANIFESTATION OF FEMALE PROSTITUTION

Female prostitution is conventionally defined as the provision of sexual services against payment (Lemert 1951: 238; Wong Lun Hing 1972: 726; Gagnon 1968: 592). As such, it has manifested itself throughout history in a variety of forms, the delineation of which involves the following criteria: the number of men for whom services are provided, the nature of payment and the degree of 'institutionalization' of service provision. A wider definition would recognize that, at one extreme, prostitution may be disguised in the legal institution of marriage and (*de facto*) polygamy through which a woman is contracted to be sold, or contracts to sell herself, to a man in exchange for social conformity, economic security and some limited rights (Lindsey 1979). In this case, sexual services form only a part of the exchange relationship. At the other extreme, prostitution is a profession involving the exclusive supply of sexual services on a relatively indiscriminate basis in a manner similar to the sale of any commodity. In between are the *hetaerists* (including courtesans, *geishas*, *demi-mondaines*) who provide sexual services to a limited number of partners, sometimes as a form of erotic art, and usually against payment which may range from money, expensive gifts, and/or access to social mobility. Equally, there is the *maitresse* who has one partner to maintain her in exchange for the occasional supply of sexual services. The variation between the major forms of prostitution depends on public acceptance and social institutions which exist in particular cultural and historical circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

In Eastern societies, concubinage and brothels have existed for centuries and have carried a distinct class connotation. Courtesanery was widely practised in monarchist circles, and concubinage was common among powerful lords whose accumulation of wives mirrored their accumulation of power (Goughlin 1950: 22; Phongpaichit 1980: 18). On the other hand, brothels served commoners, providing female company (including sex) according to the purchasing power of the customers (Nguyen Du 1926). Women working in brothels were usually bought as slaves, abducted or seduced and sold by pimps, and received no return for their labour. They were morally condemned, had no right to move out of the brothels and re-integrate in their community unless bought by someone to become concubines, but were still subject to repeated exchange as an item of trade (Salmon 1725, Nguyen Du 1926). Thus, one may argue that in pre-capitalist Asia, female

prostitution could manifest itself within the confines of the monarchy, marriage and *de facto* polygamy, and brothels. Slave labour existed in brothels and the institution of polygamy, while within marriage and courtesanery, women could have limited social mobility and were largely free of moral condemnation.<sup>2</sup>

In Southeast Asia, the manifestation of prostitution as described above has undergone significant changes. With the exception of the limited phenomenon of the 'bonded girl' and the *maitresse*<sup>3</sup> (a new version of the traditional concubine), at least four other forms of prostitution have emerged: the freelancer, the call girl,<sup>4</sup> the chartered prostitute, and the 'mail order bride'. Freelancers are women whose primary occupation is not prostitution, but who occasionally engage in prostitution to augment gross income. They include women with government jobs (Phongpaichit 1980: 34), factory workers and other semi-skilled workers (Thitsa 1980: 13). Institutions such as massage parlours provide in-house displays (Phongpaichit 1980: 12; Stol 1980) while bars and clubs provide meeting opportunities (Neumann 1979: 20-21). Call girls are professionals who operate through intermediaries (sometimes using photography to facilitate the selection process), whereas the chartered prostitute works on the basis of a time-charter to be negotiated with the client for the duration of his sojourn in the area (Jones 1976: 3). Mail-order brides submit their photographs and personal history to an agency which sells catalogues to men in search of Asian wives (*Parade Magazine* 10.10.1982: 13). It may be noted that the major change in the manifestation of prostitution in Southeast Asia is the degree of differentiation in terms of forms, institutions and selling arrangements. While the traditional forms have not totally disappeared, there is now a wider range of services, of institutions through which services are distributed, and a greater variety of payment arrangements.

This differentiation can be related to several phenomena linked to the process of capitalist development and conditioning labour relations, demand and supply. With respect to labour relations, urbanization and the shift from bonded-labour to wage-labour has broken down extended kin relations of production at the village level, and somewhat reduced patriarchal control over women's mobility, while female entry into the labour force represents a significant step towards challenging traditional values (Wiegiersma 1981: 1-28). Despite the exploitative relations of the wage-labour market, women, by becoming wage-earners living outside the control of kin relations, have become more conscious of the

various dimensions of social oppression, including gender oppression. Prostitution enters this confrontation as an issue related to double-standard chastity and polygamy (Marr 1981: 190-251); the professional prostitute can no longer be thought of as simply a moral and social outcast, but is rather a member of an oppressed class of workers (Marr 1981: 192; *Asia Week* 1983). With increased public criticism of brothels and polygamy, and reduced moral and social condemnation of professional prostitutes, the barriers between the two institutions have become eroded. Since polygamy and brothels are only two specific institutions through which certain forms of prostitution manifest themselves, their decline conforms to the rise of new institutions that reflect changing patterns of demand and supply.

Three broad factors may be distinguished as conditioning heterosexual male demand for prostitution services: circumstances preventing the establishment of a regular relationship, sexual codes of conduct, and lack of satisfaction within an established relationship which may include the desire to command the services of several women whatever the quality of sex. Lack of opportunity to establish a regular relationship occurs during prolonged separation from home and peer groups, as in the case of migrant labourers, military servicemen or businessmen whose jobs involve extensive travelling (Barry 1979: 59-70). In Southeast Asia, these circumstances are intensified by the growing internationalization of capital. Both Bangkok and Manila have become important business centres, hosting several international organizations, and providing regional headquarters' facilities for a number of MNCs operating in the region, thus stimulating a rapid expansion of business and conference traffic in addition to tourism. Bangkok, in particular, has become the gateway to other destinations in Asia (Gidwitz 1980).

Furthermore, the legacy of US military bases has also conditioned the demand for prostitutes. In the late 1960s, for example, about 40,000 US servicemen were stationed at air bases in Thailand and close to half-a-million were stationed in Viet-Nam, creating a conducive climate for entrepreneurs to organize prostitution. Entertainment centres grew up around these military bases to form a service infrastructure. While in the case of Viet-Nam these have now largely disappeared following the American withdrawal,<sup>5</sup> they have been maintained in Thailand and now serve the needs of a different category of visitor, the tourist (Lubeigt 1979: 393-95). Similarly in the Philippines, prostitution has flourished in places

with a heavy concentration of foreigners (Neumann 1979: 18). Olongapo, near the US naval base in Subic Bay, for example, is popularly known as the 'Liberty City' of the US Seventh Fleet, with a rest and recreation network of more than 500 clubs, bars, restaurants, sauna baths and massage clinics (*Ang Makatao* 1981: 9-10). More generally, in developing countries, lack of opportunity to establish a regular sexual relationship is not simply a question of geographical mobility, whether imposed by economic or military circumstances. Many men, due to their age and/or stage in their life cycle, cannot afford to marry (e.g. young men awaiting land rights) or must wait for female partners who are not yet available (e.g. young men in polygamous societies).

Double-standard codes of conduct reinforce and reflect the demand for prostitution. In many societies, while strict rules of sexual conduct are applied to women, men can maintain their sexual freedom, and in many cases promiscuity is taken as proof of malehood. This leads to the familiar stereotyped segregation of women into the pure and virtuous versus the impure and vicious, to fit the sexual roles assigned to them. Pure and virtuous women exist to produce children of undisputed paternity, whereas the impure and vicious exist to serve the men who want to prove their malehood, or those who want to gain experience before marrying a virtuous woman. Examples of such stereotypes are familiar enough, ranging from the prurience of Victorian England to the *machismo* of Latin America. For present purposes it suffices to point out that disparities between partners' sexual needs and views, or forced abstinence in the context of power struggles between partners, can lead to dissatisfaction within an established relationship. With the sexual revolution and the rise of feminism, sex becomes, as Greer writes, 'the arena of confrontation in which new values must be hammered out' (*Time* 12.4.1971: 49). Often this confrontation provides an additional reason for seeking extra-marital relationships by both men and women. In Western societies where rules of sexual conduct have become lenient, this does not always imply a demand for prostitution, except in very specific forms. As Mead states: 'for sex satisfaction, it is no longer necessary to choose between marriage and prostitution; for most of those without religious scruples, sex is available on a friendly and amateur basis and without responsibility' (Mead 1955: 244). However, a demand may arise among men who feel they are losing out in the power struggle between the sexes, and who need to restore their feelings of masculinity but cannot find partners suitable to this end among

peer groups. Examples are cases of sexcursions to Southeast Asia in search of a 'lost paradise' of traditionally submissive women (Lenz 1978: 14; Thitsa 1980: 13), and the 'mail-order brides' business selling catalogues that stress the obedience and devotion of Asian women (Stol 1980; *Parade Magazine* 1982: 13). Though 'sexual revolution' in the West may have led us to believe that the demand for prostitutes' services has diminished within Western societies (a hypothesis which remains to be tested), it is clear that several factors feed this demand. At an observable level, these include the increasing geographical and occupational mobility of single males associated with 'development', and the general resistance of some males to certain changes brought about by the women's movement.

On the supply side, prostitution can be viewed as a female strategy for survival and terms of comparative advantage relative to other opportunities. The feminist movement has laid considerable stress on the economic function of the cultural subordination of women in ensuring the reproduction of labour power. This subordination is first and foremost reinforced by sexual codes of conduct established mainly to ensure the undisputed paternity of children. Together, these two elements have substantially contributed to the social retardation of women. Under prevailing traditional marriage customs, women are explicitly exchanged for economic gains, thus denying them the free choice of partners, or forced to enter into matrimony in order to gain social 'acceptance' and limited rights. Although the situation is improving for some, many still do not have access to the means of controlling their own life. In these circumstances, women who are victims of such customs may be forced to turn to their last resource, namely their body. In this context, the sale of sex can be regarded as part of women's strategy for survival. How they survive after having made such a choice is a different issue. The fact is that, unlike unpaid household labour, prostitution offers women (except in the case of slave labour) an opportunity for control over the returns of their own work, even if a substantial part of these returns is skimmed-off by the agents involved. Moreover, as a strategy for survival, prostitution is not simply a matter of rejecting traditional customs, or of being victimized by such customs; it also reflects female social retardation which renders women ill-equipped to be absorbed into other productive spheres when abandoning their traditional productive roles.

According to D'Souza, child marriage, the dowry system, social taboos on widow remarriage and drastic sanctions against female

infidelity have all been factors contributing to prostitution (D'Souza 1973: 42). In a study of several villages near Mamfe in Cameroun, Lagerberg and Wilms report that young women sometimes shirk forced marriage by migrating to the nearest city, and that to attain and sustain economic independence, about 70 per cent of female migrants engage in prostitution (Lagerberg & Wilms 1972: 48, 87-88). Case-studies of the Philippines and Thailand point to similar factors which, in addition to dire poverty, lead women into prostitution: namely, unhappy marriage, abandonment by the husband, single-motherhood (Phongpaichit 1981: 18-19; O'Grady 1981: 10-11; *Ang Makatao* 1981: 12). Other studies on prostitution in poor countries also indicate that a large majority of prostitutes would choose another profession if there were alternatives (*Intermediair* 1978: 7). For reasons of social viability and mobility, some consider prostitution as a lucrative occupation which allows them to save enough money to enter trade, to help pay for the education of younger siblings, and/or to remit part of their income to family farms to help make these viable (Phongpaichit 1980: 47-48). Moreover, prostitution may have the advantage of flexible working hours, important to single mothers who do not have access to child-care facilities.

To examine prostitution from the point of view of comparative advantage, it is useful to distinguish the case of poor countries from that of the more developed societies. In the first instance, with few exceptions, prostitution is a matter of struggle for survival in a socially and economically hostile environment which provides women with few viable alternatives. In the second instance, it is a means of attaining a level of income above the minimum standards guaranteed by the state. In the welfare state, in short, discretionary income can be thought of as a major pull-factor in determining supply in prostitution (*Intermediair* 1978: 5). In developing countries, extreme poverty is the key push-factor (D'Souza 1973: 45; Phongpaichit 1981: 17; *Ang Makatao* 1981: 12).

In terms of income, prostitution is generally substantially more attractive than other unskilled occupations that are traditionally considered suitable for women. Table 1 shows data for a cross-section of countries on differentials between gross earnings from prostitution and other occupations.<sup>6</sup> It should be borne in mind that, to arrive at gross income figures, overhead-costs have to be deducted from gross receipt figures. Overheads are that part of gross receipts taken by other market parties involved, i.e. bar owners and the like, pimps, and bribes to policemen. As in the case



Table 1. *Gross Income per Year From Prostitution and From Alternative Forms of Employment; Different Years in the Period 1974-1978 (US Dollars)\**

<i>Korea</i>	
garment industry	135-480
prostitution in Seoul	4500-9000
<i>Philippines</i>	
spinning and weaving	580
prostitution in Manila	850-3200
prostitution in Olongapo	3375-5000
<i>Thailand</i>	
restaurant waitress	250
battery factory	312
garment industry	450
prostitution in Bangkok	1875 <sup>1</sup> -18,000 <sup>2</sup>
<i>Netherlands</i>	
textile industry	15,000
prostitution	30,000 <sup>3</sup>

Sources: Lenz 1978; Miyamoto 1978; Wideman 1976; *Ang Makatao* 1981; Phongpaichit 1981; Mentink & Scholtes 1978; Brink 1979; UN 1976, 1978.

1. Excluding 'bonded' girls who may make only approximately \$625.
2. For a 'star-masseuse'.
3. Assuming a gross income of 60 per cent of gross revenue.

\* Compiled by H.L. Theuns

of other commodities, commercial sex requires 'distribution outlets': prostitutes must meet buyers interested in their services. Since prostitution is generally illegal, a woman making sexual approaches on the street can be accused of soliciting and loitering and is therefore vulnerable to arrest. Thus, most prostitutes must use 'entertainment establishments' as a camouflaged marketplace. In doing so, they must comply with the rules of the game established by the owners (Phongpaichit 1980: 35-39; Miyamoto 1978: 138; Neumann 1979). Although these rules tend to vary according to institutions and countries, all owners of such institutions receive a share of the prostitutes' gross receipts, which can be considered as a form of rent to gain access to the market. Available information indicates that this share varies widely depending on the working arrangements. Table 2 gives an indication of the magnitude of these overhead costs.<sup>7</sup> It must be noted further that, in the calculated gross income figures, neither 'maintenance' costs nor the decline in earning power over the prostitute's

Table 2. *Prostitutes' Gross Revenue, Gross Income per Deal (US Dollars), and Gross Income Share of Gross Revenue; Different Years 1970-1980\**

	Gross revenue	Gross income	Gross income share as %
Korea, Seoul <sup>1</sup>	30-60	18-36	60
Philippines, Manila <sup>2</sup>	5.30	0.66-1.06	12.5-20
Thailand, Bangkok <sup>3</sup>	2 <sup>7</sup> -3	0.50 <sup>7</sup> -1.50	25 <sup>7</sup> -50
" <sup>4</sup>	4	1.50 <sup>8</sup>	38
" <sup>5</sup>	3-5	0.75	15-25
" <sup>6</sup>	5-10	1.50-4	30-40
The Netherlands	40	n.a.	n.a.

Sources: Lenz 1978; Miyamoto 1978; Phongpaichit 1981; David 1981; Peagam 1976; D.D. Gray 1981; Mentink & Scholtes 1978; Brink 1979; UN 1976, 1978.

n.a. = not available

1. Per deal taking a whole night.
2. Tips to be added to gross income.
3. Phongpaichit differentiates between 'sleazy establishments' and 'plush establishments'. The rates for sleazy establishments are given here.
4. Rates for plush establishments.
5. Figures based on Phongpaichit 1981, David 1981, Peagam 1976.
6. Figures based on Gray 1981.
7. Figures for 'bonded' girls. To gross income, tips have to be added.
8. Plus income from 'special services'.

\* Compiled by H.L. Theuns

'working life cycle' are taken into account. Maintenance costs here mean the costs of health care, both mental and physical. In Southeast Asia, such costs are likely to be high; since prostitution and abortion are illegal, only certain doctors will deal with prostitutes. Only in the better organized brothels are regular VD check-ups provided by the owners. Moreover, hazardous backstreet abortion often implies secondary medical complications and mental depression, which in turn often contribute to drug addiction and alcoholism. In assessing the prostitute's earning power, it must be remembered not only that this decreases with age and declining physical attractiveness, but also that, compared to other occupations, the working life cycle of the prostitute is relatively short. Thus, although prostitution appears to be a lucrative occupation,

its costs can be very high, particularly in societies where health services are poor or inegalitarian, and where little public support exists for protective legislation for workers in this field.

In Southeast Asia, the number of prostitutes appears to be increasing. According to the Ministry of Labour and Employment of the Philippines, about 100,000 hospitality girls — a euphemism for prostitutes — had secured a licence and health certificate in Metro Manila in 1979 (Neumann 1979: 20-21; *Diliman Review* 1980: 44). In 1969 tourist arrivals in the Philippines totalled around 125,000 (*Neda* 1973: 7). By 1979 the number had shot up to around 950,000, the majority of whom were Japanese males, or almost 85% of the total number of Japanese tourists (*Impact* 1981: 17-19). In 1970, the Bangkok-Thon Buri agglomeration, with a population of approximately three million, was supposed to have an estimated 20,000 prostitutes (*Time* 11.1.1971: 47). Between 1970 and 1977, tourist arrivals in Bangkok almost doubled from 628,700 to 1,220,700, of which two-thirds were males (*International Travel Statistics* 1971; *Economic Review of World Tourism* 1980; Phongpaichit 1980). A rough estimate of Bangkok's prostitutes in 1977 amounted to 100,000 (Stol 1980: 149). According to Stol, this includes 65,000 full-time female prostitutes and 35,000 part-timers, of whom 10,000 are males. David (1981) suggests that a conservative estimate of the number of 'masseuses' in Bangkok is more than 200,000. If the 1970 estimate of 20,000 prostitutes is at all reliable, what explanation can be given for the extra 80,000 or even 100,000 prostitutes? Citing the presence of the American troops as one of the major causes can no longer be valid since their number fell sharply after 1973. Sex tourism appears to provide the explanation. Moreover, given their short working life, it cannot be assumed that the same prostitutes who served the American soldiers a decade ago are now serving tourists. This indicates that, regardless of whom clients are, the actual increase of prostitutes may be much more significant than is suggested by the statistics and may have other causes than merely an increase in demand. It may well be that mass prostitution reflects the structural crisis of the agricultural sector where women were traditionally active. No longer able to maintain their traditional roles, women migrate to urban areas where there are only limited opportunities to join the industrial work force (*Balai Asian Journal* 1981: 23). Data on earnings differentials, even after 'market rent' has been paid, still suggest that there are important economic incentives in prostitution compared to other types of occupation in the industrial or services sector.

### III. THE DYNAMICS OF MASS TOURISM AND ITS LINK WITH PROSTITUTION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

As Mathieson and Wall (1982: 149-50) point out, discussions on the relationship between mass tourism and prostitution are frequently speculative. First, it is difficult to analyse this relationship in purely economic terms. Second, visits to brothels at a tourist destination may be carried out in parallel with other activities such as business travel, attending conventions, etc., and can also be 'incidental' to ordinary sightseeing. Third, as with other activities taking place on the fringe of legality, data on the number of prostitutes and their clients are hard to obtain, and where available are often unreliable and best taken as rough estimates. Nevertheless, the fact that sex tours are organized and explicitly promoted by specialized tour operators (as well as being promoted more discretely by some of the large well-established travel firms) indicates that there is a relationship here that needs to be analyzed, at least in the context of tours purposely chosen by consumers where sex is the main attraction. This relationship can be conceptualized as one between a legally marginalized form of commoditization (sexual services) within a national industry (entertainment), essentially dependent on, but with a dynamic function in, an international industry (leisure travel). The emergence of the leisure travel industry (mass tourism) has been facilitated by a set of factors unrelated to the commoditization of sexual services. In Southeast Asia, however, mass tourism encounters institutionalized prostitution inherited from American military bases, and is beginning to perform an 'institutionalizing role', elevating prostitution to a significant item of international trade.

The growth of mass tourism had been conditioned by a variety of factors including the birth of the Inclusive Tour or package holiday, technological advances in the field of air transport, increase of disposable income and social legislation governing holiday time (*ILO Convention 1936*). Perhaps the most important factor is the latest innovation in travel organization, the inclusive tour, prior to which travellers had to buy services on an item-by-item basis. Long-distance travel could be obtained at a reduced rate on the basis of Affinity Group Travel, using non-scheduled air services. Prices were still relatively high compared to present rates and fairly strict rules were applied as regards the group character, restricting long-distance travel to a limited market.

The situation changed fundamentally with the introduction of

the 'inclusive tour' in 1953-54 by a number of non-IATA carriers. These entered into contractual arrangements with tour organizers to tap the price and income-elastic tourist market for destinations in Southern Europe. They offered inclusive tours by charter, so-called ITCs, for a package consisting of transport-plus-accommodation, at prices sometimes lower than IATA rates for transport only (Wolf 1967: 130; Peters 1969: 78). These tours proved extremely successful and induced IATA carriers to revise their pricing policy for a variety of reasons: (1) the realization that there was a price and income-elastic market to be tapped; (2) the low profitability of scheduled services predominantly supported by the business community; and (3) the introduction of wide-body aircraft which are cheaper to operate on a seat-mile basis than conventional narrow-body planes. But as Swieringa and Crandall point out (1982: 20), 'the load factors must be high enough to realize economies of scale of large jets, because on a plane-mile basis the wide-bodies are more expensive to operate than conventional aircraft.' Moreover, cheaper fares are only economically sound if the occupancy rate of available aircraft can be increased sufficiently to offset the loss of income resulting from price decreases.

IATA carriers responded in a number of ways: (1) the introduction of special low, so-called ITX fares, tour-basing fares available to tour operators only, granting 40 per cent discount on regular rates; (2) setting-up their own charters; (3) moving from a basic two-class fare structure to a complicated schedule of fares designed to cater for different demand elasticities; and (4) moving into the accommodation sector (Lowenfeld 1975; Haanappel 1978; Jonsson 1981; UNCTC 1982). These responses have provided the opportunity for tour operators to go further afield, beyond destinations on the periphery of the tourist-generating market — a market made up of consumers who would never have considered travelling such distances if the inclusive tour had not been available to the lower income brackets, long-distance air travel thus becoming part of the mass tourism phenomenon. In recent years, there has been a trend towards vertical (backward) integration (under which a tour operator partially or fully owns a charter airline, often a subsidiary of a scheduled airline, as well as hotels), in an effort to secure plane seats and hotel beds to allow a more profitable scale of operation (Hudson 1972). Forward integration also occurs. Examples of forward and backward integration are the following: KLM Royal Dutch airlines has 50 per cent ownership of Holland International Travel Group and owns shares ranging from five to 65.9 per cent in

several hotels in Third World destinations; TWA owns Getaway Tours and has 100 per cent share of Hilton International; SAS has 100 per cent ownership of Vingressor Tours and Scandinavian Air Tour Productions, as well as SAS Catering and Hotels which manages as well as owns hotels at several tourist destinations (UNCTC 1982: 107-12).

In addition to corporate policies of airlines, public policies in the field of tourism development have contributed to the successful application of 'industrial' assembling techniques. As Lanfant points out,

Tourism is not, as is often claimed, a spontaneous phenomenon. It does not occur in a disorderly way, as a result of uncontrollable demand. It is a product of will. It unfolds under the impetus of a powerful tourist promotion mechanism, supported at the highest international level: the World Tourism Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations, The World Bank, UNESCO, etc. (Lanfant 1980: 15).

The involvement in tourism development of international governmental and non-governmental organizations has been reviewed by Groen and De Boer (1976: 103-22), whose report suggests that tourism development is a subject to which a considerable number of UN agencies have addressed themselves. Following the recommendations of international institutions, many Third World governments have embarked on tourism development programmes, the emphasis varying from country to country, but all seeing this as a way of earning the badly needed foreign exchange which other development strategies have failed to provide. To promote this industry, Asian governments have allocated large sums to their national airlines, to promote tourism through advertising, and to provide hotel accommodation and infrastructure. In an 'excès de zèle', over-investment in this field has resulted in an over-supply of accommodation, as exemplified in an advertisement of the Tourist Organization of Thailand which calls the attention of tour operators to the possibility of boosting their sales and profit because of this over-supply (*World Travel/Tourisme Mondial* 1972). Another example is the case of the Philippines where, according to the Philippines Tourist Authority, over 5.5 billion pesos have been spent on tourist projects over the period 1970-79, and more than 4.3 billion pesos were additionally spent on providing 6,000 extra rooms in some thirteen first-class hotels built during the 1975-76 construction boom prior to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund conventions that were held in

Manila. These projects are estimated to have cost the equivalent of one-seventh of the government's total proposed expenditure for 1976 (Richter 1980: 238; *Impact* 1981:18). Although by 1978 the occupancy rate was reported to have risen to 60 per cent, at least five first-class hotels, beneficiaries of the wave of public financing in the mid-1970s, have reported losses in 1980 (*Far Eastern Economic Review* 1980: 94).

In an effort to secure occupancy at a rate which can at least cover variable costs and part of fixed costs, the usual practice of hotel owners is to enter into contractual arrangements with tour operators by selling room space in blocks, or to organize conventions to ensure incidental full occupancy but at a cut rate. It is reported that the Development Bank of the Philippines has recently stepped-in to rescue the faltering hotel business by providing loans amounting to 200 million pesos in 1980 and 50 million pesos in 1981 (*Far Eastern Economic Review* 1983: 39).

The ample supply of 'ingredients' produced by both corporate policies and government policies in the field of international air transport and tourism development, allows tour operators to apply their industrial assembly techniques to designated tourist destinations at minimal investment costs to themselves, and also makes it possible for them to sell the product at a price which is impossible to achieve when services are bought by the consumers on a one-at-a-time basis. Furthermore, as noted by Britton, the structure of the international tourist industry is such that Third World countries assume a largely passive and dependent role. Immobile tourist facilities rely on foreign corporations to supply both the bulk tourist environment and the tourists to ensure viability (Britton 1982: 347). These corporations control access to the tourist-generating market and, with the aid of advertising, can influence the number of package tourists going to a given destination. They will generally choose to feature most heavily those destinations where the best deals from local hotels and tourist firms are offered (Cleverdon 1979: 20). This intensifies competition among Third World tourist destinations and creates very competitively-priced tours.

Access to cheap air transport and accommodation also gives access to cheap prostitution. As seen from Table 1, and confirmed by other evidence,<sup>8</sup> an important cost differential exists in the provision of sexual services between the industrialized and the South-east Asian countries. This cost differential is further enhanced by the fact that there is a larger supply of entertainment facilities (an important amenity for recreational tourism) and a large number of

women workers in this sector. These facilities, originally designed to serve the local population including indigenous and foreign residents, were later expanded and/or improved to serve American military personnel stationed in the several countries of the region during the Indochina conflict. With the American withdrawal, a new market segment had to be built to compensate for the loss of turnover. This opened-up a new avenue for tour operators who deemed the profit sufficiently attractive to integrate the services of prostitutes systematically in the inclusive tours and to lower their prices, thus creating a situation in which supply more or less determined demand.

Since tourists travel for a variety of reasons, it is very difficult to demarcate their motivations. Some authors have attempted to do so, but the results have yet to be systematized into a general framework which can be widely applied. It may be assumed, however, that sex tourism is often not just a matter of 'pure sex'. It is the addition of sex to the traditional elements of touristic recreation which gives the package its particular appeal. Given the growth in supply and demand in tourism, and given the legacy of US servicemen and bases which contributed to the initial infrastructural development, it is not surprising that the growth of mass tourism in South East Asia has been accompanied by sex tourism.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Clearly, prostitution cannot be viewed solely from the perspective of tourism. Tourism and prostitution are two social activities with their own socio-cultural continuity. In Southeast Asia, these have emerged as a highly organized phenomenon which arguably constitutes a new category of international trade: one which was previously a 'non-traded luxury service' available only to a certain social group, and is now in the process of being transformed by mass production and coming within reach of a wider market. The complexity of this 'traded service' is found in the nature of the service itself: it is a combination of services, part of which involves the dynamics of an international tourist industry where both public and private marginal sectors play a role, and part of which involves a 'marginal' sphere of petty trading on the fringe of legality. The marginality of this sphere is not related to the quantity of goods and services sold, but rather to the fact that agents operating at the margins of legality have extracted a large part of the value of the 'traded service', leaving the women who actually sell their services



at the margins of existence and unprotected by legislation. How tourism and prostitution have emerged as a 'packaged commodity' on an international scale requires further investigation, particularly into the special features of societies in which it is 'produced'. For present purposes, it suffices to say that sex tourism indicates a high level of 'commoditization of sexuality' to meet the demand of a stratified international market. This differentiation has been facilitated by the transport revolution, the growing integration in the leisure travel industry, and the lack of control by Third World countries over the distribution of their own 'tourist products'. It also reflects the failure of development policies to help improve the living standards of the poor in both rural and urban areas, and to reduce the rate of exploitation in the labour market, particularly with respect to female labour.

● NOTES

1. During the Middle Ages prostitution was allowed, but those who practised it had no civil rights and were confined to a few streets of the city; they were also forced to wear clothing to distinguish them from others. See: ISIS 1979 and Taylor 1981. At the turn of the century, in Western Europe and particularly in France, prostitution in the form of *demimondaine* was well accepted, some of the women even becoming well-known and feted figures. Courtesans have historically had their share of influence over public life and culture in their societies. See 'Kurtisane' in *Das moderne Lexikon* (1968: 188); Sombart 1922: 59-69.

2. This does not imply that female serfs bought by the monarchist class were sexually abused, or that some concubines and wives were not loved and respected. But in providing sexual services against payment, courtesans were free of moral condemnation, had access to social mobility, could be selective and receive rewards. Concubines were also free of moral condemnation, but could not be selective and received limited reward, whereas professional prostitutes in brothels had no right to select nor any substantial reward beyond food and lodging; they were morally stigmatized, and their children were social outcasts.

3. 'Bonded girl' as a form of prostitution is legally proscribed. As a new version of concubinage, which was legally and morally tolerated because of its function in the provision of additional labour power within the extended family, the *maitresse* is now less tolerated by ethics that reinforce the monogamous nuclear family, and because she consumes rather than produces.

4. In Western Europe, the institution of the 'red light district' occasionally provides the display case for freelancers. A more sophisticated institution for discrete freelancers is the Escort/Guide Service, in which sex is an item to be negotiated between guides and customers. The *International Herald Tribune* lists in its advertisements a section on escorts and guides in almost every major European city. Some of these are university-educated women with a regular profession during the day; some are housewives who become bored with being alone in their flats and suburban houses. See *Holland Life* (1978: 20-22).

5. Journalists report that although the rehabilitation programme for former prostitutes has yielded some results, prostitution has not been eradicated in Viet-Nam due to dire poverty and the continuing presence of foreign males with stronger purchasing power.

6. Income figures for prostitutes are mere guesstimates since available information usually states a price per deal. As commercial sex normally involves a limited amount of time, the assumption is that several deals can be made each day, generally up to five. In some instances, services can also be hired at a discount rate per night or week.

7. According to Cohen (1982: 409), Thai women working with 'farangs' (white foreigners) are in many respects better off than with others: they earn significantly more, enjoy greater independence, and are rarely controlled by pimps which otherwise is a common phenomenon. This contradicts some of the more widely-held views.

8. In the Netherlands, some five years ago a woman escort could be hired at 375 guilders per night (about US\$ 170) See: *Holland Life* (1978: 20-22). In the Philippines, a woman can be auctioned for US\$60 per night. See: *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 7-13 November 1980, 92. In Thailand a very young girl can be hired for three hours at 85 guilders (about US\$ 35). See: Brochure issued by travel agent Kanita Kamha, specialist in sex tours to Bangkok (Hoorn, The Netherlands).

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