

Chapter 4

Thaniya: Its Social History and Contemporary Setting as an Entertainment Area for *Settai*

This chapter deals with the birth and development of the Thaniya entertainment area as a place for *settai*, or Japanese corporate entertainment. It then argues how the Thai sex industry relates to *settai* at the Thaniya entertainment area.

As described in Chapter 2, Japanese corporate culture was based on a Japanese style of management that led Japanese industry and the economy to so-called miracle development after World War II. The main concepts around which Japanese corporate culture is constructed are strong employee conformity to the company, a sense of solidarity and unity between management and employees, a corporate-oriented life, and groupism. *Settai* has played an important role to strengthen and expand these components of Japanese corporate culture. This chapter discusses the dynamics of Japanese corporate culture outside of Japan through the observation of the Thaniya entertainment area from several angles.

4.1 Social History of the Thaniya Entertainment Area for Local Japanese Business

4.1.1 The Thaniya Building: a new business district

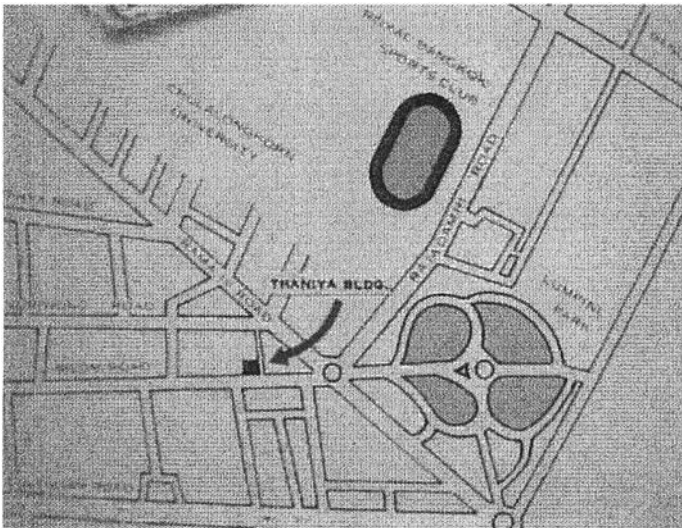
The beginning of the Thaniya area as a place for Japanese corporate entertainment dates back to September 1970 with the appearance of the Thaniya Building. It was planned and designed as a joint venture by Sumitomo Thaniya Real Estate Co. (Thailand) Ltd., which was opened by Thaniya Co., Ltd. and owned by Dr. Prasert Sombuntham, and Sumitomo Real Estate Co., Ltd., an affiliated company of the Sumitomo Group.*¹ The building was constructed by Obayashi-Gumi Ltd., which is, still now, one of the leading Japanese enterprises in the field. They built an eleven-story office building with nearly fifty office-rooms at the corner of Thaniya Road and Silom Road (Picture 4.1 and 4.2). Until the Thaniya Building was completed, Thaniya Road was a quiet path with many green trees on either side (Picture 4.3).

According to interviews with Japanese who were representatives of Japanese affiliates in Bangkok in the 1960s and early 1970s, the central business district developed along Yaowarat Street *² at that time. Almost all of the Japanese enterprises had Bangkok branch-offices along Yaowarat Street and its neighborhood. As the Thai economy developed, the number of business offices increased, and the number of cars coming into the district increased accordingly. Since the old business area was not designed to accommodate so many cars, the area became inconvenient for

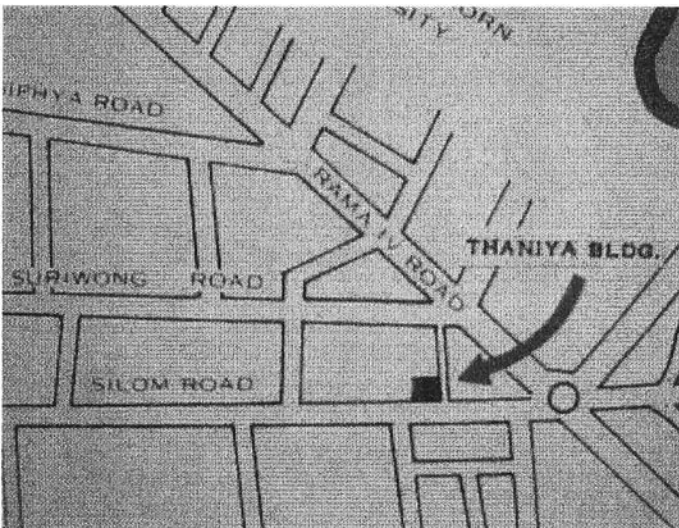
business.

The area along Silom Road and Surawong Road, instead, began to be developed for a new business district. The Thaniya Building was constructed for the purpose of supplying office space in the new business district. The Bank of Tokyo (later it changed the name to the Tokyo Mitsubishi Bank) opened a new branch on the first floor of the Thaniya Building in 1970. Many Japanese firms, which had accounts with the Bank of Tokyo, moved their offices to the Thaniya Building one after another as if they had followed the bank. In this way, the Thaniya Building became a symbolic office building where many Japanese affiliated companies gathered soon after it opened to tenants (Ishihira 1998:10).

Picture 4.1 Site of the Thaniya Building-1



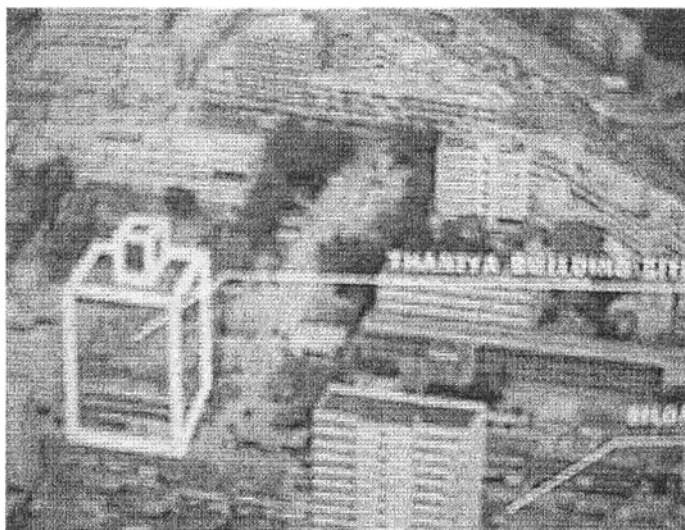
Picture 4.2 Site of the Thaniya Building-2



Source: Company Brochure of the Thaniya Building, Sumitomo Thaniya Real Estate Co. (Thailand) Ltd.

Picture 4.3 An aerial photograph of the Thaniya area and a projected shape of Thaniya Building in the late 1960s.

The lane of green along both sides, as seen in the center of the picture, is Thaniya road.



Source: Company Brochure of the Thaniya Building, Sumitomo Thaniya Real Estate Co. (Thailand) Ltd.

4.1.2 Development of Thaniya for corporate entertainment

At that time, Patpong*³ Road was the central entertainment district. Most nightclubs and bars at Patpong took after American style sexual entertainment: go-go-bars and sex shows. There were a very few nightclubs targeting Japanese clients in the early 1970s, and they were scattered among the Patpong, Surawong area. As mentioned previously, soon after the Bank of Tokyo began their business on the first floor of the Thaniya Building in September 1970, many joint Japanese-Thai companies followed and opened new offices, including Obayashi-Gumi, Mitsui, Itochu, Toray, Hakuholdo, and so on (Ishihira 1998: 10). More and more Japanese businessmen who were going in and out of Bangkok gathered around the Thaniya area accordingly. Nightclubs and Japanese restaurants targeting *shayo-zoku* (expense-account spenders, see Chapter 2), appeared one after another as if responding to the demands of Japanese business custom; providing an evening's entertainment for business guests. They began to appear and gather along Thaniya Road where Picture 4.3 shows green trees. Some nightclubs that had been doing business for Japanese clients in Patpong moved to Thaniya Road. Consequently in a decade, Thai people classified Thaniya for Japanese in the same way they equated Patpong as the place for Westerners (ibid. : 9).

The author interviewed a Japanese man in his fifties, whose title was marketing director at a big Japanese restaurant chain in Bangkok. He operates four *karaoke* houses and two Japanese

restaurants at Thaniya. He first came to Thailand in 1964 as a staff of a Japanese affiliated retailer. Although he had gone back to Japan after seven years in Bangkok, he came back again in 1977 to open a new business at Thaniya. Since then he has run his business there. He accepted an interview on the condition of anonymity therefore he will be called Mr. A hereinafter.

According to Mr. A, the number of *karaoke* houses increased during the 1970s and 80s, especially after the 1985 Plaza Accord and the ensuing increase in Japanese investment flows. The number of *karaoke* houses at Thaniya was not more than twenty when Mr. A started business in the late of the 1970s. In the next decade, the number skyrocketed to 300 around 1988. That meant Thaniya road was fully occupied with restaurants and *karaoke* houses. Although some *karaoke* houses have changed their owners and managers, as usually seen in any commercial district, the total number of 300, has been maintained.

Picture 4.4 The present scenery of Thaniya street

The green belts that were seen in Picture 4.3 are now replaced by buildings. Thaniya Road is only 300 m in length. Almost all of the signboards are those of *karaoke* houses.



Photo by the author

Picture 4.5 The white building on the right is Thaniya Building. Silom Road goes behind the Thaniya Building.



Photo by the author

Picture 4.6 The night scene of Thaniya

It is said that there are nearly 300 *karaoke* houses and 10 thousand Thai women working at Thaniya every night.



Photo by the author

Picture 4.7 Signboards of *karaoke* houses lit up at night

Most *karaoke* house signs are in Japanese.



Photo by the author

4.2 *Thaniya Business System*

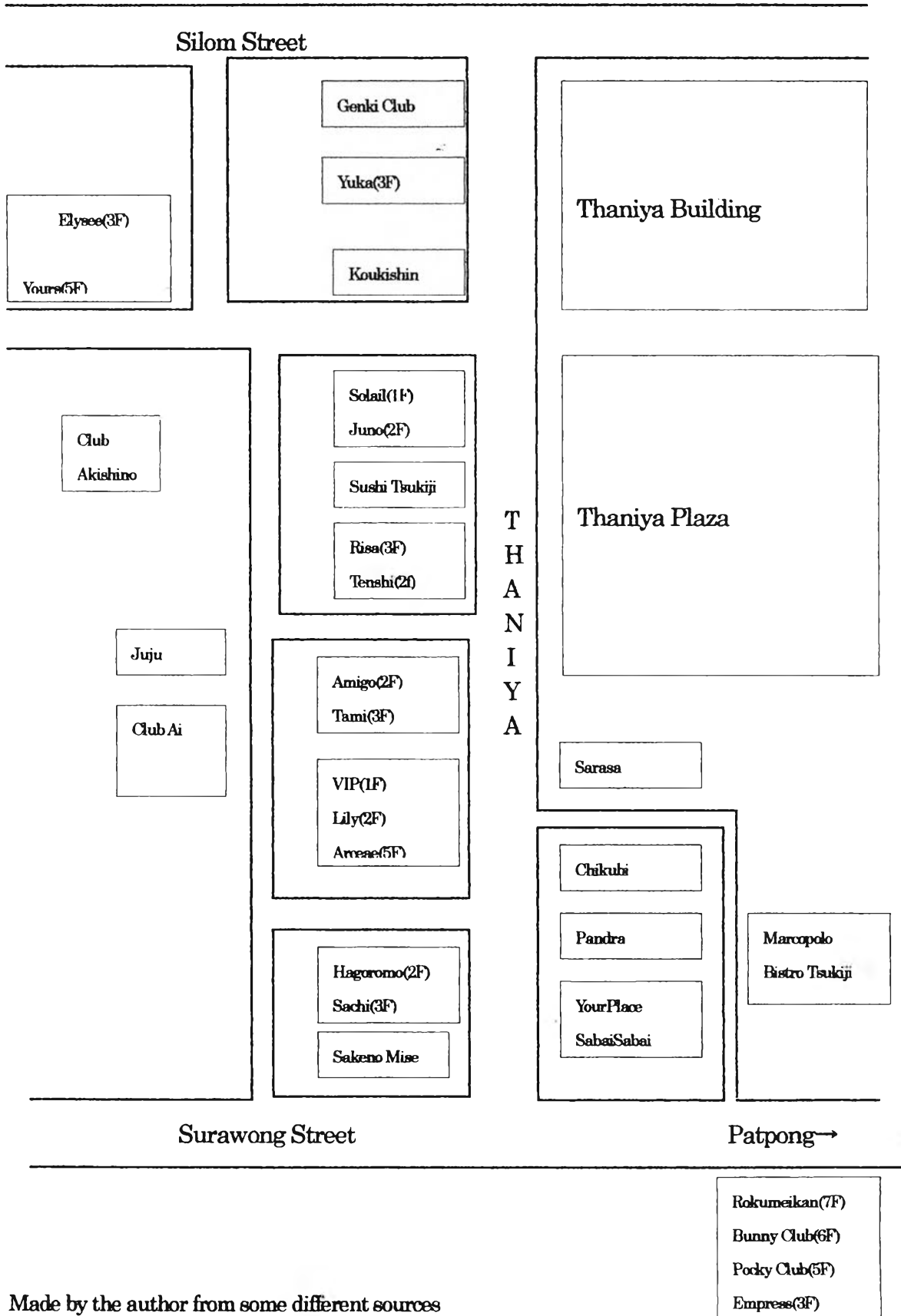
4.2.1 *Karaoke house*

Since procedures and conditions are more complicated when foreigners try to register a company in Thailand, most *karaoke* house*⁴ owners are Thai. Some Japanese, however, are doing joint management and some are practically managing the place with a nominal Thai owner.

Karaoke houses on Thaniya were not always there. According to Mr. A, most places were nightclubs, where clients could enjoy talking and drinking alcoholic drinks served by Thai hostesses while listening to some quiet music played by a pianist or a band usually from the Philippines. Japanese clients could feel as if they were drinking and talking at the nightclubs in Ginza, which was a popular area among Japanese salary men so called *shayo-zoku*, or expense-account spenders. Soon after *karaoke* became a boom in Japan in the mid 1980s, managers at Thaniya nightclubs adopted *karaoke* machines to attract clients. Mr. A recalls that almost all nightclubs had *karaoke* machines by the late 1980s. Thaniya thereby became the place that offered Japanese *shayo-zoku* the same atmosphere as that in Japan. The only thing that made clients feel they were in Thailand was that all hostesses were Thai. Thai people began to call the curious area “*Soi jiipun*”, meaning “Japanese Street” in Thai. Several scenes portraying Thaniya as an entertainment area for *shayo-zoku*, or expense-account spenders, can be found: the majority of Japanese customers are in business suits; Thai men who are regarded as

drivers are seen waiting for their bosses sitting on the path near the Thaniya parking; fewer visitors are seen on Sundays. These scenes may not be seen at Patpong, even though a few cases might be recognized at high-class massage parlors.

Diagram 4.1 Thaniya Entertainment Area



Made by the author from some different sources

4.2.2 Prices

Most *karaoke* houses at Thaniya are run in ways taken after that of Japanese nightclubs and bars. Table 4.1 shows the details of prices at Thaniya *karaoke* houses.

Table 4.1 List of *karaoke* houses and their charging items (unit: baht)

<i>Karaoke</i> house	Price 1: Whisky (Chivas Regal/ bottle)	Price 2: Cover charge per person	Price 3: Drink for hostess per drink	Price 4: Drink for <i>chi-mama</i> per drink	Price 5: Snack	Price 6: V.I.P. room
Rokumei-kan	1800	1500	No charge	No charge	No charge	300 up
Bunny club	1800	250	150	No charge	100	500 up
Yuka	1800	150	130	130	50 per client	500 up
Sachi	1800	200	140	140	200	400 up
Kokishin	2000	150	150	150	50 per client	500 up
Tami	2000	600	150	150	No charge	500 up
Tenshi	2000	750	150	150	No charge	500 up
Marcopolo	2400	200	170	170	40 up	500
Elysee	2000	180	150	150	80	Not furnished
Solail	1700	150	300	No charge	100	Not furnished

Source: *G-Diary* – leisure-time magazine for Japanese men published in Bangkok – vol. 1 1999: 18-19 and vol. 2, 1999: 26-7

Note: Prices in the list are those as of February 1999.

'Price 3: drink for hostesses per drink' means the charge for an accompanying hostess. Each client needs to pick a hostess to accompany him before enjoying *karaoke*. Clients usually have whisky and water, while the hostesses are each served a soft drink in a small glass about 5 cm high. Another glass of soft drink is automatically served to each hostess every 30 minutes and added to the clients' invoice (see Picture 4.8, item No.4). 'Price 4: drink for *chi-mama* per drink' is charged to each account. *Chi-mama*, literally meaning 'little mistress', is employed by a *mama*, or a woman manager or an owner of an establishment, and plays the role of a trainer and a leader of other hostesses. *Chi-mamas* usually have experiences as a hostess for several years. The role of *chi-mama* is definitely taken after the Ginza nightclub managing style. 'Price 6: V.I.P. room' refers to rent for a private *karaoke* room. As in most Japanese *karaoke* establishments, *karaoke* houses at Thaniya usually have several small rooms for groups and for customers who do not want to be seen by others. The term of 'V.I.P.' seems to be used just to draw the attention of customers. They add no extra charge for a private room.

Japanese clients are likely to enjoy *karaoke* for one to two hours. They mostly stock a bottle of whisky at establishments where they often visit. The expense of one visit will amount to no less than 1,000 baht, usually around 1,500 baht, per person, about one fifth or less the price of nightclubs in the Ginza area, Japan (Fujii 1997a: 75).

Not listed in Table 4.1, they are additional items with service charge: commercial sex services. Many *karaoke* club managers allow customers to take hostesses out for a date if the customers want to do so. *Karaoke* houses, however, are not such places where commercial sex is ostensibly served, hence commercial sex services are not available inside the establishments. When customers wish to enjoy a commercial sex service with hostesses, they first have to pay a fee for taking a hostess out of the establishment. The fee is 500 baht among most establishments

that accept customers' requests for commercial sex services. As summarized from some journalistic articles and in interviews with Mr. A, and some resident Japanese, the procedure of taking out a hostess for a commercial sex service is as follows: 1) A customer is to pay 500 baht to the manager as a 'taking-a-hostess-out' fee. 500 baht is charged to the customer's account (see Picture 4.8, item No.6, D/C stands for Date Charge); 2) If the customer stays at a hotel, he can take the hostess to his hotel room. If the customer is a resident officer or stays at a high-class hotel where the hotel guests are not allowed to bring such Thai women, they would go to 'sex hotels'*⁶ scattered around Thaniya. Resident officers therefore should reserve hotel rooms for business visitors in accordance with the visitors' intentions: He must therefore anticipate whether or not the visitor intends to buy prostitutes. Some officers at Mr. Y's office understand the business visitors' intentions in headquarters in Japan by the name of a hotel they ask to reserve; 3) a commercial sex service fee depends on the length of a stay, and it is likely fixed as a tacit agreement at 2,000 baht for one session and 3,500 baht for the whole night. The customer has to pay the hostess the fee directly. Some *karaoke* house managers let hostesses keep the full amount, others make them share.

Mr. A admitted that every Thaniya establishment makes regular payments to the local police in order to keep their business smooth, even though he did not want to disclose the amount. Phongpaichit and Boonchalaksi also reported the payment to the local police for the same purpose (Phongpaichit, Piriyarangsan and Treerat 1988: 199, Boonchalaksi and Guest 1994: 99). This custom likely become a necessary evil for managers and owners in the sexual entertainment sector.

Picture 4.8 A Bill of a *karaoke* house -1



ELYSEE

58-5871-2 Taniya Surawong Road,
Bangkok, Bangkok 10500, Thailand
Tel: 235-9323, 632-7987

NO. 03948

6 MAY 1999

1260

Date

			TABLE NO.	A
1	TIC	@ 180 F		540
2	SNACK	@ 90 -		90
3	FRUIT	@ 120 -		120
4	DRINK	@ 120 BEET		2080
5	DRINK	@		
6	D/C	@ 500 -		500
7	COKE	@ 30 -		30
8	BLACK	@ 2000 -		2000
9		@		
10		@		
			SUB TOTAL	5380
			SERVICE	200
NAME: (PRINT) IC [REDACTED]			TOTAL	5400
SIGNATURE [Signature]				
ADDRESS (PRINT)				



Picture 4.9 A Bill of a *karaoke* house -2

№ 05417



NOBLE PLANNING

24-30, 7th & 8th Floor, Dime's Tower,
Surasong Rd. Bangkok, Bangkok 10500
Tel : 232-0951-e FAX : 232-0965

DATE	TABLE NO.	NO. OF PERSON	NAME & REF. NO.
12-12-99	K.3	2	MR. [REDACTED]
NO. & DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY	UNIT COST	TOTAL
T/C	1	1000	1000
TYE	1	1000	1000
BLACK	1	1000	1000
ROOM RENTAL (2:10-2:35)	2 H.	300	300
CHEQUE			
SUB-TOTAL			4600
VAT 10% 7%			147
SERVICE 5%			113
AMOUNT PAID OR CHARGED PRINTED HERE.			4860

500604
Member's No.

[Signature]
Member's Signature

4.2.3 Inside of karaoke houses

To summarize articles reporting Thaniya *karaoke* houses in leisure time magazines and journalistic books, interviews with Mr. A and some Japanese resident officers, there are three types of *karaoke* houses in the Thaniya area: 1) no hostesses servicing commercial sex because the establishments pride themselves as luxury nightclubs. This type of establishment requires customers to have membership. They expect high-class Japanese customers, for example company executives of Japan's business giants, rather than tourists; 2) some hostesses do not accept any offer for commercial sex service, and others do. This type is convenient for a resident officer to escort his visitors because he can let his visitors have a choice; and 3) all hostesses are waiting to be taken out by customers for commercial sex services. This type of establishment targets not only resident officers but also tourists, who expect commercial sex services from the beginning.

Karaoke houses have diverse service styles to attract customers' interests. The following show characteristics of some *karaoke* houses that can be typical examples of the three categories explained above.

Marco Polo

Since established in 1992, this establishment has been proud of high quality service by well-trained hostesses. Customers are required to become members of the establishment. No hostess is allowed to accept a 'taking-out' offer from a customer for commercial sex service. If the manager catches any hostess making extra earnings from commercial sex services, he fires her immediately. All customers can do is enjoy singing and talking while hostesses serve their drinks, light their cigarettes, and sit beside them smiling tenderly. Customers, therefore, are mainly resident officers who want to enjoy drinking and talking calmly, instead of

reveling in singing and touching hostesses' bodies. The manager said that he would welcome female customers and couples. Today, this kind of establishment, category 1) as mentioned above, is very rare at the Thaniya entertainment area. As far as Mr. Y is concerned, there are only four establishments in this category.

Rokumeikan

This establishment is named for an old Japanese social club in the Meiji era (almost the same period of the King Chulalongkorn). This establishment also belongs to category 1), and is known as a luxury *karaoke* house. Customers are required to become a member by paying 15,000 baht for annual membership fee. Although the establishment seemingly provides no commercial sex services, it has some women ready for commercial sex services these days, according to Mr. Y, who often escorts visitors there. These women will appear only when the manager receives an insistent demand from a customer.

Bunny Club

Bunny Club has more than one hundred hostesses divided into two groups; those available for commercial sex services and those not. The former group stands to welcome customers at the entrance of the establishment, while the latter sit towards the back and wait to be picked up. It is convenient for resident officers to escort their visitors to this establishment because of the large number of hostesses and the clear classification of them.

Yours

The owner of 'Yours' is Japanese. This establishment provides a kind of old-fashioned and indecent *geisha* entertainment that can be rarely seen in Japan today. For example, they play rock, paper, and scissors – a toss in the United States – between Japanese male customers and Thai hostesses. The rules are as follows; a Japanese man picks a

competitor among the Thai hostesses. All of the hostesses wear five garments including underwear. Whenever a man wins the game, the loser, the hostess has to remove one article of clothing. On the other hand, whenever the hostess wins, the loser, or the man must pay her 100 baht. They can play until the hostess wins 500 baht. That is why every hostess wears five garments.

The establishment succeeds in exciting customers. Needless to say, this establishment belongs to category 3). The hostesses, on the other hand, have several penalties. For example, every hostess is supposed to make *dohan* (coming to her workplace accompanied by her patron, as will be explained later) two times a month at least. If impossible, 1,000 baht each will be reduced from her monthly income. In addition, the hostesses have to pay 300 baht back to the manager for every 2,000 baht earned by commercial sex services. The hostesses seem to be severely controlled by the manager.

Pocky Club

Contrary to *Yours*, this establishment adopts a new wave of Japanese sexual entertainment; '*enjo-kosai*', or commercial sex services by teenagers.*⁶ The establishment has a 'school girls' uniform service day twice a week. All hostesses provide services in costume like Japanese high school girls' uniform on these days. Almost all the hostesses are ready for commercial sex services. One hostess working at the establishment said that she could not understand why Japanese men were excited with a Japanese high school girls' uniform. This attraction reflects the trend that Japanese sexual entertainment is escalating more and more towards the abnormal, and that the Japanese sense of morality is worsening nowadays.

4.3 'Settai', Corporate Entertainment, at Thaniya

4.3.1 A custom among Japanese resident officers

As described in Chapter 2, *settai*, or corporate entertainment, is an essential aspect of Japanese business that helps to develop and maintain amicable relationships without conflicts, and to avoid direct negotiations. Japanese corporate culture emphasizes conformity of the people in the same company. It is, thus, meaningful for Japanese employees to bond after work with business guests and colleagues. The same situation can be seen in Bangkok.

Mr. Y, in his late 30s, is working for a Japanese governmental affiliated organization in Bangkok office. He recalled that his colleagues took him to some *karaoke* houses in the Thaniya area, and taught him the characteristics of the establishments, how to make and transfer bills to the account's section of the office, and other customs of *settai* carried on by the resident officers of the office, when he had just arrived at his post. He escorted a total of 230 Japanese business clients, 94 among whom were business visitors from Japan and the remaining who were resident officers, during eight months (more details will be discussed in Chapter 5). A resident officer of one of the leading Japanese *shosha*, or, general trading enterprises, revealed that he visited the Thaniya entertainment area for *settai* more than one hundred times a year. It is like an unwritten rule, rather than a custom, for resident officers to escort their clients and visitors to *karaoke* houses at the Thaniya area.

4.3.2 Some aspects of Japanese corporate entertainment

A business card is an essential item when visiting Thaniya's *karaoke* houses because it is more important for managers which

company a customer belongs to than what kind of person he is. Once a business card is accepted by the manager of an establishment, a resident officer does not have to pay his account in cash from there onwards. Bills will be sent to his office once or twice a month. Resident officers attach a paper reporting the names of the members and the purpose of using the establishment to the bill, and transfer them to the account department of the office. After a simple check of the bill and paper, the account department will pay the amount to the establishment. This procedure is exactly the same as that the author experienced during her office-work in Tokyo once.*⁷ This situation hence reflects two aspects of Japanese corporate culture: stress on company-oriented individuals rather than personalities, and the indulgent attitude of management towards company entertainment expenses, as described in Chapter 2.

As listed earlier, most *karaoke* establishments at Thaniya have decorative names, such as 'Rokumeikan', 'Pocky club' and 'Tenshi' (angel). Some managers prepare bills with different names from those of their actual *karaoke* houses. The purpose is to make it easier for their customers to transfer bills to the accountants' section of their companies as meeting expenses in spite of entertainment ones due to their limitation of budget for *settai*. For example, as shown in Picture 4.10, the bill of 'Pocky Club' puts another name, 'Joto Asia Co.,Ltd' that sounds like a trading company. Picture 4.11, is a copy of the bill of 'Rokumeikan', but printed a different name with 'Noble Planning Company Limited' instead. The resident officer is able to transfer such bills to the account section under the pretext of a meeting expense or something else instead of corporate entertainment cost. This is likely a conventional method among *shayo-zoku*, or expense-account spenders. These methods are often used when the corporate entertainment budget is not sufficient or *shayo-zoku* feel uncomfortable submitting the bill as a corporate entertainment cost, according to the author's experience of working for a Japanese company.

Picture 4.10 A bill of a *karaoke* house sent to the client's office - 1

ใบวางบิล
INVOICE

No. 0274


JOTO ASIA CO., LTD.
POCKY CLUB

24-30, 30th Floor, Dohy's Tower Suraasak Rd., Bangkok 10500
Tel : 238-0970 Fax : 238-0971

ลำดับที่ NO.	เลขบิล NO. BILL	วันที่ DATE	ชื่อ NAME	บริษัท COMPANY	จำนวน AMOUNT
1	3055	16/3/99	Mr. [Redacted]	[Redacted]	4200
2	3251	26/3/99	Mr. [Redacted]	[Redacted]	5100
					2
Baht nine thousand five hundred Baht					Total 9400

จำนวน 2 บิล
 เลขบิลรวม
 วันที่ 16/3/99

Picture 4.11 A bill of a *karaoke* house sent to the client's office -2



RECEIPT

502001

10 APR 1990

RECEIVED BY _____

NO. _____ (000004)


_____ (00000)

_____ (0000)

DATE _____ TIME _____

ITEM NO	ITEM NO.	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
01-03-90	05417	FOOD & DRINK	4,800.-
(FOUR THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED SIXTY DOLLARS)			TOTAL (PAID)
			4,800.-

ISSUED BY _____



PAID BY _____

NAME OF BANK _____

NO. _____

AND DATE _____

RECEIVED BY _____

NAME _____

NO. _____

DATE _____

A COMPANY MEMBER OF THE SINGAPORE ASSOCIATION OF HOTELIERS

100, Orchard Road, Singapore 238803

4.4 Role of Hostess

4.4.1 Daily routine

According to Mr. A, there may be a total of 10,000 hostesses working at *karaoke* houses in the Thaniya area. Several large-scale establishments have more than 150 hostesses, most have about forty to fifty hostesses. All hostesses are Thai.

Most establishments open from around seven every evening to one at midnight. All hostesses working in the Thaniya area, accordingly, are engaged in night duty. According to some hostesses, they are often given only two or three days off a month. They are to change dress to fancy costumes from their casual clothes, such as T-shirt and jeans, an ordinary style among young Thai women. They, at the same time, wear make-up to look like hostesses. Some establishments have hostesses wear what they like, and the others supply uniforms designed to tempt Japanese men, for example, an open-breast long dress with a slit up to the thigh, or a pink sleeveless mini-skirt dress. In either case, hostesses have to dress up in fancy costumes at their expense.

When the club opens, all the hostesses should welcome customers by standing in a line at the entrance of the house. They pin numbers on their costumes so that customers can pick up their favorite hostesses by number. When named, hostesses come to the table or the *karaoke* compartment of the customer and sit beside them, serving whisky, operating *karaoke* machines, talking with their patrons (but they generally have poor conversations because of language), and singing if requested. The most important role of hostesses is actually to make customers feel relaxed and comfortable with their gentle and angelic smiles. Since almost all customers are Japanese, hostesses understand

some basic Japanese words. Some hostesses can sing some Japanese songs to the accompaniment of *karaoke*. One hostess stated during an interview that she usually practices Japanese songs at home listening to music tapes that the *chi-mama* lent to her. If she can sing some Japanese songs, she is able to respond a customer's request, an act which would make him pleased and then she would become popular among Japanese customers as a result.

4.4.2 Income

The monthly income of Thaniya hostesses consists of a basic salary, commission from drinks and tips from customers. The basic salary and the percentage of commission depend on each *karaoke* house. Hostesses of Marco Polo, known as one of the most luxury places among Thaniya *karaoke* houses, who do not accept 'taking out for commercial sex services', will receive 6,000 baht as a basic salary plus a 50 percent commission for drinks (see Table 4.1, Price 3). One manager said that the highest monthly earning in the club comes to about 30,000 baht, while the mean is around 15,000 baht. According the Ieda's report, an establishment where hostesses are allowed to be taken out for commercial sex services provides only 3,000 baht as basic salary, while higher earners make about 20,000 baht including commission of commercial sex services (Ieda 1994: 34).

Mr. A disclosed that at 'non-off' *karaoke* establishments, the basic salary is higher, around 6,000 baht, while, that of 'off' *karaoke* houses tend to be fixed lower because hostesses are easily encouraged to make more earnings from the commission of commercial sex services. Mr. A added that hostesses working in the Thaniya area were able to collect kick-backs from some restaurants, 'sex hotels' in the Thaniya area. When a hostess takes her customer to such kinds of restaurants and hotels,

many operators often pay some kick-back to her.

Establishments' operators in the Thaniya area impose restrictions on their hostesses with various rules. They will face penalties if they break rules, such as absence and tardiness without notice, and negligence of services as seen in other commercial sex sectors (Boonchalaksi and Guest 1994: 83). Among them, a unique obligation on Thaniya hostesses is *dohan*, literally meaning 'accompanied by a patron'. *Dohan* is one of the Ginza business rules or customs used to collect patrons. Hostesses are obliged to come to work accompanied by their patrons twice or three times a month. Some establishments, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, reduce 1,000 baht from a salary as a penalty for failing to make *dohan*. This rule aims to encourage hostesses to become popular among the customers. Many Thaniya establishments implemented this rule for hostess management. It is also called *dohan* at Thaniya.

Comparing average monthly wage by industry as shown in Table 3.9 of Chapter 3, wages of hostesses working at Thaniya seem to be higher than that of any other occupation. However, comparing the basic salary among hostesses in general, there is little difference among them and some *karaoke* hostesses seem to be paid rather low. Considering that Thaniya hostesses have their monthly earnings deducted under the pretext of fines, costs of costumes and medical checks (for HIV), and that their earnings are mostly made up by informal wage, being a Thaniya hostess does not seem to be an easy occupation if a young woman wishes to make sufficient earnings.

4.4.3 Change of the role of hostesses

Mr. A revealed that commercial sex services were rarely managed at Thaniya until some ten-odd years ago. If any, those were quite private

matters between hostesses and patrons. Mr. A claimed that hostesses and prostitutes should not be considered the same occupation at all. He mentioned that a hostess was a professional occupation in service industry and should be well trained to make any customer feel comfortable no matter how far from her favorite he was. In the 1970s and the early half of the 1980s, the Thaniya entertainment area was the place where Japanese resident officers gathered to relax after work, to talk business or to escort business visitors for *settai*. Mr. A distinguished hostesses from disguised hostesses – CSWs. Mr. A classified the former as a professional companion, and the latter as nothing but a CSW just waiting for a patron who satisfies her desire for money.

Three kinds of hostesses were, thereby, established at Thaniya, such as; 1) those unavailable for any request to take her out for commercial sex services, 2) those available but not for every request: she has rights to make decisions to be taken out or not, and 3) those available for any request, that is to say, a CSW. Mr. A indicates that *karaoke* houses where managers oblige all hostesses to accept customers' requests for commercial sex services should be called brothels, rather than nightclubs. Furthermore, a number of drug addicts and HIV positives are really found among CSWs working in the Thaniya area, as seen among those working in other sexual entertainment districts, according to a NGO activist. *⁸ In this regard, the Thaniya area is not an exclusive area as a safe sexual entertainment area designed for Japanese. *⁹

4.5 Change of the Thaniya Entertainment Area

4.5.1 Change of Japanese resident officers

It is likely that what made the Thaniya entertainment area introduce commercial sex services is the increase in demands of men for women as well as the thriving Thai sex industry. Japanese men's 'sex tours' planned by tour operators to Asian countries, such as Taiwan, Korea, the Philippines and Thailand, were lavish in the 1970s. Many Japanese tourists' groups were organized by male employees of the same company in the name of a company-recreational trip, or by business partners, so-called '*settai* trips'. In response to the repeated criticism by feminist groups and authorities of these countries, the Japanese government set a countermeasure so as not to operate group-sex-tours. The number of Japanese tourists, accordingly, declined around 1980 (Yoshimura 1993: 187-88).

In accordance with the rapid Japanese investment flow to Thailand influenced by yen appreciation as a result of the 1985 Plaza Accord, the number of Japanese coming to Thailand dramatically increased again. As Figure 2.2 in Chapter 2 shows, the number of Japanese affiliates dramatically increased from the later 1980s. The number of Japanese staying in Thailand increased accordingly.

It can not to be denied that the more Japanese companies send staff to Bangkok, the wider the classes of Japanese resident officers would be found there. Mr. A points out that the behavior of Japanese customers has actually become worse during this decade. Mr. A analyzed the change of Japanese customers in the following way: before the 1985 Plaza Accord, there were fewer resident officers in Bangkok, and most of them were representatives of Japanese business giants. Mr. A felt that many recognized themselves as members of the business elite, and they

understood well that their behavior strongly influenced the image of their companies as well as that of Japanese as such. In contrast, after the Plaza Accord, a large number of Japanese companies, not only large-scale enterprises, but also small and medium-sized subcontractors came to Thailand in order to maintain international competitiveness with cheaper production costs. The number of Japanese resident officers who were not members of the business elite increased accordingly in the period.

It is not that there is visible discrimination between the elite and non-elite with regard to one's behavior, but that the tendency mentioned above can exist in a sense especially among Japanese employees, as will be described in Chapter 5. The same view is pointed out from another perspective. The vice-principal of the Japanese school in Bangkok indicated a similar tendency found among the pupils. According to him, the school had been proud of the high intellectual level of the children compared with municipal schools in Japan until the middle of the 1980s. He recalls that almost all their fathers had been the elite of Japan's business giants, and the children had been well-trained and well-educated accordingly. Teachers seldom had problems with the children or their parents. As the number of pupils increased rapidly since the latter the 1980s, he pointed out, the number of problems concerning the children has also increased. Many of the problems are caused by the parents' lack of educating their children, some problems of which are as the result of parents' separation and divorce. The vice-principal said that the intellectual level of the pupils in this school is no longer exceptional at all these days.

Table 4.2 Number of Japanese residents in Thailand and pupils of Japanese School in Bangkok

Year	Japanese residents in Thailand	Number of pupils (Age: 7-15)
1981	6,786	927
1983	7,125	940
1985	7,852	985
1987	9,048	1,027
1989	13,113	1,297
1991	17,075	1,541
1993	19,119	1,531
1995	20,804	1,684
1997	23,292	1,980
1998	22,481	2,016 (March)
1999	-	1,503

Note: The Number of Japanese is based on those registered themselves as residents with the Japanese Embassy in Thailand, as of October of each year. The number of pupils of Japanese School in Bangkok is based on the school's report, as of April of each year.

Source: The Japanese Embassy in Thailand
The Japanese school in Bangkok

4.5.2 Tourists to Thaniya

Growth of tourism and improvement of information can be listed as additional factors that facilitated the growth of business in the Thaniya area. In response to the severe criticism by Thai and Japanese feminist groups, as stated earlier, Japanese group sex tours as seen in the 1970s decreased (Yoshimura 1993: 188). However, that does not mean it 'disappeared'. According to Mr. S, who is a Japanese tour operator working in Bangkok for ten years, the number of Japanese male tourists whose purposes were sexual entertainment rather than sightseeing has never decreased in this decade. Mr. S mentioned that Thaniya was regarded as the place for Japanese resident officers and their business visitors, not for tourists until a decade ago. He has increasingly been asked by Japanese tourists to take them to Thaniya recently. Many of them already had information about Thaniya through magazines or the mass media while in Japan, and they came to Bangkok expecting to have dates with Thai girls.

Both Mr. A and Mr. S point out that Thaniya has changed its appearance and reputation through the years. Through interviews with them, it can be concluded that the dramatic rise in Japanese investment flows led by the yen appreciation after the Plaza Accord had a great impact on Thaniya. The more Japanese men came and brought a lot of money to Thaniya, the more *karaoke* houses opened one after another. The worse Japanese customers' behavior became, the more popular *karaoke* houses which offered vulgar services and entertainment became. In accordance with increasing demands of commercial sex services, more and more CSWs who seek better income gathered at the Thaniya entertainment area. In fact, the price for a commercial sex session is higher than other types of sexual establishments in the country as shown in Table 3.8 of Chapter 3.

The Thaniya entertainment area, in this way, has changed its character from a secret spot for *shayo-zoku*, to a busy and open place for any Japanese expecting sexual entertainment. Today there are very few *karaoke* houses where none of the hostesses are CSWs. In contrast, *karaoke* houses whose hostesses are all owed to be 'taken-out' for commercial sex services are increasing in number and popularity, which Mr. A referred to as a 'brothel'.

Japan's long-term economic recession is threatening the business of Thaniya *karaoke* houses targeting *shayo-zoku*. Mr. A estimates that the number of customers for *settai* dropped by about 10 percent compared to a couple years ago. Worse, the payment per visit has obviously lessened compared with the period of the bubble boom. This condition can be another why some *karaoke* establishments are changing their customer targets from *shayo-zoku* to tourists in order to survive this long-term recession especially for the last few years.

4.5.3 Commercialized expression of Thaniya

Japan is infamous for sexual entertainment. Various kinds of sexual entertainment flourish in spite of illegality. The sex industry in Japan is a big business with estimated annual profits of 4.2 trillion yen (Rayanakorn 1995: 39).

Thaniya is often compared to 'Ginza', the traditional spot for *settai*, located in the center of downtown Tokyo. There were reportedly more than 2,000 nightclubs and bars in the 'Ginza' district during the bubble period (Yomiuri Simbun, September 28, 1998). When a person visits a luxurious nightclub he would have to spend at least 20,000 yen (about 6,250 baht) for one visit. That is far beyond the amount that an ordinary

white-collar salaried class can afford to pay. On the other hand, he is able to enjoy himself at his own expense at a Thaniya *karaoke* house as well as *settai*. As the cost of sexual entertainment in Japan gets higher, the number of Japanese expecting such pleasures during their stay in Bangkok would increase. Thaniya is often introduced in tour guidebooks, magazines for entertainment, TV programs in Japan, as well as in Bangkok today.

The following are examples of descriptions of Thaniya;

Hostesses are absolutely professional. They are well trained to make customers feel happy and comfortable just as Japanese hostesses do. If you have such fun at any Ginza nightclub, you have to pay 50,000 yen (about 15,625 baht) for two persons. It is surprising that you should pay 2,500 baht only for two. Further, you can pick your favorite hostess as your own among many young and beautiful Thai women, while you have to share one hostess with your group at a Ginza club. You are sure to find a pleasure at Thaniya that you never experience in Japan.

(Fujii 1997a: 72-76)

To take your love or wife to Bangkok is like bringing your poor lunch box when you go to a luxury restaurant. Thaniya is established for only Japanese male visitors. You must be at a loss when you see a bunch of young and pretty Thai girls waiting for your nomination. Your favorite girl may have a seat beside you with a gentle Thai smile (Bunno 1998: 104-106).

Thaniya is the place that Japanese resident officers gather and sing to lose the blues being accompanied by Thai hostesses. Many hostesses may accept going out with clients. In a sense, Thaniya can be called a sexual entertainment road.

(Chikyu no arukikata 1996:166)

Thaniya is the place that you can experience smile and gentleness of charming young Thai women. Their sweet atmosphere should relieve your fatigue due to your busy daily life.

(Internet 'Thaniya On-Line, 25 July 1998)

* These quotations are translated to English by the author

Every description emphasizes that Thaniya *karaoke* houses provide comfortable, enjoyable and sexual pleasure to Japanese male visitors with far cheaper than that of Ginza.

It is important to note that Japanese resident officers and tourists from Japan feel expenses at Thaniya *karaoke* houses much cheaper than those in Japan, but not for Japanese local workers. Most Japanese resident officers are provided with housing allowances as much as 40,000 baht and up according to their positions and the number of family. According to an advertisement of a housing agency for providing apartments and condominiums to Japanese, most apartments and condominiums with 3 bedrooms are rented at 55,000 to 80,000 baht a month. These rents exceed the cost that ordinary Japanese salaried class can afford to pay by themselves. In addition, Japanese resident officers are supplied with other various fringe benefits, such as cars and drivers, family allowances, and school expenses for their children. They may have better income in total than working in Japan. It is generally true that Japanese resident officers and their family feel richer while living in Bangkok than in Japan. Spending 1,500 – 2,000 baht for one visit to a Thaniya *karaoke* house, or 2,000 baht for one commercial sex may not be expensive for Japanese resident officers.

In contrast, Japanese local workers, even if they are employed by Japanese affiliated companies, generally earn 20,000 to 50,000 baht a

month. For instance, Mr. S who is working as a tour operator in Bangkok started with a salary of 30,000 baht a month four years ago, and now he earns 50,000 baht a month. He has to pay housing cost at his own expense. According to Mr. S, he cannot expect better income any more as long as he works as a Japanese local worker. The Japan International Cooperative Agency (JICA), an affiliated agency of Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, dispatches officials and volunteers to Thailand. Officials are sufficiently supplied with several additional allowances as well as better salaries than those in Japan, on the other hand, volunteers are provided with 30,000 baht monthly salary and 5,000 baht as housing allowance only.*¹⁰ They cannot be regular clients of any *karaoke* houses in the Thaniya area. In this context, there are two groups of Japanese workers in Thailand: resident officers and local workers. Furthermore a clear distinction between the two can be found. Most establishments at the Thaniya entertainment area target Japanese resident officers as regular clients, or *shayo-zoku*, and certainly not Japanese local workers. This can be a notable reflection of the feature that the setting of Thaniya originally aims to support Japanese corporate culture among Japanese resident officers.

4.6 Concluding Remarks

This chapter aims to show that the Thaniya entertainment area functions as the place for carrying out Japanese corporate culture in Bangkok. A close look at Thaniya reveals several aspects reflecting Japanese corporate culture. Firstly, there was no such kind of establishment until a large number of Japanese affiliates opened their offices in the Thaniya Building. Moreover, the number of establishments at the Thaniya area increased accordingly to the increasing number of Japanese affiliates coming to Thailand. Secondly, as will be described in Chapter 5, escorting business visitors and partners to Thaniya has

become popular, like a custom among Japanese resident officers in Bangkok. Thirdly, business manners and the atmosphere of Thaniya establishments were taken after those of Ginza nightclubs targeting *shayo-zoku* of large enterprises having sufficient *settai* budget. At most Thaniya *karaoke* houses, the company that a customer belongs to is much more important than what sort of man he is. Once a customer is approved as a staff of a certain company, he does not have to pay his bill in cash any more. Bills are to be sent to customers' company later, and then the company's account section will pay to the establishment for him. From what has been observed above, it is reasonable to conclude that the Thaniya entertainment area has been existing to help Japanese resident officers reproduce corporate culture in Bangkok.

The Thaniya entertainment area, however, has gradually changed its atmosphere and appearance since the 1985 Plaza Accord. Thaniya was not the place for enjoying commercial sex services in the beginning. In the earlier period of Thaniya, most establishments tried to make the atmosphere as rich as that of nightclubs and bars at Ginza, which allows select and limited business elites to enter. The biggest Japanese investment flows after the Plaza Accord brought a large number of Japanese, some of whom expected cheaper and easier sexual entertainment than they had available in Japan. As if responding to the increasing demands for sexual pleasure, Thaniya *karaoke* houses introduced commercial sex services. In this way, the image of the Thaniya entertainment area shifted from a place imitating a luxury *settai* area – Ginza – to just a sexual entertainment center where Japanese men can enjoy cheaper and easier commercial sex than in Japan. This chapter additionally concludes that Thaniya has been influenced by the tendency of Japanese mass culture in each period, and the Thai sex industry greatly influenced the change of Thaniya especially in this decade.

Notes

1. *Sumitomo Real Estate Co., Ltd.* belongs to the *Sumitomo Group*, one of Sanwa and Dai-ichi Kangyo. Each group is organized by various fields and scale subsidiary companies (companies under majority control) or associated companies (companies under minority control), such as banks, trading companies, real estate companies, construction companies, manufacturing companies and so on (Nakata 1998: 129-30).
2. The area along this street is called China-town by Westerners. As Chinese migration into Thailand increased in the late 19C and the early 20C, they lived in this area and opened business. Some Western companies moved to the district to seek new businesses, and this street developed into the central business district in Bangkok in the middle of 20C (Igarashi 1995: 157-194).
3. Patpong Road is a small road located one block next to Thaniya road, between Surawong Road and Silom Road. It was named after a Chinese millionaire Mr. Patpongpanit, the owner at the time (Eyewitness Travel Guide Thailand 1997: 112). An American reconstructed a small tea house, Chinese style brothel into a fashionable American style nightclub in 1969 (Truong 1993: 300, quoted in Bangkok Post, 5 February 1984). Since then, Patpong has been known worldwide as the sexual entertainment spot and introduced in tourist leaflets and tour guide-books (ibid.). Some things on Patpong have remained the same since the 1970s: bars, sex shows, women for sale, men shopping for women, and so on (Odzer 1994: Introduction).
4. The term, *Karaoke* is combined with 'kara' and 'oke'. 'Kara' is the Japanese word for 'empty' in English, and can be interpreted as

'without singer's voice', while 'oke' comes from orchestra. Recording studios and radio stations started using music-only *karaoke* tapes in the mid 1960s. In the 1970s bar owners hit upon the idea of outfitting their establishments with *karaoke* sound systems so that patrons could sing along in the 1970s. *Karaoke* entertainment has kept the leading position in the leisure industry in Japan since then, and its annual income has reached up to 1,200 billion yen (NHK News report, 1998).

5. 'Sex hotels', as called 'love hotels' in Japan, accommodates not only those for a night, but also those for a few hours aiming to enjoy sex intercourse. For example, 'Travelodge' on Surawong Road charges 500 baht for a short time stay.
6. The term stands for commercial sex services carried out by teenagers, junior and high school students. Today it is a serious social problem in Japan. Their customers are men in their twenties to fifties, and they can earn 50,000 yen (about 15,625 baht) per session at the most (Miyadai 1997). The aim of prostitution is to buy luxury goods that are too expensive for high school students. Authorities have passed an act prohibiting the buying of commercial sex from anyone who is under 18 years old (Yomiuri Shimbun, March 16, 1998).
7. The author worked for a subsidiary company of Mitsui & Co., Ltd. as secretary in Tokyo from 1983 to 1989.
8. Interview with Ms. Saito Yuriko, an NGO activist, September 4, 1999.
9. Many Japanese actually think that commercial sex services are safe from HIV/AIDS as long as they enjoy them with Thaniya hostesses because the area is designed for only Japanese. There is no reasonable ground for believing it (Munakata 1993a: 88-9).

10. Mr.Y got this information when he talked with JICA staff.