

# CHAPTER III

## Thailand and Alcohol

### 3.1 Brief history of alcohol consumption in Thailand

Evidence of the alcohol use of the ancient Thais can be found on Khmer stone inscriptions in at the “Phra Nom Rung” castle, which name alcohol as a supranational being that should be worshiped like a god.<sup>1</sup>

The alcohol drinks made by the ancient Thais where usually made from fruit, vegetables and rice preserves. Examples of the early alcohol drinks are “Nam Tan Mao” or “KraChae”, both made from coconut, “Au” which was made from sticky rice and then the distilled alcohol drinks such as “Sa Toe”. The Ayutthaya period (1350-1767) saw the introduction of distilled alcoholic drinks, like “LaowRong” which was made from rice, potato, corn and the highest quality rice known as “Sam –Shoe”<sup>2</sup>

Accounts from foreigners who visited Siam (Siam is the former name of Thailand, changed in 1939) in the Ayutthaya era to the Rattanakosin era (1350 – 1932), claim that the main beverages consumed by Thais where water and tea. There was alcohol but the usage of it was an exception to the rule and it was mainly used for medical and traditional purposes or to show one status in

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<sup>1</sup> Prah Paisah Wisalo. (1994). *History of Alcohol Consumption In Thailand*. Bangkok.

<sup>2</sup> Prah Paisah Wisalo. (1994). *History of Alcohol Consumption In Thailand*. Bangkok.

society, for only wealthy and authoritative personnel could get away with drinking.

Commerce with alcoholic beverages had begun in Thailand in the Ayutthaya period (1351-1767). The Siam government had made measurements to regulate the alcohol industry in order to generate tax revenue. During the Ayutthaya period Thai authorities found the need to control alcohol consumption among high rank officials. Therefore a law was enforced banning all parties where alcohol was served among the officials, a violator of the law would be considered being guilty of treason. After the fall of Ayutthaya all commerce with alcohol was halted, and then it was re-established in the era of Rama I (1767).<sup>3</sup>

The main reason for the Thais low consumption and abstention from alcohol among the Thais is considered to be the strong faith in Buddhism.<sup>4</sup> In the teachings of the Buddha are the so called five Precepts or teachings, which are recommendations Buddha proposed to be lived by one who wishes to lead a peaceful life while contributing to the happiness of family and society.<sup>5</sup> The fifth precept emphasizes on respect for mental and physical wellbeing by avoiding all intoxicants. It furthermore advises its followers to be mindful, or to be aware of

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<sup>3</sup>Bundit Sornpisan, & Chutaporn Kaewmungkun. (28. May 2008). Past and present. *dramatic change of alcohol consumption in thailand*. Page 1.

<sup>4</sup> Thaksaphon Thamarangsi. (2006). Thailand: Alcohol today. *Society for study of addiction*, 783-787. Page 783.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Harvey. (2000). *An introduction to buddhist ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Page 60-61.

the suffering caused by un-mindful consumption.<sup>6</sup> Therefore drinking alcohol was considered a violation of Buddhist way of living. Despite the Buddha teaching, consumption of alcohol was a part of social events, such as: weddings, funerals, New Year and other special celebrations.<sup>7</sup>

During the reign of King Rama I the first king of the Rattanakosin period (1782- 1932), the first alcohol brewery was established and taxation of alcohol began to generate revenues for the government.<sup>8</sup> Social attitudes toward alcohol consumption also changed significantly in the Rattanakosin period, when drinking alcohol was no longer seen as shameful or bad behavior. Historians trace this change in attitude towards alcohol consumption to be the effect of growing influence of the Chinese in Thai society, who had been immigrating in to Thailand in ever greater numbers. During this period the number of Chinese immigrants in Thailand grew so sharply that they resulted in constituting a quarter of the Thai population. Therefore the individuals belonging to the elite of Bangkok, civil servants and community leaders could be seen drinking alcohol freely in public.<sup>9</sup>

1855 saw the birth of the Bowring Treaty, which was a Treaty of trade between the Kingdom of Siam and Great Britain, with the objective to ignite

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<sup>6</sup> Peter Harvey. (2000). *An introduction to buddhist ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Page 77.

<sup>7</sup> Ian Newman. (2004). Globalization and alcohol. *Executive Journal* , 54-56. Page 55.

<sup>8</sup> Ian Newman. (2004). Globalization and alcohol. *Executive Journal* , 54-56. Page 55.

<sup>9</sup> Thaksaphon Thamarangsi. (2006). Thailand: Alcohol today. *Society for study of addiction* , 783-787. Page 783.



trading between the two nations. The Bowring Treaty gave the British residents rights in Thailand and trading privileges. The treaty also removed all trading privileges that had been awarded to the Chinese community and was an attempt to regularize import and export between the two nations and to maximize the mutual profit from opium trade. The Siamese Kingdom later made similar Trade agreements with other Western nations such as the US, France, Denmark, Portugal and Netherlands. The Bowring Treaty open a gateway for import in to Siam, which later in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was dominated by Western shipping companies and contributing to a popularization of western goods, such as Beer and spirits.<sup>10</sup>

With increased availability of alcohol beverages the consumption also increased. In 1887 The Woman's Christian Temperance Union was founded in Siam in order to counter the alcohol problems in Thai society. According to writings of Miss Mary L. Cort of Petchaburi, who was the president of the Siam Union, there was considerable drunkenness visible on the streets of Bangkok as well as moderate drinking, but the drinking behavior was mostly upheld by foreigners.<sup>11</sup>

The great depression and retreat from colonial exports opened up opportunities in beer production in the 1930's. BoonrawdSrethabutra of the BhiromBhakadi family had been working as a manager for a European sawmill,

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<sup>10</sup> Chris Baker & Pasuk Phongpaichit. (1995). *Thailand economy and politics*. Oxford: Oxford Univerity Press. Page 98-102.

<sup>11</sup> Ernest Hurst Cherrington. (Editor.). (1929). *The Encyclopedia of the Alcohol problem* (V. 5). Ohio: Anti saloon league of America.



recognized the opportunity for domestically manufactured beer.<sup>12</sup> In 1933 Boonrawd persuaded the Siamese government for a concession to raise a beer brewery. The BhiromBhakadi family managed to preserve the concession with the Thai authorities for the next six decades, ensuring the them virtually a monopoly of the Thai Beer market, for their beer brand Singha, had no rival on the Thai market.<sup>13</sup>

The consumption of alcohol in Thailand increased a lot after the end of the Second World War (1945). A barrier was broken in that period, as it became socially accepted for the general public to use alcohol as a channel for relaxation and celebration, and in this period the alcohol industry in Thailand began to get more organized and started to use advertisements to promote its products to further increase their sales. The period after the war saw a lot of changes in the Kingdom of Siam. It marked the beginning of both social and economic changes for the nation, influenced by the forces of urbanization, modernization, capitalism and then later globalization and finally the power of the mass media. These dynamics forced modernity upon the Thai nation which was made up mostly by rice farmers and fishermen stepping in to an era of fast growing modernity and in many ways transforming the ways of life for the people, one of the changes being the increase in alcohol consumption.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Chris Baker & Pasuk Phongpaichit. (1995). *Thailand economy and politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Page 46

<sup>13</sup>Chris Baker & Pasuk Phongpaichit. (2008). *Thai capital after the 1997 crisis*. Silkworm Books. Page 130-131.

<sup>14</sup>Wisalo, P. P. (1994). *History of Alcohol Consumption In Thailand*. Bangkok: Thailand Public Health Institute.

### 3.2 Alcohol Use of the Thai people

Thailand is the highest alcohol consuming country in the Southeast Asian region, the only other country in the region with similar alcohol consumption is Lao. According to the Who Global Status Report on Alcohol, Thailand ranks in 40<sup>th</sup> place as a global alcohol consumer, 85<sup>th</sup> place in consumption of beer and in 5<sup>th</sup> place as a global spirit consumer, these figures are from the year 2001, therefore its is likely that Thailand's alcohol consumption even ranks higher now in 2010, for all evidence points to a rapid growth in overall alcohol consumption.

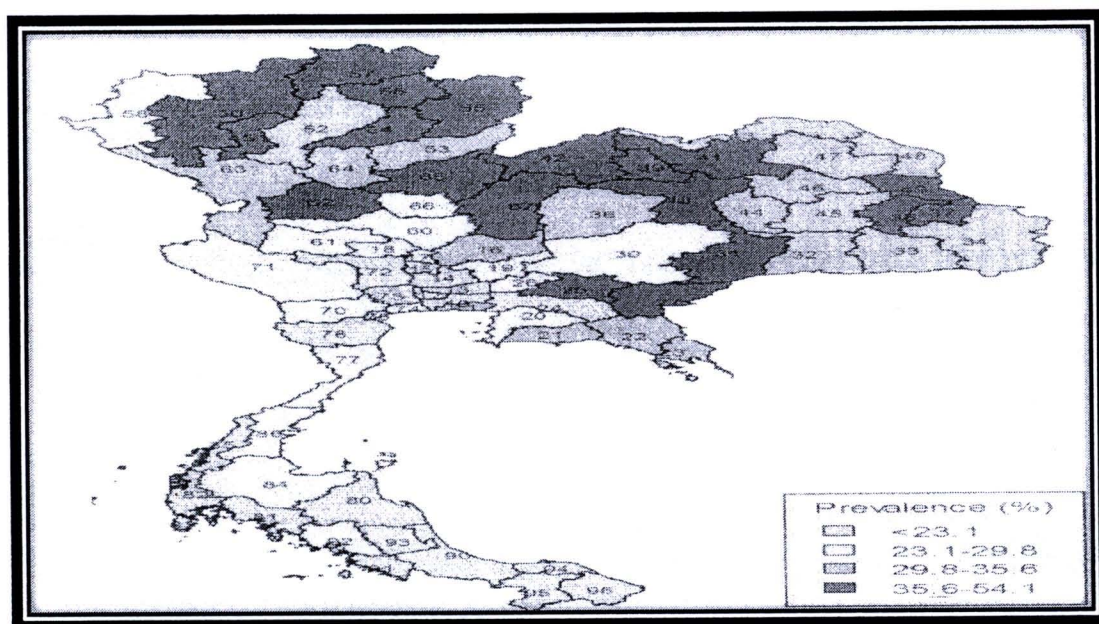
<sup>15</sup> The alcohol consumption is varies a lot between the geographical areas of the country. Elements affecting the geographical difference in alcohol consumption are mostly economical, religious and traditional. For example the people of Isan (Northeast part of Thailand) have a reputation of being heavy drinkers. The figures below portray the geographical diversity of the Thai people.



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<sup>15</sup>WHO. (2004). *Global alcohol status report*. Geneva: WHO.

**Figure 1. Thai Alcohol consumption in general**



**Source: Thailand Alcohol situation 2009.<sup>16</sup>**

Figure 1 shows a percentage of Thai alcohol drinkers in general. The green color representing the lowest consumption 10,6 % and under, the yellow 10,6 -13,9 %, the orange 13,9 -16,3% and the red 16,3 -23,8%. As displayed on the picture there is a huge difference the northern and the southern parts of Thailand. Why in the Southern parts of the country alcohol consumption is low, is explained by the regions strong Islam.

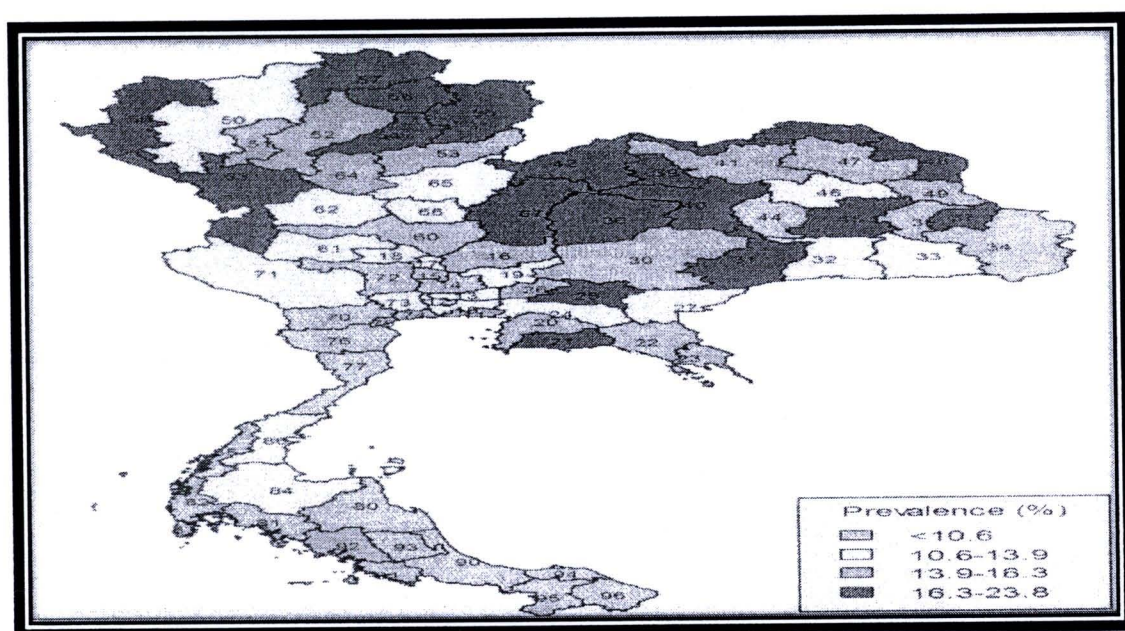
The explanation for the high alcohol prevalence in the North and Northeast is harder to explain, but there does seem to be strong tradition to consume alcohol in those parts of the country then the some other parts. One would think that a rise in alcohol consumption would go hand in hand with a rise in general consumption, but it does not seem to do that according to the data, for

<sup>16</sup>CAS. (2009). *Thailand alcohol situation 2009*. Bangkok: ThaiHealth. Page 10.



the general alcohol consumption is not so high in the Bangkok area. When the picture is examined one can see that the north and northeast seem to be the high prevalence drinkers and the southern part are low prevalence drinkers. It is also interesting that surrounding the Bangkok province most provinces are low prevalence, and Bangkok seems to have a slightly higher alcohol consumption rate than its neighboring provinces.

**Figure 2. Thai Weekly – monthly alcohol consumption**



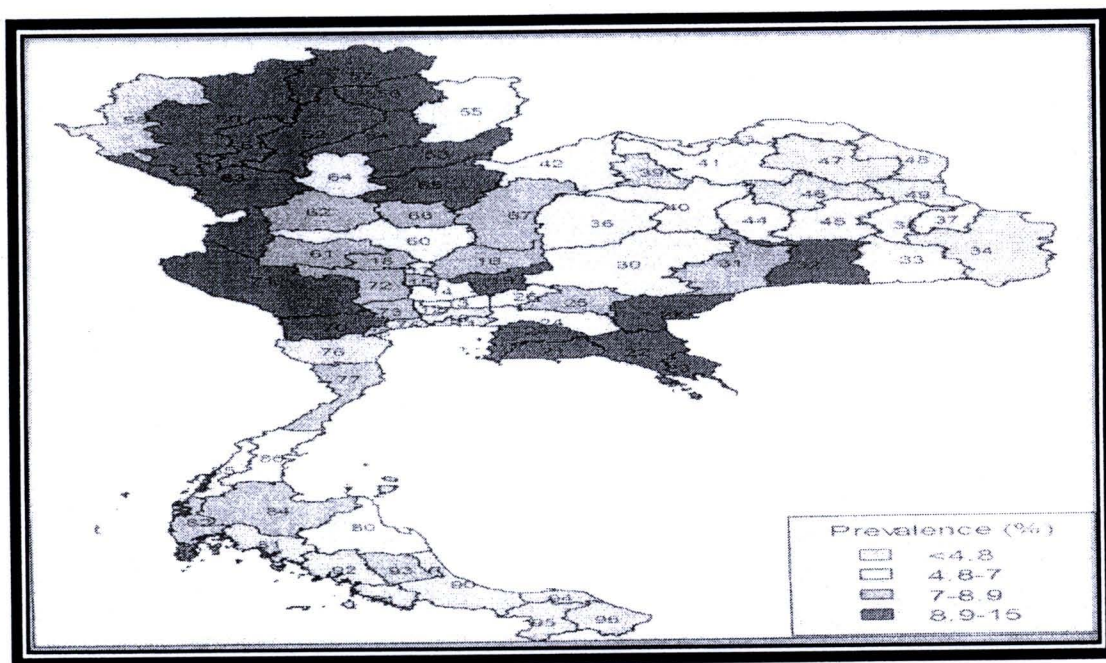
**Source: Thailand Alcohol situation 2009.<sup>17</sup>**

Thai moderate drinkers, consuming alcohol on a monthly basis can be seen on figure 2. The pattern of alcohol consumption is very similar to the one on figure 1. However there is a change in the northeast, many drinking provinces turn from red to orange or orange to yellow. This indicates that though they are among the high consumption population, they consume alcohol moderately.

<sup>17</sup>CAS. (2009). *Thailand alcohol situation 2009*. Bangkok: ThaiHealth. Page 12.

Again the urban area of Thailand is on the higher side of the scale. Consumption of alcohol on a daily basis indicates that there is a high chance of problem drinkers on the premises. Figure 3 shows those areas of Thailand with daily alcohol consumption, which indicates alcohol dependency.

**Figure 3. Thai daily alcohol consumption**



**Source: Thailand Alcohol situation 2009.<sup>18</sup>**

The highest prevalence area of alcohol consumption is the north and northeast parts of the country, as well as South-eastern coastline. The Thai peninsula or southern Thailand now gets marked in the higher part of the scale, seeing four parts of the southern parts of the country in orange and one part in red. The red part being the island of Phuket, one of the most popular tourist areas, the area southeast of Bangkok is also a very popular tourist area, which might explain the high consumption in that part of the country. The Bangkok

<sup>18</sup>CAS. (2009). *Thailand alcohol situation 2009*. Bangkok: ThaiHealth. Page 14.



area is among the lowest alcohol prevalence areas in the country according to the picture.

There does not seem to be any particular pattern between urban and rural drinking behavior. Other from the part that the urban drinkers drink more expensive and imported alcohol beverages, while the rural stick to the more traditional and cheaper alcohol beverages. There are surely more in-depth differences on urban and rural alcohol consumption, which will be recommended for further research.

### **3.3 Thai Drinking Culture**

Thailand does not have an established culture of using alcohol through their historical usage of the substance as mass consumers. This is accounted for mostly by the fact that the country was a poor country, therefore most of the inhabitants could not afford the luxury of alcohol. Further more according to the teachings of Buddha, one should not consume alcohol or any other intoxicants, which by many indications seem to have been more respected in old Siam than in modern time Thailand. Even so, there are indications that the Thais do have an existing alcohol culture, especially in the rural parts, where it is common behavior for Thais to curdle together on a mat on the ground after the hard days work and share a bottle of “Lao Kao” Thailand’s famous white whiskey.

The social and cultural roles of alcohol in a society are various and differ from one society to another. Alcohol beverages are in often defined by their



symbolic meanings and they play a vital part in classifying the social context, which they are consumed in. The following subchapters will go further in to discussing the characteristics of Thai alcohol culture and their symbolic meanings relating to Thai customs and behavior.<sup>19</sup>

### 3.3.1 Situation definer

Alcoholic beverages are often used to define the nature of the occasions. Every alcohol beverage has a link to some sort of an occasion. For example it is widely expected behavior in most western cultures that wine is appropriate with a meal, but the same does not stand for beer and spirits. Beer and spirits are thought to be more appropriate for social relaxation and spirits as well. An example of an alcohol beverage in the western culture associated with a celebratory occasion is champagne. If people are seen drinking champagne, it is assumed by other bystanders that those drinking the champagne are celebrating something.<sup>20</sup>

Consumption of alcohol beverages is associated with celebrations in Thailand as in most societies. Recent developments have however seen many of the celebrations and some traditional Buddhist one in particular have been

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<sup>19</sup>Social Issues Research Center. (1998). *Social and cultural aspects of drinking; A report to the Amsterdam Group*. Oxford: Social Issues Research Center. Page 31.

<sup>20</sup>Social Issues Research Center. (1998). *Social and cultural aspects of drinking; a report to the Amsterdam Group*. Oxford: Social Issues Research Center. Page 30.

turned in to drinking festivals, such as Songkran, where people engage in water fights and massive alcohol consumption.

### 3.3.2 Statement of affiliation

When an individual chooses an alcohol beverage he can also be making a statement of affiliation, that is a declaration that he might belong to a particular group, generation, class, tribe, subculture or a nation with its associated values, beliefs and attitudes. Many alcohol beverages are a symbol of their nation; such as Vodka for Russia, Beer for Germany and Tequila for Mexico. The national alcoholic drinks are often romanticized images of the nation's character and when an individual stays loyal to the national alcohol brand he may be expressing his loyalty to the nation and his cultural identity.<sup>21</sup>

Modern day drinking patterns of Thai people, especially the younger ones, give reason to believe that they align themselves with certain groups by their choice of alcohol beverage. One indicator for this might be the increased sales of imported alcohol beverages, which in spite of being way more expensive than the domestic ones have the image of being trendy and sophisticated.<sup>22</sup> In rural Thailand the people drink more of the cheap and domestic alcohol beverages, mainly beer, spirits and homebrewed spirits. In most rural areas in

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<sup>21</sup> Social Issues Research Center. (1998). *Social and cultural aspects of drinking; a report to the Amsterdam Group*. Oxford: Social Issues Research Center. Page 34.

<sup>22</sup> Thaksaphon Thamarangsi. (2. February 2010). Director of The Center for Alcohol Studies in Thailand. (P. A. Steinarsson, Interviewer).

Thailand people choose the cheaper alcohol beverages simply because of the fact that the rural areas have a weaker economy than the urban areas. In some cases drinking local beer and spirit is a symbol of the region or the district, so the individuals could be expressing their identity through their choice of drink.

Thailand does not have an alcohol drink that resembles the national characteristic, like some other nations. Interestingly, if any alcohol beverage has affiliation with a Thai national identity, it would be beer. Not because beer has any sort of traditional or historical affiliation, but because of social acceptability of the product and affiliation with the Thai nation and culture through.<sup>23</sup> This can be explained by ongoing marketing strategies of the two major beer brands, Beer Chang and Beer Singha, both apply their marketing tactics in a way that focuses a lot on Thai national culture. PatricJory gives a good example on how Beer Chang is advertised in a common Thai magazine in the late nineties. Where the use of Thai cultural codes, such as a traditional Thai textile and elephants in the background as well as a corner logo stating "we love Thai culture". Which is the logo of a government sponsored campaign aimed at conservation of Thai culture.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Natwipa Sinuswarm. (17. August 2010). PhD student and alcohol Resercher. (P. A. Steinarsson, Interviewer).

<sup>24</sup> Patric Jory. (1999). Thai Identity; globalization and advertising culture. *Asian Studies Rewiew* , 461 - 487. Page 475-476.



### 3.3.3 Social status indicator

The choice of an alcoholic beverage can also be an indicator of social status. Generally imported alcohol drinks have a higher status than the local ones. In many East European nations, such as Poland, wine is considered to resemble high status, while beer and vodka are the alcohol beverages of the working class.<sup>25</sup>

The same applies to Thailand, which is a society where hierarchy has been an underlying social factor for centuries, as in other Asian cultures. According to Niels Mulder, Thai people invest a lot in their image in their social “face” and they are highly vulnerable in how they present it. The consequences for the Thai individual to “lose face” can be insecurity and anxiety over his or hers status in society.<sup>26</sup> Therefore gaining and holding status in Thai society is of great importance. Drinking occasions can be used as an opportunity to express one's status, by ordering an expensive imported alcohol beverage could be used as a gateway to mingle with the upper-class elites, in order to heighten one's status within society.

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<sup>25</sup>Social Issues Research Center. (1998). *Social and cultural aspects of drinking; a report to the Amsterdam Group*. Oxford: Social Issues Research Center. Page 32.

<sup>26</sup> Niels Mulder. (2000). *Inside Thai society*. Chaing Mai: silkworm Books. Page 53.

### 3.3.4 Thai drinking places

As noted before, alcohol consumptions is essentially considered to be a social act. There are rules and norms regarding who, what, when, where and in whose company an individual shall drink. Most cultures have a formed some sort of a specific environment, designed for people to drink alcohol. There are various types of different drinking places in the world, varying from a fancy New York cocktail lounge to scruffy bamboo hut by the beach at in Jamaica. Most cultures have their own version of a socially acceptable drinking place.

Whether being a communal facility like a bar, club or any other type of official drinking venue, or a private one such as a private household, the drinking places around the world are in general very similar. There are however a few interesting cultural differences that are worth highlighting. In societies where attitudes toward alcohol are more ambiguous and uneasy and where alcohol consumption is a moral issue, the drinking environments are more likely to be more enclosed, isolated and even secretive. This applies to cultures such as in Scandinavian countries, Britain and North America.<sup>27</sup>

In societies where the consumption of alcohol is more accepted as an element of everyday life the drinking environments tend to be highly visible, and when inside there are usually large windows and open spaces. These more open societies also have a tendency to drink outside, even if the climate of the

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<sup>27</sup>Social Issues Research Center. (1998). *Social and cultural aspects of drinking; a report to the Amsterdam Group*. Oxford: Social Issues Research Center. Page 36.

country will not allow it all year round. Countries that fit this description are for example European countries such as Spain, Italy and Greece.<sup>28</sup>

It is safe to say that Thai attitude toward alcohol consumption is more in line with the countries of South Europe. For there seems to be a very relaxed attitude towards alcohol in Thailand. Dr. Graham Fordham, experienced a very positive attitude towards drinking in the Northern Thailand. He wrote the following in his paper on the social change in Northern Thailand;

***“Unlike many western societies where alcohol use is often considered synonymous with alcohol abuse, in rural Thailand at least, alcohol is looked upon as very positive experience”<sup>29</sup>***

These attitudes are probably manifested in the drinking environments the Thai people have designed for their consumption of alcohol, which are very much in line with the drinking environments of the South European countries. According to a survey on drinking patterns of Thai men, most of them drank at their own home or at a relative's home. Drinking at the village store was also popular in rural part of the country. Other places mentioned where picnic areas such as by the beach or by a waterfall.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Social Issues Research Center. (1998). *Social and cultural aspects of drinking; a report to the Amsterdam Group*. Oxford: Social Issues Research Center. Page 36-37.

<sup>29</sup> Graham Fordham. (1995). *Social change, cultural logic, and the transformation of domestic relations in rural Northern Thailand*. Canberra: Australian National University. Page 13.

<sup>30</sup> Sawtri Assanagkornchai, John B. Sounders & Katherine M. Conigrave. (2000). Patterns of drinking in Thai men. *Alcohol and alcoholism*, 263-269.



The Thai people have very liberal attitude towards alcohol, which manifests itself in social acceptability to consume alcohol almost anywhere at almost any time of the day. All that is needed is a mat or a foldable table and stools sit on, and beer or Thai whiskey and preferably ice cubes and snacks to make the occasion more pleasant. Thais can be seen sipping on alcohol beverages outside on street corners from early morning until midnight

### 3.3.5 Drinking of the genders

There are distinctions between masculine and feminine alcohol beverages in all societies. Usually the alcohol beverages for men are described as strong and fierce, while female drinks are often weaker, softer and sweeter. Even in societies that have just a one alcohol beverage available, such as palm wine among the Lele of Zaire, a weaker and a sweeter version of the same beverage is considered more suitable for the women.<sup>31</sup>

According to the research of Dr. Graham Fordham, in the North of Thailand alcohol consumption is a behavior dominated by men and it is considered to be a significant factor in the performance of a male role. An individual who does not drink alcohol would undoubtedly have a hard time “khao sang khom” socializing with the others, though the villagers would in some

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<sup>31</sup>Social Issues Research Center. (1998). *social and cultural aspects of drinking; a report to the Amsterdam Group*. Oxford: Social Issues Research Center. Page 34.

way respect such a person by calling him a “good man” others would express that an individual who does not drink must be gay (katoï).<sup>32</sup>

A Thai alcoholic and member of Alcoholic Anonymous who the researcher interviewed, described similar attitudes in the urban life in Bangkok. According to him there is great pressure for a young male to drink in Thai society. He mentioned an example of this pressure from his high school period, where in parties the older boys will pick on the juniors and order them to drink alcohol. Most often it was alcohol in a large container, and the older boys cheered as the young one finished of the alcohol drink in a short period of time. The aim is to get the junior heavily intoxicated. If however the young one resists taking a drink, he is in great danger of getting beaten up by the older boys. The interviewee remembered a few instances when his friends from school beat up on a younger one for resisting, he also shared that he had in his senior years participated the same activity and pressured juniors into to drinking alcohol, and at least once he beat a individual up after he had resisted taking a drink.<sup>33</sup>

Alcohol consumption of Thai male overshadows the consumption of the females. Traditionally Thai women have not consumed alcohol, theirs was the responsibility of the home and raising the children, while the men worked and had time to play. In spite of the Thai tradition on the role of females and

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<sup>32</sup> Graham Fordham. (1995). *Social change, cultural logic, and the transformation of domestic relations in rural northern thailand*. Canberra: Australian National University. Page 14

<sup>33</sup>Thai\_alcoholic. (10. March 2010). Thai Member of AA. (P. A. Steinarsson, Interviewee).

alcohol, the behavior of Thai females has been changing, and rather rapidly in recent years.

### 3.4 Recent developments in Thai alcohol consumption

All available evidence suggests that the number of alcohol drinkers in Thailand has been increasing. A survey from 2001 indicates that the number of drinkers increased from 13.7 million in 1996 to 15.3 million in 2001 or increased 2.3 per cent per year. Among those 15.3 million drinkers, 13.0 million were male, and 2.3 million were female. The highest prevalence or 39.3%, was among people in the age group of 25-39 years old and the people in the youngest age group 15-24 years old, there prevalence was 21.6%.<sup>34</sup>

Thailand is the highest alcohol-consuming nation in the region of Southeast Asia, a region with a history of relatively low alcohol consumption. WHO alcohol consumption world rating system shows the same upward trend in Thai alcohol consumption.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>J. Bung-OnRitthiphakdee. (2001). *Alcohol consumption and control in Thailand*. London: Global Alcohol Policy Alliance. Page 16.

<sup>35</sup>WHO. (2004). *Global alcohol status report*. Geneva: WHO.



**Table 2: World rank alcohol consumption per capita, (liters)**

Year	Beer	Vine	Spirit	Total
2001	85 (1,31)	124 (0,04)	5 (7,13)	40 (8,47)
2000	92 (1,25)	132 (0,03)	6 (7,12)	43 (8,40)
1999	102 (1,13)	138 (0,03)	6 (7,16)	44 (8,31)
1998	102 (1,04)	146 (0,01)	9 (6,61)	50 (7,71)

**Source: WHO Global Report 2004.<sup>36</sup>**

As seen above in table 2 the Thai people are increasing their alcohol consumption in every category of alcohol beverages, in the four-year period from 1998- 2001, with spirits being the most popular, but Thais are according to this data Thailand is the fifth largest spirit consumers in the world, in the year 2001. The biggest progression how ever is in beer consumption, going up seventeen places in the four-year period, while spirit consumption only moves up ten places. The year 2001 Thais where ranking the 85 largest beer consuming country. Even though vine is not the favorite alcohol beverage of the Thais, the ranking shows that the Thais are developing a taste for vine, with a considerable growth in the vine consumption in the period.

Data gathered by Dr. Bandit former director of CAS shows the large increase in alcohol consumption of a period of 44 years, showing the alcohol consumption increasing many fold in that period.

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<sup>36</sup>WHO. (2004). *Global alcohol status report*. Geneva: WHO.

Figure 4: Thai alcohol consumption 1961-2004.



Source: CAS.<sup>37</sup>

The line on figure 4 shows that in the beginning of the 1960's the alcohol consumption was 0,26 liters per capita. Forty-three years later the alcohol consumption has reached 8,7 liters per capita, which is a thirty-three fold increase in alcohol consumption of the Thai nation.

Data compiled by the Centre of Alcohol Studies in Thailand, on consumption development between 1996 to 2007,further substantiates these findings on considerable increase in alcohol consumption in Thailand.

<sup>37</sup>Bundit Sornpisan. (2008). Alcohol deveopment in Thailand and policy control. Bangkok, Thailand: Center of Alcohol Studies. Slide 7.

**Table 3: Consumption development of age groups 1996 -2007.**

Age Group	Drinkers 1996	Drinkers 2007	Change
15 – 19	4.7 %	8.0 %	70%
20 – 24	15.0 %	21.6 %	44%
25 – 29	20.1 %	24.5 %	22%
30 – 34	22.1 %	24.7 %	12%
35 – 39	22.0 %	25.6 %	16%
40 – 44	20.9 %	25.6 %	22%
45 – 49	20.9 %	24.9 %	19%
45 – 54	18.6 %	21.7 %	17%
55 – 59	18.6 %	17.9 %	-4%
60+	11.6 %	10.5 %	-9%

**Source: Centre of Alcohol Studies Thailand<sup>38</sup>**

As seen in table 3 the youngest age groups are the ones who have the highest increase in alcohol consumption in this period. The youngest age group 15 -19 years old shows an escalation of 70% consumption in this 11-year period. The second youngest age group 20-24 year old is not so far behind, with an escalation of 44% in alcohol consumption over the same period. The statistics show that almost all age groups are consuming more alcohol in 2007 then 1996. The only age groups that are decreasing their alcohol consumption are the two oldest ones. Though the increase in alcohol consumption is visible among all age

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<sup>38</sup> Thaksaphon Thamarangsi. (2010, Febuary 2). Director of The Center for Alcohol Studies in Thailand. (P. A. Steinarsson, Interviewer)



groups under 55 years old, the utmost growth in alcohol consumption is among the young Thai people.

**Table 4 : Gender group alcohol consumption Development 1996 -2007.**

Sex	Drinkers 1996	Drinkers 2007	Change
Male	28,3%	37,7%	33%
Female	23%	3,8%	65%

**Source: Centre of Alcohol Studies in Thailand<sup>39</sup>**

When the same data is analyzed according to gender, the consumption increase is seen from another perspective, as seen above on table 3. The 11-year period shows a change for male alcohol consumers from 28,3 % to 37,7 %, which is a 33 % increase in alcohol consumption during this period. The findings on the female alcohol consumption show a big increase in consumption or a rise from 2,3 % to 3,8 %, which is a 65% change from 1996.

**Table 5 : Trends of alcohol consumption in Thailand.**

	1996	2001	2004	2006	2007	Change
Non Drinker	68,5%	67,4%	67,3%	68,5%	70%	2%
Drinker	31,5%	32,6%	32,7%	31,5%	30%	-5%
Occasion Drinker	14,6%	16,2%	14,9%	13,1%	9,7%	-34%
Regular Drinker	16,8%	16,4%	17,8%	18,5%	20,2%	20%
Daily Drinker	6,2%	5,8%	6,4%	7,7%	6,5%	6%

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<sup>39</sup>Thaksaphon Thamarangsi. (2010, Febuary 2). Director of The Center for Alcohol Studies in Thailand. (P. A. Steinarsson, Interviewer)

1-2 Times a week	5,5%	5,6%	6,1%	6,6%	6,7%	4%
1-2 Time a month	5,2%	5%	5,3%	4,2%	7,9%	46%

**Source: Centre of Alcohol Studies Thailand <sup>40</sup>**

The drinking trend has also changed considerably in the in the eleven year period measured by CAS. As seen on table 5 there can been seen several patterns in Thai drinking trends. After seeing the alcohol beverage production volume on an almost constant rise over the last decade, one would expect a similar rise in consumption. But in fact the drinking trend of the Thais seems to be in both directions. First of all there is a decrease in drinkers and occasional drinkers, as well as an increase in non-drinkers, which implies that fewer individuals are consuming alcohol. Secondly, the data shows a considerable increase with regular, monthly, weekly and daily-drinkers. The largest figure is the 46% increase with the 1-2 drinks per month drinkers and on the opposite side there is a 34% decrease with the occasional drinkers. Then there is a 20% increase with regular drinkers. Overall there is an increase with the drinkers, and it should be noted that the high percentage decrease among occasional drinkers does not necessarily mean a decrease in overall drinking trend. The individuals that are no longer belonging to that group could just as well increased their drinking than stopped drinking, In fact one would think it logical that occasional drinkers, increased their drinking, thus the data could be interpreted that 34 % of them drink more then they did before.

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<sup>40</sup> Thaksaphon Thamarangsi. (2010, Febuary 2). Director of The Center for Alcohol Studies in Thailand. (P.A. Steinarsson, Interviewer)