

CHAPTER 4

A PROTOTYPICAL SCENARIO OF SHAME

4.0 Introduction

From the review of related research in Chapter 2, we have seen that for the Thai, the face is the 'representation of ego'. One's self-pride and dignity is closely related to the face. Consequently, the face is sacred, fragile and sensitive, and a Thai would go to great lengths to avoid 'losing face' and therefore bringing shame upon oneself.

The analysis of Thai 'face' idioms in Chapter 3 reveals that the concept of shame shows up again and again in everyday usage. In addition to the twenty-one idioms that describe the emotion of shame, there are also idioms which express the behavior, reactions and values associated with shame.

According to the cognitive linguistic approach, concepts of emotion are not merely a psychological aspect of a person, but they serve a pragmatic function and have communicative, moral and cultural purposes (Palmer 1996). Lutz noted that

to understand the meaning of an emotion word is to be able to envisage (and perhaps to find oneself able to participate in) a complicated scene with actors, actions, interpersonal relationships in a particular state of repair, moral points of view, facial expressions, personal and social goals, and sequence of events (1988:10).

The purpose of this chapter is to show that the emotion of shame can be seen within a larger framework encompassing a sequence of several phases, including the causes of shame as well as its consequences, much in the same spirit as Kövecses' well-known model for English *anger* (1986). It will be shown that there is a coherent conceptual organization underlying the idioms that characterize the Thai concept of shame. Note

that the emotion scenario for shame developed in this chapter is specific to the Thai culture. Other social groups such as the Chinese or Japanese (who also place a high importance on 'face' and shame), may have a prototypical scenario for shame that differs in significant ways from that of the Thai. The involvement of a Thai folk model in the prototypical scenario once again illustrates the interdependence of culture, thought and language.

Noble (1975) described four aspects of shame, namely, honor, failure, covering and exposure. The loss of **honor** is equivalent to shame. The loss of honor also implies some kind of **failure**; it could be moral failure or failure to meet the expectations of others. When one's failure is made known to others, one feels a sense of shame and therefore tries to **cover up** that shame. However, if the covering or mask is removed, one experiences **exposure** and the response is **re-covering** by means of diversion through different channels such as anger or humor.

Using Noble's (1975) four aspects of shame as a starting point, I have developed a prototypical scenario for shame for the Thai. This scenario describes the normal course of events that take place to bring about shame and the usual reactions of the person who experiences shame. This prototypical scenario has five stages. They are:

Stage 1: Offending Events

Stage 2: Loss of Honor

Stage 3: Behavioral Reaction

Stage 4: Recovering Honor

Stage 5: Preservation of Honor

These stages will be described in detail below.

4.1 Stage 1: Offending Events

The initial scenario involves actions and events that cause one to experience shame. There are two ways in which a person can come to experience embarrassment or humiliation. The first way is when an offender does something to that person which causes him or her to feel shame. What are some ways in which a person can cause another to feel shame? The ‘face’ idioms below describe these ways:

C4	<i>k^hâam</i>	<i>nâa</i>			‘to step over the face’
	step over	face			
C5	<i>k^hâam</i>	<i>nâa</i>	<i>k^hâam</i>	<i>taa</i>	‘to step over the face, to step over the eyes’
	step over	face	step over	eye	
C13	<i>tʃ^hiik</i>	<i>nâa</i>			‘to tear the face’
	tear	face			
C32	<i>hàk</i>	<i>nâa</i>			‘to break the face’
	break	face			
C33	<i>hàk</i>	<i>nâa</i>	<i>hàk</i>	<i>taa</i>	‘to break the face, to break the eyes’
	break	face	break	eye	
E8	<i>mâj</i>	<i>wâj</i>	<i>nâa</i>		‘not spare the face’
	NEG	spare	face		
A23	<i>jăam</i>	<i>nám</i>	<i>nâa</i>	<i>raw</i>	‘to insult the water of our faces’
	insult	water	face	our	

In the idioms above, notice all the lexical items that collocate with *nâa* ‘face’: to step over, to tear, to break, not to spare, to insult. All these verbs indicate actions that are hurtful to a person. They reveal a lack of consideration for one’s feelings. An example of such an action would be not giving a person respect that is due to him or her. The phrase (C34) *mâj hâj nâa* ‘don’t give face’ (where face stands for honor) is used to describe such a situation. Sometimes, the action involves a deliberate

intention to damage a person's reputation or honor. An example of such an action would be to publicly reprimand someone in front of his or her peers.

The second way in which one can experience embarrassment or humiliation is when one does something that causes shame to oneself. Examples of such actions would be getting caught for cheating on one's wife or a lady getting pregnant before she is married. The idioms below express the second way of getting shame.⁷⁶

C7	<i>k^hǎaj nâa</i> sell face	'to sell face'
C8	<i>k^hǎaj nâa k^hǎaj taa</i> sell face sell eye	'to sell face, to sell eyes'
C9	<i>k^hǎaj nâa wan lá? hâa bîa</i> sell face day per five coin	'to sell face for five coins a day'
C28	<i>sǎ nâa</i> lose face	'to lose face'
C30	<i>sǎ nâa sǎ taa</i> lose face lose eye	'to lose face, to lose eyes'
C29	<i>sǎ nâa kàj</i> lose face chicken	'to lose chicken face'

It is important to note that all the offending events that lead to shame, whether caused by others or by the self, require an audience in order for shame to be experienced by a person. Others must be made aware of the events that lead to shame.

⁷⁶ Some of these idioms can be used to describe the situation where others cause shame to oneself as well but they will be passivized. For example, 'he made me lose face' is expressed as *k^hǎw t^ham hâj tǎn k^hǎaj nâa* 'he make CAUSE me lose face.'

4.2 Stage 2: Loss of Honor

What are the consequences of the offending events in Stage 1? The result is the loss of honor.⁷⁷ The loss of honor or loss of ‘face’ for the Thai brings about a sense of shame ranging from slight embarrassment to strong humiliation. These are the **emotional** effects of the loss of honor. Nineteen ‘face’ idioms express these emotional effects. Some of these idioms are:

E21	<i>nâa t̂ʃùut</i> face tasteless	‘tasteless face’
E22	<i>nâa t̂ʃùan</i> face embarrassed	‘embarrassed face’
E12	<i>nâa k̂əə</i> face embarrassed	‘embarrassed face’
E24	<i>nâa t̂ʃ^haa</i> face numb	‘numb face’
E37	<i>nâa t̂èk</i> face broken	‘broken face’
E49	<i>nâa máan</i> face withered	‘withered face’
E64	<i>nâa ĥèk</i> face broken	‘broken face’
E60	<i>nâa ɲǎaj</i> face upturned	‘upturned face’

⁷⁷The term ‘honor’ encompasses all the concepts related to reputation, dignity, fame, prestige, self-esteem or respect.

In addition, Thai *nâa* idioms reflect the **physiological** effects of shame such as blushing (as expressed by (E30) *nâa deeŋ* ‘red face’) and agitation (as expressed by (E7) *mâj rúu t̂ʃà ʔaw nâa paj wáj t̂ʃinǎj* ‘don’t know where to put the face’).

It is not always the case that the person experiencing shame will feel that that shame is justified. Sometimes, he or she will feel that the offending event constitutes an injustice and therefore will feel anger as well. At other times, even when the offending event is justified, a person may still get angry because his face or dignity has been violated. As we have seen in Section 3.3.5.1, there are twenty-two ‘face’ idioms which describe anger, and these usually draw on the **physiological** effects of anger to stand for the feeling of anger. Some physiological effects of anger and their corresponding ‘face’ idioms are:

red face	E9	<i>luat k̂uŋ nâa</i> blood go up face	‘blood go up the face’
frowning	E61	<i>nâa n̄w k̂iŋ k̂amuat</i> face wrinkled eyebrows entangled	‘wrinkled face, entangled eyebrows’
a long face	E1	<i>t̂ʃhák nâa</i> pull face	‘to pull face’
scowling	E52	<i>nâa m̄j</i> face scowling	‘scowling face’

Compared with the other stages in this prototypical scenario, this stage contains the highest number of idioms. This is, in fact, not surprising as it is at this stage that the emotion of shame is most intense. Other studies (see Ungerer and Schmid 1996) have shown that the majority of metaphors and metonymies describing emotions describe this stage of the emotion where physiological and behavioral effects are experienced.

4.3 Stage 3: Behavioral Reaction

Stage 2 relates to the loss of honor and the emotional reactions that are the consequences of shame. Stage 3 is the behavioral reaction to this loss of honor. What would the person experiencing shame do? There are five ways a person can react behaviorally to the loss of honor.

The first behavioral reaction could be **avoidance**. The person experiencing shame would choose to avoid the others who know about the offending events, hoping that they will forget about the matter eventually. Ukosakul (1994) commented that avoidance is one of the most employed strategies in social interaction and conflict management among the Thai. There are several 'face' idioms that aptly depict this strategy of avoidance. They are:

A15	<i>mɔɔŋ nâa kan mâj tît</i> look face together NEG stick	'look at the face but cannot stick'
A16	<i>mâj klâa sêu nâa</i> NEG dare fight face	'don't dare to fight face'
A17	<i>láp nâa</i> conceal face	'to conceal the face'
A25	<i>lòp nâa</i> avoid face	'to avoid face'
A26	<i>lòp nâa lòp taa</i> avoid face avoid eye	'to avoid face, to avoid eyes'

The saying (A15) *mɔɔŋ nâa kan mâj tît* 'look at the face but cannot stick' refers to the situation when two people who have unresolved conflicts avoid each other. The verb *tît* has numerous senses, such as to adhere (or stick), to affix (e.g., a stamp), to get stuck, to append, and to connect (Wit 1977:534). In all these senses, there is the

semantic component of two items coming close together. However, in the case where there is conflict between two parties, as in the situation described in this stage, each party will even avoid looking at each other in the eye.

Idiom (A16) *mâj klâa sêu nâa* ‘not dare to fight face’ makes use of the verb *sêu* ‘to fight’. Fighting necessitates confronting. Therefore, *mâj klâa sêu nâa* ‘not daring to fight another person’ (the face is the metonym for person) shows an act of avoidance (flight, not fight).

Another behavioral reaction to the sense of shame could be to **put on a mask** so that others do not realize that the offending event affected the person as much as it did. To put on a mask is another version of TO STRIKE THE FACE IS TO FEIGN AN EMOTION (see Section 3.3.5). The person who puts on a mask would then keep silent about the situation and not show any sign of being affected by what has happened. Several idioms describe this behavioral reaction. They are:

E11	<i>(sàj) nâa kàak</i> put on face shell	‘put on shell face’
E33	<i>tii nâa taaj</i> strike face dead	‘to strike a dead face’
E23	<i>nâa t̂ʃ^hǎj taa t̂ʃ^hǎj</i> face still eye still	‘still face, still eyes’

A third way of dealing with shame would be to use **humor as a diversion**. Even though one may be deeply hurt or humiliated, one makes light of the matter and laughs it off so that the focus will be diverted from self.⁷⁸ The idiom (B14) *nâa*

⁷⁸Ukosakul (1994:217) observed that humor is one means used by the Thai in interpersonal conflicts to distract the attention from the seriousness of a situation.

t^hálen ‘grinning face’ can be used to describe someone who turns an embarrassing situation into a funny episode.

The fourth reaction to the loss of honor is the **retribution of anger**.⁷⁹ If the experiencer of shame feels that the action of shaming was unjustified, he (or she) would feel angry. Then he would perform an act of retribution, and the wrongdoer would be the target of the act. He could rebuke the wrongdoer face-to-face. In Thai, the idiom (C20) *tòk nâa klàp* ‘to hammer the face in retaliation’ means to ‘reproach without sparing the feelings of the other’. When the experiencer *tòk nâa klàp* ‘hammers the face in retaliation’, he makes the wrongdoer lose face as well.

If the experiencer of shame is very angry, he may use insulting terms such as (B9) *nâa k^hõn* ‘furry face’, (B22) *nâa mǎa* ‘dog face’ or (A5) *t̄j^h aŋ nám nâa* ‘to insult the water of the face’ with the wrongdoer. Sometimes, these derogatory terms may not be spoken in front of the wrongdoer but they may be used behind the wrongdoer’s back with a third party.

The fifth behavioral action to the loss of honor is **acceptance**. In this case, the experiencer feels that he deserves what has happened, particularly when he is the one who brought shame upon himself. So he simply accepts it as his fate. The idiom (C1) *kôm nâa* ‘bow face’ is often paired with the phrase *ráp kam* ‘accept fate’⁸⁰ to portray this reaction to shame. *kôm nâa ráp kam* means ‘to have no choice but to accept the consequences of one’s behavior’.

⁷⁹ This is similar to one part of the scenario that Kövecses (1986) posits.

⁸⁰ ก้มหน้ารับกรรม

4.4 Stage 4: Recovering Honor

At stage 4, the experiencer will do whatever is possible to remove the shame that is being felt so that honor can be regained. The more shame one has, the more one will have to do to regain that honor which was lost.

The loss of honor can be compared to being in a state of disequilibrium. The idioms (C2) *kûu nâa* 'to redeem face', (C3) *kêe nâa* 'to correct face' and (C16) *suúu nâa* 'to buy face' clearly depict this restoring of equilibrium. The verb *kûu* can mean 'to salvage (a ship), to restore (a ruined house or one's reputation), to retrieve what has been lost, or to re-establish (e.g., a nation's independence)' (Wit 1977:132). In all these terms, there is the semantic component of a change of status from being lost to being regained. The verb *kêe* can mean 'to untie, to solve, to mend, to correct, or to save' (Wit 1977). In these definitions, there is the semantic component of something wrong being corrected. Therefore, the idiom *kêe nâa* 'to correct face' implies that one's reputation or honor that was wronged is now made right. In the example of the lady who got pregnant before marriage, she could *kêe nâa* by getting married immediately.

4.5 Stage 5: Preservation of Honor

The final stage in the prototypical scenario of shame is when the honor is restored. Two things must take place in order for the equilibrium to be restored. First, the shame must be removed and the honor re-established. The idiom that describes this stage is (C27) *ráksăa nâa* 'to preserve face'. The verb *ráksăa* 'to preserve' implies to keep something from getting spoiled or to maintain the present condition. Therefore, one who *ráksăa nâa* 'preserves face' will maintain one's reputation.

The second thing that must happen is there must be reconciliation (at least partially) with the offending party (if there is a wrongdoer involved). Recall that if the experiencer feels that the offending event is unjustified or that he has been improperly treated, he and the offender will *mɔɔŋ nâa kan mâj tît* (A15) ‘look at the face, cannot stick’ meaning that the two parties will avoid each other because of unresolved conflicts. When that shame is removed and the honor re-established, the two parties can now *mɔɔŋ nâa kan tît* ‘look at the face, can stick’ and *hǎn nâa k^hâw hǎa kan* (A26) ‘turn the face toward each other’ implying that they have reconciled.

How does one ensure that one’s honor or dignity is preserved? The idioms below describe some of these ways:

C27	<i>rák nâa</i> love face	‘to love face’
C25	<i>mii nâa mii taa</i> have face have eye	‘to have face, to have eyes’
C17	<i>dâj nâa</i> gain face	‘to gain face’
C18	<i>dâj nâa dâj taa</i> gain face gain eye	‘to gain face, to gain eyes’
C15	<i>t̚ʃ^hət nâa t̚ʃ^huu taa</i> lift up face lift up eye	‘to lift the face up, to lift the eyes up’
C16	<i>t̚ʃ^huu nâa t̚ʃ^huu taa</i> lift up face lift up eye	‘to lift the face up, to lift the eyes up’
C23	<i>pen nâa pen taa</i> be face be eye	‘to be face, to be eyes’

The idiom *rák nâa* (C27) ‘to love face’ is used to describe a person who considers honor or reputation as an important value. Whatever a person does that is good or

right should therefore be done in such a way that others will come to know about it. In this way, that person will *dâj nâa dâj taa* (C18) ‘gain face, gain eyes’ and thus receive recognition from others. The aim in all these behaviors is to become someone respected and prominent in society, someone who *mii nâa mii taa* (C25) ‘has face, has eyes’, as they say in Thai. When one is like that, then one will enhance one’s good name and the name of one’s family as well. The idioms *t̂ʃ^hêt nâa t̂ʃ^huu taa* (C15) ‘to lift the face up, to lift the eyes up’ and *pen nâa pen taa* (C23) ‘to be face, to be eyes’ describe this aspect of gaining honor.

4.6 Deviations from the Norm

The stages of shame described above constitute the prototypical scenario. However, that scenario is by no means the only course that shame can take. There are deviations from the norm and these will be described below.

One deviation which may occur at Stage 2 of the shame scenario is when a person does not feel shame when he or she ought to have felt shame. When this happens, others will rebuke that person by using these idioms:

E27	<i>nâa dâan</i> face hardened	'hardened face'
E39	<i>nâa t^hon</i> face enduring	'enduring face'
E40	<i>nâa t^hon jaŋkà ʔit ronfaj</i> face enduring like brick fired	'face enduring like fired bricks'
E62	<i>nâa nǎa</i> face thick	'thick face'
E57	<i>nâa sôn tiin</i> face sole foot	'sole of foot face'
E63	<i>nâa nǎa jaŋkà nǎŋ sôn tiin</i> face thick like skin sole foot	'face as thick as the skin on the sole of the foot'
E53	<i>nâa mâj mii jaanʔaaj</i> face NEG have shame	'a face that has no shame'
E54	<i>nâa mâj ʔaaj</i> face NEG ashamed	'face that is not ashamed'

All these idioms above have to do with being thick-skinned⁸¹ or shameless. Two additional idioms can also be used by others to reprimand one who is shameless. These are (C11) *ŋaam nâa* 'beautiful face' and (C24) *mii nâa* 'to have face'. Both these idioms are instances of irony where one says the opposite of what one means. The meanings of these idioms have been discussed in Section 3.3.3.

In rebuking verbally by using these idioms, the speaker hopes to make the person feel rightfully ashamed of what he has done. Thus, shame is used as a social sanction here to make a person conform to the norms of the society.

⁸¹ Note that even the word 'thick-skinned' is a metaphor.

Another deviation from the norm is the other extreme of being shameless, i.e., being embarrassed too easily. To be shameless is to have a ‘thick face’ *nâa nǎa*. Conversely, someone who gets embarrassed too easily is labelled as possessing a ‘thin face’ *nâa baay* (E42).

A third deviation from the norm is being overly concerned about one’s honor. This deviation occurs at Stage 5 of the shame scenario where one ensures the preservation of one’s honor. When a person is overly concerned about his ‘face’, others may rebuke this person by asking sarcastically, “*dâj nâa sàk kii krabuŋ*” (C19) ‘how many baskets of face can you get?’ meaning ‘how much recognition can you get?’ Others may also label a person who is overtly trying to gain recognition by using the idiom (C12) *tʃâw nâa tʃâw taa* ‘lord of face, lord of eyes’. A person who is *tʃâw nâa tʃâw taa* ‘lord of face, lord of eyes’ will do everything he can to *dâj nâa* ‘gain face’, even at the expense of others. Furthermore, someone who goes to extremes just to keep up the appearance of being prominent in society is said to *kʰăaj pʰâa ʔaw nâa rôɔt* (C6) ‘sell clothes in order to save face’. An example of *kʰăaj pʰâa ʔaw nâa rôɔt* ‘sell clothes in order to save face’ would be to drive a Mercedes even though one can hardly afford a small car.

4.7 Conclusion

How are the ‘face’, shame and honor related to one another? Through the numerous ‘face’ idioms that have to do with honor such as *dâj nâa* ‘to gain face’ or *sǎa nâa* ‘to lose face,’ we see that honor is metaphorically represented by the face. One can say that the opposite of honor is shame. When shame increases through one ‘losing face’ or ‘breaking the face,’ honor is lost. Conversely, when honor increases, shame decreases.

The structural metaphor in use here is THE FACE IS THE CONTAINER FOR HONOR. Honor can be seen as the contents of the face. Therefore when the container (the face) is broken (as in (C32) *hàk nâa*, for example), the contents (honor) are lost. The source domain is the FACE while the target domain is HONOR. This metaphor has the following ontological correspondences:

The container is the face.

The content is honor.

The physical damage to the container is emotional damage to the face.

The restoration of the container is restoration of the face.

We can schematize the epistemic correspondences between the face domain and the honor domain as follows:

(a) Source: When the container is damaged or broken, the contents are lost.

Target: When the face is damaged, honor is lost.

(b) Source: The container can be covered up.

Target: The loss of honor (shame) can be covered up.

(c) Source: When the container is repaired, the contents can be replaced.

Target: When the face is restored, honor can be regained.

(d) Source: A container that is made of thick material is not easily damaged.

Target: The face that has a thick skin is not easily hurt.

(e) Source: A container that is made of thin material is easily damaged.

Target: The face that has thin skin is easily hurt.

Why are there so many face idioms related to shame or honor? Studies have shown that for many non-Western cultures, shame plays an important social role (Wierzbicka

1992:131). Recall that shame for the Thai always requires an audience just as honor requires recognition by others. Shame is therefore an external sanction which arises from social pressure (Ukosakul 1994). For instance, by using the 'face' idioms described in Section 4.6 to rebuke someone who deviates from the norm, the speaker hopes to make that person behave in a socially appropriate manner. In a society which places much importance on mutual reciprocity and social harmony like the Thai, shame is one of the social mechanisms that exists for dealing with one another. The large number of idioms that have to do with honor and shame highlights the salience of this value in the Thai society.

Figure 9 illustrates the different stages of the shame scenario.

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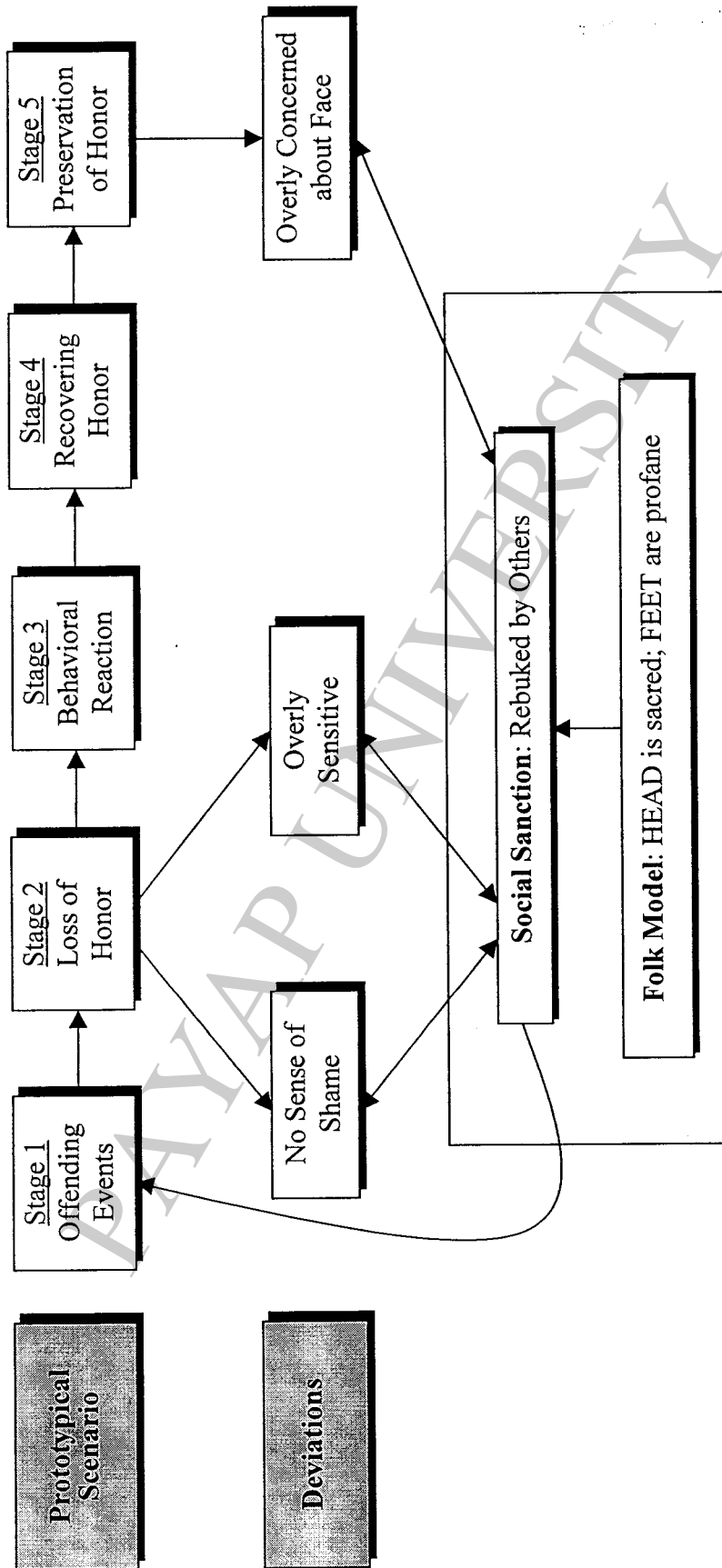


Fig. 9. Framework of Shame