

## CHAPTER 3

### CULTURAL MODELS USED IN THE INTERPRETATION OF PROVERBS AND METAPHORS

#### 3.0 Introduction

According to Burnett, world view is a system of ideas and values, a set of assumptions, a model to explain reality, and patterns for action. World view and culture are interrelated in the way that "...within each and every culture there is a system of order shared by all the members of that society (1990: 12)", and world view is that system. Hiebert defines world view as the basic assumptions about reality, which lie behind the beliefs and behavior of a culture (1985a). Palmer (1996: 113) uses the term 'world view' as the fundamental cognitive orientation of a society, a subgroup, or even an individual. Mathiot (1979: 318) said world view is the general way of thinking about the world that underlies all cultural behavior, including linguistic behavior. The relation between world view and cultural behavior is shown in Figure 11, below:

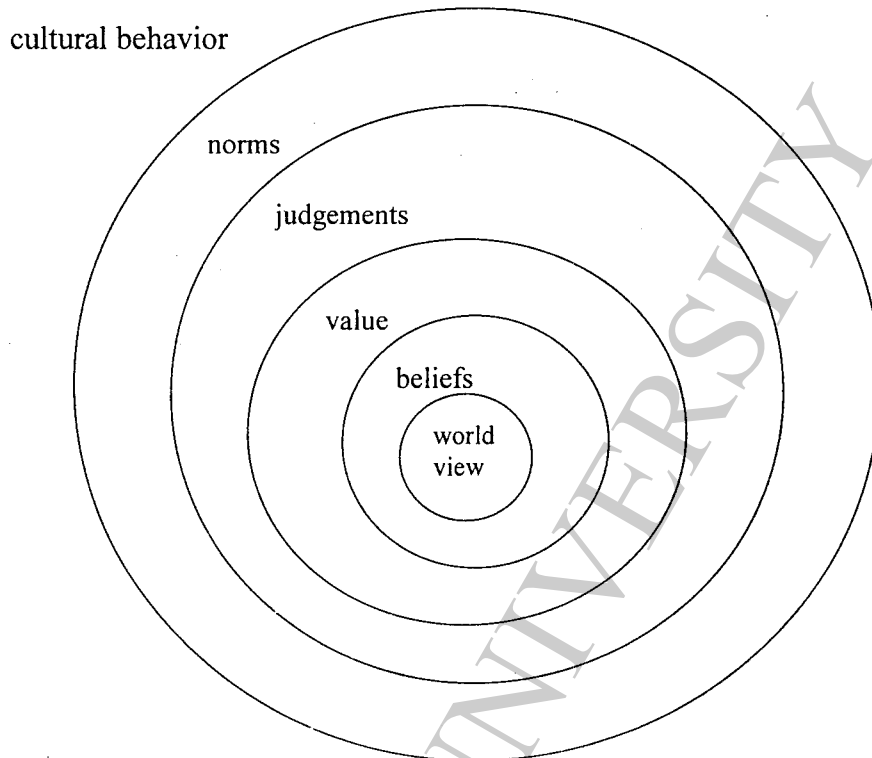


Figure 11: A model of world view (adapted from Hiebert 1985a)

World view underlies beliefs. Beliefs are used to explain reality, furnish people with their concepts of time, space, etc., and shape the mental categories people use for thinking. For example, Thai world view is that there are two kinds of worlds in which people are involved. They are the physical and spiritual worlds. The physical world is the world we can experience through our senses. The spiritual world is the abstract world that cannot be perceived by touch, smell, seeing, hearing, or taste, but only through the mind. Thai people believe that the statue of the Buddha is a holy thing that can bless people who pay respect. A temple is a place where the Buddha's statue is sited, so the temple is a holy place. Values provide the standards that people use to

make judgements of what is right or wrong. From the world view about temple, a Thai value is that people should dress politely and appropriately when they go to the temple. Value lies behind judgements (which underlie the notions of beauty, style, and aesthetics in a culture). An example of a Thai judgment is that the wearing of shorts and shoes in a temple is inappropriate or impolite. Norms are the patterns of society that we observe. The norm of Thai people when they go to the temple is that they usually dress and act politely.

Hiebert (1985a) mentions that world view operates in five functions: explanatory, psychological, evaluative, integrative, and adaptational functions. The explanatory function of world view is that the world view structures our perceptions of reality and provides us with a model to explain reality. The psychological function is that our world view gives us emotional support and security by following cultural beliefs during crises through rituals such as births, marriages, and funerals. The world view as evaluation function is that it is patterns of action or behavior which may be evaluated by cultural norms. The integrating function of world view is expressed in terms of its definition that world view is a basic assumption about reality, it also organizes our ideas, feeling, and values into a system. The adaptational function is that because culture changes, world view helps us select what ideas, behaviors, etc., fit our culture and reject those that do not.

Because world view gives basic ideas or assumptions about the reality of a particular culture or society, it is very important for the semantic analysis of Thai proverbs in the next chapter because it forms the background knowledge or background cognition that is applied to the blending process.

### 3.1 Thai world view of women as background cognition

Background cognition is the background knowledge or presuppositions that people in a particular society have in their minds that make them understand, communicate, and think of the same information in the culture specific networks.

In the past, there were two distinct social classes of women, noble and lower classes, as mentioned in Suwanna Kriangkraipheth (1992). The noble women had more opportunity in education and did not work for family income. They just took care of houses and children. The women in the governed class or farmer had to work for the support of the family.

A study by the Arts Department, Sukhothai Thammathirat University (1990), showed that the difference in Thai between 'male' and 'female' is easily identified by physical appearance. In order to behave correctly, for example, 'male' should be *lûuk p<sup>h</sup>ûu tɕ<sup>h</sup>aaj* 'manly', 'female' should be *lûuk p<sup>h</sup>ûu jǐŋ* 'womanly'. Culture and tradition indicate the way to teach how 'male' and 'female' should act. Thai tradition identifies roles and qualities of men and women clearly. It implies that a Thai man must be literate whereas a Thai woman must be good in housework and remain a virgin until married. These are very important for a woman and therefore expressed linguistically in phrases, idioms and proverbs. If a woman loses her virginity before marriage, she will be blamed by the society. In the Thai traditional concept, a woman should *râk nuan saŋǎan tua* 'keep herself', should not express her feelings, especially about love, to anyone. The man is the one who initiates and the woman is the one who responds. The married woman must be honest to her husband and the married man must not have an affair with any other man's wife. The husband's and wife's roles support each other in the way that the husband, realizing that the woman he married is his wife, should not look down at her, should give her power or authority in running the

house, should be honest to her, and give her gifts. The wife's role is that she has to manage the housework, take care of her husband's relatives, be honest to him, keep things or money he acquires well, and not be lazy in housework (Sukhothaithammathirat 1990: 375).

The role of men and women in working is expressed in the saying *p<sup>h</sup>ǔa hàab mia k<sup>h</sup>ɔɔn* 'the husband is the one who carries things on the shoulder and the wife is the one who carries things on one end of a shoulder pole'. It shows that they support each other and divide their work depending on their physical power. Another well known Thai saying is the comparison of husband and wife to the front and back feet of an elephant, respectively, *sǎ:mi: pen tɕ<sup>h</sup>á:ŋ t<sup>h</sup>á:w nâ: p<sup>h</sup>anraja: pen tɕ<sup>h</sup>á:ŋ t<sup>h</sup>á:w lǎŋ*. This saying shows that they have to support each other because both front and back feet are important and without one of them the elephant cannot easily move.

The Thai political state in the past gave importance to men rather than women because the state needed their physical power and intelligence in battle and the state's business, whereas women only had responsibility in the home affairs. Women's rights and power were invisible in laws, but they were implied by Thai culture and tradition. Thai women had the right to force a man who had sexual relationship with her to look after and accept her as his wife even though he already had a wife. If he did not accept her, he would have been punished by laws, tradition, and religion (as sin). It seemed that Thai laws, in the past, gave authority to the husband in governing the family. For example, the laws allowed him to beat and sell his wife. Thai tradition and other laws help us to understand that it was hard for a husband to beat his wife in her house among her parents and relatives. In Thai tradition, when a girl got married, the couple had to live at the girl's house, and she had rights in her own house. The husband was the leader of the family and he could have many wives, if he was ready to pay and be

responsible for looking after his minor wife, like giving her another house to be her own.

Thai women in the past behaved strictly in a traditional set of cultural frames. That is, when they were single, they were under the parents' responsibility and when they got married, they were under their husbands' responsibility. We can say that Thai women in the past had little right to select their way of life and they were the back feet of the elephant and were led by their husbands or fathers. The traditional ideas and values made women think that they were weak and that they had to depend on men. This is clearly distinguished situation between laws and tradition of Thai society in the past in which the laws did not give right to women but the tradition protected them.

Nowadays, Thai women have more roles in society. They realize their own ability, and have confidence to call for their own rights because of the changes in economy, government regulation, and the influence of western thinking. However, this idea is more common among educated, urban women rather than uneducated, rural women. The present concept and image of women is that they are smart women or *p<sup>h</sup>ũ:jĩŋ kèŋ*, which refers to intelligence, self-confidence, freedom and modernity. However, society expects Thai women to still be women; even though they are strong, they should not be hard. They should be sweet but not weak. Women, nowadays, should have some of the qualities traditionally belonging to men. When we compare women to the feet of the elephant, they are the right or left front foot. They are not the back feet anymore (Sukhothaithammathirat 1990; and from interview).

The traditional idea about women 'keeping themselves' is reduced because of the adoption of western culture. It seems that there are growing equal rights in sexual behavior. Nonetheless, Thai society still grants privileges to men in cases of punishment because women are the ones who are blamed by society if they have an illicit sexual relationship with another man.

Single women are more accepted because society does not see that single women are physically or mentally defective anymore. Women in the past needed to be married so that they would be protected by their husbands. So they got married while still quite young. The tendency to remain single for women is increasing because they are spending more time in study and work and the traditional view of marriage for their protection by men is fading. Many women today can depend on themselves and therefore decide to be single. At some levels of occupation, for example, in high executive positions, women have less opportunities because they are still perceived as having a weak point in controlling people in lower positions. Both men and women prefer to be controlled by men because the influence of the traditional view accepts men as leaders, and thinks that women are not decisive. They use emotions in work rather than reason, and they are interested in details rather than the big picture.

Therefore, in Thai thinking, men and women are different in terms of physical appearance, societal expectations, and values.

### **3.2 Traditional statuses and roles of Thai women mentioned in the proverbs**

The statuses and roles of women are founded on the world view of Thai people toward women and these are reflected in proverbs.

Hiebert says that status as defined by Ralph Linton, an American anthropologist, is a position in a social system occupied by designated individuals such as teachers, fathers, mothers, priests, and merchants (1985b: 141). Role is “behavioral expectations associated with a specific social status”. For instance, a teacher is expected to stand or sit in front of a room to teach students (Hiebert, 1985b: 142). In this part of the analysis, there are seven specific statuses of Thai woman presented in the data. They are single woman, wife, minor wife, widow, mother in law or mother,

defiled woman, and matchmaker. Supha Anggurawaranan mentions in her thesis that the word ‘woman’ contains four semantic features that are they are human, able to give birth to baby, and they may or may not be virgin (1984). This is helpful for the semantic analysis in the next chapter as part of the background cognition. Therefore, the main biological function of a woman is to be a mother and a wife.

### 3.2.1 Single woman or [ *sǎaw sò:d* ]

The word *sǎaw* means ‘girl’ and *sò:d* means ‘single’. This combined word refers to single women, which is the first status that is mentioned. Because society expects a woman to marry someone when she reaches a certain age, single status in the past was not desirable. People around her would think that she had some problem or defect. This is conveyed in the proverb in 1).

- 1) *k<sup>h</sup>ûn k<sup>h</sup>aan*  
up beam

To be on a beam

‘The useless boat will be on the beam like spinster that has no one to marry.’

This proverb refers to a woman who does not get married as comparable to a useless boat that is kept hung up on the beam and never used. As stated above, society expects women to marry and the single woman violates this expectation. So the status of being single in the traditional view is negative. The role of single women in the traditional view is to help their mothers to take care of housework.

### 3.2.2 Major wife or [ *mia lǎaŋ* ]

The word *mia* means ‘wife’ and *lǎaŋ* means ‘big’ or ‘major’. These two words are combined to refer to a major wife. In the past in Thai society, a man could have



many wives and the first one who married him was called the major wife. The world view of Thai people in having a daughter is that the parents want her to marry someone as reflected in the saying [ *mi: lû:k sǎ:w tɔ̃:ŋ hâi tɛ̃:ŋŋa:n* ] ‘having a daughter, she has to marry’. So, being a wife is a basic status of woman. The major wife has the highest status among the married woman. The status of major wife is often mentioned in Thai proverbs as in the following.

- 2)     *kìŋ*            *tʰɔ̃:ŋ*   *bai*   *jòk*  
           branch           gold   leaf   jade

The plant that has gold branch and jade leaf

‘Well-matched couple’

- 3)     *sanè: pla:j*   *tɕawàk*       *phǔə*       *rák*   *tɕon*   *ta:j*  
           charm end   kitchenspoon   husband       love   until   die

Charm of the kitchen spoon makes husband love until death.

‘To be good in cooking makes husband love forever.’

From 2-3), there are three roles needed for a successful married life: well-matched couple, honesty, and responsibility. The well-matched couple as mentioned in example 2) depends on the suitability in social status, age, education, and family background. The family is a social unit that feeds and shapes the characteristics and thinking of children, so it is important to consider the family background before getting married. In Thai society, the family is still important even though someone in the family is married already. The family influences the member’s married life as mentioned in the proverb, [*rák mia sǎ jâ:t*] ‘Love wife, lose cousin’, which means someone who loves his wife so much will ignore his cousin because of conflict between wife and cousin.

The next factor is honesty, especially the honesty of the wife because she has to keep her husband's honor as reflected in the saying [*p<sup>h</sup>anraja: di: pen sǐ: kè: sǎ:mi:*] 'Good wife is good for husband'. The word [*sǐ:*] means goodness, success, splendor, prosperity, etc. So, the wife can bring [*sǐ:*] to her husband if she is good while the bad wife destroys [*sǐ:*] of her husband and herself. A strong quality of being a good wife is to be honest to her husband. Although society accepts that a man can have more than one wife, the ideal married life needs honesty from both wife and husband as mentioned in the saying [*mia sǎ:ŋ tǎ:ŋ hâ:m*] 'Don't have two wives'. So, honesty is an important role of both men and women in marriage.

The last factor is responsibility. The good wife has to have a housewife's ability in cooking, finance, and taking care of her husband and children. These are general roles of a wife that she is expected to be responsible for. In addition, the woman who enters the status of wife should accept the role of follower who can both support and restrain the leader of the family (husband) in the decisions as presented in the proverb [*sǎ:mi: pen tɕ<sup>h</sup>á:ŋ t<sup>h</sup>á:w nâ: p<sup>h</sup>anraja: pen tɕ<sup>h</sup>á:ŋ t<sup>h</sup>á:w lǎŋ*] 'husband is leader, wife is follower', for example the front feet cannot go further if the back feet do not move, and in the saying [*p<sup>h</sup>úa hâ:p mia k<sup>h</sup>ɔ:n*]<sup>4</sup> 'husband and wife help each other to carry something'. The word [*hâ:p*] means 'to carry something on a shoulder pole' and the word [*k<sup>h</sup>ɔ:n*] means 'to carry something on one end of a shoulder pole'. It presents a picture that the husband's responsibility is heavier than the wife's responsibility because he is biologically stronger than the wife. However, the traditional view emphasizes the role in supporting the husband's decisions rather than restraining his actions.

<sup>4</sup> มหาวิทยาลัยสุโขทัยธรรมมาธิราช สาขาศิลปศาสตร์. 2533.

### 3.2.3 Minor wife or [ *mia nój* ]

The word *mia* means ‘wife’ and *nój* means ‘minor’ or ‘little’. This combined word refers to a minor wife. This status of this woman is undesirable and is not to be admired or publicly accepted from people in the society. The social status of minor wife is lower than the major wife as seen in 4- 6).

- 4) *kin ná:m tâi sò:k*  
to eat water under elbow

To drink water from somebody’s elbow

‘To be a minor wife’

- 5) *plù:k ruan k<sup>h</sup>rô:m tɔ:*  
to build house across stump

To build a house over a stump

‘To grab someone’s property/ husband’

- 6) *lû:k mianój*  
child minor wife

The child to whom the minor wife gives birth does not have full rights like the child from the major wife.

‘Someone who doesn’t have full rights or gets less love and other benefits’

Examples 4) to 6) express the lower status of the minor wife clearly. To figure that somebody drinks water from another’s elbow in 4), means that she drinks the water that flows from another woman’s mouth along the arm and drops off at the elbow. It shows that the status of the minor wife cannot have full rights as the major wife because the ownership of her husband only belongs to the major wife. According

to Sukhothaithammathirat University (1990:382), the old laws indicated that the major wife had half of a husband's *sakdinaa* 'dignity expressed in area of land entitlement, or feudalism', and the minor wife had half of the major wife's *sakdinaa*. The role of the minor wife in general is like the major wife in taking care of her house, husband, and children but she has less power of authority in house business than the major wife.

### 3.2.4 Widow and divorcee or [ *mê:mâ:j* ]

The word *mê:mâ:j* here refers to both a woman whose husband is dead and a woman who divorces her husband. This word is composed of the word *mê:* 'mother, or term of address for female' and the word *mâ:j* 'don't look, over look, and do not have a couple (do not have husband or wife)'. So, *mê:mâ:j* may refer to a status as widow or a divorcee in which a man should not get involved because she was married (or she used to belong to her husband). There are many proverbs that mention widows with both positive and negative connotations. It is interesting that the sayings often contain a negative connotation from a female point of view e.g. someone will look down at her if a widow or divorcee loves a man because the case that a single man decides to marry her is rare. In contrast, it mostly shows positive or neutral connotation from a male point of view as shown in the proverbs 7), and the proverb in 8) is negative from both male and female point of view.

- 7) *mê:mâ:j*                      *soŋk<sup>h</sup>ruâəŋ*  
 widow                              well dressed

The widow who is well dressed

'Wealthy widow'

- 8) *tɕ<sup>h</sup>a:j sǎ:m bò:t jǐŋ sǎ:m p<sup>h</sup>ǔə*  
 man three temple womanthree husband

The man who entered monk-hood three times and woman who married three husbands

‘Avoid loving or making friends with a man who entered monk-hood three times or a woman who divorced three husbands because they tend to be fickle.’

It is assumed that the widow in Thai thinking, especially among women themselves, contains a negative connotation in the event that she re-marries. The assumption about the role of being a wife in Thai culture is that a woman should be honest or faithful to her husband even though he is dead, and then everyone in society will admire her.

The ideal quality or role of a woman should be honesty and faithfulness to her husband. These are strong values in Thai society. Thais will admire these values in a woman. The ideal widow should not marry anyone again throughout her life as mentioned in the proverb in 9).

- 9) *mi: p<sup>h</sup>ǔə p<sup>h</sup>it k<sup>h</sup>it tɕon tuə taj*  
 have husband wrong think until body die

To marry bad husband makes the wife think forever

‘To marry bad husband makes the wife suffer forever because the good wife has to be honest and take care of her husband throughout her life.’

This proverb shows that a good woman should marry only once. Before deciding to marry someone, she should think carefully whether or not her potential husband is good enough for her to spend her whole life with. Thai society in the past did not accept divorce, especially when initiated by women, the status of divorcee was

looked down on. The role of widow and divorcee is different from a wife because she does not have a husband to take care of, but she is still expected to take care of children, house, and family finances by herself.

### 3.2.5 Mother/ mother-in-law or [ *mê:* / *mê:ja:j* ]

The word *mê:* ‘mother’ is both a kin term of address and a term of reference<sup>5</sup>. The compound word *mê:* ‘mother’ and *ja:j* ‘grandmother’, which refers to a mother-in-law, is a term of reference. These ‘mother’ and ‘mother-in-law’ status are mentioned together because they both influence their children and the husband is expected to treat and respect his mother-in-law as his mother and he calls her *mê:* ‘mother’ like his wife. In the same way, the wife will call her mother-in-law *mê:* ‘mother’ like her husband and treat her as she treats her own mother. In some cases, there may be different behaviors e.g. jokes, and conflict that show the actual relationship between mother-in-law and son-in-law, or mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. Generally, the status and responsibility (or role) of the woman who is a “mother” is to look after, teach, and be a good example for her child. The status as the mother is important in society because she is the one who looks after and can shape the child’s characteristics and thinking, especially for her daughter, as mentioned in 10).

10)	<i>lû:kmái</i>	<i>jô:m</i>	<i>lòn</i>	<i>mâi</i>	<i>klai</i>	<i>tôn</i>
	fruit	usually	fall	neg.	far	trunk

Fruit usually falls not far from its trunk.

‘The child’s behavior is usually like his/her parents.’

<sup>5</sup> A term of address is a word that is used to call a person when speaking such as “Dad”, or “Mom”. A term of reference is a word that is used to refer to a kin such as father, mother, and sister.

The traditional Thai view of a man in relation to his mother-in-law often contain negative connotations in which the son-in-law does not trust her because she can take his wife from him anytime, as shown in 11):

- 11) *fǒn* *tòk* *jà:* *tɕ<sup>h</sup>ûə* *da:w*  
 rain fall neg. trust star
- mi:* *mia* *sǎ:w* *jà:* *tɕ<sup>h</sup>ûə* *tɕai* *mê:ja:j*  
 have wife young neg. trust heart mother on law

When rain falls, don't look for stars, and don't trust the mother in law if you have a young wife.

'Don't think that it will rain by looking to the star. In the same way as don't trust mother in law if you have a young wife because she can take her away anytime.'

This example can tell us that the mother-in-law has much influence over her daughter and her role is usually to give the best to her daughter. If the husband of her daughter is not good enough, she may take her away or make her divorce the husband, and then find another man that she thinks is good enough to marry her daughter instead.

These proverbs show that both the families of husband and wife influence their married life. This demonstrates that Thai society places great importance on the family. These concepts are necessary in the analysis of Thai proverbs and metaphors in chapter 4 because there are several metaphors and proverbs that mention the similarity in behavior of parents and their children and the influence of parents to a couple in marriage.

### 3.2.6 Defiled women or [ *p<sup>h</sup>û:jǐŋ mâi dii* ]

The words *p<sup>h</sup>û:jǐŋ* ‘woman’, *mâi* ‘no’, and *dii* ‘good’ are compounded to *p<sup>h</sup>û:jǐŋ mâi dii*, which means ‘a woman who is defective or defiled in some way that makes her looked down on by the surrounding people’. This kind of women includes prostitutes, women who lose their virginity before marriage, and women who commit adultery. Most Thai proverbs warn or teach single women to keep their virginity until marriage. A woman who loses her virginity before marriage will be regarded as a defiled or bad woman whom nobody wants to marry. And if her parents want her to marry someone, they will make her look like a virgin as expressed in 12):

12)	<i>sâi</i>	<i>trakrâ:</i>	<i>lá:ŋ</i>	<i>ná:m</i>
	put	basket	wash	water

Put her in a basket to wash.

‘To make the woman who loses her virginity to be as a virgin woman, as one would wash the dirt off fruit or food with water.’

This proverb shows that the traditional Thai view looks at a virgin as a pure or clean thing. In contrast, the woman who loses her virginity before getting married is a dirty or impure thing, so the parents have to make her appear pure before letting her marry someone.

The defiled woman is the woman who breaks the social rule or world view of being *lû:kp<sup>h</sup>û:jǐŋ* ‘womanly’ and *kunlasàttri:* ‘a well mannered woman’. *lû:kp<sup>h</sup>û:jǐŋ* ‘womanly’ and *kunlasàttri:* ‘a well mannered woman’ should behave softly, gently, elegantly and [ *rák nuən saŋǎən tuə* ] ‘keep herself and her virginity and do not let a



man touch her body’. Aside from social status and age, the traditional view assesses a good or desirable woman from her behavior or manner and her virginity.

- 13) *sǔəm*            *kʰǎw* *hâi*    *pʰǎə*  
to put            horn to        husband

To make husband stupid like a buffalo that has horns

‘A woman who is an adulterer dishonors her husband and makes other people look at him like a stupid man.’

The status of being an adulteress is worse for a married woman because she destroys her husband and her family’s honor as presented in example 13). In addition, the adulteress is considered a defiled woman. The proverb in 13) shows that adultery by the wife makes the husband look as stupid as a buffalo. The status as adulteress makes the woman appear to be untrustworthy or lacking in loyalty. The concept about lacking in loyalty breaks the traditional idea that a married woman has to be honest to her husband.

### 3.2.7 Matchmaker or [ *mê:sù:* *mê:təʰák* ]

This word *mê:* ‘mother, term of address for calling a woman’, *sù:* ‘communicate’, and *mê:* ‘mother’, *təʰák* ‘pull’ are compounded to *mê:sù:* *mê:təʰák* which refers to a woman who has the status of a matchmaker, and whose role is to be a medium between a man and a woman considering marriage. This type of woman is often discussed in daily life, but there is only one proverb in this thesis about matchmakers:

- 14) *mê:*    *sù:*                    *mê:*    *təʰák*    *mâi*    *dâi*    *tuə*  
mother communicate    mother pull    neg.    get    body

*ʔaw wuə p<sup>h</sup>an làk*  
 take cow wrap around post

Being a matchmaker, she does not succeed in her job and she also takes a cow and wraps its rope around a post.

‘The relationship of a matchmaker to a man is like tying a cow to a post. It walks around the post until the rope is so short that the cow cannot walk anymore. Similarly, the relationship between a matchmaker and a man may grow into love as they spend time in the negotiations.’

The status as a matchmaker that appears in society says that a good woman does not have much opportunity to meet or deal with the outside men because a good quality of being ladylike is [*jù: kàp jâw fâw kàp ruən*] ‘To be at home and take care of it’. So, the matchmaker plays the significant role in being the mediator to introduce a man to a woman. The person who acts in this status can be a member of either or both the man and the woman’s families, or an outsider who is familiar with their families.

Although men can serve as matchmakers [*p<sup>h</sup>ɔ: sù:*], women more generally fill this role. This may be because the general image of woman is soft, delicate and not dangerous, so it makes the target woman and her family, trust the matchmaker. Then she can convince them easily. Thai society likes a manner speaking or behaving softly and gently, and a woman can behave this way naturally because she represents softness and gentleness, whereas a man represents strength and harshness.

However, this proverb also shows that a woman’s image is one of weakness that can easily be influenced by close relationships and sympathy. For example, the female matchmaker can fall in love with the man whom she deals with, especially in the event that she does not succeed in matching the man with the target girl (or she does not

succeed in her role). When that happens, she sympathizes with and loves the man herself.

### **3.3 Present Thai view on women**

A number of interviews were conducted in order to arrive at present ideas about women. The hypothesis of this section is that Thai attitudes about women have changed. This hypothesis relates to the semantic analysis of the proverbs and metaphors in which a factor of the change in meaning involves the blending process. There were 13 interviewees (5 males, and 8 females). They are different in terms of age, gender, hometown and education. The ages of males are between 23-28. Females are between 25-52. They are from different provinces such as Lamphun, Chiang Mai, Lopburi, Bangkok, Rayong, and Ubonratchathani. Based on this cross-section, we can investigate and represent the general ideas as to the present Thai world view of women.

The interviewees were asked several questions in the Thai language (see Appendix 2). Those questions are divided into four topics: statuses and roles, women's characteristics, social changes, and meanings of the proverbs. The answers to the questions about the meaning of the proverbs are applied in chapter 4 to check the semantic analysis of the proverbs. The first topic is about the status and roles of Thai women, and the questions are as follows:

1. In the traditional idea, what are the statuses and roles of women?
2. What are the statuses and roles of women nowadays?
3. What jobs or positions are suitable for women in the traditional idea? Why?
4. What jobs or positions are not suitable for women in the traditional idea? Why?
5. What jobs or positions are suitable for women nowadays? Why?
6. What jobs or positions are not suitable for women nowadays? Why?

Results of the interview are summarized below. Women's statuses in the traditional idea usually are daughter, younger or older sister, wife, mother, and widow. They are considered as second-class citizens who have less rights than men. Their roles are-as housewives, who take care of husbands, children, and other members in their families. They also take care of housework by themselves. Married women are expected to be honest to their husbands, but a man can have more than one wife. A minor wife has less responsibility than a major wife. The minor wife only takes care of her husband and child while the major wife takes care of the whole family. A wife governs all business in the family.

Nowadays, women are working women and housewives at the same time. They have to work outside to earn money to support their families and take care of housework and their families when they are at home. Traditionally, people think that women are most suitable for being housewives, working at home, or doing crafts that do not require hard labor because of their limited physical strength. The interviewees also think that according to the traditional attitude, women should not be prostitutes because this job makes them violate culture, morality, and tradition, and it is not good for Thai women to behave the way or do this kind of job. Many of them also think that the traditional view does not like women to work outside homes or do risky and challenging jobs such as being a police woman, soldier, or actress. All of the interviewees think that women nowadays can do any kind of job that men do, depending on their ability and interest, but the jobs they do should not be ones that violate tradition and culture, for instance, prostitute. People still are member of society and so they should be concerned about social rules. If they break the rules they will be blamed by society.

The second topic, which is about the characteristics of a woman, is addressed with the following questions.

1. When you think of ‘woman’, what characters, images, or behavior do you think about?
2. What words do you think that can best describe the characteristics of being a woman?
3. What are the qualities of a good woman?
4. What are the qualities of *kullasattri* ‘a well-mannered woman, a lady’?
5. What are the characteristics of a bad woman?

For the characteristics of women, the interviewees responded with; well-mannered behavior [*rîəp rɔ́j*], politeness [*sup<sup>h</sup>â:p*], sweetness [*ʔð:nwǎ:n*], softness [*ʔð:njo:n*], good speech [*p<sup>h</sup>û:d p<sup>h</sup>rɔ́ʔ*], and sensitivity [*ʔa:rom ʔð:nwǎi*]. They clarified the qualities of a good woman by saying that she should demonstrate well-mannered performance [*rîəp rɔ́j*], softness [*ʔð:njo:n*], gentleness [*sup<sup>h</sup>â:p*], politeness [*sup<sup>h</sup>â:p*], thoughtfulness [*hěn ʔòk hěn tɕai k<sup>h</sup>on ʔù:n*], and *rák nuan saŋǎan tua* ‘keep herself’. Good women also should have good speech, care of the family and be in the cultural or traditional frame (which are the rules or teachings or values that govern society [*krò:p prapeni:*] in Thai) i.e., don’t violate the conventional frame by *mái rák nuan saŋǎan tua* ‘not keep herself’, being irresponsible for their duties, or dissolute. In being *kullasattri*: ‘a well-mannered woman, a lady’, they should be well mannered, soft, manage the house well (*pen mê: srǐ: ruən*), be polite, gentle, obey parents, and have good speech. It is quite hard to distinguish the qualities of a good woman and *kunlasàttri*: because they overlap. The good woman may or may not be *kunlasàttri*:, and *kunlasàttri*: may or may not be a good woman as well. However, the obvious quality of *kunlasàttri*: is that she should be *pen mê: srǐ: ruən* ‘the woman who manages the house well’. In contrast, the qualities of bad women include

*mái rák nuan saŋǔan tua*, being irresponsible for their duties, being dissolute, having sexual relationships with men easily, not thinking and behaving in the appropriate way, making trouble in their family and society, and gossiping.

The third topic, which is about social change and asked the question: Do you think the thinking, social values, and roles of Thai women from the past to the present have changed? How? Why?

The result of this part is interesting in that all of the interviewees realize there have been changes in Thai society. They said that women in the present day have more confidence to express their ideas and feelings, even in opposition to other people. They also dare to express themselves in lifestyle, clothes, choices of speech and behavior. This includes whether to have sex before marriage or using ambiguous speech (such as dirty jokes) in public or with men. Nowadays, women are accepted in what were once considered men's jobs, for instance, the military, government, and politics. The idea of working outside the home to earn money to support the family is also accepted and admired by society. All of these changes have occurred because of economic, educational, and communicational factors, as well as foreign cultural influence.

Therefore, the result of the interview supports the sub-hypothesis that the Thai world view about women has changed in some ways, especially in regard to expanded statuses and roles of women, and their ideas of lifestyle. This result also influences the change of the interpretation of some proverbs and metaphors to non-traditional meaning.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

This chapter mainly presents background cognition information about the Thai traditional world view and present view toward woman. It also shows concepts which underlie the positive and negative qualities of woman in Thai society. These qualities

are social standards or values for Thai woman to perform appropriately based on the traditional idea.

Seven statuses along with assigned roles of women are mentioned in the data. These are single woman, major wife, minor wife, widow, mother or mother-in-law, matchmaker, and defiled woman. These concepts of women are used to identify the good and bad qualities of the women in each status.

The present day attitude of people toward these concepts and qualities of woman in comparison with the traditional perspective has changed in some aspects, such as the concept of keeping virginity or *rák nuan sañǔan tua*. Other aspects remain, e.g., the concept that a woman should be sweet, gentle, etc. and play the role of housewife who takes care of the family. All of these ideas are applied as the background knowledge or background cognition in the next chapter to explain Thai proverbs in terms of semantics and the processing of meaning.