

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Patsarin Ramwong for the degree of Master of Arts in Applied Anthropology presented
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Title: Changing Mother-Daughter Relationships in Isan Rural Culture in the Context
of Women's Migration

Abstract approved:

Nancy Rosenberger

This thesis explores the changes in mother-daughter relations in Northeast Thailand over the last three generations in relation to migration out of this region. Qualitative interviews were done with ten families in two villages; the interviews focused on representatives of three generations of women in each family. In recent decades, in Northeast Thailand (also known as the Isan region) many people have left their hometowns because of economic hardship and agricultural instabilities to find economic opportunities. Rural people have become migrant laborers in Bangkok, regional areas, and overseas. In Northeast Thailand the kinship system is matrilineal and matrilocal, characterized by inheritance and care flowing particularly between mother and youngest daughter. Women are the core of the family system, playing an important role in the production activities of the household, trading, and religious rituals. Faced with modernity as they migrate, women change and force transformation in the family and rural villages. The thesis finds conditions of high debt, dependence on remittances, grandchild care by grandmothers, and diminishing landholdings.

Although matrilineality continues, with the youngest generation, mother-daughter relationships have weakened in the areas of matrilocality and emotional closeness, but are maintained by remittances faithfully sent.

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Changing Mother-Daughter Relationships in Isan Rural Culture in the Context of
Women's Migration

by
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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Patsarin Ramwong, Author

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DEDICATION

In loving memory of my grandmother “Kanlayanee Suttasri”
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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 The thesis

Thailand has been described as a “female-centered system” in which relationships between women define the social structure. In general women in Thailand are not oppressed, taken advantage of, or have lower status than men (Smutkupt, Kitiarsa, & Puttha, 1994; Promphakping 2000), while some men are even considered as the head of households with responsibility for their home and the larger community (Swasdipanih 2003; Bowie 2008; Walker 2006). As the anthropologist John DeYoung who studied peasant village in Thailand noted “The social position of the Thai peasant woman is powerful” (1966:24). The majority of women’s responsibility is within the household. Thailand has a pattern of matrilocality post-marriage residency through matrilineality (Potter 1977; Bowie 2008; Santasombat 2013) in which a man will move into a woman’s household after they get married. These practices are prominent in Northern, Northeastern, and central regions of Thailand (Bowie 2008). This explanation of family relationships holds true thought rural Thailand including Northern and Northeastern Thailand. In the rural societies of Northern and Northeastern Thailand, families are related through the maternal sides. The extended family consists of a woman, her siblings, and cousins living close together, in houses in the same area (Santasombat 2013). The son-in-law will become a part of the work force in the woman’s household (Potter 1977). Thus, matrilocality in this context correlates with a female-dominant household. Women are the core of the family system and kinship, playing an

important role in the household activities, productivity, trading, and religious rituals. The importance of matrilineal system is evidence by the presence of strong belief in maternal ancestral spirit.

The Northeast region of Thailand is known as Isan. In Northeast Thailand, Isan women play an important role in both the economic and cultural wellbeing of the region (Matsumara 2003; Caffrey 1992). Isan women are traditionally obligated to take care of the elders and the young children. In the traditional Northeast village, the constituent units were domestic groups (kin groups) which consisted of a woman's family (her parents, husband and children) and the sons-in-law who had married into the wife's family. Land was inherited by couples from the wife's mother and father, although much land was obtained traditionally through homesteading. The matrilineal post-marital residence pattern as well as the custom of giving the house to the youngest daughter through inheritance have functioned to encourage her continued residence in the home and the provision of care to the elderly parents (Caffray 1991). Additionally, inheritance of land is usually given to all children, with the house and largest piece of land going to the last daughter married (usually youngest daughter) after the parents passed away (Santasombat 2013; Caffray 1992; Tambiah 1970). It is common for sons or daughters that will move to other places to sell their property to their siblings that will be living in the parent's house (usually sisters). This often happened if sons married women who had their own land.

During the economic upturn in 1950s, many Isan people started to work in non-agricultural jobs, mainly in Bangkok (Keyes 2014; Mills 2003). Many young people, especially young women, began to leave home for manufacturing jobs during the 1960s, which is the period that Thailand began a national economic development program (Mills 2003; Matsumura 2012). Many unmarried women left their village while their children were raised by elder parents. At the same time, Isan

migrants have an obligation to send money back to help their rural family. Traditionally the youngest daughter would remain in the household after marriage to care for her parents. She will eventually have inherited her parents' house. This responsibility is deeply rooted in the Isan family culture and the Buddhist belief system. However, this family and kinship pattern is changing due to capitalism, land degradation, and the limited agricultural land available for the younger generation. All of which pushes Isan people to leave their home to work somewhere else.

A recent study from the National Statistical in Ministry of Information and Communication Technology in Thailand indicates that migrants from the Northeast are the largest part of migration in Thailand at 40.7% (National Statistical Office 2014). One of the biggest push factors for migrants is economic hardship. Many migrants found opportunities overseas in other countries or in the bigger cities in Thailand. Migration refers to the process of moving from one's place, one's homeland, to another place permanently or temporarily. During the economic boom of 1970s-1990s, with Thailand's development plan, Thailand had policies to develop the country through expanding industrial and manufacturing production industries. According to Thailand first development plan of 1961, there was an objective to change Thailand into an industrial country in order to achieve a higher GDP and more income for citizens. Many industries came to be located in urban areas and Bangkok suburbs, creating more demand for migrant labor in order to work in factories, especially at low-skilled levels.

Modernization and social changes have had a profound effect on daily life and social life of rural Isan communities. In Northeast, there are large arid areas. Agriculture is the largest sector of the local economy with rice as the main cash crop. However, the weather in the Northeast is unpredictable and drought often strikes, making it hard for farmer to make a stable living. Furthermore, rice fields can also be flooded during the rainy season, while often only two harvests

are possible each year. This results in Isan people wanting to get better opportunities through urban employment in Thailand and overseas employment due. Many people in rural communities are determined to become immigrant laborers in Bangkok and overseas, affecting rural population of Thailand.

Focusing on women, I wish to develop a deep understanding of how relationships between mothers and daughters change due to women working as labor migrants in other places. Not only do things change in the village, but women migrants are also faced with modernity that make them slowly transform and change. There is a large and expanding body of literature within the field of migration studies on women Northeast Thailand. These studies have focused on such things as: the relationship between migration and development, understanding of the migration process, reasons for leaving the Isan region, and impacts of migration (Kitiarsa 2014; Jacqueline 2014; Narongchai 2011; Masaki 2003; Mills 1999; Leah 2004; Phasertkun&Pimonpun 2000; DeJong 2001). These studies touch upon many related issues, such as Northeast women's migration, the effect of migration on different populations, matrilocality, modernity, and identity. However, not one study focuses on the important relationship between mother and daughter in Northeast culture.

Globalization, modernization and capitalism have affected the lives of Isan women tremendously, both giving them new supports and imposing new limitations on their livelihoods. Within the framework of matrilineality in Northeast Thailand, a study of the mother-daughter relationship and how it has changed in rural culture due to women's migration is important for several reasons. First, such a study will help us to understand shifts in family relationships within rural communities in Thailand, but also with echoes in other parts of the world. Second, comprehension of the current situation in rural communities in Isan will be clarified by studying the shifts in the mother-daughter relationships over generations from the points of view of shifts

in matrilocality and matrilineality. Furthermore, it is hoped that this study can be useful to the community's development planning in the future.

1.2 Specific Aims and Significance

The purpose of this ethnographic study is to explore the phenomenon migration and its impact mother-daughter relationship in Isan rural communities in Khonkean and Roiet's provinces in Thailand because it is assumed that these provinces have been affected by the migration of women from Isan. The specific focus will be the social and cultural aspects of social suffering in families of women migrants in the context of labor migration as reflected in changing mother-daughter relationships.

Labor migration is a social force and culture practice (Kitiarsa 2014) in Isan rural community. Modernization results in people changing and adapting to contemporary society norms that are reinforced by migration, affecting family relationships as well as economic and social changes. The shifting phenomenon of migration in Isan region has affected mother-daughter relationships as well as inheritance pattern such as land, house, and duties or obligations to take care of elders in Isan culture. In the context of migration, Mills' (2003 1999) work mentions the tension between parents and daughters where the benefit of remittance is weighted against the increased sexual autonomy where socio-economic advancement came with the risk of behavioral change and increase influence on personal aspirational from exposure to modern city life.

From my point of view, no one has yet to study the Isan mother and daughter relationship change in the context of migration, what is significant because the relationship between mother and daughter in Isan culture is significant to the wellbeing of rural society. Isan women are

expected by society to fulfill the role of “good person or good daughter” based on Buddhist beliefs. For example, men can be ordained into monkhood and this act is considered obligatory in order to make merit for their parents. While women are ineligible to join the monkhood, they can show gratitude for their parents by providing care for them when they are old. Isan women have the duty or obligation to support their families and take care of elders, not only in terms of the mother-daughter relationship, but also in terms of land holding and inheritance, which connects with the mother-daughter relationship in Isan culture.

In this study, I explore Isan culture in part because my grandmother came from the Isan region. My mother was born in *Jaturapakpiman*, Roiet province and she is the youngest daughter of five. As the youngest daughter she has responsibility to take care of her mother. She brought my grandmother from Roiet to live with us in Bangkok. My family also has a servant who came from Isan and found her job and dream in Bangkok. Seeing my roots from Isan culture in my family inspired me to define and explore Isan culture as an ethnographic field in this anthropological study. My close relation with Isan migrant labor has led me to explore the lives of Isan women migrants and their families, as well as identity changes among women because they inevitably encounter social suffering and relationship changes in the course of migration over generations.

I was born and raised in a household guided by the spirit of Isan culture. My parents are both originally from Isan, though they settled down in Bangkok. My mom and my aunt have worked in the government sector as teachers since before I was born, teaching in famous public schools in Bangkok downtown. I was born and raised in Bangkok, while being exposed to Isan culture from food and Thai-Isan dialect that I heard my mom and aunt speak not only to our relatives, but also to other Isan people living in Bangkok who were cooks, maids, and shop owners.

Isan people who met in Bangkok often speak Thai-Isan dialect to one another out of habit and convenience, making it seem like they actually know each other. Because of my background I cannot call myself a complete insider in relation to Isan culture, although because I have been raised in Bangkok, I am somewhere in between an insider and an outsider.

My field studies were inspired by the memory of my grandmother that lived with us in Bangkok, since she could not take care of herself in Roi-et alone. I grew up with my grandmother until she died a few years ago. My grandmother often went back to visit her hometown and that was how I experienced firsthand the picture of Isan migration. My grandmother had a good life since we were a government worker middle-class family. My grandmother was a teacher while my grandfather was a head of local ministry of education. My grandfather died shortly after I was born. Since my grandmother, my mother, and aunt often spoke Isan-Thai dialect everywhere they went, it made me think about the connection of the people that left the Isan region. They always maintained that connection wherever they went as a part of their identity; it enabled them to be able to get back in touch with their Isan roots.

My grandparents used to own land in a town called *Jaturapingpimian* in Isan region. They gave the land to their oldest daughter, which she sold over 30 years ago¹. My only inheritance is my Isan blood, in that my family only owns land and a house in Bangkok. All five children of my grandmother moved away from Isan to work in Bangkok and the house in *Jaturapingpimian* was left abandoned. My relatives who live the same street would sometimes go around to check on the house and inform my mother if the trees needed to be trimmed or if the area needed to be cleaned.

¹ My grandmother split her property equally to her children. My aunt inherited this land after my grandfather passed away, then she sold the land shortly after. My family are not from a famer background and my grandmother preferred to live with my mother at Bangkok. When my grandmother passed away my mother did not inherit land and house from my grandmother, but she inherited some money and jewelry instead. The inheritance has been divided equally for all three sisters include my mother.

This house would only be occupied when my grandmother and her relatives visited their hometown for Buddhist holidays. When I was little we used to take my grandmother to this house once a year, but as time passed we visited the house less due to timing, work, and my grandmother's deteriorating health. Today my grandmother's house sits on two rai or almost one acre of land that was mostly left unoccupied.

1.3 Research Question and Research Objective

Given the centrality of the mother-daughter relationship in Isan culture, it is of crucial importance that we explore how this relationship has changed due to women working as labor migrants in other places. This study is guided by three central research objectives: The major objective is to understand the changing nature of matrilineality and matrilocality in Isan over three generations, especially in relation to migration.

1. To study the nature of the relationship between the middle-aged mother and the youngest or inheriting daughter in rural Isan culture with migration as a backdrop.
2. To compare the contemporary relationship between mother and daughter relationship with the nature of the relationship between the middle-aged mother (who is the inheriting daughter) and the grandmother.
3. To compare the changing nature of matrilineality and matrilocality in Isan in relation to economic agricultural differences between communities.

Because matrilineality is an important concept in the culture of Northeast Thailand where migration is so frequent, many women leave their hometown in Isan region to work in other places; migration could be the main reasons for change in mother-daughter relationship.

1. What is the situation now in these household relations?
2. How does migration affect practices of both of matrilocality and matrilineality?

2.1 By studying the effects of migration on mother-daughter relationships over three generations in Northeast Thailand, how has matrilineality and matrilocality changed in Isan?

2.2 How has the care of elder parents and children shifted?

2.3 How has the receiving of land, inheritance and house transformed in Isan region?

1.4 Organization of the Thesis

Chapter Two, the Literature Review, explores research in the historical background of development discourse and modernity during the economic boom around 1970s-2000s in Thailand. The economic boom and modernity, which has transformed life in Thai society, have revolved around young rural women involved in the migration process due to poverty in Northeast rural communities. I will address how the nation-state has failed to encourage human development in Isan for a long time. This chapter explains the meaning of Isan women's migration and reviews research on the Isan family in this rural region. The economic theory of Gibson-Graham (2008) that touches on economic communality is also presented as part of this literature review.

Chapter Three, Methodology, describes the sites of Dongdang and Nonkhong villages that are central to the study, and how they were selected for fieldwork. I will describe the methodology

by which I arranged interviews and collected data in the Isan rural areas. I will establish an understanding of how I did my fieldwork, including conducting case studies, interviews, and so on.

Chapter Four, “three-generation” describes the framework of the three generations of women in rural Isan that I studied, delving into concepts important to kinship such as “*look-sao-la*” (youngest daughter). I will discuss the diversification that has occurred in each generation, for example, the perceptions of Buddhism. This chapter also shows the particular relations among family members. I will end with a case study from each generation to illustrate significant characteristics and changes in kinship and migration over the generations.

Chapter Five, local economy, deals with the present economic situation in Dongdang and Nonkhong villages. There is a diversity of rural livelihoods that households undertake to earn incomes. Rice culture and rice farming still play an important role in routine life, but it is necessary to also look at home-based work, remittance, debt, and income in the household.

Chapter Six, explores land ownerships and changes there are vital to understanding contemporary changes in matrilocality and the relationship of matrilineality to the land in Dongdang and Nonkhong villages. I will offer case studies that indicate the changing use of the land.

Chapter Seven, migrant women, deals with the way in which migrant women construct their reasons for working away from home. I will discuss remittances sent home by women migrants and the reasons why some migrant women come back home.

Chapter Eight, grandmother child care, outlines the care of children by the grandmother. It describes the situation of grandmothers and grandchildren while the mother lives as a migrant

woman away from Isan rural communities. I will offer case studies of mothering and child care in Dongdang and Nonkhong village.

Chapter Nine, discusses the findings of this study, siting key contributions of this study. I will use J.K. Gibson Graham's iceberg model for understanding the community economy in rural Isan. I will conclude with what changes can be seen in matrilineality, matrilocality, grandmother-child relations, and mother-daughter relationships, (especially the relationship with the younger daughter) in Isan, due to the ongoing migration of women over the last three generations. The villages studied will be compared to see how the varying economic agricultural situations have affected the differences between the two communities.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2. 1 Introduction

Theories help us to organize and view the world. Theories are the result of anthropological thinking, investigation and analysis that have been shaped into useful tools to help us understand the world. Theory might come from a combination of small things, which became a part of the big picture. No single theory can describe everything. In my opinion, we need both theory and ethnography to understand the essence of culture and people.

This chapter analyzes the studies of Western and Thai scholars. Many theories help me to look through the eye of Western anthropologists and see new points of view that can be beneficial to my research; these focus on social structure, human behavior, and human thoughts that can be explained by different theories/approaches and ethnography. In Thai Scholars, feminist and gender difference were popular topics in the academic field during the 2000s. Thai scholar like Amara Phongsapich focus on women's status, working on Thai women and Thai gender topics. Focusing on Isan women topics, famous Thai scholar such as Anan Ganjanapan, Yot Satasombut, Pattana Kitiasa, Buapan Promphaking, and Pachaarin Lapanun have done extensive studies in Northeast Thailand. Their work illustrates perspectives on Thai culture through exploration of family structure, family size, status, and life in rural communities.

My aim is to explore topics such as development discourse, progress, globalization, migration, indigenous people in the rural communities, and women. In the first part of this chapter I discuss development discourse and modernity in Thailand from the perspective of Isan people,

and change in relationship between mother and daughter due to migration. Studying the effects of women's migration from the rural Isan communities, local economics, and stereotypes of Isan women under the power of Thai nation-state are significant. Focusing on women, I wish to develop an understanding of how relationships between mothers and daughter have changed due to migration for labor to other places. I also pay attention to works that explain how modernity is slowly transforming and changing these women migrants in family context.

2.2 Development Discourse and Modernity

The approach of Arturo Escobar is useful in discussing the power between government nation-state and rural poor people who are struggling with inequality especially in relation to the development of Thailand. In "Encountering Development," (1995) Escobar points out that the West has a certain dominance over representations of third-world countries on matters such as politics, economics, ecologies, and cultures. Escobar mentions that development discourse is associated with modernity and Western-style economic practice. For example, the image of societies from the East is portrayed by Western culture as "exotic." (11).

The development discourse represents the configurations of knowledge, rural development, as well as Western knowledge as a system of production, and power. Escobar writes about development and modernity that has not helped to solve the problems of people from developing and so-called Third World countries. Development has not improved the quality of life, but rather has increased the gap between rich and poor, rural and urban. In many ways, the developed Western countries are dominating and exploiting developing and Third world countries. For example, during the Cold War between powers in the Eastern Bloc (Soviet Union and satellite

states) and the Western Bloc (United States and NATO allies), the United States tried to convey the image of help and righteousness in a mission to prevent Communist domination of Southeast Asia. The United States helped to spread capitalistic democracy that has shaped the world into a framework for international corporations and economic domination over poorer developing countries. Escobar also mentions that “as Western experts and politicians started to see certain conditions in Asia, Africa, and Latin American as a problem--mostly what was perceived as poverty and backwardness -- a new domain of thought and experience, namely, development, came into being resulting in a new strategy for dealing with alleged problems. Initiated in the United States and Western Europe, this strategy became in a few years a powerful force in the Third World” (Escobar 1995, 6). Escobar discussed orientalism, developmentalism and government’s ambitious development plans that reflects what happened in Thailand.

Economics and development after WWII made many impacts on indigenous people in the rural areas, as well as on gender relations. Development discourse are present in many policies. For example, in Northeast Thailand, one example of the failed development project is called the “Green Isan” policy. This project was an effort between the Thai army and corporations from Australia to get rid of economic problems and environmental problems of the region, while bringing development and progress to Isan. The project turned out to focus more on commercial interests than small-scale farmers and rural development. There were very loose policies for worker protection. Rural unskilled labor migrants had to endure low wages and unfair jobs both in the agricultural sectors and factories. There were little to no improvements in the local economy of the rural communities and policies were not made considering women’s rights. Unskilled women workers faced low job security, no pensions, and no maternal leaves.

Furthermore, due in part of Isan people and Thai development failure, focus on the impact of dam in local communities that persist for many decades. The case study of *Pak Mun* dam in Isan region reflects the development capability incompetency by the Thai government, with the main failure on the lack of involvement of local communities. Rapid economic progress without adjustments has resulted in the frustration of Isan people that are exploited and struggling. The case of *Pak Mun dam* in Northeast Thailand reflects the incompetency of development capability by the Thai government and World Bank, with the main failure on the lack of involvement from local communities. The article “Voices from the Margin: *Pak Mun dam*” describes the project as “the features of a failed development policy, no participation of local people in the decision-making process, a flawed environmental Impact Assessment, government misinformation, construction carried out in the shadow of martial law, careless World Bank oversight, ill-conceived mitigation plans, and the destruction of an entire river ecosystem upon which river communities depended” (International rivers, 2008). In addition, the local communities are usually perceived as uneducated and in need of help from developed counties. The World Bank provided large funding for building dams in third world countries, but never accounted for the difficulties that the dam may cause to the local communities. The discourse of poverty causes the destruction of national resources, while capitalistic-oriented governments gain profit in the name of promoting development as a hidden agenda. Minority local communities suffered from this development discourse as the Thai state tried to improve the economy but ignored social justice. The result of development discourse in Isan region increased migration, ecosystem problems, household displacements, while reducing food sources and local income. Many people migrated to cities for work, breaking up traditional close family structures. The severe ecological shifts also destroyed local people’s way of life and violated their rights to food, work, and culture.

Escobar's discussion on industrialization and urbanization, technicalization of agriculture, rapid growth of material production and living standards, and the widespread adoption of modern education and cultural values (Escobar 1995, 7) are mirrors to what happened in Thailand's economic boom around 1970s-1990s, (Mills, 2003; Baker, 2000; Keyes, 1986) Thailand had plans to develop the country through expanding industrial and manufacturing production industries. Per Thai's development plan in 1961, there was an objective to change Thailand into an industrial country to achieve a higher GDP and more income (office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2019). Many industries were designated in urban areas and Bangkok suburbs, creating more demand for unskilled factory workers in the area. Migration of female workers due to the poverty reflects the incompetency of the country's development plan for the agricultural and rural sectors. Being "domestic servants", "commercial sex workers", and "worker in factories" are the easiest way to make money for women who have little or no education and who want to escape poverty in their hometown.

However, the successful effort of increasing agricultural productivity in Thailand since the economic boom of 1960s was overshadowed by the increasing demand for unskilled labor from rural areas (Rigg, Promphaking, Mare; 2014; Baker, 2003). Most of the labor available is unskilled due to the failure of government/state in developing by the populations human capital. Low income. Poverty in Isan population is compounded lack in education development. The Thai development plan since 1960s failed to address the issue of human resource and education until 1997 where the development plan vol. 8 started to address these problems (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2019).

In the article "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy", Arjun Appadurai (1990) discussed transnational migration as disjuncture that is caused by globalization

and transnationalism. For Appadurai, globalization does not directly destroy local communities, but rather transnationalism is a major condition of globalization. “Home” and new home in the host country construct new cultures, consumption behaviors, and identities. Appadurai tries to convey the image of people moving with the shifting world in which we live as immigrants, refugees, guest workers and so on. In addition, the situation of deterritorialization could be one of the major effects of prolonged or permanent immigration where people have lost touch with their origins through cultural assimilation and exposure. Appadurai’s approach can help us to understand both internal and international migrants. For example, people from Third World countries move to the First World countries such as United States, Germany, and England for work because they can get more money. Looking at internal migration in Thailand, people who moved to work in Bangkok often try to change their perceived identity into modern city people, hoping for better opportunities in society. Modernity and globalization have brought the concept of being a modern woman to the new generations of women migrants. Globalization, disjuncture and difference in the global culture can establish new forms of identity for the immigrants. However, Appadurai also points out that moving people can also create new connections through kinship with people who share similar roots, cultures and identity. Using Appadurai’s approach in studying mother-daughter relationships and migration in the Thai context puts attention on the connections between “home” and new home in transnational and rural-urban movements.

Irene Dankelman (2002) discusses the connection of local and global ecological crises that affects communities worldwide. She points out the significance of natural resources in the context of globalization, showing that changes occurring in the environment are connected to rapid changes in cultures. Understanding the connection of the environment to community can help to describe cultural roots, belief systems, traditions, and power relationships in community. For

example, Dankelman discusses the global nature of cosmovision with rice. The cosmovision of Dankelman is a framework in viewing the world in order to understand the universe. Cosmovision of Dankelman (2002) have influence my study to touch on rice culture that does not only indicate production of a food source, but also represent spirituality, belief systems, and relationships with culture and community members. Within rice cultures, land is considered to be the property of the earth spirit and the giver of all means of life (Dankelman, 2002).

Isan region is the largest rice producer of Thailand that benefit the Thailand economic development through rice exports. It is necessary to note that Thailand is among the top three countries in the world for highest dollar value of rice exports. In 2017, India exported US \$5.5 billion (26.3% of total rice exports) and Thailand US \$5.2 billion (24.9%) and United States US \$1.8 billion (8.5%) (Workman, 2018). According to the report of Thai Rice Exporters Association (2018) more than 13 million Thais are rice farmers, while ironically most of them are poor. For example, in the *Sri Sa Ket* province of the Isan region, which is the best place in the world for growing Thai Jasmine rice, local people are still poor and disadvantage by their occupation.

Land in the context of matrilocality and matrilineality demonstrates the connection of women with their roots. For example, according to Isan tradition, elder caregiving will be maintained with the income from agriculture. Elder parents will pass their land, house, and property to their daughter so she can take care of them. Land is very important not only for the economy, but land also creates life for new generations in their household. At the same time, land is symbolic of local knowledge and inheritance. The relationships of the family from one generation to another is maintained through land possessions that leads to transfer of traditional skills, local wisdom, knowledge and values. Using Dankelman (2002) as a framework to see the connection of natural resources and community can establish women as gate keepers of relations

with the environment, relations within the community, and relations between the environment and the community.

2.3 Isan Women's Migration

Demand for cheap labor in Bangkok has had a large impact on the Isan population since the economic boom around the 1970s and Thailand's strategy of economic development in export-oriented manufacturing industries (Masaki, 2003; Baker, Phongpaichit, 1997; Mills, 2003). Furthermore, the international labor force is increasing, especially in female labor, and much of it is unregulated or even illegal, placing these workers outside the protection of law and regulations. According to AW Asian Women (2008), states that "the new forms of global migration and growing ethnic diversity is a large factor in economic, social and political structures changes." Modernization and economics are the main factors that drive Northeast women to be internal migrants. An observational study conducted by Heyzer (1986) analyzing women and migration shows that rural-urban migration is a highly selective process. The highest rates of movement occurring among single individual's is in the age group of between 25-29. 37% of rural-urban migrants are under the age of 20 and 67% are under the age of 25. There is a higher rate of movement for young women than for young men up to the age of 20. The higher mobility of Thai young women in this age group is also supported by census data. These young rural women are more likely than their male counterparts to move to Bangkok where there is a greater demand for certain kinds of young female services, such as domestic service, masseuses, and sexual services.

A recent study by the National Statistical in Ministry of Information and Communication Technology in Thailand also indicated that migrants from the Northeast are the largest group of labor migrants in Thailand at 40.7% (National Statistical Office, 2014). This is also due to the fact

that the Northeast region is still the largest and the poorest region of Thailand. Additionally, the Office of the National Economic and Social Development (2018) and National Statistical Office of Ministry of information and Communication Technology (2017) indicated that the amount of remittance sent by women laborers to the Northeast region is more than what men laborers sent.

The study of Phongphit and Hewison (1990) discusses how by working in Bangkok, migrants earned more income than working in their home area and this mobility of people has created a new form of family life. Many grandparents have to raise their grandchildren because often the middle generation ended up working in Bangkok or the Bangkok metropolitan area. Furthermore, the income from migrants can create a new form of relationship in family pattern. Thai development and industrialization are the fundamental factors that stimulated rapid changes on village lifestyle and local culture (Phongphit & Hewison, 1990). This study emphasized the importance of changes in the family unit, particularly on mother-daughter relationship. As Isan rural village is an agricultural community, looking at not only the family relationship, but also the community relationship regarding daily life rituals.

Looking at agriculture and its relation to gender and family can also help us to understand Isan culture. Weismantel (1988) focused on rural, indigenous women and food culture in Ecuador and painted a picture of indigeneity through food embodiment in their communities and the relationships of practice and gender. Weismantel's approach emphasizes the effects of the interdependence of places, such as rural-urban interdependence and global-local interdependence that might affect gender and food in community. Furthermore, Weismantel's work can be used to help to understand the big picture of rural communities, for instance the changing nature of matrilineality and matrilocality in Isan in relation to economic and agricultural differences in Isan regions.

Looking at agriculture in Isan communities, land plays an important role since it is inherited by daughters and sons. The food discourse of Weismantel can be used as a lens to look at women and poverty. Indigenous people in developing and third-world countries must face changing social behavior and organizational structures. Looking at Thailand, Isan people's connection with rice from long ago has been encoded in bodies, minds, and relationships in rural communities. For example, "The goddess of rice" ("*Pra-Mae-Poh-Sobp* in Thai) is a concept that defines the lifestyle and the mood of a certain kind of "place" in Thai's mind. It represents the social structure and village lifestyle of the poor rural population. In many rural villages, women always come back to their homeland at the start of the farming seasons and for Thai new year around April every year (Mills 2003; 51-55). They always bring back food from their hometown with them when they go back to the city. The connection between food from their hometown and working as a laborer in the big city reinforces belief, while stimulating social interaction and practices within the community. Many activities in rural communities require collective effort. Working in rice paddies or making food for the village results in social interaction that give definition to the local culture. Such senses of "place" are carried with the people from place to place, in this case with the young migrant workers from Northeast Thailand to Bangkok through the belief of the goddess of rice. The approach of Weismantel defines food discourse, while points out interesting notions of gender, poverty, and agricultural community that could be applied to my study.

Mills (2003) work revolves around young rural women involved in the migration process due to poverty in Northeast rural communities during the time where concept of modern life is transforming Thai society. In the context of modernity, Mills related to the idea of being an urban up-to-date person (*than-sa-mai* in Thai word), describing an image that rural young women are attracted to in association with modern cultures and trends in Bangkok. Rural community life

versus urban life, local consumption versus capitalistic consumption, and changing gender roles (Masaki, 2003; Mills 2003). As Mills focused her research on women migrants from rural communities. The mentality of women in her study were focusing on being a “good daughter of a family” (p. 80, p. 94-96) by migrate to work and provide financial support to her family. Northeast women strive to be a good daughter while desiring to be perceived as a modern woman at the same time.

Mills’ study focused on Isan women laborers, investigating young rural women who migrate to Bangkok to work in factories. Many young migrants return to their homeland only for a short period of time during the start of farming season or special holiday. While living in the big city they cultivated a new identity and lifestyle. Thus migrants experience conflict between being a modern woman and keeping their economic and moral responsibilities to the traditional, rural lifestyle.

Focusing on modernity and social change in Thailand, Mills (2003) conducted an ethnographic study that answered questions about modernity on one hand and Isan labor migrants upholding economic and moral responsibilities to rural kinfolk on the other. Mills did research with Isan women migrants who worked in Bangkok and found that those women confront significant social and economic constraints as low-wage, low-status migrates labor; yet those bad experiences in the workplace are mediated by aspirations for modernity and participation in modern commodity consumption. Mill points out that people from rural communities seek new opportunities because of limitations in farming and jobs, while the decision of young migrants to leave make relationships in their family worsen, especially between parents and children. Thus, the picture of women’s migration in the 90s is complex and conflictual.

The study of migrants by Masaki (2003) extends the results of Mills and takes into account

two populations: female laborer who worked in Bangkok and female laborer who worked near their hometown. The pattern of Northeast labor migration is that they try to find a job out of their hometown and come back during farming season. Masaki (2003) shows that some migrants can take care of their elders at rural village. The study emphasized an experience of modernity that incorporated perceptions of the rural workers and return migrants. This post-modern approach demonstrates that the experience of women migrants, moving locally and culturally, help to create new forms of culture (Masaki, 2003: 110).

This article discusses the impact of rural industrialization on the migration of Isan women and their families, incorporating the perception of these women on modernization and family role with emerging issues of aging population and maternal distress because of separation from children. Masaki points out that some laborers choose to work in rural factories because they can easily come back to take care their parents. However, it is impossible if they migrate to work in Bangkok. Many migrants prefer to work in the big city because they are attracted by the modern culture and consumption. On the other hand, working in rural factories near their village can provide better relationship between parent and child.

Vanwey. (2005) conducted a study of land ownership between international and internal migration in Mexico and internal migration in Northeast Thailand and concluded that the land can have an impact on migration in four ways: wealth, employment, investment opportunity, and especially inequality in ownership. Vanwey uses data from the Mexican migration project and data from the *Nang Rong* project (covering one district in Northeast Thailand) to show the effects of relative levels of land ownership on migration. She points out similarity across the different types of migration in rural areas. The negative effect of landholding for who have smaller landowners. Vanwey points out that land is distributed more equally among these households. The relations

between land in Northeast Thailand, has a positive effect only for households owning between 10 and 20 hectares of land. (1 hectare=6.25 rai). Local people who own larger amounts of land might use migration to finance purchases which is improve the productivity of their land. Thus, the amount of land owned has a positive effect on out-migration for larger landholders in Northeast (Vanway, 2005: 168).

Gordon F. De Jong did a research study of migration in 2011. De Jong argued that evaluating options between the decision to stay and the decision to move along is a major intentional factor that affects migration behavior. De Jong used data from 1992 and 1994 from the Thailand National Migration Survey show strikingly different sets of expectations, household demographic indicators, and migrant capital factors that were significant in determining migration intentions for men and women. De Jong argues that the perceived family migration norms was a powerful determinant of migration behavior, but the size of network was not statistically significant to determine either migration intentions or behavior. While men's migration was promoted by family and cities network, women's migration carried on added expectation of family support roles. Thus there are difference expectation and values between women and men migrants.

Sara R. and Jacqueline Meijer-Irons (2014) add to our understanding of migration by looking at the relationship of migration with climate change. They suggest that climate change plays a large role in migration in Thailand. This study focusses on the effects of men and women's response to drought and rainfall. Their study also investigates how land ownership moderates these effects. In Thailand, the livelihood of people is related with climate. Bad weather and poor farming season drive people out of their hometowns. The authors also found that lower probabilities of overall women migration are significantly related to land ownership. (Sara R. and Jacqueline Meijer-Irons, 2014: 36).

2.4 Isan Family and migration

A demand for cheap labor in Bangkok has had a large impact on migration among the Isan population. Working in Bangkok, migrants earned more income than working in their homeland. The mobility of people has created a new form of family life. Many grandparents must raise their grandchildren because the second generation are working in Bangkok. Furthermore, the income from migrants can create new patterns of family relationship. Phongphit & Hewison (1990), focusing on Thai development and industrialization, gives the reader a better understanding of the fundamental impact of rapid changes on village and culture. The village life of Isan people has changed due to migration, explained by the culture of Isan, beliefs, rituals, ceremonies and kinship.

Isan as a minority have been gradually inculcated with the nation state's ideology and economy, forming new cultural identity. At this point, the nation-state has created a new definition of Thailand's indigenous people, similar to those in developing countries. For instance, in poor families in the rural communities, the Thai state, aligned with capitalism, pushes people forward into the labor system. Many people in rural areas were ultimately powerless and exploited. Isan rural communities have been infiltrated by the state and market. Many Isan women were stereotyped as sex workers, hired wives of foreign men, and servants. A Thai historian scholar Thongchai Winichakul describes rural folk as just an undifferentiated mass of ignorant, simple, uneducated peasants, an economic resource to be exploited, but not worth understanding (Rigg, 2002). Mary Beth Mills (2003) has stated that people in the rural communities "are a country bumpkin people, they are uneducated, living far from development and achievements of urban Thai life". In additionally, rural Isan identity is often portrayed in media as regional minority. For example. A Thai drama series presents Isan character as servant or sex worker with Thai-Isan

accent. Isan identity in popular media represent a lower status person in a subordinate position in Thai society.

The Northeast lifestyle has changed slowly over many decades since the 60s with the impact of modernization. Family remains a source of cooperation (or conflict) in the terms of income distribution and resource allocation. Migrant remittance has impacted the structure and relationships within the family and this still continues to be a challenging issue. Traditional inheritance pattern is affected, as one other aspects of family relationships in rural Isan.

Rosalie Caffrey (1992) is a Western scholar who has written about elders in the family and health in Isan rural villages with modernization and find that money sent from migrants working in the big city help parents to get new commodities and improve their quality of life. The largest percentage of taking care of elder parent is youngest daughter “as caregiver was found in the developed village 36.7%, while one-fourth in the less developed villages and 18.7% of the elders in the intermediate village were being cared for by youngest daughter” (1992: 110).

According to Caffrey, the quality of care that the elderly receive depends on land and economic status of the family. Most of the Isan families are in poverty because they cannot find a substantial income source other than money sent from their migrant workers. On the other hand, if a household owns large amounts of land and are successful at farming, the Isan traditional pattern of elder caregiving will be maintained with income from agriculture. Land is very important not only for economics, but also land creates jobs for the new generation in their hometown. The relationship within families from one generation to another are the source of traditional skills, local wisdom, knowledge and values. Moreover, Thai culture and Buddhism value the obligation of children to their parents. Either sending money or taking care of their parents make them a good person.

2.5 Concept of matrilineality and matrilocality in Isan culture

Matrilineality is the unilineal groups that are based on links traced through a person's mother (or female kin) are called matrilineal (or uterine) (Murdock 1970; Levenda & Schultz 2012). "In a matrilineal system, an individual belongs to a group formed by links through females, the lineage of his or her mother. "Patrilineal" and "matrilineal" do not mean that only men belong to one and only women to the other; rather, the terms refer to the principle by which membership is conferred." (Levenda & Schultz 2012) This is relevant to who will inherit property from a predecessor.

In Thailand matrilineal in Northern, Northeastern, and central region have existed (Bowie 2008). Many anthropological studies agree that rural Thai women do not maintain lower status than men (Phomphaking, 2000; Wijeyewardene, 1984; Potter, 1970). As the anthropologist John DeYoung in his work of "Village Life in Modern Thailand" (1966) explains that "the social position of the Thai peasant woman is powerful." Isan women usually have high status in the kinship system and are not oppressed by men (Tambiah, 1970; Keyes, 1975; Phomphaking, 2000). However, in Buddhism ideology women cannot be ordained into monkhood, thus they are unable to reach nirvana. This belief puts women in the lower hierarchy of prestige and authority in the context of Buddhism, giving men prestige, rights and authority in religious ceremonies.

In Isan matrilineal kinship, matrilineal membership is derived from the wife's family. Men will usually receive property from father-in-law. The inheritance of parent would go to both daughters and sons equally (DeYoung; Phomphaking, 2000). In practice men usually do not receive property or land since they will have access to their wives' land when they got married

(Mills 2003, Phomphaking, 2000; Caffrey 1992; Keyes 1986). One interesting concept in matrilineal family is “*Look-sao-la*” or youngest daughter in Thai. In traditional Isan agricultural community, the youngest daughter that marry last will inherited the parents’ house and land for taking care of her parents in their old age. “*Look-sao-la*” will usually inherited the biggest piece of land. But in practice the daughter that takes care of parents, not necessary the youngest, will usually be the one who inherited biggest piece of land for her sacrifice and contribution to the parents’ wellbeing in their last days. The concept that “*Look-sao-la*” should stay and take care of her parents are still relevant in the rural communities evident from songs, folktales, and local monk teaching that I have experience in my fieldwork in Isan rural village of Dongdang and Nonkhong.

Matrilocalty refers to the residency practice of newly married couple, as Murdock (1970) remarked about the rule of residence that is significant in every society. Living arrangements are usually consistence with either patrilineal or matrilineal residency that affect the collectivism of family and relatives (Murdock 1970; Savawwerd 1998) Anthropologists use the term matrilocality or matrilocality residence to refers to a pattern of new family unit that live in (or near) the wife’s natal family residence. As well as the term uxorilocal that is also used to describe residency with the wife’s kin (Ortner & Whitehead 1987; Levenda & Schultz 2012; Stone 2000), making the husband a new member of the wife’s family. Husband is usually expected to contribute to the labor force of the household. Many cases of matrilineal societies are also associated with matrilocality (Stone, 2000). In Thailand, Yot Satasombut (2013) discussed the bride services in Isan society that, in addition to monetary dowry, men’s labor work in the women’s household is considered a type of non-monetary dowry to the wife’s family. In many cases men will also work for the wives’ family as a part of requirements for husbands. This is evident from the Isan famous local story of “Cutting wood” that depict the tension between father-in-law and son-in-law (Koh, 2003). In this

story the son-in-law is a new member of the household that is expected to take care of the wife's family in the future, living under the authority and intense discipline of the father-in-law, the story revolves around the conflict between the father-in-law and son-in-law in the forms of jokes. Once the wife's parents pass away the son-in-law will become the head of the family. Considering matrilocality residency, this family structure shows the strength of wife's kinship that contributes to the wellbeing and security for women. Furthermore, marriage of couple also link families together and establishes kinship connections. One interesting marriage ritual in Isan is called Som-Ma, where the groom must pay respect to everyone of wife's relative, accepting them as his own relatives before being parade around the village to announce that the groom is a new member of the village.

There is a large and expanding body of literature within the field of migration studies and Northeast women in Thailand. Research by Charles Keyes shows the characteristics, regionalism and Thai nationalism of Northeast people. In terms of Isan women and matrilocality, Keyes (1983) indicates inheritance passes through women and that "Agriculture land is passed from a couple to their daughters and son-in-law" especially, the youngest daughter who is usually the last to marry in family (1983: 852). Also, Caffrey (1997) mentions that daughter was expected to bring husband into her family and continues to cultivate her parent land. Young daughter was expected to remain in the household after her marriage to care for her parent until their death. If there were no daughters, the youngest son brings his wife into household as the caregiver (1997: 107).

Pattern of matrilocality and matrilineality in Northeastern Thailand is similar to what is Northern Thailand broadly. The study of Bowie (2008) has touched on the issue of "matrilocality and matrilineal kinship" in rural politic as election context. She argues that the public domain of electoral politics in rural Thailand is embedded within village practices of matrilocality and

matrilineal kinship. Villagers give one vote for who is closest kin to them. The local political networks provided by their wives, sisters and mothers are often the primary organizers of mutual credit associations, and also support for their respective candidates. She also points out “the importance of matrilineal as the key structural principle of village social organization, women’s role has been to safeguard their matrilineal and ensure the functioning of inter-matrilineal relations both within and across village.” (2008: 148).

The study of Phongphit and Hewison (1990) on identity in the Northeast, discussing kinship, have found that young migrants will usually go back home during Thai New Year to celebrate with their family and rekindle ties. Most of young migrants who work in Bangkok, the Middle East, or elsewhere will send money home to their parents. “Father and Mother” are the most important institutions. They are to be respected and supported. To be a good person, young migrants are expected to send money home.

Finally, the work of Lapanun (1993) also supports the strong role of women in the Northeast Thailand. Lapanun finds that women’s trade is central to her role of responsibility to the household economy as a good mother, as good wife, and good daughter. This usually takes place in local and regional contexts. However, nowadays migrant women become an important source of income for household. In short, Lapanun shows that modernization has different effects along gender and age lines.

2.6 “Skipped generation” in Isan

In the term of skipped-generation in Isan family household, the meaning is referred to grandchildren is raised by grandparent with assistance from parents (Narongchai and Aywat (2011:

36). Research by Narongchai and Aywat conducted a survey in *Nongbualumpoo* province, Northeast Thailand. The study focused on the patterns of co-residency of the so-called skipped-generation in Isan migrant family which indicates the grandmother caring for the grandchildren with the middle generation gone on migration. The result of the study found that the migration situation in rural villages has continued to occur. This has affected the family structure and causes the skipped-generation family, which has different components depending on the social status of elderly persons and number of children. Patterns of co-residency of the skipped-generation in Isan migrant family have been classified into two patterns, the single grandparent in the skipped-generation family and the couple grandparents in the skipped-generation family. Both of the patterns in her study only focus on the relationship between grandparent and their grandchildren. The grandparent has responsibility to take care, educate, and support their children instead of their sons or daughter. The data of Narongchai also shows that some money was sent from middle-generation labor migrants in order to support their family.

There are both positive and negative effects of migration on the relationships in the family. The negative effect of migration is that there are no one to take care of the elderly and young people. An observational study conducted by Phasertkun & Pimonpun (2000) analyzed the Isan migrants in *Nang Rong, Buri Ram* province. They found that migrants cannot take care of their own children, while their elderly cannot take care themselves due to various reasons. However, Phasertkun & Pimonpun point out one advantage of migration is the monetary return for elderly. They can use that money to help them improve their quality of life.

The study of Keiko Kiso (2012) described mothers' labor migration and childcare in Northeast Thailand. Her study indicated that women's migration affect, relationship among family member, as well as the meaning of mothering. Women's migration restructures family forms

where grandmother have to take care of grandchildren. This form of grandmother childcare takes on symbolic role of caregiver of her grandchildren (Kiso, 2012: 478). Her work shows that women migration affects the pattern of child rising, finance and aging parent care in Northeast rural areas.

2.7 Isan Women in Rural Community

Julie Gibson and Katherine Graham (2008)

I follow the foundation laid by J.K. Gibson Graham (2009) to help me put into context the complexity of Isan family and relationships. Relationships between women and social structure are dynamic. J.K. Gibson Graham (2009), described the new political vision of anti-capitalism, looking at the meaning of women in the frame of class identities and community economy as the potential ground for a new non-hegemonic articulation. Their idea is to elaborate on the non-mainstream aspects of economy by considering language that contains subtexts and non-monetary contexts; this intrigues me. In many frameworks people on the edge of society in rural setting are often ignored.

Many studies of labor mobility in Thailand focus on migration as a response to rural poverty. In this study I focus on rural women. I consider for women in households as her responsibility as daughter in Isan culture. Gibson and Graham (2008) can help me to construct a better picture of women's migration and family relationships between mothers and daughters of Isan women, not just in economic perspective, but also in cultural perspective. Their idea of community economy is quite outside the box of the mainstream economy because community economy touches on the issues of economic instability and inequality. Their work shows the importance of local economic relations that activate relationships in local community. In developing countries, there are traditional practices of gender division of labor that prevail in

households where domestic work is performed by women (Julie Gibson and Katherine Graham 2008, 67). The diversity of economic relations as well as identity changes among women is due to the encounter of social suffering and relationship changes during migration over generations.

In addition, the patterns of co-residency of the skipped-generation in Isan migrant family can be applied to the iceberg model of J. K. Gibson-Graham, two feminist economists, following the analogy of iceberg with visible top of the iceberg and a larger invisible below-the-water iceberg. As J. K. Gibson-Graham mentions that “the point of this framing is really to highlight our deconstructive move. By marshaling the many ways that social wealth is produced, transacted, and distributed other than those traditionally as associated with capitalism, non-capitalism is rendered a positive multiplicity rather than an empty negativity, and capitalism becomes just one particular set of economic relations situated in a vast of economic activity” (Julie Gibson and Katherine Graham, 2008: 70). The tip of the iceberg can be represented by consumerism and capitalism, while the invisible economy or the support system is the bottom of the iceberg, which is the psychological support of a shared culture in which symbols, values, love, tradition, family care, and relationship of mother and daughter can be freely drawn on to create meaning.

In the context of my research, the top of the iceberg is the apparent economic activity that translates into monetary income, while the bottom of the iceberg represents the supporting factors that enable the economic activity and retain meaning such as family relationship and love. The patterns of co-residency of the skipped-generation in Isan migrant family have shown that the elder generation have supported younger generation in many ways. For example, grandparent has the responsibility to take care, educate, and support their children instead of their sons or daughter, who support the family by sending back remittances from working in other places. Remittance culture is an obligation for “a good daughter”, while women who live in a rural community will

work in rice field, farming, handicraft, and take care of children as a form of unpaid labor. They also take care of their land, house, poverty when they are inherited. In this case remittance are turned into unproductive expenditure of the household (Julie Gibson and Katherine Graham 2008, 94) such as a new washing machine, motorcycle, refrigerator, etc.

Normally grandparents are considered social surplus, but in this case, social surplus may be used to support those who are currently nonproducing such as infants and small children. Women migrants produce more value embodied in social commodities more than what is compensated by her wages (Julie Gibson and Katherine Graham 2008: 91-92). Furthermore, social surplus can create new communities and culture, while the decision-making process that configure surplus appropriation and distribution will play an important role in determining their ethical character in Isan community economy. The rewards for unpaid labor may come in the form of love, emotional support, protection, companionship, and a sense of self-worth (Julie Gibson and Katherine Graham 2008: 62-63). In addition, “money” has different meanings and contexts in the poor rural communities. More than means of trade and consumption, money can also represent the abstract of culture where success and happiness is translated. Being able to afford a motorcycle or refrigerator means that their daughter or sons is successful in life. Money and consumption can be a way that people in the community measure, compare or express success. Community economy take multiple form of economic differences. The relationship between mother and daughter due to community economy is characterized by unpaid labor, paid labor, social surplus, and psychological support.

These theoretical works contribute to the background and framework for my study. They have made me think more deeply about the social structure and culture change that affect Isan women migrants and traditional patterns of matrilineality and matrilocality. I will return to some

of these works in the later chapters when I discuss the contributions of my study in relation to their findings. Much of the literature mentioned in this review has touched on issues such as poverty-caused migration and its effect on family structure, Northeast women's migration, the effect of migration on different populations, matrilocality, modernity, and identity. Through them I can explore the changes in family relationships along with social and cultural implications of the transformations that are due to migration and modernity. They make a basis for this original study on the effects of migration on mother-daughter relations.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

3.1 Research Methods

The fundamental objective of my thesis is to understand the mother-daughter relationship in Isan culture. In my research, I use various techniques in ethnographic methodology to help me understand the current Isan culture. Thus, theory and ethnography work like a jigsaw puzzle to create understanding of the essence of culture and people. As Mills wrote “Ethnographic research is always an extremely personal endeavor and its outcome—an attempt to understand “other” lives and practices—is necessarily filtered through the ethnographer’s own peculiar interests, emotional responses, and cultural sensitivities” (2003:23). I selected two villages in the Northeast of Thailand to compare the experiences of migration for women and the effects on the mother-daughter relationships in the families. I used my grandmother and mother’s connections to connect with people from Dongdang village in Jaturapingpimian district, Roiet Province. I contacted the head of village through my aunt. Then I contacted Nonrachit Jirasatthumb, who is a lecturer at Khonkean University, to help introduce me to people in Nonkhong village in Baan Fang district in Khonkean Province. I made contact with the district-chief at Baan Fang to help me select a suitable village for my research.

In each village, I chose five households in which women migrated for work and in which I could interview the grandmother, mother, and daughter. I used focus groups on the first day that I arrived at each village and again on the last day before I left. When necessary, I snowballed from

household to household in these small villages. I conducted formal interviews and semi-structured interviews, using questionnaires that covered such topics as family relationship, land ownership, parents, and households. (Please see the Questionnaire in Addendum A.) I also used life history to design the questionnaires and interview questions. Life history evokes local people's experiences in relation to their timeline, and through this I try to understand their worldviews, behaviors and how they may have been influenced by poverty. I also use informal interviewing as the method of choice at the beginning of participation observation field-work (Burnell 2011:171).

Questionnaire, interviews, and their life stories were put together to create the big picture in my research. I usually interviewed people at their houses and sometime at the central house of their village. In Bangkok, I interviewed people several places such as, mall, coffee shop. I interviewed some of the young daughters through social media. I used a voice recorder and took notes every time to make sure that I covered all the important points.

During my time in each village I didn't dress up and put on any makeup. I dressed like the local farmers so that I could blend in. I also conducted interviews in Thai-Isan accent to make the subjects feel more comfortable. I joined public events in the village to collect participant observations. Participant observation includes going out and staying out, and learning a new language (Burnell 2011:276). I always brought and offered some food and beverages when I met with interviewees at their houses as a token of gratitude. I stayed in Dongdang village and Nonkhong village at the end of September 2016, and again at the beginning of October 2017. I transcribed the data from my interviews in Thai-Isan dialect and translated life stories and important ideas into English. I coded the material in Dedoose and developed themes from the coding.

3.2 Choosing the villages

Northeast Thailand is also known as Isan, which is also the largest region of Thailand, located on the Khorat plateau bordered by the Mekong River (bordered with Laos) to the north and east, by Cambodia to the southeast and the Sankampaeng Range south of Nakhon Ratchasima Province. To the west it is separated from Northern and central Thailand by the Phetchabun Mountains (Department of Provincial Administration 2019). Isan region covers 168,854 square kilometers with the largest population of 22.30 million people. This is also considered the poorest and driest region of Thailand.

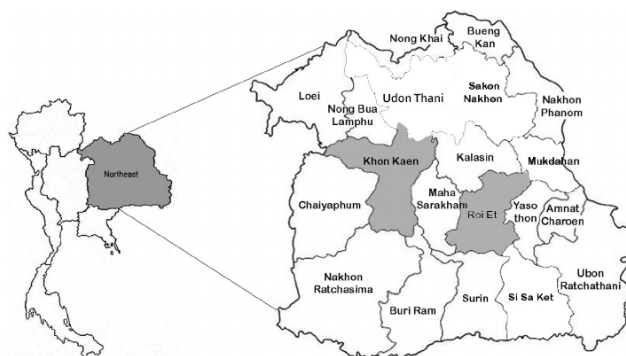


Figure 3.1 Northeast Thailand map and the research site: Roi Et Province and Khonkaen Province

The typical images of Isan villages through the lens of Bangkok middle class are often of a poor indigenous village full of cows and buffalos with dirt roads, no running water or electricity, where villagers live with the bare minimum. This would have been true 30 years ago. In reality, I saw in many villages new cars and newly built modern-style houses with traditional farming sheds.

From my survey and observation, many people of the younger generation are staying and working in Roiet Province instead of migrating to work in Bangkok like the older generations used to do. I've also met many people my age that are university graduates, they mention to me that they work in cities in Isan region.

Roiet Province and Khonkaen Province are an hour-and-a-half away from each other by car. I decided to choose a village from Roiet Province and another village from Khonkaen Province because these two provinces represent the central region of Isan. I chose Dongdang village in Jaturapakpiman district in Roiet Province because it was close to my grandmother's house in which I could stay during my research period. I found out about this village through my aunt that connected me with key informants in the area. I went to visit the village, met the head of the village and decided to choose Dongdang village for my research because this village is a great representation of what a typical village in Isan is like in terms of people, culture, and environment.

Then I got in touch with Professor Nonrachit Jirasatthumb who is my brother's friend and a close acquaintance that works as a lecturer in the faculty of Business Administrator and Accountancy at Khonkaen University. When I arrived at Khonkaen University he asked me to meet Professor Buapun Promhakping before I left for field study. Professor Buapun Promhakping is a senior lecturer at Khonkaen University. I was so excited to have met him in person since I have read his work with Jonathan Rigg on Isan studies. His work has been associated with the Isan region for a long time. Professor Buapun told me about his research in the field of gender studies in Isan. Then I met and talked with many officers at Khonkaen University through Professor Nonrachit Jirasatthumb's connections. Conversations with most of the people I met were very welcoming and friendly. Interestingly, all of the university officers were in the younger generation with families in rural Khonkaen Province. I heard stories about droughts that resulted in dead rice

fields. People retold those stories with tears in their eyes, reminiscing about the struggles of their families. A woman who works as an office at Khonkaen University suggested that I call the district-chief at Baan Fang district in Khonkaen Province. She gave me his phone number and introduced me on her behalf. After the preliminary research, I decided to choose a village at Baan Fang district in Khonkaen province because of a story from a university officer. She said “I remember the time in Nonkhong village at Baan Fang district where I was born when they had no water for a whole year. My mom and I had to beg for rice from neighbors.” I talked with district-chief *Surachai* about my research. He gave me many names of villages in Baan Fang district. He told me that there are eight to ten villages that are now economically sustainable from growing mushrooms. These mushroom the village head in Nonkhong village, *Puiyaibaan Mai* and *Puiyaibaan Sak*, and after I talked to them I decided to choose Nonkhong village for my research.

Contemplating the concept of rural field study, I thought about an article I have read from Jonathan Rigg, “Production, Consumption and imagination in Rural Thailand” (Rigg, 2002), who works in Southeast Asia on geography and rural transition. His work mentioned the rural idyll that city people desire as they look at the rural setting as a beautiful place, pure and fresh. In contrast, the interviews that I’ve had with many mothers illustrate the hardships that they faced through social structure, economy and poverty—which has not changed for Isan people over many government administrations.

The research methodologies employed in this study are directed toward collection of qualitative data. This research project took place in Dongdang village, Jaturapakpiman district at Roiet province and Nonkhong village, Ban Fang district at Khonkaen province in Isan region. Most villagers from both Dongdang and Nonkhong are Laotian descendants or Thai-Laos. Both villages speak Thai-Isan dialect and residents believe in a rural form of Buddhism that incorporates

ideas of ghosts and superstition. The two villages are primarily relying on agriculture, especially rice and mushrooms. However, the majority of many households' income is obtained from employment outside the village in the form of remittances. Five households of each village were interviewed, included women representing three generations from each household. I spent one month in each village in 2016 and came back again for another month in 2017. Also, from November to December 2017, I did interviews with young daughters of the families that I met in the village who now live in Bangkok because of migration.

Dongdang village

Based on ethnography research both in villages and in Bangkok, I started my research in Dongdang village. I got to stay at my grandmother's house again after so many years. It felt similar to the last time I had been there, but the condition of the house was deteriorating. The house felt peaceful and lonely. There were many memories here, as I looked at the pictures of many family events that happened here, even though I've never actually lived in this house. I saw pictures of all my relatives, my parent's wedding photo, my aunt's graduation photo, and Buddhist holiday celebration photos among the many pictures that are still hanging on the wall.

My grandmother's house is 15 minutes' drive from Dongdang village and the head of the village had prepared breakfast for me in advance of my arrival on Wednesday morning for my first day of research. The head of village in Dongdang name is "*Lord-Charsaart*". I founded out later that the head of village in Dongdang was my mother's distant relative. His house was full of fabric products, since his wife had a part-time job at home, making bedsheets. Other villagers also kept their finished products at the head of the village's house before delivering them to the middle men.

Those fabric products like bedsheets and washcloths would eventually make their way to markets around Roiet Province. Besides representing the village and leading village activities, this illustrated that the head of village was also economically tied to the villagers as well.

Dongdang was a small village with concrete and dirt roads. I saw the portrait of the late King Rama Nine at the entrance of the village next to old telephone booths on the drive entering the village. Dongdang village had a mom and pop shop, a small grocery stand, a motorcycle repair shop and a barber shop. There were rice fields around and throughout the village of 95 households. Most houses were made from wood and concrete.
















Nonkhong village

Nonkhong village was a mid-size village of 141 households that was very hard to reach with concrete roads going deep into the rural area that was famous for its mushrooms and frogs. The main occupations of this village were growing mushroom and raising frogs, receiving awards for being an excellent village that created sustainable local industries. In this sense it was economically different from Dongdang village. On the way to the village the two sides of the road were mostly rice fields. There was a local village school at the entrance of the village to the left next to the local health station. Driving around the village I saw two barber shops, a motorcycle repair shop, three mom and pop shops, a temple and a meditation house. When I arrived at the village the heads of village came to welcome me, wearing their best outfits. This village had two heads which are *Puiyaibaan Mai* (female) and *Puiyaibaan Sak* (male). It is unusual for a village to have two heads of village, especially one male and one female. They took me to the center house of the village to meet with about 20 ladies that were waiting for me to interview them. I was

surprised with their hospitality and cooperation in interviews. I introduced myself that I'm conducting a field study on Isan women. The village head took some photos while I was doing a focus group to report to the local government that there was a researcher from America doing a field study at the village. The women were ages from 40-60 years old and were very enthusiastic in the focus group. Even though Nonkhong village was bigger than Dongdang and were doing better economically, there were many similarities with Dongdang village in terms of people, culture, and environment. In the course of my stay *Puiyaibaan Mai* often took me to local events and ceremonies, allowing me to conduct participation observation as well as facilitated interviews with fellow villagers.

3.4 Sample selection

In this study I targeted Thai Isan women between the ages of 20 and 80, separated into 3 generations of elder mother, middle-aged mother, and young daughter. I tried to located households with all three generations alive and households with female member that are migrating or have migrated in the past. If someone among the three generations refused to be interviewed, I would proceed to the next household. At Dongdang, most of my interviewees were married women. In Dongdang village I interviewed 12 people, with 2 people from the village interviewed in Bangkok and 1 interview though LINE application and Facebook VDO call. In Nonkhong village I interviewed 11 people, with 3 people from the village interviewed in Bangkok, and 1 interviews though LINE application and Facebook VDO call. My interviewees also included the village head in each village as will.

Dongdang village	Family 1	Family 2	Family 3	Family 4	Family 5
elder mother	 62	 68	 82	 60	 76
middle-aged mother	 45	 45	 55	 48	 51
Young daughter	 24	 26	 26	 27	 33
















Nonkhong village	Family 1	Family 2	Family 3	Family 4	Family 5
elder mother	 69	 80	 73	 79	 67
middle-aged mother	 46	 60	 54	 58	 47
Young daughter	 26	 38	 27	 31	 34

Figure 3.2 Interviewees at Dongdang and Nonkhong villages

Total=30 key informants

3.5 Gathering data

Isan people in the Northeast region speak the Thai-Lao language that is different from the main dialect of main Thai. I can also understand special Lao words that are helpful in understanding the cultural context as an interviewer. I usually begin by asking my interviewee easy questions such as Where do you live? Who do you live with? And how many children do you have? Besides our common linguistic dialect, I would share my stories and connection to Isan region to create rapport with my interviewee. My mother was born in Roi-et Province as well as my grandmother who was born and worked in Isan region for most of her life. This made my interviewee more comfortable and easier to open up to me. They often identified me as another Isan daughter. I addressed myself as “*Nu*”, meaning little miss, a Thai cultural conventions of seniority and fictive kinship prefix (Kitiasa, 2014: 15). I called my interviewee “*Mae*” or mother to show them respect and made them feel closer.

Following Creswell (2014), I contacted “gatekeepers” who could provide access to the site and permitted the research to be done. I contacted the village heads in Dongdang village and Nonkhong village before I started in-depth interviews and participant observation. The village heads were excellent facilitators that made interviews easier because they had residential records as well as the trust of the villagers. Not only can the village head create a comfortable atmosphere for my subjects, but also the village head knows the activities and schedules of their residents, helping me to identify and make a list of village residents, and selecting suitable interviewees. Isan rural village dwellers give much respect and importance to the head of village. The role of head of

village extends beyond official descriptions. Sometimes the head of village even helps to negotiate and settle disputes between villagers, providing guidance and even loaning them money.

This study of women villagers' life stories helped me to understand the history of women and matrilocality in their context. Life histories from Isan women can also be used as research questions in the form of semi-structured interviews. I usually started my interviews with elder mothers or middle-aged mothers. If any one of three generations was not there, I would ask to contact them later. If young daughters or middle-aged mothers lived in Bangkok, I would usually ask for their contact information and make appointments with them later. After I interviewed elder mothers and middle-aged mothers in the rural villages I would call up the young daughter along with the middle-aged mother to introduced myself before I left the village for my Bangkok interviews. In some case I brought some stuff from her mother in the village to give to the daughter in Bangkok. Two young daughters from Dongdang village were interviewed at a mall in Bangkok near their work place while some other young daughters were interviewed through telephone calls. I used LINE application to interview a young daughter living in Germany with her husband. I used field logs to plan out interview schedules because there are many households and three generations for each.

Participant observation was used to study their daily activities such as working on their farm, having lunch, dinner, or visiting Buddhist temples (*wat*) on weekends. I was invited to join merit-making events such as the *Katin* festival in both Dongdang and Nonkhong village. I would be there every time anyone asked me to join. I was invited to join family dinners with my interviewees on many occasions. Sometimes I even interviewed women while they were working. I participated with washing scallions in Dongdang and the women gave me some scallion as a token of their gratitude. Working with them, people would see me and talk with me more

comfortably. The villagers called me “little miss researcher from America.” On many occasions they would wait for me at their house for their turn to be interviewed. The head of village would give me a ride on his motorcycle to houses in the villages since the head of village knows where everyone lives. After a few weeks in the village I started to remember who lives in each house and then sometimes the interviewee would give me a ride to the next house on my list.

There were also some difficulties that I encountered as well. Most households in the villages welcomed me as a researcher while a small number of people looked at me as an outsider and were reluctant to share their personal stories. Some elder women were also not talking much and needed help from daughters to open up and tell their stories. One of the thing that I noticed is that some middle-aged mothers were reluctant to share their past in fear of me telling those stories to their daughters. They did not want their daughters to know about their past. I had to convince them that as a researcher and scholars I would kept their stories confidential. On many occasions the interviewees were very emotional, telling their past stories, making me cry with them since some of the stories were sad and they had not talked about it for a long time.

3.6 Analyzing data

The other difficulty that I faced with was the issue of coding Thai-Isan dialect. It was very hard to transcribe the Thai-Isan dialect into English considering the emotional and cultural context. I used a recorder for my key informants. I listen my audio more than three time. I transcribed from Thai-Isan language, then back and forth between the audio and transcription many times. I used the Dedoose program to analyze and categorize my data, coding the data by text or image segment (Creswell, 2013). I coded both the interviews and my fieldnotes from my journal. The data analysis

was coded by paragraphs and sentences. Text, data, and images were split into categories. The raw data obtained from my field study were reshaped in the process of my analysis. In the process of writing I tried to understand and discuss specific historical, cultural, ethnic and class situations. I developed my research from new ideas that emerged from data analysis. I spent a lot of time summarizing and shaping the data into themes (Creswell, 2013) by comparing texts. My data analysis process was focused on the three generations and comparing contrasting the five households in both Dongdang and Nonkhong villages.

3.7 Methodological Reflections

Anthropology has taught me to accept the different schools of thoughts and to pay attention to the context of society and diversity. In general, theories resulting from anthropological thinking, investigation, and analysis take shape into useful tools to help us organize and understand the world. Ethnography formulated theories from combinations of small things, which became a part of the big picture that ultimately inspired research. Thus, no single research could describe everything, and also research is never perfect. In my opinion, a combination of theory, ethnography and research through anthropological lens are the best way to study the essence of culture and people.

From the literature of *Mr. Pattana Kittiasa*, a Thai-Isan scholar, the concept of “Las Meninas” from literature of Michael Foucault was mentioned that had captured my interest. “Las Meninas” is where the subject of a painting witnessed the creation of the painting of him or her in real time by means of a mirror, instead of seeing the painting for the first time when it was done. I felt that the concept mirrored field study in the sense that the subject of an interview also

influences the direction of the interview as the interview is conducted. As people retold their life stories, it brought back memories and emotions that made ways for new reflection and realization with the guide of the interviewer. Field study is not static since many aspects will have to be changed and improvised under the circumstances within the framework. Spending time in both villages helped me to experience the hospitality and the reality of the community and culture that contributed to a better understanding of the local cultural context.

We are observing ourselves being observed by the painter and made visible to his eyes by the same light that enables us to see him. And just as we are about to apprehend ourselves, transcribed by his hand as thought in a mirror, we find that we can in fact apprehend nothing of that mirror but its lusterless back. The other side of a psyche. (Michel Foucault, *the Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. 1971 p.6)

Chapter four

Three Generation, Buddhism and the Role of women

4.1 Isan Rural Woman: Roles and Responsibility

Traditionally, Thai gender roles are determined by the social and cultural conditions where girls are considered easier to raise, more helpful around the house, and more likely to care for parents in old age, while sons are helpful in farm work and can enter into monkhood to make merit for parents. In the women of rural Asia, Whyte and Whyte (1982) describe the rural community of Thailand where tasks are performed by both men and women. Grandmother look after home and infants while the husband, wife and older children work on the fields. The husband may tend the buffalo and the children can help gather its feed in the evening. Girls and boys look after small children, cut grass, tend animals and work in the fields. Privilege is prioritized by seniority rather than gender. Labor task are often distributed with no discrimination between men and women while gender specific tasks such as household chores and children care are the responsibility of women.

Pongsapich (1998), explained that Thai society expects certain responsibilities from women as a daughter. It is expected that women have to undertake most of the housework, while wives must obey her husbands because men are the authority in decision making. This is in contrast to the, “good” women in the modern migrant eyes; women who took up jobs outside of home and sent remittance to sustain household. Trying to fulfill the role of mother, wife and migrants, women

are carrying many duties in the household as well as working outside at the same time, while being a good daughter and mother to her family.

Isan women play an important role in both economic and cultural well-being of the Isan family. Isan women are traditionally obligated to take care of elder and young children. For instance, in the traditional Northeast village, the constituent units were domestic groups (kin groups) which consisted of a family and the sons-in-law who had married into the wife's family. Keyes (1983) points out that agriculture land is "passed from a couple to their daughters and son-in-law". In Isan land is usually inherited by couples from the wife's mother and father, although much land was obtained traditionally through homesteading before the creation of nation-state. The youngest daughter who is usually the last to marry, Bowie (2008), is expected to remain with the elderly to take care of them. Then eventually she will inherit her parents' land. The economic status of many families in the Isan region also relies on income from women working outside their hometown where migration is considered to be one of the ways that families in rural areas can earn money. Lapanun (1993) discussed the role of women in northeast, their responsibility, family and reproduction in relation to household and economic transition in local and regional contexts.

The study on gender and cosmology by Sparkes (2005) in Loei province discussed the relationship between gender and cosmology in the dominant sphere. In female dominant sphere the power inherent in nature, life essence (*khwan*) of ancestors, female descent groups, and household are symbolized by female. Sparkes mentioned that the difference in age between sons and daughter is also important to when they leave the family to establish his/her own household. The youngest daughter usually stays with parents in the ancestral household. In the household, wives and daughters are the manifestation of authority while the male is still considered

superiority. “Father and Mother” are the most important household institution. They are to be respected and supported.

Mills’ (1999) study indicated that the perception and experience of Isan women are becoming more diverse, focusing on Isan women migrant worker that worked in Bangkok from a certain village in *Mahasarakam* province. She discussed the differences in experience and perception felt between the old and the new generation of women. The life struggles in the context of modern world are becoming more emphasize on the idea of modernity, individualism, and adaptation that results in conflicting roles of life in Bangkok and life in their home village as daughter, wife, of mother. Mills’ work is in the same theme as the work from Kiso that explore the remittance model of working women. From Mills and Kiso, we can see a better picture of Isan women’s role and social status where they still hold the economic responsibility. For example, mothers allow their daughter to leave home to work and sent money back, since the mother once did the same for her family, while grandmother will be responsible for grandchild care. After the daughter moved back to hometown as wife or mother those experience will be brought back with the women, helping to shape the village to the coming changes of the future.

This chapter aims to exhibit the family lifestyle relationship in Isan women through the exploration of each of three generations in Dongdang village and Nonkhong village. How each generation change and deal with changes, focusing on the recent changes of rural village women through selected cases and points from the research.

In both of Isan rural village that I interview, people often got married at a young age. Mostly they get marriage at the age between 18-24. In some case study in elder mother group they

even got married at the young age of 16-17. It can be assumed that the majority of women in these age-groups are also wives and mother. Traditionally Isan families were normally large, with several children and many generations living together in a large compound household unit. Men will usually move into women's household. The other important aspect of marriage ceremony, from experience of elder mother and middle-age mother, is to announce the marriage to the villagers and relatives. Rural weddings are simple and will usually be done at the bride's house. Those who can afford will invite the monks to come and bless the couple at the wedding and gave them food and robes. In the past silk making is an important part of the marriage tradition. Girls has to learn to make silk so that one day she can make silk to gift them to their future groom and his family. Marriage also signifies a transition of girls into womanhood that are ready to have a family and bear child. Silk making also represent the learning and process of passing on knowledge from one generation to the next where mother will teach daughter the art and craft of silk making as well as the specific pattern of each household or village. While today younger generation are getting married at an older age than their mothers and silk making is becoming less important in the process of marriage preparation. Silk making in both villages are becoming less prominent as well as the disappearance of household silk making skills. In this aspect women in Dongdang and Nonkhong are both very similar, regarding the changing roles of women in each age group as well as beliefs, religion, perspective, and the village lifestyle.

On the other hand, from the interview on marriage from elder mother and middle age mother, the core marriage ceremony is still practice today. For example, looking at the marriage proposal ceremony where parents and one senior relative representative will go to woman's house to ask woman's parent permission for their daughter to marry their son. This shows the importance of kinship in the rural village and the importance function of the extended family. From all of the

household that I interview, elder mother and middle age mother have gone through the same marriage proposal ceremony.

“We have to give respect to our future husband through ceremony. My mother taught me when I was young. In the past there will also be a ceremony master that will come to teach you all the steps in the marriage ceremony to show respect to the husband’s parent as well as making merit for the family. My parents taught me that in a meal you have to let the husband eat first before wife can starts eating.” (Srichard, interview 2016)

“The bride must learn about who is who in the groom’s family and during the marriage ceremony there will be a point where the bride must give gift to the groom’s family to show good will. This ceremony has not change since the time of my mother, but the different is that everything looks more modern. In the past the bride will just wear a plain white silk dress. Bride then will wash the groom’s feet and pay respect to the elder before let him enter the house.” (Dawon, interview 2016)

In the study of *Intimate Knowledge: women and their health in north-east Thailand*, Andrea Whittaker (2000) discuss the 1990s birth control campaign by the Thai nation state with a motto “Two children are enough”. In this case fertility control coincides with state population policy as directed that younger mother should only have two children. This campaign stems from the overwhelming poverty in Isan region looking to attach the financial burdens of rising many children with the post-modern ideology that prefers small size family.

The gender dynamic in both Dongdang and Nonkhong village are very co-dependent. Isan people are rarely sexist, and women are generally respected, reflecting from the prefix for women

in different age group. Newborn baby girl until 12 years old will be called “*enang*”. 13 years old until married, girls will be called “*sao*”. After marriage up to 45 years old she will be called “*mae*”, which means mother. At 45-60 years old she will be called “*mae-yai*”, translated to boss mother. And after 61 years old until death she will be called “*mae-yai-tuad*”, which translated to boss godmother. (Kittiasa, 1994) The word “Mae” that is used for women over 45 years old means “mother” and to call a woman “mother” is to give her the same respect and treatment one would give their own mother. Mothers are also considered a source of local wisdom, skill and guidance in Isan culture. This prefix illustrates the Thai culture of respecting elder as well as representing the social expectation, status and the respect women received in the rural village society.

Pairee	67	Srichrad	69
Mayuree	68	Lorde	80
Sutta	82	Nun	73
Seesri	60	Palee	79
Som	76	Nang	67

Figure 4.1: from case study aging generation who is 60 years old in Dongdang and Nonkhong villages.

Tungoh	45	Dawon	46
Sunee	45	Bonmee	60
Panna	55	Oui	54
Nujan	48	Samai	58
Dang	51	Tungting	48

Figure4.2: from case study name and age of middle-aged mother in Dongdang and Nonkhong villages.

Toey	24	Aim	29
Jai	26	Kookkai	38
Tee	26	Noi	27
Vee	27	Num	31
Numwan	34	Jaw	33

Figure 4.3: from case study name and age of young daughter in Dongdang and Nonkhong villages.

4.2 Buddhism in villages

One significant perspective of changing in rural Isan in this section is the results in change of gender dynamic and family relationship. To understand Isan rural culture, it is important to first understand the Thai belief system. Evident from my interview with elder mother, Thais had a strong Buddhist-based ideological system (Sparkes 2005). Merit is collected through life from good Karma and being grateful is something that one must reflect and shows through action. Thai-Isan family structure and culture had traditionally incorporated means to care for the elderly to reflect the idea of “being grateful”. The matrilocal residence pattern as well as the custom of giving the parent’s house to the youngest daughter through inheritance have functioned to encourage her to continued residence in the home and provide care for the elderly parents. It is a bad karma to hurt your parents and elderly through both words and action.

Buddhist conceptions privileged men over women. Gender is one major factor that influence relative status between individuals (Mills, 1999). In the gender male dominant sphere, it is more acceptable for Isan men to travel or get out of town than women because they are not expected to stay with their parents. On the other hand, Isan women who migrated would still have

responsibility to come back and are expected to take care of their parents in their homeland. Thus, even though migrants in other places might not be controlled by their culture, most of Isan migrants, especially Isan women migrants, still carry Buddhist concept in their heart and the will to be a good daughter to their parents, to satisfy their gender role and cultural expectation.

Buddhist beliefs in Isan culture plays a big part in assigning gender roles. Since women cannot enter monkhood, the ideology of women's role is mainly responsible for taking care of household and children as a mother and wife. Men will leave all the worldly role and possession when entering the monkhood even though he is a father or a husband. That is why in the household women are the pillars of the house where the continuation of generation and legacy will pass through. A monk cannot satisfy the roles of father and husband since the goal of becoming a monk is to "let go" and become nothingness or "Nirvana." Parents are proud when their son become a monk due to the belief that the merit from monkhood will help parent to reach heaven. On the other hand, women cannot satisfy this requirement and in order for women to reach nirvana she will have to be reborn as a man in the next life. Buddhism look at men and women very differently, since women are better at taking care of family and household it is better to have women in that role to satisfy the need of the family and children. Isan Buddhism is a religion of men in that the most significant role can only be done by man as well as the symbol of Buddhism is also a man. Women will usually take care of the supporting role such as organizing, cooking, and facilitating in religious ceremonies and rituals. There is even a temple in Thailand that will not allow women to enter because of the ancient sacred seals that considered women's period an impurity.

At the time of my study in Dongdang and Nonkhong village, there was a merit-making festival called *Ka-tin*. *Ka-tin* is around the end of October until November every year. Local people

will gather to donate new monk robes, money and food to the temple and pay respect to the Buddha. In general donations will earn you merit, the more you give, the more you will receive. Everyone in village should attend the ceremony. Particularly elder father, elder mother and middle-age mother love to go to the temple or *Wat*. On the other hand, younger people are rarely attending this Buddhism ceremony. The elder men are usually the leader of religious activities at the temple. Meanwhile, elder women and middle-age mother will make food for monk and everyone who join this ceremony. Women always wear nice clothes to attend the ceremony, since they are expected to dress politely within the temple area.

“It is a duty of a man to enter monkhood, all parent expects their son to show his gratitude by enter monkhood for their parents.” (Srichard, elder mother interview 2016)

“We all have parent. We should always make merit for them.” (Bonmee, middle-age mother interview 2016)

“I’m so happy that all my sons have entered monkhood. My grandson is also getting ordain. I’ll surely be going to heaven as the monk told me.” (Som, elder mother interview 2016)

The most important difference between women and men is the possibility of being ordain into the monkshoods. Women cannot enter the monkhood, according to the Buddhist belief men are above women. In this respect women cannot inherit Buddhism and when considering the socio-cultural context of Dongdang and Nonkhong village we can see the example that reflected this belief. Many parents that have sons are proud when their son had entered the monkhood as expected of a son’s duty. Nang has great pride that her sons ordain for her and he is satisfying the

son's obligation. Older and middle-aged women are usually in charge of cooking and facilitating during the Buddhist festival and ceremony.

Women's role in Buddhism are reflecting their cultural roles as wife, mother, and daughter. According to the interview with elder mother "Lorde", she believes that having a son is a good fortune because she can get merit from her son's monkhood that will make her next life better. Her son also takes good care of her when both her daughters are living in another province. Lorde is a frequent visitor of the local temple in every Buddhist holiday and festival. Even though they are poor they still make food to give that are easy and delicious such as sticky rice. Each morning monks will make a routing walks to meet with locals and accept food donations. Women will wake up early to cook for the monks and wait in front of their house to give food to passing monk and pray or accept blessing. Even though women cannot enter monkhood Buddhism activities are still very important for them to participate because it is how they show their gratitude and make merit. Seesri is a mother of Nujan. She always goes to the temple in her village. Seesri mentions that newer generation are different from her and her mother. They are more modern in lifestyle and thinking. Many time Seesri do not understand what her children is talking about and the new technology. She has a simple and traditional village life. Seesri and her husband usually go to the temple every Buddhist day. They want to make merit for their ancestor.

Furthermore, the return of family members during festive seasons helps to signify the importance of Buddhism and the village traditions where religion plays a role is keeping the family member in touch and keep them connected to their roots. Chai moved to central region of Thailand, but he comes back once or twice a year to attend the Buddhist ceremony with his grandparents and relatives. His other relatives also travel back to the village and they all celebrate together as a big

family as well as attending the ceremony at the temple and meet with other people in the village that returns for the occasion.

Looking at the expectation of women in Buddhist Isan culture as daughters, the women are expected to take care and send money back to their parent to show gratitude and fulfill their obligation. The identity of Northeast women is caught between being “a good daughter” and desire to be perceived as a modern woman (Mills, 1999, Masaki 2005). Many young migrants return to homeland only for a short period of time during the start of farming season or special holiday, while living in the big city they cultivated a new identity and lifestyle. The new identities are conflicting between being modern women and keeping economic and moral responsibilities to rural traditional lifestyle. Rural community life versus urban life, local consumption practices, gender roles, and the familial tensions are often the catalyst to labor migration. This is more evident in the younger generation where they are more receptive to the modern lifestyle and technology. In the middle-age women the conflict is more defined due to the responsibility to family as well as the aging process.

4.3 Elder mother as the tradition and knowledge keeper

Isan rural women have a strong role in the rural society. The elder mother generation is women who are 60 years and older. The average age of elder women from both villages is 72.2 years. Most of them were born in Isan rural village. Particularly, most of elder mother maintain the traditional conservative value and beliefs, concerning storytelling and wisdom-knowledge through Isan words and songs that reflect their practice in daily lives. These elder women are very religious and strongly believe in Buddhism, praying and going to the temple are few of the

important daily rituals. Sharing their traditional knowledge, they are proud of their legacy as well as showing enthusiasm in passing on that knowledge to the new generation. The elder generation also strongly support abstinence before marriage and that it is a shame for women to lay with a man that is not her husband. From my research I have found that the character of elder mothers from both villages are very similar in these aspects.

Elder mother is also considered the most important source of information in the village, concerning practices, traditions, ceremony as well as spiritual beliefs, local wisdom and the continuation of culture that have been passed on from generations before. For example, in the old days some case study of elder mother was taught silk making, which is a part of important Isan culture that is disappearing, which is only pass through by women. Silk making have a broader importance in terms of family, kinship, and neighbors where if we look at the “*Heet Sip Song Kong Sip Si*” there is a section that mentions about clothing. This section is actually taking about how the wife need to be able to make clothing for her husband, not just doing the laundry. Silk making taught by mothers emphasize on delicate touch is a form of women symbolization in Isan culture.

“I used to be able to make silk cloth since my mother taught me all the pattern, but I have not made them for a long time. Kid these days they don’t care about silk making anymore.” (Sutta, interview 2016)

Furthermore, much local wisdom and know-how are pass on through women such as rice farming knowledge, women’s role, cooking recipe, herb collection and household skills. Many elder mothers sacrifice the chance to get education since their family can only afford to send one child to school. Their brother will go to school while they stay home to learn from their mother.

But when comparing elder and middle mother to younger daughter, the younger daughter is leaving home more since they have a better chance of getting education as well as job opportunity, while the usual stereotype roles are being less importance such as household chores and rice farming

Elder mothers' generation is highly religious. Many traditional practices also derive heavily from Buddhism beliefs. Elder mothers always teach their daughters that a woman need to learn all the household skills such as cooking, cleaning, nursing and the roles of women in Buddhism, regarding ceremony and rituals, as a supporting unit. In many case it is also considered a sin for the family if men are to participate in the household chores and that it will bring bad omen to the family. Many elder mothers also believe that women's main role in Buddhism is to birth and raise a son so that he can enter the monkhood. It is the best way to make merit.

“We are women, we have to take care man as we could do, house work and marriage life are significant.” (Nang elder mother, interview 2017)

4.3.1 The wisdom of *Heet Sip Song Kong Sip Si*

“*Heet Sip Song Kong Si*” comes from two words. *Heet* means rituals, celebrations that included good life behavior. *Sip-Song* means twelve months. This celebration ritual derives from Laos and is prominent in Isan region of Laos descendant as a mixture of rituals concerning agricultural practice and spiritual beliefs with Buddhism. (Kittiasa, 1994; Mill, 1999; Promphakping, 2000) The two *Heet* or rituals songs below illustrate the traditional gender roles guideline in the form of a poem song. “*Heet-Mea*” is the wife song where “*Heet-Poah*” is the husband song.

Heet-Mea (Wife)

ชีวาในห้วงคลองเมียห้าวอย่าง

There are five teachings for wife

หนึ่งเมียให้เฮ็ดเวียกบ้านการที่ของผัว

First, wife shall take care chores and husband

สองเมียให้สองฮับหมู้ผัวมาเยี่ยม

Second, wife shall welcome husband's friend

สามเมียให้เป็นคนสัตย์ซื่อ

Third, wife shall be honest -

บ่มีใจเบี่ยงเบี่ยงมีชู้จากผัว

do not commit adultery

สี่เมียให้ฮักสาเงินที่ผัวมอบ

Fourth, wife shall save the money husband earn -

อย่าเอาไปให้ชู้แพงไว้จ่ายเอง

don't give it to other men

ห้าเมียอย่าคร้านการเวียกเบาหนัก

Fifth, wife shall not be lazy -

ให้ฮยันขันแข็งอย่าเป็นคนคร้าน

she shall work hard

Heet-Poah (Husband)

ชีวาไปหน้าคลองผัวห้าวอย่าง

There are five teachings for husband

หนึ่งผัวให้ฮู้ยกย่องเมียมั่งของโต

First, husband shall respect his wife

สองผัวอย่าฮ่มฮ่อว่าเมียเป็นคนฮ้าย

Second, husband shall not criticize his wife

สามผัวเป็นคนหมั่นมีใจสัตย์ซื่อ

Third, husband shall be honest -

ชู้เขี่ยข้างพันชั้นบ่เหลียว

do not mess with other women

สี่ผัวมอบเวียกบ้านให้แก่เมียโต

Fourth, husband shall leave chores for wife -

การหุงหาอาหารแผ่นแพรผืนผ้า

cooking and clothing is wife's responsibility -

การกินใช้ภายในคู่ชู้ย่ง	let wife providing food in the household
กับทั้งเลี้ยงลูกเต้าคนใช้แขกคน	let wife take care of children and guest
ห้าผู้จักให้เครื่องแต่งประดับโต	Fifth, husband shall provide jewelry for wife -
เมียกะอย่าพาโลอยากได้หลายเหลือสิ้น	wife will not be greedy -
ให้มันพอสมควรตามันจ้งแม่น	husband shall buy things that he can afford -
อย่าให้เขาเว้าพื้นสือยหน้าหม่อมวล	so that other people will not gossip

(interpret in Thai by me, from Suriya and Kittiasa1994)

From the directions of “*Heet Sip Song Kong Sip Si*”, when considering the role and responsibility of women we can see that women must be well verse in the household affair, taking care of the wellbeing of the husband in terms of food and clothing, fulfill the duty of wife and mother. Roles learning through matrilocality relationship of the couple where men will move into the women’s household in the Isan culture is called “*Krum-Jao-Khot*”, which is where the wife’s relatives will teach and give guidance to the couple on how to be a good family. Even though *Krum- Jao-Khot* is usually done by the wife’s relative the lesson is target for both wife and husband in helping them to realize each other’s complementary and gender different roles.

“When I got married, we had go-between like the wise man in village, he sings and taught us about marriage life” (Mayuree elder mother, interview 2016)

4.3.2 Story of Srichard: Elder mother

Srichard's story illustrated an elder mother with a strong sense of duty, following traditional roles. Srichard is from a poor family. Her father was from "Nongvang", a village nearby Nonkhong village. Srichard was born third of six children. She had to take care of her sister and brother. Srichard moved back to Nonkhong village after she had a second child. At that time her husband was still working as manual labor in Bangkok. Srichard always sends back remittance to her parents when she was working in Bangkok. She believes "you have to do it as you are a woman, this is our duty." She is not *look-sao-la* (younger daughter), but she still has a sense of duty to take care of her parents and sibling.

Srichard has five children. Her life is involved with agriculture in the rural village. Everything doesn't need to be bought because she can grow them. She knows everyone in the village. She can go to any house in the village because everyone in the village is welcoming and the door of each house is never closed. Her life revolves around cousin, children, land and agriculture. Nowadays she still raises her grandchildren and does her duties in household. She is considered the "mother" of her household. Srichard is content with her routine life in Nonkhong.

"I do everything in the household from cleaning to cooking for my parents. When I was away I could only telegram my parents since I was a country girl. We did not have any tap water and I had to go out every day to collect water. Men would go to the field and work the land. Us women would cook and deliver lunch to the men in the field. There wasn't any car in the past and we relied on buffalos. It was the age of true organics, the age of true sufficiency. Thirty years ago families that had buffalos were the rich families. Everything (human and buffalos) has a duty to do and we all do it every day routinely. I think it is a kind of happiness, the simplicity of life. I was strong back then so that I can

do everything so that I don't need to think much. It is normal for us farmers to be under the sun.” (Srichard elder mother interview 2016)

4. 4 Elder mother, middle-aged mother and Buddhism

October and November are one of the major Buddhist festival period. Making merit with the *Ka-tin* festival, it is an annual festival that are implemented in both Dongdang and Nonkhong. Villagers gave high importance to this festival and there are preparations of decoration and food for the festival attendee that are prepared by the villagers as a community. *Ka-tin* festival are associated with making merit for the prosperity of family and village that are ties with Isan family traditions. Dongdang village appearance are of poor village with less than average income of Nonkhong village, but villagers will do their best to organize this festival, so it does not depend on if they are richer or poorer, but it reflected the strong belief in Buddhism. The festival is usually held after the end of rainy season where monks will come out from three months of meditation in the temple. It also signifies the coming of winter where people will donate winter robes and food for the monks, since the monks will not leave the temple to received food in these three months and rely heavily from temple visitors to provide food. In Buddhism beliefs, at this time of year the Buddha will comes down from heaven to bless the world and the gates of heaven and hell will open for merit to flow through, this is why *Ka-tin* festival is important so that the merit will reach their ancestors in heaven and hell. From my interview with elder mothers, they believed in merit making for their deceased relatives. They will wake up at 3AM in the morning to prepare food and flowers, dressed in white and clear their minds. They will go to the temple to received blessing and wisdom from the monks. The temple will be filled with elder and middle age generations, both

men and women. Majority of these temple goers are elder women and children under 15 years old, where working age and teenagers will not usually attend. This is true for *Ka-tin* festival in both villages.

“We must make merit for our parent who pass away, it is traditional” (Srichard elder mother, interview 2016)

As in the case of Nunun husband. He is a master of ceremony at the *Katin* ceremony and being the host at the temple. Meanwhile, all the elder mother will prepare food for monk in religious ceremonies. Buddhism practice and family values are still strong in elder mother in the rural village as well as beliefs in supernatural superstition. Dos and don'ts are derived mainly from these beliefs. Buddhism gave high respect to parents and seniority, with phrase like “father and mother are the god of the house” and “the pinnacle of children are parents”, reflect the highest of blessing that parents received for bearing and raising children. Children succeed because of their parents and that is why children are obligated to pay back their life debt through roles and responsibility in physical and financial aspect, even after their parent pass away in the forms of merit making and paying respect.

Middle-age mothers are similar to elder mothers in terms of women's role in Buddhism. They believed in Buddhism, attend the Buddhist ceremony and participate in any Buddhist activity for women such as cooking, organizing, and support. The difference between middle age mother and elder mother in terms of Buddhism is not the roles they play, but how they applied Buddhism to their lives. Middle age mother has less knowledge on traditions than elder mother and many middle age mothers are less strict on how Buddhism are applied to their daily lives.

“Raise boys to become monks, raise girls to take care of old parents”

(Srichard elder mother, interview 2017)

“My mom wants me to go to work, but my brother is already sending money to the family. I’m a woman so I cannot become monk. Isan women needs to be tough. We can do anything” (Nujan middle-aged mother interview 2016)

4.5 Young daughter and Buddhism

The contrast between older generation and younger generation is that Buddhist belief became less important in motivation or lifestyle choices. When I was in Dongdang and Nonkhong village during the *ka-tin* ceremony I rarely saw any young daughters, attending the ceremony expect for small children that accompany mothers and grandmothers. Sense of duty for younger generation is diminish despite Buddhist beliefs due to modern lifestyle goals such as education and career. Buddhist beliefs are rarely interpreted and considered in everyday life as well as putting less importance in attending or participating in any Buddhist ceremony both at home and in the city. For example, Many younger daughters (Toey, Jai, Numwan, Aim, Kookkai, and Noi) from both villages that lived in Bangkok and abroad will not usually return home for any particular Buddhist holiday, but rather they will return home for visiting family. The study of Promphaking (1999) points out that Buddhism roles in the countryside are dramatically reduced due to the impact from modernity and capitalism. On the other hand, many younger generations still believe in Buddhism where family have a big impact on how much Buddhism is ingrained into the children and how much Buddhist beliefs are retained as the child grows up. But at least the concept of merit

and being grateful are still strong with the younger generation as endued by the remittances that they sent back to their parents, fulfilling their moral duty.

Aim, daughter of Dawon lived in Bangkok for six years. She sends money to support her family every month at around 10,000 baht. Aim has one older brother that does not work, lazy, and disobedient to parents. Aim has a good job that will often takes her overseas. Aim has many friends in Bangkok. Aim saw her mother's life hardship before and decided to work hard to do better. The relatives of her father's side dislike her mother because her mother's side of the family is poor. Aim told me that one day she will move her mother to live with her in Bangkok.

“If all Isan daughter stayed with their parent, my life will not be like this. Look at the people in the same age as me who stayed at the village. All they do is having children and raising children at home. I want to make a lot of money and make my mother happy.”

(Aim younger daughter, interview 2017)

“I have no time to come back home. I'm not interested to go back just for making merit as Buddhist. My mom wants me to make merit. For this year I will just transfer the money into her bank account. Visiting home requires a lot of money.”

(Jai young daughter, interview 2017)

4.6 *Look-sao-la*: The Isan youngest daughter

As the anthropologist Charles F. Keyes wrote, “in Northern and Northeastern Thailand—the mother's side of the family is considered the more important. In the rural North and Northeast, although men are entitled to inherit land from their parents, it is more typical that after marriage a

son will move out and reside near his wife's family and inherit land from them while a daughter will remain with her parents and she and her husband will inherit land from her parents" (1987:125).

The concept of *Look-sao-la* has the meaning of the youngest daughter in Isan; she culturally has duties and holds a special role in the aging household. The youngest daughter is usually the last marry in agricultural land. She is a person who remain with her parents to care for them in their golden age (Tambiah,1970: 13). The idea of *Look-sao-la* also connects to the unity of the entire extended family, representing stability and strength of the family relationship. *Look-sao-la* in each generation are always expected to be with and take care of aging parents as well as her household. The role of youngest daughter is very important, and parents trust the youngest daughter the most to take care of their household and living affairs, especially when parents got sick. Mindset of Isan parents will be relying mostly on youngest daughter. Interestingly, there are no concept of youngest son (*Look-chai-la*) since men are expected to leave the household due to work or marriage traditionally.

4.6.1 *Look-sao-la* in elder mother and middle-aged mother

From the interview of my sample group from both villages of two elder mothers who are also the youngest, in both cases the elder mother inherited their parent's house and stay with their parents to take care of them until they pass away. They ultimately own their parents' land as well. Elder mothers are still adhering to this tradition, expecting their youngest daughter to do the same.

Middle age mother viewpoint regarding the concept of *look-sao-la* are also very similar to the elder mother's viewpoint. Many of them stay and take care of their elder mother as expected,

fulfilling the traditional role. This concept of taking care of aging parents are what binds these middle age mothers to return home after extended period of work migration, keeping relationship with their hometown. Even though they sent remittance back to their elder mother it is still not enough in their minds and that being back to take care of their aging parent is ultimately the symbols of being a “good daughter”. To leave their parents to live by themselves in their golden years is a great sin. The concept of *Look-sao-la* is ingrained into their identity as a youngest daughter that shackles them to ultimately returns home. For example, Seesri is a youngest daughter. All her siblings expected her to live with her parent, following *look-sao-la* traditional roles. “Every minute you have to think about your parent.” Seesri mother was diabetic for the past 23 years and Seesri takes care of her sick mother until the day she died. “As the youngest daughter all duty in the household is my responsibility. I have to live in my hometown and take care of my parent. Sons can leave easily. Sons just come and visit” (Seesri, interview 2016). These matrilineal expectations are still reflected through both elder mother and middle age mother generation. Where their youngest daughter is their hope in the golden years, in both physical and financial responsibility. In many cases elder mothers express preferential living situation with their youngest daughter over their sons.

“my mother expected me to take care of her, and now I expect my child to take care of me. I raised them, and now I raised their children. This is never ends as you are women.”

(Seesri elder mother, interview 2016)

***Look-sao-la* in younger daughter**

On the contrary, younger generation are less strict to the concept of *look-sao-la*. Many younger daughter generation does not care about the tradition of staying in the village to take care of their parents and will only sent remittance, while does not shows any intention to move back in the future. They are also not really interested to inherit their parents land and will rather sell those lands for money or just keep it as an asset and live in Bangkok or abroad.

“I’m selling the land if my mom gives it to me. She (mom) knows that I will never do anything with agriculture.” (Jew young daughter interview 2017)

4.7 Elder mother and the role in household economic

Elder mothers are not impervious to changes, many of them have to adapt to the new things and circumstances. For example, in Dongdang all women in the household will know how to make silk cloth, but due to working migration and urban development traditional silk making method that symbolized rural village was change to industrial cloth making and patchwork using modern sewing machine to satisfy the local economics. Many elder mothers are taking new kinds of jobs that they can do at home such as making bed sheet or pillow case with sewing machine, washing scallion, and growing mushroom as a home-based working in rural villages. Home-based working is important because it is an income source that does not require elder mother to travel and is a relatively low stress work that does not require a lot of thinking skill, since Isan women are known for being skilled in handicraft. Elder mother employment also helps to improve local economy as

well as create independence from relying on income from other family members. Even though the return payment is not substantial, but it is better than to stay home and do nothing.

“We help each other in my family because I’m not out of energy, I’m still alive.

My children take this fabric to selling into the downtown Roiet market. Everybody helps for this.” (Pairee elder mother 2016)

Elder mother also received monthly income from the government of 600 baht. People that are older than 60 years old will qualify for a monthly welfare check from the government. This is a very small amount of money compare to the living cost and that’s why many elder mothers still need to do part time job. In many case elder mother is helping with middle mother’s home-based part time job such as in the case of Pairee, Sutta, Palee, and Nang. Many elder mothers have to work all day for a relatively small amount of money, but they will work in their own pace, take a break when need and often will watch TV or listen to radio while working. Sometimes elder mother gets together to work together and socialize so that it will make work more enjoyable.

It is interesting that all elder mother from my studies are all staying in their village of Dongdang and Nonkhong. There is no case in my studies that elder moved to live with middle mother in other places, even though many elder mothers used to work and migrate to other place they will eventually come back to live the golden years in their hometown.

4.8 Middle-aged mother and the role in household economic

I highlighted the case of Tungting family to illustration life and responsibility of a middle age Isan mother. It is interesting that the youngest daughter in the middle age mother generation does not always live with their mother, but they still find other ways to take care of her family as a good daughter.

Tungting has been working hard all her life. She and her sister migrated to work at computer parts factory in Bangkok are. Tungting spends time going between Bangkok and Nonkhong for the past 10 years. She sends remittance to her parents every month because she knows that her parents work very hard in the rice field. Her parents are very poor. She wants to be a good daughter and take care of her parents. She hated working in the rice field and she made a promise to herself that she will never become a farmer. She has dark skin from working in the rice field as a kid since her parents makes her work. Isan parents holds the authority and daughters cannot say no to anything. Tungting is the second child in four daughters. She is not the youngest daughter. The youngest daughter in the family is working at a massage parlor in Bangkok and are married with her own kids. Tungting parents are very disappointed with their youngest daughter since they expected the youngest daughter to marry a man that they pick out for in the Nonkhong village. Her youngest sister never spent time in Nonkhong for very long beside occasional visits. If her youngest sister moves back she would probably inherit her parent's house and land.

Tungting is considered the pillar of the family since she is the most well off among her siblings. Tungting's husband is a retired soldier with pension. Tungting main income is from rice farming, raise frogs, and growing mushroom. Tungting made enough so that she can support two niece's educations and she plan to have her nieces stay and take care of her mother. She encourages

one of her niece to open a beauty salon on the family land since it is right next to the main road. When she returns home from working in Bangkok she will buy nice clothes from the wholesales market in bulk to sell to another villager in Nonkhong village. She often accepts barter with rice when villager that need clothes does not have much money. Then she will sell those rice to the rice mill, making good profits. Half of that income is then given to her parents and the other half is saved for her future house. Tungting did this for the past 8 years. Everyone in the family expected the youngest daughter to remain in Nonkhong with her parents, but she ended up moved to Bangkok permanently. Her youngest sister does not send much money back to her parents because she claims that living in Bangkok is expensive with husband and kids to take care of.

Today Tungting owns 13 rai of land from inheritance and purchase. Working in Bangkok for 10 years have taught her to manage her money well. She is very discipline in money management since she does not earn much from working in the computer parts factory, living paycheck to paycheck. She sees many of her relatives that went to work with her ended up with debt and no savings and eventually will have to sell their land and moved to become a permanent labor worker in Bangkok. Many relatives took out invest loans to buy motorcycle and truck that results in massive debt. Her older sister has already sold the land inherited from her mother and are working in Bangkok permanently. Tungting has three daughters, but only the oldest one are working. She does not want her daughters to grow up farming like her but express her regrets that she did not taught her daughter the knowledge of rice farming.

“My mother taught me that work hard today to live better tomorrow. I was wrong to have my own daughter live an easy life and miss that lesson. Many Isan mothers think like me since kids these days does not know how to grow rice at all, even the farmer’s daughter.

We are an agricultural family that did not teach our kids how to work the field. The younger generation does not want to work in the field anymore and everyone wants to work in an office. Today only the mother generation that still do rice farming”

(Tungting, middle-aged mother, interview 2017)

Looking at Tungting’s family through the lens of Isan daughter, she need to take care of her parents and support her niece education since she has a better financial situation than other siblings. Even though her highest education is only middle school, she works hard and build her life from agriculture income. She believes that women’s family obligation is very important. Most Isan parents grew up poor without any formal education and have less opportunities. Taking care of her parents gives her joy and happiness and she believes that if she takes good care of her family her life will be fill with good things (good karma). Tungting’s perspective represent the image of migrant women in poor family. Her voice represents the “little voice” heard in debates about social changes when Thailand was entering the economic boom period. This story illustrated not only economic hardship, but also Isan rural cultural through exploration of family structure, family size impact, status, and life in rural communities.

In the study of “*Thai Women in the Global Labor Force: Consuming Desires, Contested Selves*” Mills 1999 revolves around young rural women involved in the migration process due to poverty in Northeast rural communities during the time that concept of modern life is transforming Thai society. Mills focused her research on women migrants from rural communities. The mentality of women in her study were focusing on being a “good daughter of a family” (p. 80, p. 94-96) by migrate to work and provide financial support to her family. Modernity and globalization bring the concept of being a modern woman to new generation women migrants (p.168-169). My

case studies in the middle-aged mother and being women migrant in the part of Dongdang and Nonkhong village show that the ideology of being a good daughter are a strong “obligation” based on Buddhist thinking that push forward young women to become migrants. Moreover, Buddhist woman is expected and “obligated” by parent and society to fulfill their daughterly duty. In their perception of middle-aged mother “obligation” still play an important role in their life, not only in youngest daughter who is inheritance, but also in every Isan woman as well.

4.9 Young Daughter and the role in household economic

The most important duty of young daughter generation today is to study. Middle age mother knows that education is the best way to ensure her daughter’s future. After graduating high school those families that can afforded will sent their daughters to university, while those that can’t will allow their daughter to leave town to find work in order to support family with remittance. However, in normal case mother are reluctant to let their daughters leave town alone and live alone in the city. Daughters will often be allowed to leave town if there is an accompanying relative traveling with and relatives living in the destination that can be parents’ point of contact.

Children that are born and raised in Isan rural village have a very strong connection with their relatives and villagers because of the matrilocal living pattern where relatives are living close to the elder mother house. This is why in the elder mother and middle age mother generation everyone in the village knows each other through relatives’ relationship and village socialization. Elder mothers can name everybody in the village as well as point out the location of their house, occupation and even their stories. As a sense of community in Isan village, all the people in the villages are considered distant relatives. There is a collectivism in the village unit that create a

feeling of big extended family. Elder mothers also gave importance and trust people whom she considered family. They would allow their daughter to work in other province if she travels with a relative or people from the village. This gives them peace of mind and a sort of guarantee that their daughter will be safe and taken care of. In many case from both Dongdang and Nonkhong where a father or a brother will accompany daughters when traveling. This practice reflects the strength of the kinship relationship as a means of safe keeping.

“My parents will not allow me to go if I did not go with my relative. My aunt is already living there running a restaurant and I’ll sent back some of my earning to them”

(Samai, middle-aged mother interview 2016)

4.9.1 Story of Dawon: middle-age mother (as a young daughter and middle-age mother)

Dawon’s story illustrate the sacrifice of herself as a young daughter in support of household economic as well as the realization of the importance of education for her children. Dawon came from a poor family in Nonkhong village. She was born the fifth of five children. She is a *look-sao-la* (younger daughter) and worked hard to pay her parents’ debt. Her parents could not pay their debts so they had to borrow money from Dawon’s aunt, so 10-year-old Dawon had to move in with her aunt to help with her aunt’s household duty and business. Her aunt runs a small shop in Nonkhong. Once Dawon turned 18 years old she moved to work at a cosmetic factory in Bangkok and sent back remittances to help her parents pay off their debts. She loves her parents and she wants them to have a better life. It is her duty to send back her hard earned cash. She got married and has 2 children, a younger daughter and an older son. She supported her daughter until her daughter graduated from university. Her daughter is her hope, as she is trying to give her daughter

what she missed in her childhood and a proper chance to get education. Her older son does not do well in school and misbehaves. Her son did not work and was ordained into monkhood for three years, by which she believes that her son has shown that he is grateful for her as a mother and makes merit for her sake. In the present she lives with her husband, her son and his girlfriend. Dawon's husband loves their daughter very much. Dawon is proud that her daughter got a good job in Bangkok and her daughter could afford to take her to travel abroad a couple of times. Her daughter's work is involved with America. Today her daughter supports her financial need and sends her 10,000 bath every month. She always flies to visit her mother. Dawn believes that because her daughter is grateful to her parents she is doing well in life as a result of good merit. Dawon also thinks that she is lucky that her daughter is a good daughter, that she takes care of her mother. Dawon likes to make merit and that she also believes that her merit results in her having a better quality of life. As a youngest daughter herself she always teaches her daughter that Isan women can do everything and be anything in the household because women are more detail-oriented and more responsible.

“The responsibility of 10 men is not as much as the responsibility of a woman. Isan people love their parents and a daughter must never abandon her parents. I made most of the family decisions and at the same time did all of the household chores. My only worry is that I want my daughter to get married to a good husband and have her own family. I don't want her to keep living alone in the city. Women these day they live together with a man and don't care about traditions anymore” (Dawon middle-aged mother, interview 2016)

Dawon only graduated from grade six. Her husband works in the government and has a good job and her husband's relatives are always jealous of their better financial situation. Dawon is hardworking and supported her daughter through university education by taking many kinds of part-time jobs such as cloth making. She is now also looking after her aging mother since she is also the youngest daughter. It is her duty and she knows Isan women are strong and resilient. She will always take care of her family because being a mother is her life's role.

4.9.2 Story of Aim: young daughter

Aim is one of the success stories of young daughter generation with good education thriving in Bangkok, while are also able to support her family, fulfilling her roles. Aim is the daughter of Dawon. She left her hometown because she has a good job in Bangkok. Aim is working in a shipping company in Bangkok, wearing fancy outfits, and brand-name bags. Aim is a good-looking woman and was confident when I interviewed her. Her personality is of a modern young generation. Aim did not think that she will ended up in Bangkok after graduated bachelor's degree in *Maharakam* province. She thinks she is just a country girl, but she doesn't want to live in Khonkean anymore.

She always wants to work in Bangkok because there are many jobs available. She wants to live the city life with freedom and no boredom. Dawon was against Aim decision to move to Bangkok because Dawon thinks that the city is dangerous and expensive. Dawon is afraid that she will be fooled by bad guys and there are no relatives or friends that will be close to Aim. Eventually Aim landed a good job in Bangkok despite her mother's objection. Aim is lucky that she got a job that pays well and has good benefit, even though she only graduated from a small university. She

is motivated to make a lot of money so that her mom can live a better life. Aim is a *look-sao-la*, but she didn't think that she need to live with her mother. She will not make as much money working in Khonkaen and she will not have the opportunity to travel to other countries or meet as many people that she did. Aim believed that to be a good daughter she can sent remittance to her mother every month. She sent 10,000 baths to her mother monthly, which is considered a lot of money comparing to what her peers can afford to send back. Aim knows that her parents owns lands in her hometown, but she is saving to buy her own apartment in Bangkok. If she makes enough money she wants to buy a house and have her parents move to live with her in Bangkok. She is now dating with a man in Bangkok.

“I know that my mom works hard to support me through university. I know she's proud of me that I always send her remittance and I took her to travel abroad 2 times. I think I have gone farther that I have imagine being a simple country girl.”

(Aim, youngest daughter interview 2017)

4.9.3 Story of Ja: young daughter

Ja's story is another case of young daughter that, with education and encouragement from mother, ended up having a good job and are able to support her family through remittance. Ja is the daughter of Sunee. Ja's mom does not want her only daughter to remain in Dongdang because Ja has the highest education level of all the relatives in the family. It is a great opportunity for both Ja and the family that Ja gets to live in Bangkok and work in a famous company. Ja's mom does not need her daughter to take care of her. Ja's mom pushes her to have a higher education because she wants her daughter's life to be better than her. During Ja's study Sunee decided to sell her land to send her daughter through college.

Ja is a twenty-six years old woman from a poor farming village in Dongdang. Ja is the granddaughter of Muyuree, and the eldest daughter of Sunee. Ja has one younger brother, who is ten years old. His name is “New” and was born in Dongdang. Ja is a short hair woman and she is not very tall. Her skin is honey-yellow. She does not carry hi-end expensive branded bags. She looks like many of the young girl generation from Isan region. In Bangkok, Ja lives with her friend who graduate from the same university. Her apartment is in *Ramkhamhaeng* area. Ja and her friend share rental room together at around 2,500 bath a month. She goes to work by public bus every day. She is frugal. She spends her weekend going to malls, markets, and watching T.V. drama series on YouTube.

Ja gets a salary from a private company around 22,000 Bath a month. She divides her salary and send around 6,000-7,000 bath a month to her family. Her company is a famous insurant company in Thailand. She said her bonus is good and she is planning to buy a car someday. She got this work because her cousin (father side) recommend her for this position. Her cousin worked at *Suvarnabhumi* Airport and he suggests that she apply for this job. She has been working in Bangkok for almost two and a half years. She is closes with her mother since she is the only one daughter in the family. She mentions that her mother does not talk a lot. She is a good student. She's not smart but she works hard because she knows her parent struggle to support her education. Five years ago, she learned that her mother sells family land and buffalos to support her education. She knows her grandmother does not like her father much. she doesn't know why. But she tries not to think about it. She just sends money to support her family in return. Living in Bangkok, she knows that she cannot take care of her family as well as she'd hope. But at the same time, living in Bangkok gives her freedom and happiness. In the future, if she inherited family's land and house she won't move back. She will sell it or give it to her brother.

“My mom is patient and tolerant. She works so hard to support my undergraduate education. My family is a farmer family. I graduated from Mahasarakhum University and my mother is so proud of me. She tells everyone that I graduated from there.” (Ja, younger daughter interview 2017)

“I don’t want to go back to Dongdang, I know my mother will be sad if she hears that. Living in Bangkok is not easy, but I have a good job and I can do whatever I want.” (Ja, younger daughter interview 2017)

4.10 Conclusion

Buddhism is the pillar of Thai society where traditions and lifestyle are heavily influenced as well as the identity, roles and responsibility. The case studies discussed in this chapter illustrate that they are still rooted in their Buddhist traditions. The concept of being a “good daughter” stems from the sense of duty that is tied with idea of Karma from Buddhism. A good daughter in the eyes of the parent and society are rewarded with merit, while a bad daughter brings bad karma that results in suffering. To be a good daughter in Isan she must take care of her parents when they are old to show her gratitude as a gesture of good Karma. The concept of “Good daughter” is also overlapped with the idea of *Look-sao-la*. *Look-sao-la* refers to youngest daughter where in Isan tradition will remain with the parents and take the responsibility to take care of them in golden years. This could be look at as a form of primitive social security where parents can feel secured that they are being taken care of, through inheritance and Buddhism as vehicle to instill the sense of duty in daughters that roll over to the next generation. This is also corresponding with the

matrilineal inheritance pattern of Isan where parent's property is often inherited by the daughters that stay with them as a reward for her sacrifice and good karma.

In general, the elder mother and middle-mother generation are more religious than young daughter generation. They often go to temple and participate in Buddhist ceremony, in contrast to young daughters that will not usually attend Buddhist festival and go to temple less often. There seems to be a strong connection between religious beliefs and sense of duty, illustrated by young daughter generation that are moving away from home, being less concern on traditional roles and duty, while sending remittance home helps to maintain "good daughter" (*look-sao-dee*) image to their parents as a new way of showing gratitude.

Roles and responsibility of the three generation have change due to migration and capitalism. Elder mother is now working at home to earn extra income for the family, as well as being the main caretaker of their grandchildren due to the migration of middle-age mother. Middle age and younger daughter are more focus on working to send remittance alternative to fulfilling traditional roles. We will explore deeper into the concept of local economy that will touch on topics such as local jobs and remittance in the next chapter.

Chapter Five

Local Economy in Dongdang and Nonkhong village



Figure 5.1: *Amphoe Chaturaphakphiman* district, Roiet province



Figure 5.2t: *Amphoe Baan Phan* district, Khonkaen province

5.1 Introduction

Considering economic factors that affect changes in relationship and lifestyle of Isan women, topics that will be covered in this chapter will touch on local occupation, income, debt and expenditure for both villages. When comparing the two villages, Nonkhong has a better economic standing than Dongdang because the village location is closer to the city center and the main highway. Nonkhong is 40 minutes by car from the city center and the roads are well paved with multiple lanes before turning into the village road. Dongdang is an hour drive from the city center, the roads are smaller, and the village roads are dirt and asphalt. In this context, location is a big factor that affects the development and economic access of the villages, given that the two villages are in a similar climate, have similar household numbers, and environments.

Dongdang is a remnant of a larger fabric village. In the past the main occupation of Dongdang was producing silk and raising silkworms, but the villagers are no longer involved in

silk production anymore and the local silk industry has vanished. Today most villagers are either participating in agriculture or manual labor. Young people often find other local jobs such as airport employee or store staff. In the past women were in charge of making silk cloth for both selling and wearing, but with the availability of cheap cotton shirts and modern clothes there is no more need for women to make silk clothes as the silk industry is unsustainable for villagers. Most of the income of villagers in Dongdang is not from rice farming, but from part-time jobs and remittances from family members working elsewhere. The part-time jobs that villagers often do are manual labor, sewing fabric to make bed sheets and pillow cases, washing scallions, and selling home-grown herbs.

As you can see from the graph below most villagers from the sample group earn less than 15,000 baht (about 480 USD as of February 2019) a month and only Dang's family earn more than 15,000 baht. A starter position in a Bangkok office for a fresh graduate would pay around 20,000 baht per month. The household incomes cited in the chart includes income from aging mothers, middle-aged mothers, and younger daughters who stay in the village, and remittances; it does not include the whole salary of the younger daughters that are working in other places, but only what they send home.

Income levels	Numbers of household
Lower than 15,000 THB	Pairee's family, Mayuree's family, Sutta's family, Seesee's family, Som household.
15,001-30,000 THB	Dang's family
30,001 THB-and above	None

Figure 5.3 1: Monthly cash incomes of household in 2016-2017 in Dongdang village

Note: 1 USD =35.6 THB (September 2016)

Nonkhong is a fabric village that is still producing silk as a specialty. In the past the main occupation of villagers in Nonkhong was also raising silkworms and producing silk clothes, but today the majority of villager is not involved in the silk industry. Silk production has become a part-time job for villagers although they never did make a lot of silk. Villagers are mostly involving with rice farming and mushroom farming. Nonkhong is sometimes called a mushroom village due to the many households that are involved in cultivating and selling mushrooms. Straw mushrooms comprise the main cash crop of the village besides part-time jobs and manual labor. The other popular occupation in Nonkhong is raising and selling frogs for consumption in Isan. Other popular part-time jobs for Nonkhong villagers are growing papyrus and making papyrus mats.

Income levels	Numbers of household
Lower than 15,000 THB	Nunan's family, Lorde's family
15,001-30,000 THB	Srichand's family, Palee's family, Nang's family
30,001 THB-and above	None

Figure 5.4: Monthly cash incomes of household in 2016-2017 in Nonkhong village

Note: 1 USD =35.6 THB (September 2016)

Minimum wages vary across the country. A 2018 report from the Ministry of Labor reported that the lowest minimum wages in Thailand is 308 baht, while metropolitan the Bangkok minimum wage is 325 baht. Roiet province minimum wage is in the 3rd level at 315 baht and Khonkaen province minimum wages is in the 5th level at 320 baht. (Ministry of labor Thailand, 2018). The amount of cash income of Dongdang households is mostly less than 15,000 baht and is considered very low. In comparison, one person living in Bangkok cannot sustain a meaningful lifestyle with less than 15,000 baht a month. But people don't need a lot of money to live in a village where food can be grown, and property prices are low. Still these villagers are considered

to be in poverty by modern standards. On the other hand, three out of five households in Nonkhong are making more than 15,000 baht. This might be because Nonkhong villagers have created more profitable local industries such as mushroom farming and frog raising. In general, there are not many jobs available in the village and most available jobs are manual labor. That is why many from the younger generation want to migrate to find work in big cities with better salary and opportunities.

5.2 Rice Culture

There is a saying in Thai that poor people eat rice with only fish sauce. This shows the importance of rice for survival and that it is still okay even if you lack any other food but rice. There are two kinds of rice that Isan people farm which are white rice and sticky rice. White rice and sticky rice are both main staples for Isan people and most of the produce will be consumed within the household or shared with the other villagers. Traditionally women's role in rice farming is very important, since women also share the workload with men, from planting seedlings to weeding and harvesting. Culturally rice farming has been the way of life for these people for many generations. Knowledge of rice farming has been passed down from mothers to daughters, but these traditions are disappearing as the new generation is moving away from the agricultural lifestyle. Rice farming can be divided into three phases: Phase 1 is the preparation of soil, Phase 2 is the cultivation period, and Phase 3 is the harvest. In Phase 1 men will do most of the work using buffalos to plow the field and flip the soil; women will support them by making food and bringing them refreshments. In Phase 2 women will insert the rice seedling onto the soil in the early morning while the men will get rid of the weeds and work the soil throughout the day. Women will go back

to making lunch after they are done with the field work. This is the most labor-intensive part of the process and which the outcome of the harvest depends heavily on. In Phase 3 both men and women will help to maintain the rice paddy until the rice is ready to harvest by weeding, maintaining the water level, chasing away birds, and catching mud crabs. Harvesting will also be done by both men and women together from late morning till evening. In the past harvesting was done by hand and required a lot of labor, but today there is machinery that aids farmers in harvesting. The whole process will take about 6-7 months.

Som, the elder mother in Dongdang village, has worked in rice farming her whole life. In the past everyone in Dongdang including traders, teachers, doctors, and even the head of village was a farmer. Only the monks do not participate in rice farming. Som's brother also has been involved with rice farming since he was very young. Som's family and neighbor always help each other in both their family farms and the neighbors' farms without asking for money. This tradition helps to create the sense of community as well as providing free-cost labor for both parties. When many people get together for farming activities it is called "*Long-Khag*", which signifies that people are coming together to work together and help each other.

"We made rice in a sticky rice basket. Then, my mom and I carried this to the men in the rice field. A farmer's life is slow. No one rushes you."

(Som, elder mother)

Rice farming is not financially sustainable in either village due to the lack of land and financial resources. Even though rice is the main staple of Thai people the rice price in the market still fluctuates and the rice market benefits the middle man more than farmers. The rice mill will

push down the buying price as well as sort out the lower quality rice since they are the middle men between the farmers and the market. Farmers cannot mill their own rice because they lack the heavy machinery as well as capital, so they need to sell their rice to the rice mill. This is why it is hard to make a sustainable living for smaller size farms with no capital investment because farmers lack the production volume that would achieve neither economy of scale nor quality control.

Rice farming is a labor-intensive activity and farmers need to hire extra help in the field. With the missing younger generation, the older generation do not have enough strength to work in the field. With the newer generation moving away from rice farming, there is a shortage of low-cost or cost-free labor for farming families during Phase 1 and Phase 2 of farming activities. This is why many households depend on outside labor to keep up with work and maintenance of the rice paddy. It will cost at least 300 baht per day to hire one person to work in the rice field. This labor is hired from the neighborhood, from other villages, or migrant workers from Laos and Cambodia. For example, Samai has 18 rai of land in the neighboring village in which she needs to hire her relatives to help work the field. She does not pay them in cash but splits the rice that she gets from the harvest with the workers.

It is only in Phase 3, the harvest season, where migrant family members will travel back to hometown to help participate in the harvest. This is an important time for family members to bond and rekindle relations with one another through harvest activities and to maintain connection with their hometown. It is also an opportunity for elders to pass on the rice farming knowledge to the younger generation. This is illustrated by the case of Nujan and Toey.

“I have worked in Bangkok from when I was 18 years old. At that time, there were a lot of factories. I used to work in the factory. In the harvest season, I had to come back to help

with rice farming too. I was used to going back and forth between Bangkok and my hometown, where I would stay for 2-3 months to work each year.”

(Nujan, elder mother)

“I grew up helping my grandparents and brother in the rice field. I know how to do rice farming. Since I started working in Bangkok it is hard for me to travel back to my hometown. But my brother still does rice farming with my grandmother and my mother.”

(Toey, young daughter)

Most produce from the family land will be consumed in the household. Rice is the main staple of the Isan diet as it is consumed in every meal. Many villagers rely on their field as their main food supply. Besides rice villagers also grow other types of plants on their land such as banana, sugar cane, and mushrooms. Sticky rice and white rice are equally important, but Isan people would eat more sticky rice because it is delicious, cheap and makes you full for a long time, which is a great source of sustenance for workers doing manual labor. The sticky rice plant grows well in the Isan climate and it is more convenient to eat outside in the field or during travel because the rice sticks together. In contrast, ordinary white rice is popular for dinner because it is easier to digest, and it requires the family to sit down and eat together. Banana is a local plant of Thailand that is culturally important and easy to grow. Isan people use banana leaves for food wrapping and planting; the stems are used for making *Kratong*, a festive floating lantern, as well as a good sandbag for Thai boxer to practice their kicks. Looking at the table below we can see that many families will split land to grow ordinary white rice and sticky rice equally, while some family dedicate more land to grow sticky rice than white rice. Many families would also grow herbs such

as holy basil, lemongrass, chili pepper and lime for household consumption and share with neighbors.

name	rai	sticky rice	regular rice	others
Thungoh's family	15	7.5	7.5	banana
Sunee's family	33	20	13	banana, herbs
Panna's family	9	4.5	4.5	banana, sugar cane
Nujan's family	4	2	2	banana
Dawon's family	10	5	4	1 rai of herb garden, mushroom
Bonmee's family	9	4.5	4.5	banana, sugar cane
Oui's family	13	8	5	banana, mushroom
Samai's family	18	9	9	banana, mushroom
Tungting's family	13	6	6	1 for banana, mushroom, sugar cane, integrated faming

Figure5.5: The amount of land dedicated to white rice or sticky rice (glutinous) in Dongdang and Nonkhong village.

5.3 Part-Time Job in Dongdang and Nonkhong



Figure5.6 fabric products from sewing fabric collective group

(source: <https://www.facebook.com/otopdongdang/>)

Fabric products such as pillow cases and blankets have become marketable products that can create income for local villagers. Despite the prevalence of what may be regarded as subsistence production (rice production), sewing fabric has effectively drawn Dongdang households into a circuit of commodity production as a collective effort with establishment of a fabric collective group that acts as a local production organization. The other popular part-time job for this village is washing scallions that elder mother and middle-aged mothers can participate in within the comfort of their homes.



Figure5.6: washing scallions at Dongdang village (taken by me)



Figure 5.7: grow mushrooms at Nonkhong village (taken by me)

The diversification of agricultural enterprises to grow mushrooms has increased the flow of income in Nonkhong. As in the example of Num, she only grows mushroom on her land. Her income is around 20,000-30,000 baht per month, which is considered very good for rural standards. At the heart of Nonkhong, villagers established a local meeting place where mushroom farmers can meet with middle men to sell their produce in the village, while some households sell mushrooms by themselves at the local market and roadside stalls.

Women usually take up part-time jobs that are gender-specific such as sewing fabric, washing scallions, selling home-grown herbs, and making papyrus mats. These jobs can be found in their village and can be done at home where they can take care of their family at the same time. Men will usually take up part-time jobs such as driving taxis and manual labor that requires them to be out of the house and sometimes in another province. Some families own very little land since the parent's land has been split among many siblings and children; in addition, the children are not as good in rice farming as the older generation. Many of these women make most of their money working in part-time jobs during the off-season. Part-time jobs create a good opportunity for socializing, since women from the same village will gather to work together and split the income. Isan women are also associated with traditional handicraft skills, such as making Thai-silk, jewelry, and arts. Handicraft part-time jobs in their hometowns can improve the local economy and preserve the traditional arts and crafts industries as well. The other reason for people taking

up part-time jobs is debt; since living in the village does not have much cost, the income from part-time jobs will usually be used to pay off debts and loan sharks. However, many unskilled part-time jobs are taken simply because women lack choice; these jobs are undervaluing their skills.

Nujun and Mayuree often sew fabric as a part-time job, making pillow cases and rugs. They earn 12 baht per piece of finished products that will be bought by the middle man to sell at the market in Roiet Province. On average they each make 100 baht a day, which is better than doing nothing. Mayuree used to cut cane sugar for a part-time job during the off season, but she would rather sew fabric because she can stay home and take care of her family as well. Vee washes scallions as a part-time job and she earns 2,000-3,000 baht per week. The merchant pays her 3 baht per kilo of scallions washed. She started this part-time job in 2012 and it has become her main monthly income. Mayuree also wash scallion at home beside sewing fabric as well. Sometimes they have to work until after midnight to finish the whole batch of scallions. The more they work, the more they will earn. In addition, some Nonkhong households grow papyrus tree for their part-time job making papyrus mat for sale as well. The papyrus mat can be sold for around 60-100 baht per piece.

“It’s not easy to do this job (washing scallions). Even in the night we have to wake up to work. Sometimes we work until 1-2 am. It depends on how you work that day. If you do a lot, you will get a lot. Also, it depends on how many of the scallions are delivered to us.” (Vee, young daughter)

5.4 Remittance

Remittance is the solution for many families in poverty. Remittances in Isan culture serve two main purposes: financial need and emotional need. Many migrants also help support other family members' education through remittances since their parents cannot afford to. In some cases, remittances from daughters and middle-aged mothers are used to help pay off debt and loans of the parents as well. In many households, remittances contribute to more than half of the monthly household income and have become an essential part of the local economy. Furthermore, remittances are also used on buying more land, car, motorcycles, home improvements, and for use in daily expenditures.

Remittances are one of the main sources of income for middle-aged mothers and elder mothers since they are living in the village that does not have a lot of job opportunities that offers sufficient pay and because they have job limitations due to declining health and strength. It is expected from the younger daughters, or in some cases middle-aged mothers who have migrated to work in other places that they send back some money to help sustain the family. In Thai Isan society this obligation is the equivalent of being a "good daughter" and is considered a showing of gratitude to the parents. (See Chapter 4.) The amount of remittance varies depending on how much the migrant women gets paid and the level of family finances. Sometimes if an Isan family is well-off, the daughter will still send remittances anyway to fulfill her duty and to show her gratitude. It also creates a sense of pride for the parents to receive remittance from their daughter because it shows that they are being taken care of.

Remittances comes from mainly two ways, which are from work and marriage. Many Isan women who are married to foreigners will be able to send remittances from their household

allowance through services such as Western Union. For example, Kookkai and Numwan, who married with foreigners, send between 10,000 baht – 20,000 baht to their parents every month. Some of elder mothers and middle-aged mothers who used to work in Bangkok and *Rayong* province also sent back money to their parent as well. Most elder mothers cannot remember how much money they were saving for their parents. Interestingly in the past migrant women would keep the money and bring it back with them when they returned home instead of using bank services. For example, Seesri cannot remember how much money she used to give to her parents, but she remembers that it was not enough to buy land or pay off debts. She also mentioned that at the time she did not have any bank account and it was hard to send money home every month. They still tried to give some money to their parents, even though the amount of money was not anything significant. It's the gesture that counts.

Young daughters from my research usually send at least 2,000 baht up to 20,000 baht to their parents. In Nonkhong village Num and Jaw did not send any remittance to their parents because they are working in agriculture in their village. Generally speaking, the young generation today is sending a higher amount of remittance home compared to their elder mothers and middle-aged mothers in the past, due to better jobs from higher education. There are no standards in the amount of acceptable remittance, as it depends on the household's financial situation and daughter's paycheck. A migrant woman that does not send remittance home might face gossip in the village and be called ungrateful (*ar-ka-tan-yu*). Remittances can also be considered a retention of connection between the migrant and the family in the sense that they still have this duty to fulfill wherever they are.

5.5 Debt and Expenditure

Most of the money earned will be used every month; that's why many people do not have any savings. Even though the cost of living is low, and food can be grown, they need to borrow money or take out loans in order to buy land, build houses, pay for children's education or even just to hire people to work in the field. All of the villagers in my sample group are in debt and more than half of what they earned each month will be used to pay those off. Many families would rather take out a loan than sell their land because they believed that in the end land is the most important asset for the prosperity of their family and following generations to come. There are many available resources for small and medium loans both provided by the government and by private entity (loan shark).

Size of current debt (THB)	BAAC and other institution	Another financial source
No debts	Mayuree	-
Lower than 5,000	-	Som shark loans
5,000-10,000	Pana	-
10,001-50,000	Seesri	-
50,001-100,000	Tungoh, Sutta,	-
100,000-200,000	Pairee, Sunee	-
300,000-400,000	-	Vee shark loans
Higher than 400,000	-	-

Figure5.8: size and source of debts of in Dongdang village

Size of current debt (THB)	BAAC and other institution	Another financial source
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No debts	Srichand, Nang, Tungting	-
Lower than 5,000	-	-
5,000-10,000	Nunan	Oui
10,001-50,000	Dawon	-
50,001-100,000	Lord, Samai	-
100,000-200,000	-	-
300,000-400,000	-	Bonmee shark loans
Higher than 400,000	-	-

Figure 5.9: size and source of debts in Nonkhong village

In Dongdang and Nonkhong almost every household is in debt. The most common source of loans is from the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BAAC). The BAAC is considered one of the government's major financial commitments to rural development to allow local farmers access to low interest loans. In the annual report of Dongdang municipality there are 90 households with formal loans averaging 2,400,000 baht that are for business use. The other 50 households got their money from loan sharks with loans averaging 500,000 baht. The interest rate of loan sharks is steep, but it is easier to obtain loans from them since they do not check your credits, though they will use intimidation tactics to make people pay. Many households use these loans for personal business such as funding for farm equipment and labor costs, opening a small mom and pop shop, opening various service shops such as barbershop, restaurants and even a small hand-pumped gas station (which is just a gallon tank with manual hand pump system). The cost of farming is substantial since labor is paid 300 baht per person per day, and sometimes it takes up to 10 people to work the field each day. Other costs are fertilizer and field machinery such as tractor and truck.

The following quotations give an idea of the nature of debt and its hardships:

“We have a tractor, but we have to hire labor for harvesting. In one year, we have gotten around 100,000 baht from rice farming, but we still have debt. There is debt from buying a tractor in the past. We have to pay 200,000 baht for two more years. We also have gotten many loans as well.” (Sunee, middle-aged mother)

“We borrowed money not only from BAAC, but also from the “sewing fabric” cluster¹. Our cluster borrows money from BAAC. I’m one of the cluster. We have many people in the “sewing fabric” cluster. I have not mortgaged my land. Everyone in Dongdang doing this. (Panna, middle-aged mother)

“My life is hard. I am living day by day. You can see how my life is. Every day I have to find money to support my family. I have to rise my grandchild. Every day is busy. I have everything to do. Life is so hard. I do not have anything. I get a bit of money from selling food. If I don’t have money, I borrow from my cousin. Like two days ago, I just borrowed from my neighbor. (Sutta, elder mother)

¹ Local people can ask for government loans that aim to serves as capital investment for farming activities, this is unclear—break up this sentence and clarify meaning--as collective organization creating home-based work through collaboration using local knowledge and skilled. The women’s collective organization get a loan from the BAAC and then the members get to borrow money from the local government. Everyone in the cluster would be responsible for paying back those loans. However, it depends on how much each person has borrowed.

One of the biggest issues arising from easily obtainable government loans is poor money management. Many people that got the loans do not put it into business but buy other commodities that cannot translate into income such as a motorcycle or truck. It becomes a cycle of borrowing and paying back; the farmers will try to pay off loans with more loans and there are not really any government plans to solve this issue. In many cases the people might not even need to take out loans in the first place and they would be able to sustain themselves if they used better money management and investment plans.

The other purpose for loans are investment in children's education. Cost to attend a university in Thailand is much higher than the primary education and there are not many government-subsidized programs available for people that wants to attend university, especially for students in rural Thailand. Parents must take out loans so that their children can study in a good university. There is no immediate return on this investment and they will have to work hard to keep up with the monthly payment. Many university students will have to work part-time jobs to help with their parents' payment as well as making money for room and board. This can be considered as another form of work migration in the younger generation.



Figure 5.10: A house for contain rice in Nonkhong village. This house is more than fifty years old. There is a lot of papyrus plants in front and around the house.



Figure 5.11: The under part of a house in Dongdang village. The house is separated between ground and upper level for people and animal. You can see a water buffalo standing under the house on the right side of the picture.

5.6 Rural Livelihood, and Economic Activities in their Land

International labor organization give the definition of homeworking, which is people working from their homes or from other premises of their choosing other than the workplace, for payment, which results in a product or service specified by the employer (International Labor Organization Homeworking, 2018). My case studies portray women as a main work force in many local economic activities, playing important roles as leaders in this rural setting. Bullock (1994) suggests that homeworking is the basis of pre-industrial economic activity in the developed region that made an important contribution to the early stages of industrialization.

From my data, elder mothers and middle-aged mothers that diversify between farming and non-farming activities might be even more economically effective than those that only participate in one or the other. Homeworking in rural areas allow people to be professionally productive and be effective in household duties. Households in both villages are still maintaining their agricultural

activity at the same time as they are involved with non-farming activity in relation to the capitalist market. It shows that people make good use of second income job, working in their house or nearby in the village.

Home-based part-time jobs can be seen as a response to the limitations in agricultural resources. On average Dongdang household have 12.2 rai of agricultural land, while Nonkhong average is 12.6 rai. It is interesting that even though both villagers have similar amount of land available the type of part-time job that villagers do is different. This indicate that the availability of part-time jobs is not related to the available agriculture land, but rather the collective decision of the villagers. The villagers can get together and decided the part-time job that they will collaborate as a village.

Home-based working could be a solution for the aging population of Isan, since elder mothers can choose to work on jobs that require less physical strength, less travel, and flexible work hours. The population demographic of Dongdang and Nonkhong are mostly elder mothers and middle-aged mothers of 50-70 years of age. In the future as, young generation living in villages decrease, the agriculture activities are more likely to decrease as this older generation gets too old to work in the field.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explored local economic activities that affect the livelihoods of Dongdang and Nonkhong village. Rice is the main agriculture focus of both villages that surprisingly does not yield sustainable income and only serves as a food source, even though it holds so much significance and meaning to villagers as a way of life. Villagers have put so much efforts into

farming rice, but they will still have to work second jobs in order to make ends meet. Remittance has become one of the main sources of family income where efforts from family members that might have been put into rice farming is transformed into creating monetary income. Remittance is also much more than just income. It also represents the gratitude from daughter that makes parents feel proud and secure, fulfilling the role of being a “good daughter”.

Both villages have similar economic and environmental settings where the difference in economic activity illustrated the adaptation of local wisdom as well as creativity and resilience of the local population. Diversifying their local economy, people in Dongdang and Nonkhong village integrated their farming activity and non-farming activity that has translated to income that is having a positive effect on their livelihood, helping them to maintain their way of life. However, most of villagers are still in debt due to bad money management and high interest rates from loan sharks. Villagers often rely on each other in working part-time jobs, creating local organizations to help them maximize output as well as maintaining quality through collaboration and knowledge sharing. These organizations such as the sewing fabric collective helps members to consolidate their product together, increasing their bargaining power with the middle man, and becoming a platform for borrowing money.

Chapter Six

Land Ownership

6.1 Land and family structure

Looking at family kinship in Isan culture, women have possessory rights for land and inheritance. Traditionally the youngest daughter would remain in the household after marriage to inherit the land. Larger kin groups, approximating matrilineality, existed in some parts of the Northeast. These groups had the function of regulating marriage and mediating disputes (Keyes 1974). After marriage, daughters were expected to bring husbands into their family system and continue to cultivate their parents' land. Sons usually moved into the wife's family system. It was expected that youngest daughter would remain in the household after her marriage to care for her parents until their death. She will eventually have inherited her parents' house. This responsibility is deeply rooted in the Isan family culture and the Buddhist belief system. This has all changed so much due to problems from increasing birth rate, land degradation, and the limited agricultural land available for the younger generation.

The importance of the matrilineal-matrilocal system is evidenced by a variety of things, such as the presence of a strong belief in maternal ancestral spirits. However, the relationship between mother and daughter has changed due to migration for work. This has caused shifts in family relationships within rural communities, especially in the Northeast of Thailand, where the matrilineality system is an important concept and practice in the local culture.

Matrilocal and matrilineal in Isan rural villages are reflected in practice in residency of the newly married couple into the wife's family and household. In Thailand matrilocality is reflected in both the Northern culture and the Northeastern culture (Satasombut, 2013; Potter: 1977). The society tends to be matricentric with women usually holding a more significant role and social standing in the community. For example, Isan culture believed in worshipping of the maternal ancestral ghost. Maternal relatives have a tighter relationship than their fraternal counterpart, and household inheritance usually follows the maternal lineage, members of whom will ended up living in the same area or even in the same maternal household compound. A matrilocal living arrangement after married is traditional to the North and Northeast culture and communities of Thailand.

Traditionally, when a couple in Isan got married the husband will move into live in his wife's home or build a small house in his wife's compound. The son-in-law is considered a part of the household work force and household labor. He will work for the wife's family and will be answering to his father-in-law, who holds the leader role in the wife's family. The wife parents might give the couple some land so that they will have their own property to work and make a living. In some cases, the father- and mother-in-law will loan the agricultural land cheaply to the couple (Santisombut 2013). In case that there are more than one sons-in-law, the first daughter that got married could build another house in the vicinity and live close by in a new home. Yet a single family will not thrive alone. Isan cultural values emphasize the importance of relationships between families, extended families, neighbors, and community, reflecting from the marriage traditions and practices. There is also a collective sentiment that binds the village together as a functioning unit structure.

Family structure is designed through marriage patterns (See Chapter 4), which reflect the basic needs and the residence rules. The residence rule concept in the Isan rural culture usually refers to the living situation, roles, and the household arrangement of the family, extended family and new members from marriage. There are many changes that affect the family structure that includes social change, migration, education, marriage, and work. Traditionally, the women's household is considered the center of the family collective due to the fact that men have moved in with their wife after marriage. Extended maternal families will also mostly remain close with the main family's household as well. From my collected data, the aging mother-generation and middle-aged mother generations in both sample villages show some changes in the residence rule, but most of the changes have happened in the young daughter generation (cases of Chai, Numwan, Kookkai, Toey, and Jai), although these changes are not true in every case.

The housing style of the Isan living compounds consist of relatives and extended family living in the same area; they can be in a separate house in the same compound or on nearby land. Unmarried children will often still live with their parents until they get married, in which case the extended family will grow and settle in the same area to become a bigger family and traditionally the cycle continues as each generation progresses.

Land ownership and availability are very important to the livelihood of the rural community. Land ownership is considered a major stability factor for migrant women, in that they will have workable land, a house to live in, and will have little or no expenses when they return to live in their own property of rural Isan. I'm focusing my research on two rural communities in two provinces in Isan region to see if the economic differences would play a role in differentiating the ownership and availability of land between the two communities in the context of women's migration and change in mother-daughter relationship regarding matrilineal and matrilineality.

As we discussed in the local economy chapter, with the differences in economy and jobs of both villages, farming is not considered a stable source of income since the productivity fluctuates highly from the unpredictable weather and limited by the size of land that is available. Most farming products are being used and consumed in the household or sold to make a little bit of income. Most agriculture plants that are grown in the area are rice, sticky rice, and cane, which requires a lot of water. Drought has a major impact on the livelihood of the villagers as well as the need to migrate to find a better source of income to subsidize for the loss of agriculture productivity.

Women are considered the main pillar of the household and are the caretaker of the older and younger generations. It was expected that the youngest daughter would remain in the household to care for her parents physically and financially until their death (Sparkes 2005; Mills 1999; Keyes 1983). At that time, she will eventually have inherited her parents' house and land. This responsibility is deeply rooted in the Isan family culture and the Buddhist belief system. As we can see from the interview of Seesri, "He (my brother) did not take the land. He has already known that the land will be given to daughter. It's traditional. I don't know too. But we are doing that for a long time. Because if someone takes care of the parents they should be given the land automatically. My mom has five children, and she had more than 60 rai of land. Parent will divide the land into six parts appropriately for both parent and each child. The child that stays and take care of the parents will eventually inherit the parent's part of the land, but it's not the same for every household." (Seesri, elder mother)

elder mother	Pairee (68) 7th of 12	Mayuree (68) 4th of 8	Sutta (82) 9th of 12	Seesri (60) 5th of 5 younger daughter	Som (76) 12th of 12 younger daughter
middle-aged mother	Tungoh (45) 1st of 2 younger daughter	Sunee (45) 2nd of 2 younger daughter	Panna (55) 5th of 5 younger daughter	Nujan (48) 3th of 4	Dang (51) 5th of 7
young daughter	Toey (24) 2nd of 2 younger daughter	Jai (26) 1st of 2	Tee (26) 2nd of 2 younger daughter	Vee (27) 3rd of 3 younger daughter	Numwan (33) 2nd of 2 younger daughter

Figure 6.1: Birth of order and age in the three-generation family, the case study in Dongdang village

elder mother	Srichand (69) 3rd of 6	Lorde (80) 3rd of 4 younger daughter	Nunan (73) 4th of 4 younger daughter	Palee (79) 6th of 8	Nang (67) 6th of 7 younger daughter
middle-aged mother	Dawon (46) 4th of 5 younger daughter	Bonmee (60) 2nd of 3	Oui (54) 2nd of 7	Samai (58) 4th of 4 younger daughter	Tungting (47) 2nd of 4

young	Aim (26)	Kookai (38)	Noi (27)	Num (31)	Jaw (34)
daughter	2nd of 2	1st of 2	2nd of 2	3rd of 3	1st of 3
	younger	younger	younger	younger	
	daughter	daughter	daughter	daughter	

Figure6.2: Birth of order and age in the three-generation family, the case study in Nonkhong village

In order to understand land in the context of matrilocality, it is important to begin by looking at the distribution of land holding in each village. Table 1 and 2 shows the three-generation age, birth order and if she is the youngest daughter. It is interesting that most of the women in the sample size are the youngest daughter of their respective families, reflecting the pattern of younger daughter inheritance in the matrilineal system of Isan. The number of siblings in each generation has been getting smaller from the aging generation of average 7.8 siblings per family to an average of 4.3 siblings per family in the middle-aged generation. The average number of siblings in the young daughter generation are the smallest at 2.3 siblings per family. This indicates the change in how many children a mother has in each generation. This can affect the land inheritance and distribution size. The less siblings in the family means a larger piece of land inherited.

elder mother	Pairee:	Mayuree:	Sutta:	Seesri:	Som:
(used to have)	15 rai	4 rai	4 rai	11 rai	5 rai
middle-aged	Thungoh:	Sunee:	Panna✳:	Nujan:	Dang:
mother	15 rai	33 rai	9 rai	4 rai	0 rai
young daughter	Toey:	Jai:	Tee:	Vee:	Numwan:
	not receive	not receive	1 rai	not receive	not receive
	yet	yet		yet	yet

Figure 6.3: land inheritance in the three-generation family in Dongdang, Roiet Province

Panna★ has 8 rai of land in *Kaset-visri* village, which is her husband possession.

elder mother	Srichand:	Lorde:	Nunan:	Palee:	Nang★□
(used to have)	47 rai	30 rai	18 rai	20 rai	41 rai
middle-aged	Dawon:	Bonmee:	Oui:	Samai★□	Tungting:
mother	10 rai	9 rai	13 rai	18 rai	13 rai
young daughter	Aim:	Kookai:	Noi:	Num:	Jaw:
	not receive	not receive	not receive	not receive	not receive
	yet	yet	yet	yet	yet

Figure 6.4: land inheritance in the three-generation family in Nonkhong, Khonkaen Province

Samai★ has land in *Nonglua*, neighbor village, that she inherited. Nang ★ lives in another village.

Table 3 and 4 shows the amount of land owned by each generation in each village. The middle-aged mother generation in Dongdang have an average of 12.2 rai while the middle-aged mother generation in Nonkhong have an average of 12.6 rai. The land is acquired from inheritance, through marriage and purchases. I put more importance on middle-aged mother because they are the current owners of the family land and they will be the one who distribute the land to the next generation. The land owned by most of the families in the two villages are small; only Sunee from Dongdang owns quite a lot of land of 33 rai because she bought more land. The effect of diminishing landholdings in Nonkhong is more severe than Dongdang, with an average of 31.2 rai in the elderly generation that has shrunk to an average of 12.6 rai in the middle-aged generation. In most cases land is not yet passed down to the younger daughter generation. Notably the size of

land owned naturally get smaller as each generation splits the land among the children of each emerging generation. Most of elder mothers in Dongdang, except Som, have part-time jobs.

Dongdang	Thungoh:	Sunee:	Panna:	Nujan:	Dang:
	15 rai	33 rai	9 rai	4 rai	0 rai
Nonkhong	Dawon:	Bonmee:	Oui:	Samai□	Tungting:
	10 rai	9 rai	13 rai	18 rai	13 rai

Figure6.5: landholding of middle age mother generation in each village

From the table 5 the latest household size of family that still lives in the village, and size of land owned can be seen. Looking at the landholding and number of children of each generation, five households of the aging generation, age sixty to seventy-six, in Dongdang have approximately 7.4 rai with an average of 4 children. Five household of aging generation, age sixty-seven to eighty, in Nonkhong had approximately 31.2 rai with in an average of 4.6 children. Notably, average size of land owned by the elder generation in Nonkhong is significantly bigger than Dongdang due to land availability and economic differences. Some of them in Nonkhong do not have debt, and some of them has small debt. From their stories and interviews, land that are less than 5 rai are usually not enough for full size commercial farming and will usually be used for producing household food or generating a secondary income source. The size of landholding can determine the amount of extra jobs a person needs to have besides working the land and farming. (in the section of occupation, home-based work, debt, and income).

Size of land	Number of household in Dongdang	Number of household in Nonkhong
landless	1	0
1-10 rai	2	2
11-20 rai	1	3
21-30 rai	1	0

Figure 6.6: Distribution of land holding in Dongdang and Nonkhong village

Note: 1 acre = 2.5 rai

Table 6 describes the distribution of land holding in Dongdang and Nonkhong villages. One person is landless in Dongdang. Two people in Dongdang, and 2 people in Nonkhong have 1-10 rai. One person in Dongdang has 11-20 rai, and 3 people have 11-20 rai in Nonkhong. Also, one person in Dongdang has 21-33 rai. However, one person in both Dongdang and Nonkhong village have 30 rai.

Want to sell or sell or give land to their sibling	Do not want to sell land
Bonmee (middle-aged)	Tungoh (middle-aged)
Dang (middle-aged)	Sunee (middle-aged)
Numwan (young daughter)	Pana (middle-aged)
Vee (young daughter)	Nujan (middle-aged)
Jai (young daughter)	Dawon (middle-aged)
Toey (young daughter)	Samai (middle-aged)
Aim (young daughter)	Tungtik (middle-aged)

Kookkai (young daughter)	Oui (middle-aged)
Jaw (young daughter)	Tee (young daughter)
	Noi (young daughter)
	Num (young daughter)

Figure 6.6: Desire to keep or sell land

elder mother	Pairee	Mayuree	Sutta	Seesri	Som
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
middle-aged mother	Thungoh	Sunee	Panna	Nujan	Dang
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
young daughter	Toey	Jai	Tee	Vee	Numwan
	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗

Figure 6.7: Those who do rice farming in Dongdang, Roiet Province

✓ is the symbol of who does rice farming. ✗ is the symbol of who does not do rice farming.

elder mother	Srichand	Lorde	Nunan	Palee	Nang
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
middle-aged mother	Dawon	Bonmee	Oui	Samai	Tungting
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
young daughter	Aim	Kookai	Noi	Num	Jaw
	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

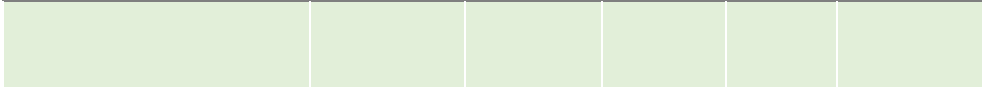


Figure 6.8: who does not work on rice farming in Nonkhong, Khonkean Province

✓ is the symbol of who does rice farming. ✗ is the symbol of who does not rice farming.

From the data in Table 7, the interviews show some middle-aged mothers and young daughters do not want to keep land inherited from their parents or grandparents. Interestingly, most of the women that show desire to sell their land are in the young daughter generation, while most middle-aged mothers desire to hold on to their lands. Due the trend in work migration many younger generation women are considering selling their land and moving to the big city to pursue a modern lifestyle that is more desirable. Many of those in the younger generation perceived that being a farmer has a lower status than being a blue-collar worker in cities. Data from their stories also illustrate that the young generation has migrated due to work, marriage, and study and thus many people have established a life in Bangkok or abroad like the case of Ja and Kookkai. In addition, their storied show that they are not interested to get involve in rice farming and they do not want to live in the rural village. Table 10 and Table 11 shows that people have no skill or knowledge in rice farming and most of them are from the young daughter generation.

“I don’t think I will do rice farming, even though my mother has done it.”

(Ja, youngest daughter)

“I don’t want to be farmer as my mother.” “I told her to sell the land for money.”

(Jaw, youngest daughter)

“I know what basically rice paddy does, but now I can’t do this. I live in Sweden, and I don’t know why I come back here.” (Kookkai, young daughter who live abroad)

6.2 Case Studies

The seven case studies that I picked out from people of both villages illustrate land usage, what the land means to them, and how the land gets passed down from one generation to the next. The case studies start from the elder mother to middle-aged mothers and finish with young daughters as a story of three generations.

6.2.1 Case 1 Pairee’s story in Dongdang

Pairee is sixty-eight years old in the elder mother generation. Her highest education level is primary school (*por 4*), the equivalent of 4th grade. She can read and write a little bit. She was a labor worker at a garment factory for three years in Bangkok. Pairee was born seventh of twelve children in Dongdang. Her family has been rice farming for many generations. Her parents had a lot of children and most of her siblings did not have any higher education. Before Pairee’s parents died they split the land among their children. Pairee inherited 15 rai from her parent, while her younger sister got 25 rai and the parent’s house.

When the rice harvest season arrives everybody in the household always works together. However, in Isan region there are large arid areas with unpredictable weather and drought, making it hard for farmers to make a stable living. When Pairee was younger, rice production was very poor because of drought so most of the young people in her village went out of their hometown to work in Bangkok. Pairee also decided to go work in Bangkok as her cousin was also leaving. After Pairee got married, she got a piece of land not far from her parent’s house, and after that Pairee

and her husband did not work in Bangkok anymore. Pairee has two children, Tungoh the older sister and Chai the younger son. Both of her children have already gotten married. Pairee lives with Tungoh and her family, while Chai lives in another place with his family. Chai was a construction laborer who worked in *Kaohsiung* Taiwan for eight years, and after that Chai moved in with his wife in *Nakornsawan* Province (in central Thailand). When Chai got married in 2007, Pairee gave him a 7.5 rai piece of land. However, Chai sold his land to his sister because he does not have time to do rice farming. He also lives in *Nakornsawan* Province with his family.

Nowadays Pairee doesn't own a lot of land. Her family would not have enough even if she sells all her land, so they split up the land, selling some part and using that money to farm on the rest of the land they keep. Pairee and Tungoh family do rice farming for both regular rice and sticky rice. They sell regular rice and keep the sticky rice for family food. The family farms sticky rice in 2-3 rai of their land, while Pairee and Tungoh also work in the nearby garment factory at the same time in the off season.

Tungoh, who is the older daughter of Pairee, has two children, Tonk is two-two years old and Toey is twenty-four. Tonk and Toey do not live in Dongdang and Tungoh did not give them any land yet. She is saving the land for them when they grow up and get married. Today, Pairee and her husband together receive an aging welfare check of 600 baht per month.

In most cases, it seems fair to divide the land among sons and daughter equally. When a son or a daughter does not want to live in that land he/she will sell it to the other siblings that wish to remain in the village. For example, in Pairee's story, Chai, the younger son that got married and moved to *Nakornsawan* Province, lives in central Thailand, and also his wife has land for doing rice in *Nakornsawan* Province. He sold his land to his sister. In many cases brothers will sell their land to their sisters when they do not want to live in the same village or are moving to live with

wives in another village. in this case shows in practice men usually abandon his right of mother's land. As the same time, men had access to his wives' land. Moreover, in this case matrilocality is represented by how the younger daughter of Pairee received more property than any of the other siblings.

Case 2 Mayuree and Sunee' story in Dongdang

Mayuree, sixty-eight, is the mother of Sunee who is forty-five years old. Mayuree and Sunee are living together in Dongdang. Mayuree was born here, the fourth daughter of eight children from a poor family. Mayuree used to work in Bangkok for about 2 years before she came back to her hometown and got married before her sister. Mayuree moved out to live with her husband after she got married and her parents gave 4 rai of land to Mayuree and her husband. And because of this the old house was to be her younger sister's. After their parents passed away her siblings also inherited 4 rai of land each. However, her brother sold the land to his sister and moved to another place. Even though Mayuree has her land and house, she and her husband still went back to work as manual laborers in *Rayong* Province for about 4 years. Mayuree and her husband came back every year for 3-4 months to work as rice farmers during harvest season in their own land at Dongdang.

Sunee is the youngest daughter of Mayuree's two children. Sunee knows her mother does not have much land and that her family does farming just to grow food for the household. Sunee and her husband want to buy more land because they don't have enough land to grow enough rice to sell to the mill. They have saved a lot of money from her husband's earning from working as a construction laborer in Taiwan. Her husband worked very hard to buy more land and they were

able to own up to 33 rai of land. However, they still have some debt because of the uncertainty of rice farming. Sunee parent do not have much land, but she worked very hard to buy more land because she believed that it would bring more stability to the family, even though her family still carries debt. Six years ago, Sunee had to sell 5 rai of her land to pay for her children's education. She cannot sustain the cost of farming while having to support her children's education and she knows that she might need to sell more land in the future to subsidize those costs. She assumes her children don't want to do rice farming as her daughter left the hometown since she graduated from Roiet University.

In the case of Mayuree at Dongdang we can see the reduction of land size passed down due to matrilocality. Sunee had more land because she and her husband saved money for buying land until they ended up with 33 rai, but Sunee had to sell some of her land to support her daughter's education. Furthermore, many people, especially men, are working abroad in countries such as Taiwan, Singapore, and Middle-Eastern countries. Transnational labor Isan migrant men has become a normalized cultural practice (Kitiasa, 2014). Mayuree and Sunee's case show that size of land owned that reduce though inheritance can be increase by purchasing of extra land. Remittance from Sutta's husband that is working in Taiwan is used to buy more land. Matrilocality in this case represent the increase of land by son-in-law that adds to the family property.

Case 3: Sutta's story in Dongdang

Sutta, eighty-two, was born fourth of nine children from a poor family in Dongdang. When she was young her family had 30 rai of land in Dongdang, and another 27 rai of land outside of the village. As she grew up her mother sold a lot of the land that they owned, including the 27 rai land outside of village in *Baan-Nong-Chan* and a big part of the land in their property in the village.

Her mother sold her land and divided it among her children. Some of Sutta's relatives used money from the mother's land, exchanging land for money to agents due to working in Middle Eastern countries for a long time ago. They still have some land left for rice farming. After her parents died, 1-2 rai of land was shared to each child equally.

Sutta got married with a man who grew up in the same village. They met each other while working in *Rayong* Province and came back to the village together. Her husband used to work as a construction labor in Bangkok and cutting sugar cane in *Rayong* Province. She is now a widow since her husband died ten years ago. After her husband died, Sutta inherited 2 rai of land in Dongdang from her husband. Most of her children work in rice farming, but her first-born son is a policeman. One of Sutta's five children died a long time ago. One of her daughters moved to *Maharakham* Province in Isan region. Sutta expressed that she never wants to sell her small piece of land and would like her children to own it once she is gone.

Sutta lives with her youngest daughter, Panna, and her youngest granddaughter, Tee, in the same area. There are 2 houses on the property, which are Sutta's house and Panna's house. Panna and her daughter Tee live in the same house. There is a little kitchen house behind the three-main houses used as a shared cooking area. The land in the property is divided into 3 parts for Sutta, Panna, and Tee.

Panna is a middle-aged mother who is taking care of her mother Sutta daily. Panna and Tee cook for Sutta every day in the little kitchen house. Then she goes out to do her job such as washing scallions and sewing fabric in the village and nearby area. Panna is responsible for rice farming in the 1 rai land that she received from her mother when she got married and the 8-rai of land that belongs to her husband at *Amphor Kasert*. Panna and her husband ride the tractor to *Amphor Kasert*

to work on the rice field and return to Dongdang in the evening. During May every year they have to plow the field, sow, and harvest rice.

Tee is the youngest daughter of Panna who has never worked outside Dongdang. She wants to buy more land if she can get enough money. However, Tee did not receive any land from her mother yet, even though she has already gotten married. She still does rice farming in her grandmother's and mother's land. Tee is also responsible for rice farming in the 8-rai land in *Amphor Kasert*, which is her father's property that is quite far away from Dongdang area as well. For taking time to *Amphor Kasert*, Panna and her husband have to ride the farmer's truck around one hour and thirty minutes. Unlike her sister who went to work and live in Bangkok, Tee knows how to do rice farming since she has been doing it for her whole life. Most of the rice produced from Sutta's family land in Dongdang will be for consumption in their household.

Marriage is another way for a family unit to increase landholding, especially when people from the same village got married. The land from husband and wife will be combined. In many cases, land will be given to the daughter when she got married as a gift so that she can have a place to live close to the parents in the village

This case also illustrates the diminishing of land due to matrilineality. In older generations, Sutta's parent had a lot of land for agriculture. So far Sutta, the elder mother in Dongdang, gave her land to Panna who is the young daughter that takes care of Sutta. The land is limited, and they cannot commercialize their rice produce. Panna received land from her husband's inheritance and they are still farming rice, even though they have less than 10 rai of land.

Panna, her husband, and Tee work together on the 8 rai of land at *Amphor Kasert*. This land is from Panna husband's property. In this case husband and wife can combine their land in order to maximize their production. Although not as common, gaining land through marriage is an

alternative to inheriting land. Interestingly, Panna, her husband, and Tee are freelance farmers that will also work on other people's land as well. Tee does not want to live in Dongdang but she knows that eventually all the land will belong to her.

In my study, there is evidence that rural families are getting smaller. Couples that got married are deciding to have fewer children. One of the reason is that there is not enough land to pass on and the amount of land own is decreasing as generations pass along. The amount of land that will be divided depends on the number of children. The average number of children in young daughter generation of the sample size (both in two village) is 2.1 children. (See Table 1 and 2.) The elder generation will often pass on their landholdings to the middle-aged generation before they pass away to avoid conflict between siblings.

Case 4: Seesri's story in Dongdang

Seesri is from a poor family and she has been faced with hardship all her life. Seesri is sixty years old and her family has been living in Dongdang since her parents' generation. Seesri is the youngest daughter in her family. When her parents died Seesri inherited 11 rai of land from her parents. Seesri inherited both the land and the house of her parents because she is the youngest daughter and she was usually the one who took care of her parents. Seesri used to work in *Rayong* Province when she was healthy and younger because there was no work to do in Dongdang. Seesri eventually got married and had four children. Nujan is her third child from four children and the youngest daughter of the family.

Nujan used to work in Bangkok as a factory worker for 8 years. Seesri allowed her daughter to work in Bangkok because she knows that there is no work for her daughter to do in the village. Seesri lived with Nujan and her husband in the same house after Nujan got married until Nujan

had two children. After that Seesri moved to a new house that Nujan built near her property. Seesri's house is close to her cousin and she feels that she can depend on her cousin for help and small favors. Nujan's two daughters are Fai, the older daughter, and Vee, the younger daughter. Fai is married and moved to work in Bangkok, while she left her son to stay with Nujan, who is his grandmother, to take care of him. Nujan knows that Fai might never come back to live in DongDang and that Fai is saving money to bring her son to live with her in Bangkok. That is why Nujan is determined to keep the family land for Vee, the younger daughter, who still lives in Dongdang village.

Vee is twenty-seven years old and never worked or lived in another place besides Dongdang. Vee is responsible for taking care of her mother and her grandmother. She does everything that she can to support the family from rice farming, temporary work, sewing fabric, and washing scallions. She works on the 4 rai rice paddy that is owned by her family. She works hard, and she knows that her mother will give her the family land someday. Vee has a son who is studying in middle school. Beside the property that the family has, Vee and her husband took out 300,000-baht loan from a loan shark to build their own house and support her son's education and rice farming cost. Vee is worried about her mother and grandmother so she decided to live near them in the village, even though she still has the desire to go and live elsewhere. Someday, if Vee must, she says that she will sell all of her land and move to where her family can have a better quality of life.

This case represents the responsibility and duty of *look-sa-la* due to Isan rural traditions such as what Vee is doing right now in Dongdang. Vee is responsible for taking care of her parents and grandparents. In this case explains land will belong to children who take care of parent. Vee and husband work in Dongdang village. and thus her husband receives a share of land.

Case 5: Som's story in Dongdang

Som turned seven-six years old in 2017. She used to work as a construction laborer in Bangkok for about 3 years. The only thing that Som and her husband is really good at is working the rice field and raising farm animals. Som's parents have been doing rice farming and raising cows for a long time. Som also has been involved with family farming for her entire life. Her husband used to live near her village and moved to Dongdang after they got married.

Som's parents had 12 children, in which Som is the tenth child. Her brothers and sisters have duties to do in household. Everyone had their responsibility to help with the workload. They were from a farming family, working hard for 7-8 months until after the harvest is done. They will usually find other jobs to do while waiting for the next season or making merit in the village. Living off the land, they don't need to buy any food and they can scavenge enough to live in Dongdang area. When Som's parents passed away, as a youngest sister, she inherited 4 rai of land from her parents. Most of her siblings ended up working in Bangkok, and one of her siblings even went to work in Singapore.

Som's life was difficult. Som always has had to borrow money from her siblings because rice farming did not bring enough income to lift her out of poverty. Som has seven children, but she cannot afford to raise all of them due to poverty. Dang, the fifth daughter of Som, was raised by Som's sister when Dang was very young. Dang did not want to inherit her mother's land because she was raised by her aunt, who has a better financial situation. While Som was cutting sugar cane in Rayong, Som's mother also did not have enough time to take care of all the grandchildren. Som's relatives are the ones who financed Dang's education and that led Dang to

get a good job in Bangkok. She met her husband, who is from *Prachupkhirikhan* Province, and decided to live in Bangkok for good. Dang expressed that she originally planned to move back to Dongdang to be close to her mother and save some money to buy some land, but her plan changed because she met her husband.

Today, Dang is fifty-three years old with two daughters of her own. Dang's family lives in Bangkok. She visits her parent every year, but never thought of moving back. She has one brother and she decided that she will give him the land in Dongdang when their parents die. This piece of land is rather small (only 4 rai) and is not suitable for commercial farming. She also does not have a strong connection with the village since she left the village when she was very young. Dang does not know how to work the rice field. She has a good quality of life in Bangkok with her husband because of her aunt that sponsored her education. She loves her aunt like a mother because even though her aunt has a better financial situation they are still pretty poor, and she has to help her aunt work in the restaurant, even on the weekends. She is the only sibling in the family that lives in Bangkok. Her other siblings are all working outside of Bangkok and some in foreign countries.

Namwan is Dang's thirty-three years old daughter. She got married with Nicole, a German man, six years ago and they have one child together. She's living in Germany with her husband. She is working in a Thai restaurant and sells made-to-order Thai desserts to other Thai restaurants in Germany. Namwan's husband doesn't want her to work every day so she only works 3 days a week and will usually make her desserts at home. She sends 10,000-12,000baht remittance to Dang every month and she knows that Dang will pass some of this money to her grandmother as well. Once her uncle tried to persuade the relatives that they could afford to buy more land in Dongdang next to the family property, but because Dang's family has no intention of moving back she refused

to chip in. If one day her grandmother dies and splits the land among the siblings, Namwan will sell this small piece of land to her uncle.

Their story illustrates how the kinship relationships in a family has influenced their life. Dang left home for a long time since her aunt raised her in Bangkok, but the relationship between Dang and her family are still strong. The study of Pomsema (2015) and Numwan case point out that the expectations of relatives play an important factor in Dang and Numwan's life decisions. Dang didn't know how to farm rice because she left rural village at a young age. Her husband also didn't want to buy more land in rural village since they settled down in Bangkok, having no connection with rural life. However, within their family though matrilineal inheritance from mother to daughter, Dang and Numwan are still taking care of Som (elder mother) by sending remittance. Thus, in the end the reward for taking care of their parent is still land inheritance.

Case 6: Lord in Nonkhong

Lord owns 30 rai of land and she is the fourth daughter of her family. Lord's father was the village leader, so their family was well known within the village. She is now 80 years old and needs special care because of her health. She has bad eyes and bad legs, so she can't work in the rice field anymore. Her husband passed away 10 years ago. She often visits the temple with her daughter-in-law and granddaughter. Now she lives with the granddaughter of her eldest son's family. She has three children which are Pong (son), Boonmee (son) and Sa (daughter) respectively. All her daughters are living in *Chonburi* Province with husbands. *Chonburi* Province is located at Gulf of Thailand. There is largest tourist city is *Pattaya* district. Also, many industrial company is located at *Chonburi* Province.

Lord gave her children some land when they got married and when her husband passed away. Today she still lives in her old house that got renovated. Her eldest son Pong has a big family and there are six people living in the same household. Pong and their relatives works on the 12 rai of land that he owns and 9 rai of land that belong to his brother Boonmee. He grows sticky rice, white rice and sugar cane. Most of the produce from the land is consumed by the household, which is also shared with his sister Sa in *Chonburi* Province. Sa sells Isan food in *Chonburi* Province and she believes that selling food provides better income than working in agriculture in the rural village.

Lord wants to keep the land in the family, but she feels that the new generation will not want to work in agriculture anymore and that someday her grandchildren might sell all their land and move. She thinks that her son Boonmee might move back to the village someday and that he might buy more land, but she is worried that he might get into more debt.

Boonmee's son is Kom. Kom works as a construction contractor to save money so that he can buy more land in Nonkhong where his mother already has 9 rai of land. Boonmee wants to sell this piece of land, but he was stopped by Kom. Kom paid some of Boonmee's debt by borrowing from the loan shark so that Boonmee would not have to sell the land. This debt is old since Boonmee borrowed this money to pay for his second son's education many years ago.

Kookkai is Boonmee's daughter. She is living in Sweden with her husband and a seven-year-old son. She will never move back to Nonkhong since her financial status is good in Sweden. They own a house and a car. She enjoys her life in Sweden. Even though she will not move back to Nonkhong, she still loves to visit and take her family to see her mother and grandmother. She wants to build a new house for her mother in Nonkhong if she can save more money and possibly buy more land so that the family will have land to give to the next generation.

“My daughter doesn’t want it (land), but for my son he knows his sister supported him when he had troubles, and when he wanted to study. He wants to pay his sister back by keeping the land for sister as well.” (Boonmee, middle-aged mother)

“My mom told me that she wants to fix the house at Nonkhong, and my brother wants to come back too. If they want to live in here I can pay for them to renovate the house (and land) since this house is inherited from predecessors.” (Kookkai, young daughter)

As in the case of Lord at Nonkhong, her daughter is living in another village, while Kom, Lord’s grandson, wants to have the land and live in Nonkhong. It is very important to note that young people such as Kom are not often willing to live in the rural village. His sister, Kookkai, always supports her family because she knows that land is very important and valuable for their family. Lord lives with her older son in rural village, showing that sometimes parents do not always end up living with daughter. Sa and Boonmee did not live with Lord but they came home to visit Lord every now and then. It is interesting that Kom, a young generation, are interested to come back to live in Nonkhong and get involve with agriculture. This case represents the negotiation of women and men in family where sisters plays a big part in improving quality of life for her brother and that he takes on the role of parental care-taker instead of his sisters. The remittance from Kookkai shows that she still sees the significant in fulfilling the role of “good daughter”. She also wants to renovate her parents’ house as well as buy more land. This case also shows that matrilineal inheritance and property ownership can be significant in some young generation where most young generation are not interested in rural lifestyle.

Case 7: Palee in Nonkhong

Palee is almost 80 years old, but she is still in good health with a good memory. She has four children, three sons and one daughter. Her daughter is Samai and is a *look-sao-la* (the youngest daughter). Palee used to have 20 rai of land from both her inheritance and her husband's. Palee sold a part of the land that is right on the main road to put her three sons through school. She sold this part of land to an investor since Samai was a young girl.

Samai, the youngest daughter, is 58 years old. Samai has 3 children, oldest son and 2 younger daughters, which is Tuk (38 years old), Sa (35 years old), and Num (31 years old) respectively. Both of her daughters remain in Khonkean, while her son moved to another province. Samai has 18 rai of land in another district not far from Nonkhong and she uses that land to grow food for her family. She hires workers to work in the field because she is not so healthy. The workers that she hired are mostly her relatives. She said that she has a much harder time than her brothers because she did not go to school. She owns the house, but she has no money.

Samai separated from her husband 20 years ago. Her ex-husband used to go to work in Saudi Arabia during the 1970s. Her husband is from *Srisaket* Province. Samai had saved some money from remittances that her ex-husband sent back from Saudi Arabia, and she used that money to buy 18 rai of land in *Nonglua* district. One day she found out that her ex-husband had an affair and was remarried to another woman that went to work in Saudi Arabia, so she divorced him. She does not have any land left in Nonkhong because her mother sold all the land except for the house where she is currently living.

Num, the youngest daughter, is 31 years old. She used to work in Bangkok at a yoghurt factory. Num got married as soon as she graduated from high school with a man from the same village. She does not go back to work in Bangkok anymore because she has found a really good

job that can provide a steady income for her family, which is growing mushrooms. Num and her husband use the inherited 2 rai of land to grow mushrooms. Nowadays, Num does not want land for doing rice farming, but she wants to save land for growing mushrooms, and do something else. She also received land from her husband.

In this case represents the youngest daughter usually lives with the parents and she will inherit the land and house after her parents have passed away. If the parents are still healthy the youngest daughters will sometimes have a chance to go and work in other places, but eventually returns home to take over the responsibility once needed. In Palee's case, part of her land was sold to support her children's education. As a *look-sao-la* Samai will probably inherit the house once Palee passes away. Samai received a lot of money from her ex-husband, keeping this money for her children as future inheritance. Furthermore, 18 rai of land in *Nonglua* district will eventually be pass along to her children as matrilineal inheritance. This case is also another case that reinforce the idea that transnational labor Isan migrant men has become a normalized cultural practice (Kitiasa, 2014).

Num, the youngest daughter of Samai, moved back home to grow mushrooms in her husband's land, since Samai's mother sold all her land, Num had to rely on her husband's land for her family livelihood and income through mushroom growing. Her income from growing mushroom is better than rice farming so she doesn't need any part-time job to be able to cleared their debt and raise their children. This case shows that wife can also rely on husband's land when there is no land to inherited from her mother.

6.3 Implication of land ownership changes

Without land in rural areas, people are more likely to leave their village to live in another place such as Bangkok or other urban areas. Landlessness and land diminishment due to splitting inheritance, poverty, and work availability encourages the younger generation to move away from rural area, contributing to the disappearances of traditional family rice farming. Many young daughters show the desire to sell their land, in part because the size of land is getting smaller in each generation. Changing of landholding patterns in parallel with smaller size land and decreasing population contribute to more people moving out of rural villages that leads to reduction of available local farm labor. Most of the people who remain in the villager are elder mothers and middle-aged mothers.

“Oh...she will not do that for sure (rice farming). She said if you have money you can buy land, but then I will sell it. She asks me why do you do rice farming? Why do you want to have a hard life? If I were you I will not do that. Why do you need more land since no one lives in the property? I have a good job with good salary.” (Tungting, milled-aged mother)

“I don’t think I want to buy more land, for the past ten years the price has gone up to more than 200,000 baht for one rai.” (Tungting, middle-aged mother)

“So far there are just old people farming rice.” (Nujan, middle-aged mother)

“No one wants to be a farmer; no one wants to suffer.” (Numwan, young daughter)

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter aims to explore the matrilineal land inheritance, change in land ownership pattern and family structure in the context of matrilocality in Dongdang and Nonkhong from case studies. In general, the size of land owned is diminishing in each coming generation due to inheritance distribution between siblings, migration and education investment and inflation. As these families are in poverty they often have no money to buy more land while their children will often depend on the monetary and agriculture value of land inherited, since land is one of the few valuables that parents have to offer. Many middle-aged mothers that do well financially can sometimes buy more land for their family because they believe that land is the best investment for future generations. Samai from Nonkhong has bought new land outside of Nonkhong village and hired her relatives to work in her land. Some people with a lot of land will rent out their land for others to work on and split the rice produce as payment.

In relation to mother-daughter relationship and migration in Isan in the rural areas, there is a great deal of change in land ownership. Land will be divided after the parents pass away and that will be split equally among the children. However, in many cases younger daughters might receive more land and house than other siblings. Land is usually inherited through daughters since husband traditionally move into the wife's household and that *look-sao-la* or youngest daughter will traditionally inherit her parent's land for fulfilling her duty, taking care of aging parents. Case of Tee and Vee is a good example matrilocality and *look-sao-la* conception who lives with her parents and grandparent, taking care of them. Her case illustrates the matrilocality nature of three generation Isan household. Most of young daughters (For example, Jai, Bonmee, and Sa) in my sample group do not care about land in the rural area, while there are small number of young

daughters that want to make good use of their parent's land such as Num, who is farming mushrooms on her mother's land in Nonkhong. She is making more money than rice farming. Young people who decided to live in the village are looking to buy more land, such as Chai (son), Kom (son), Samai, and Noi. These people believed in the opportunity and stability that their land can offer. There are also some people that still want to have land as an asset, even though they do not live in the village and are not involved with agriculture. On the other hand, migration is one of the biggest factors in diminishing land ownership as young daughters move to live in cities and sell their inherited land to investors or other siblings. Interestingly, in case of Numwan she inherited land straight from her grandparent, skipping the middle-aged mother.

Interestingly, there are situations where the son is staying and inheriting the land, taking care of his parents. In the case of Chai, the younger son of Pairee, he gave up right for his parent's land as he had access to his wife's land in Nakhonsawan Province. There is also a young generation son that wants to maintain land and live rural life, which is Kom, the son of Boonmee. He wants to inherit land from his grandmother, working on the land he plans to live in Nonkhong village indefinitely. This case reflects young men that wish to come back and maintain land belong to his grandmother.

Transnational labor can result in enough income through remittance to actually purchase more land and improve the quality of life for the family such as Samai's case, looking at matrilocality and migration, men can also play a role in household economic as well as increasing the family's wealth and property. The data from cases of son and son-in-law of Sunee (husband of Sunee), Kom (son of Boonmee), Chai (the younger son of Pairee), and husband of Samai show that men can also take the role of elder mother's care-taking and that men are also an important part of matrilocality household.

Land ownership also is tied with the structure of Isan family where land ownership ensures the matrilocality pattern of cluster residence where relatives live in houses close to each other and share the use of family land. With diminishing land, many relatives are more likely to relocate away from the family cluster with the influence of work migration and marriage, reducing the family size in contrast to the traditionally large Isan family. The case studies discussed in this chapter also illustrate the reduction of household size as each generation passes. In many households where there used to be more than three generations of family members, they now only consist of less than two generations or just a husband and a wife.

Chapter Seven

Migrant Women

7.1 Introduction

Traditionally, the Isan population migrated together in groups that included the household and extended family members (Phongphit&Hewison 1990). All the belongings would be put into the cart that was dragged by buffalos. Isan migrants would also need to bring animals such as cows and chicken with them so that they would have animals to work the field and consume. Indigenous Isan would usually migrate along the river bank. Once they had located a settlement the houses were usually built close together in a cluster on the hills (Phongphit&Hewison, 1990; Sawadepanit, 1994). From my interview with *Puyaibaan* (head village), the heads of the villages of both Dongdang and Nonkhong, I learned that the cluster of 5-10 houses are usually home to relatives and close families and in each cluster, there will be one head of the family or “*Jao-Kot*”, which is the family elder (Koh, 2003). Isan does not adhere to any urban planning standard, but there usually are walkways that connect all of the households in the cluster together, depending on the availability of land. Children that grew up and have their own families will usually build their houses in the same cluster close to their parents’ house.

Modern migration often results in Isan people relocating away from their family cluster temporarily or permanently due to work and new family establishment. As Charles Keyes (2014) states, “migration as practiced by northeastern villagers thus must be interpreted as indicating that most northeastern villagers have made “development” of their rural worlds a personal goal”

(Keyes, 2014: 154). Many Isan split their time between hometown and workplace, traveling back and forth many times in a year for various reasons. The rural population is an important source for the production labor of the country that affects the economy (Taylor & Lopez-Feldman, 2010). Industrial development stimulated the migration from rural to urban areas that ultimately reshaped the economy in myriad ways. Migration has helped to increase local per-capita incomes via remittance and increase in rural land productivity of the household. Migration affects the agriculture household through remittances that increase capital investment for agricultural activities such as labor payment, equipment loans, and purchases of farming materials.

During the economic boom from 1970s-1990s, with Thailand's development plan, Thailand had policies to develop the country through expanding the industrial and manufacturing production industries as modernization. The development by the Thai nation-state has played a big part in stimulating the rural-to-urban migration that draws Isan people to Bangkok and other industrial areas to satisfy the labor needs of factories. Many Isan migrant women worker have worked as temporary employees and would return home during the harvest season (Mills, 1999).

On the other hand, Thailand's development plan failed to address the human resource development that results in lack of education for many Isan migrants, limiting them to non-skilled labor jobs. Rigg, Promphaking, & Mare (2014) who discuss the "middle-income trap" and migration focusing on the Isan region illustrate the failure of the nation-state to develop human capital in the poor regions of Thailand. Rigg, Promphaking & Mare (2014) also point out that it will take around 6-9 years to educate a generation of people and it costs a lot of money. People who were born in 1960s in Isan rural areas were only required to attend up to grade 4 of school, while the education reform did not arrive until the lifetime of the young generation that were born in the 1990s. As a result, every elder and middle-aged Isan woman and some young generation

Isan that I interviewed have an education level of high school or less, ultimately limiting their job choices to manual labor or factory worker with lower income. The issue of education has improved in the young generation, where the middle-aged mothers put importance on their children's education, resulting in many young generation Isan migrants graduating from university and college. Some of the young generation with university degrees in my interview have landed white-collar jobs, receiving higher income.

Women labor migrants are significant to the production of many industries, especially the garment industries that usually hire only female factory workers, added to the fact that Isan women are proficient in silk and cloth making through local traditions and practices. Southeast Asia is one of the main production regions for many well-known clothing company brand such as North Face, Columbia, Nike, Patagonia etc. In the era of elder mothers and middle-aged mothers' migrations, the Thai development plan and workplace policy were lacking in concerns for worker's rights and safety. That is why Isan workers are usually underpaid and have to work in bad conditions. Isan is also the poorest region of Thailand and Isan people often have very little education, thus the jobs that are available to them are limited and are usually non-skilled labor jobs in the manufacturing and garment industry.

Today the local economy in the Isan region has improved with higher minimum wages and more local jobs available. Many Isan people prefer to work closer to their home and migration patterns are less exclusively to Bangkok. From the study of Masaki (2003) on population, the new generation of Isan people have better education and opportunities to get better jobs; this leads to younger generation migration that results in decrease of family labor in the rural village.

7. 2 Poverty and job opportunity

Poverty is one of the biggest factors influencing future outcomes and opportunities for Isan population and is also the main drive for migration. The low availability of local jobs and low local minimum wage helped to contribute to the migration movement of young to middle-aged Isan women. Isan is the poorest region of Thailand and most of population is involved in agriculture; this was taken advantage by the middle men and major investors. While rice farming yields enough produce to consume for the household and to share within the village it is not enough to create a sustainable income as the only income source. Also, fluctuation in rice market prices and buying discrimination practices by the rice mill owners both contribute to the sustenance of poverty. Working in the city does provide a far better compensation as well as more opportunities for both work and marriage.

Many of the new generation of young daughters in my study are not interested in rice farming, since rice farming is viewed as outdated, poor, dirty, and does not make much money. My observation and interviews revealed the social ties and social networks that were and are an important influence on decision to work outside village, but especially in the era of elder mothers and middle-aged mothers where the location and job choice depended on their friends or relatives that were already working there before. Thus, this signifies the importance of trust in family, kinship and friends' networks that is fundamental in the rural community. Moreover, it is important to note that many middle-aged mothers in my study group did not teach their children rice farming and are more focused on giving them better education so that they will have a better future. It seems that the recurrent theme of the middle-aged mother to younger daughter relationship reflects the desire of mothers to give daughter a better life, easier living, and to conform to the modern

lifestyle. The young generation also have better career opportunities from better education. They can choose to get better jobs that allow them to live in the city and enjoy a modern lifestyle with a solid career path that results in many young generations relocating permanently to the city as illustrated in table below.

Generation	Elder Mother 1980-90s	Middle-Aged Mother 1990s	Young Daughter 2000s-present
Migration Pattern	Unmarried women began to migrate to cities in search of temporary work and returned to their villages for harvest season, upon married and having children.	Mothers began to leave their children in villages to work far away from their villages, in Bangkok, <i>Rayong</i> , and <i>Karnchanaburi</i> province	Young women left village in order to work and study. Also, many migrant women live in urban area after they graduated or married.
After migration trend	return to village, involve in farming and part-time jobs	return to village, involve in farming and part-time jobs	Relocate to the city, only visit hometown, no farming

Figure 7.1: Women migration periods both in Dongdang, Roiet province and Nonkhong, Khonkaen province

In these interviews, most people also mentioned that there is nothing to do in the village. One of the best way to get rid of boredom is to go somewhere else; even if they will not be making much money, it is better than staying in the quiet rural village. Many women want to escape from the boredom of their hometown and freedom from daughterly obligation and to create new identities. Daughters such as Jai, Jaw, Toey, Numwan, Aim, Kookai, and Aoi want to start a new standing on their own legs. Many women are seeking a new modern identity, instead of the

traditional role in the rural household, because it seems exciting, beautiful and bright. It is important to note that in Isan culture daughters are living in an environment tightly controlled by parents, since it is considered taboo for woman to have sex before marriage. Leaving town is the best way to gain freedom and to be able to explore her own sexuality as a modern woman outside of her parents' watchful eyes. Isan women of Dongdang village in my study mentioned extended family members who have already migrated to work in other places and that parents often feel safer to have their daughters migrating to join with existing relatives. For example, in the case of middle-aged mothers Oui and Dawon, their parents allowed them to migrate to work when they were younger because their cousins had already gone to the same place before them. *Load Changsaart* who is the head of village in Dongdang told me that most everyone in this village are very poor and they have to go to work in the city. He also mentioned that many women in their forties from the village mostly work in Bangkok or Rayong province, following their relatives. In other words, the decision to migrate of many women was not made by their parents but was made by themselves as many interviews in this below.

“I don’t want to live in the village. It’s boring. Working in Bangkok has changed me so much. Sometimes I get lonely, but it’s worth it.” (Aim, young daughter)

“I don’t want to come back home much, since I can text and call my mother. On New Year I just buy a smart phone for my mom. It’s easy to connect to each other.”

(Aoi, young daughter)

Everyone that I interviewed came from the same root of Isan rural villages. There are many similarities in temporary migration patterns that Isan migrants will return home to their village for a certain time each year to help fulfill the local family-labor need during the harvest season and keep the relationship with extended families. It is normal that Isan woman would work for several months to years away from their hometown, but each year they will return home on harvest seasons and on some Buddhist holidays to rekindle ties with their families.

Elder mother 60 years' old born in 1958s	middle-aged mother 40 years' old born in 1978s	young daughter 20 years' old Born in 1998s
garment factory (textile era) cosmetic labor cane factory servant manual labor construction labor freelance	garment factory cosmetic labor construction labor manual labor	officer in private sector services freelance

Figure: 7.2 list of jobs that these migrant women often take in Dongdang and Nonkhong village

The table above shows migrant women's occupation. Elder mothers and middle-age mothers are very similar in the sense that both generation are not well educated and are limited to non-skilled labor jobs such as factory workers in garment factories and cosmetic factories as well as labor jobs in construction and sugar cane cutting. Many elder and middle-aged mothers work or worked as household servants, cleaners in hotels and office buildings, and cooks in restaurants. From my research, the most popular jobs for elder mothers and middle-aged mothers in the village

is to go to cut sugar cane in *Rayong* Province; they spent several months each year in *Rayong* during the off-season to make extra money.

“There is no income in Dongdang. I did not know what to do when we were done with rice farming. That’s why we went to work in Rayong and came back home again to work. I saved money from cutting sugar canes I don’t know exactly how much, but I could help my parent to build this house.” (Seesri, elder mother)

The young daughter generation is getting better jobs than their mothers and grandmothers since they have a better education and opportunities such as working in various office functions in modern companies and working freelance in various fields. Many young daughters with less education can also end up in services industry that are available for a certain age groups such as show girls, bar hostess and masseuse in massage parlors. These jobs have a high demand for young good-looking women. In comparison, these service jobs in the grey area offer a very high monetary return for a short shelf life and they satisfy financial requirements and flexibility. However, these jobs also carry more risk for sexually transmitted diseases, abuse, and ridicule from family and society.

7.3 Marriage

Marriage is another big reason for Isan women to relocate away from their hometown, both domestically and internationally. Many Isan middle-aged mothers from my study moved to

Bangkok because their husband was already working and living in Bangkok. Some Isan women that married with foreigners also moved to another country to be with their husband.

One of the more recent phenomenon in the past 20 years in Isan migration is cross-cultural marriage or “*Mia-farang*” in Thai meaning women who married with Western foreigners. Cross-cultural marriage has improved many Isan women’s quality of life and financial well-being of the extended families. This phenomenon is more prominent in the middle-aged mother and young daughter generations. It is interesting how poverty has influenced values and life goal of the Isan population. Many villages in Khonkaen Province, Udontani Province, Mahasarakham Province, and Sakonnakhon Province hope for cross-cultural marriage with Western men (Pomsema, Yodmalee, Lao-Akka 2015: 11). Also, in many villages and communities in Roiet Province and Isan region followed this cross-cultural marriage trend as a response to poverty, seeking a better quality of life with the possibility of moving to live in Europe or America (Buapan et al. 2005; Lapana 2012). Interestingly, there is a village in Roiet Province in which most of the women got married with men specifically from Switzerland, a Swiss village, and that many cross-cultural families spend time both in Switzerland and in Isan. Switzerland, Sweden, England, and Germany are the among the most common nationality of the Roiet cross-culture husband. There is a certain mindset among many Isan women that to be able to marry a foreigner and live abroad is the “Dream” and “Hope” and that foreigner men are more desirable than local men. These women value a certain living standard that foreigners can provide and that also helps them to support their families, financial status, and social status (Pomsema, Yodmalee, Lao-Akka 2015: 11). The irony is that in cross-cultural marriage the merit of wealth is often overshadowed by a bad stereotype around women as prostitutes or mail-order brides, which is also a way in which people move out of the village and create long-distant families.

Interestingly, there are some parents that discourage their daughters to date Thai men, since rural Thai men are often associated with bad stereotypes such as being lazy, alcoholic and being womanizers. Some mothers push their daughters to date and marry foreigners in hopes of improving their quality of life and their futures like the cases of Dang and Boonmee. From my interview, there are many households in Dongdang and Nonkhong village that have foreigner son-in-law.

“I encouraged my daughter to break up with her ex-boyfriend. He only drank alcohol and didn’t do any work. Today we have a good life since my daughter married a foreign guy and sent back a lot of remittance. We are lucky to have a foreigner as son-in-law.”

(Dang, middle-aged mother)

I have already taken two trips to Sweden to help take care of my granddaughter. My daughter bought me the plane ticket. If she still would be dating that guy (her Thai ex) she probably would not have nice house or car like today. My mother (grandmother) always pushed my daughter to break up with that guy. It is her fortune that she gets to live abroad and it’s my fortune that she sends back remittances every month. (Boonmee, middle-aged mother)

Kookkai was interviewed through Facebook and FaceTime since she is living in Sweden with her Swedish husband and child. Kookkai was born and raised in Nonkhong village. Her skin is dark tanned, and she knows that Thai men prefer women with lighter complexion. She met her Swedish husband through her cousin. Her husband is ten years older than her. She told me that her

husband loves her because she always takes care of him, make delicious Thai food, and works hard. Kookkai decided to married to her husband because she sees that her aunt also has a foreigner husband. Her aunt has a good life in *Pattaya* district with her foreign husband. Kookkai has been living in Sweden for more than ten years, working at a nail spa. She knows that her cousin in the village always ask for her money through her mother and her aunt.

The image of “*mea-farang*” (wife of a foreign man) is not good for women. They think we are rich. But many times people have insulted me saying that I don’t have to work and can just ask for money, but actually I work very hard in Sweden. I don’t really care what they say. I’m focusing on my family. Also, my mother-in-law is very nice to me.

(Kookkai, young daughter)

I don’t know my cousin in the village much since I left many years ago. If I did not tell them that I’m the daughter of Bonmee no one in the village will know me. I don’t really want to go back to the village because people will always ask me for money since I’m married to a foreign man. (Kookkai, young daughter)

From my interviews there are patterns ins how Isan women meet foreigner men. Many Isan women met foreign men through internet dating websites and chat applications. Some Isan women met their future husband working in bars and night clubs. Isan women with foreign husbands will also be encouraged to introduce her relatives to her husband’s friends. Interestingly, in some cases the women will expect her relatives that got married to foreign man that she introduced them to

pay her back or give her a present for their successful marriages, although it is a less common practice.

7.4 Settling down

Working in Bangkok and other provinces creates opportunities for people from different villages to mingle and date. Following marriage matrilocal tradition brings people, especially men, from other villages into the women's village. Many couples from both Dongdang and Nonkhong moved back home into the women's household after marriage, inherited land and built houses. My data shows that migrant women mostly migrated to work when they are about 16-22 years old and single. Many elder mothers and middle-aged mothers met their husbands when they worked in Bangkok or *Rayong* provinces. Thus, migration creates opportunity for mate-selection in work places. Interestingly, women who migrated from Isan often date men who have migrated from Isan due to similarity in culture, values and language; also, there are more migrant workers from Isan than any other region. Marriage is the first factor that influences migrant women to return home. For example, in case of Sutta (elder mother) and Nujan (middle-aged mother) after they got married they moved back to their village and inherited land, while their husbands also moved into the women's households. Isan marriage also guarantees land inheritance for women so that they will have a place to stay. This practice can also represent a way that parents can provide care and safety for their daughter after marriage as well as incentives for daughters to move back into the household so that she can fulfill her daughterly duties and take care of her parents. Living in the rural village also has a lower cost of living, making it more affordable to have children.

Most elder mothers came home because of marriage. My cases of elder mothers in my study got married with Isan men. Elder mothers in Dongdang and Nonkhong village are still involved with rice farming, while some of them have to take care their grandchildren due to their daughters working in Bangkok.

“I met my husband when I was working in a cosmetic factory in Bangkok. He used to live in the same area. We always talked in the Isan language and then we were dating in Bangkok when I was at Bangkok.”

(Dawon, middle-aged mother)

Living in the city is also lonely and much more difficult than home. Many migrant women have no welfare or benefits, while being underpaid compared to their male counterparts. Many Isan migrants grew tired of city life after a few years and decided to move back and enjoy the comforts of family. Isan people, especially the older generations, thrive in the collectivism of the rural village, helping each other and knowing everybody. Culturally, Isan people are used to living in a big household with many extended family members close by.

Most young daughters in my study have not yet inherited land from their parents. Many of them do not wish to move back at all and only visit from time to time such as Jai, Aim, and Kookkai. On the contrary, some married young daughters are happy to do rice farming and raise children in the village rather than the city. For example, Num lives in the village with her children while making enough money growing and selling mushrooms.

“I don’t want to go back to Bangkok. Living in the village has a lot of benefits. I can take care of my grandmother, my children, and make money growing mushrooms.”

(Num, young daughter)

Looking closely at the story of Num, she is the youngest daughter of Samai. She has one brother and one sister. Her older brother left Nonkhong village when he was seventeen years old. When Num was nineteen she also left Nonkhong and lived with her brother in the industrial areas of Ayuttaya province, working at a beverage factory. The cost of living was much higher. She had to pay for rent, food, clothes, and spent money to go out partying with her friends. Num met her husband at the same industrial areas in *Ayuttaya* province. He is an Isan man from *Kalasin* Province. Num and her husband ultimately decided to move back to Nonkhong village because they could not afford the cost of living in Bangkok. In order to make a living Num started growing mushrooms and doing rice farming on her mother’s land.

“I decided to come back home. I think I did the right thing. As *look-sao-la* (younger daughter) I have to take care of my parents and family. Growing mushrooms helps me to support my children.” (Num, younger daughter)

Num’s case represents the answer to the question as to whether economic differences between the villages made any difference in women’s decisions to stay in the villages. Income from growing mushrooms allows Num to be able to take care of her family, living in the mushroom village. On the other hand, Tee and Vee, who are living in another village, stayed in the village not for economic reasons, but they stayed to take care of their parents. Despite the available rural

economic resources many women left the mushroom-growing rural village because they want to enjoy city life, living a modern lifestyle.

7.5 Conclusion

Poverty and marriage are the two main reasons of Isan women's migration. Many Isan women left their village because it is boring and there is no work available for the young generation that pays well while providing opportunity for a career path. Isan migrant women are a significant workforce to the production of many industries such as garment and electronics. Isan women often get underpaid due to lack of education, especially in middle-aged mothers and elder mothers' generation that were limited to non-skilled labor jobs. The young generation are getting better jobs from higher education that allows them to have a meaningful life in the city, while being able to send back more remittance for their parents. The average years for migration of elder mother in Dongdang is around 3.6 years, and Nonkhong 2.5 years. The average years for migration in middle-aged mother in Dongdang is 15 years, and Nonkhong is 8.5 years. Many members of the young generation are interested in settling down in Bangkok rather than going back to live in their rural villages, viewing farming as a low class dirty work. Many migrant women met their husbands while working and ended up settled down outside of their village in Bangkok or abroad. One interesting aspect of women's migration is cross-cultural marriage or "*Mia-farang*". This phenomenon in Isan region has become more prominent with the help of internet and smart phones as well as relatives and friends, helping Isan women to meet and marry foreign men. Many Isan parents encourage their daughters to marry foreign men in the hope for a better quality of life and opportunities to travel or live abroad.

Migration is not only a response to poverty, but also response to motivations such as being a good daughter, creating new identity, seeking personal freedom, financial improvement, and job opportunities. Migration is becoming more permanent in the younger generation, creating a long-distance family that can affect the mother-daughter relationship. In many case remittances act as a device to help maintain connections and good feelings between daughters and parents that can help sustain the long-distance relationship. Many Isan women also decide to return home after work migration because of marriage, bringing their husband home and settling down in their villages. Many migrant women came home after marriage because of the high cost of living in the city, since childcare is more affordable in the rural village. Mother-daughter relationship in Isan rural culture will always be associated with migration.

Chapter Eight

Grandmother Child Care

8.1 Introduction

Grandmother child care in Isan is not a recent phenomenon since the elder generation also has experience with women's migrations in the past, but the difference is that migration today is being done over a longer distance as well as in a longer duration that affects the household size of Isan families and which eventually affects child caring. Female migration is a major phenomenon that affects rural Isan households and results in family structure changing into skipped-generation, which are co-residents of grandparents and grandchildren without the middle-aged parents in the household. Grandparents' roles are becoming more inclusive as guardians and caretakers of grandchildren, instead of the middle-aged parents who are missing from the household for long periods of time. Grandparents have become the main person to take care, educate, and support their grandchildren. In the past grandparents usually fulfilled the supporting roles of child-caring, but since the increase of Isan work migration, skipped-generation households are becoming more prominent as well as the shift in child-caring responsibility due to female migration. A restructuring, reinterpretation and diversification in family relationships through changes in the mother-daughter relationships that depend on women's migration have created a new concept of "mothering." Many studies such as, Mill (1997), Phasertkun & Pimonpun (2000), Narongchai (2011), and Kiso (2012) have all touched on the issue of migrant women's inability to care for their own children and that duties often fall to the grandparents.

A good illustration of the skipped-generation phenomenon is the famous Isan song that represents the feelings of an Isan family. A popular Isan singer Siriporn Aumpaipong sang a song called “*Tah-Yay-Kam-Lan-Noi*”, which is translated as grandparent and little grandchildren; it is about how grandparent have to raise their grandchild by themselves when old women and old men are supposed to be finished with child care, but now have to take care of babies or small children again. This song also illustrates that the middle-aged parents left the village for work, while leaving grandparents to work in rice fields alone. The grandparents wait for their children for many years without any help. One of the verses translates as the following: “Struggle to raise grandchildren while waiting for their sons and daughter. Many tiring seasons pass, tell their neighbor to call their sons and daughters to come home. Let them know that even if they (sons and daughter) don’t care for their parents, please think about the grandchildren that are becoming orphans.” This song is very sad, and the theme resonates throughout Isan region. Raising children is a heavy burden on elderly that are not physically and mentally fit.

In the article concerning “multiple mothering” in Isan, Keiko Kiso (2012) focuses on mothers’ labor migration and childcare in Northeast Thailand, discussing the idea of multi-household compounds where “childcare is afforded by women having specific kin relationships with the mother in existing domestic residential units” where aunt and other female relatives living close by whom has close relationship with the mother can take responsibility for child care when the mother is away working. With the increase in women’s labor migration, the importance and role of the extended family in the residential unit has also increased, particularly as it related to childcare. Nowadays, due to decrease in household and compound size there are less relatives available to alleviate the grandparents’ responsibility regarding child care.

8.2 Household and migration

Traditionally Isan families are large with multiple households in a compound that consist of extended family members that, besides parent and children, can include grandparents, aunts, uncle, etc. Insight from field study in both villages shows that a compound usually consists of multiple households situated nearby one another that houses family and relatives. A compound is what the local people refer to as “*Baan*”. For example, Seesri’s family does not live in the same house with her daughter and son. Both of her children built their own houses in the same property of the compound and people in the village will refer to this setting as a collective family “*Baan*” (Kititasa, 1998; Masaki 2004). Children who got married will sometimes live with their parents until they have a few children of their own and need more space. Traditionally, a compound can have up to ten or more individuals that live together on the same property. They do activities together, give each other help and guidance as well as serve different roles and responsibilities. Elder people usually watch over “*Baan*”, supporting parents and raising young children. Isan families are close-knit and family relationship is a very important part of life (Keiko, 2012; Koh, 2003).

The Isan household and compound size is getting smaller as the new generation comes. Data from Dongdang and Nonkhong village illustrated the smaller number of members of each extended family in the interviewed households. On average from both samples, each household in the compound holds at least two or more persons living full time, excluding the family members that migrated to work. Traditionally Isan households were bigger, but with migration the number of people living in a household is drastically reduced, resulting in the skipped-generation household pattern of co-residence with only grandparents and grandchildren living together. Many extended families that used to live near or on the same property with their parents also moved

away due to work migration. Most child that grew up in a household (inclusive of extended family) were raised by mother or grandmother. A household can include members of the family from infancy to old age. It's normal for the younger generation and middle-aged mother to be out of the hometown for a period of time due to work. And because of these situations grandparents are the ones who have to take care of the grandchildren, since they will usually stay home and have more free time. Nonetheless, there are always women present in the household such as mother or grandmother. There are many elderly women living alone with their grandchildren in Isan region since the young and healthy women in the households will often migrate to work in other provinces due to opportunities for a better income.

The reduction in size of household are often not permanent. Looking at the rural-urban migration pattern in this study, the majority of migrants in all periods had their first working migration under the age of twenty-five when they were unmarried. All migrants in the interviews eventually came back home to get married and inherit land. In many case studies from both of the villages, the married couple will live with the bride's parents for a short period of time before setting up their own houses in the village area when they need more space because of new babies. Some migrant women have not returned to work in the city again and mostly go to work in their hometown or other rural areas, but some middle-aged mothers went back to work in the city and left their children in the village with grandparents.

8.3 Mothering in Dongdang and Nonkhong

Grandchild care is an important family role that is directly affected by women's migration. From the interviews collected from Dongdang and Nonkhong, the following case studies highlight the circumstances of families that illustrate grandchild care in the context of migration. In

Dongdang village all of the five households had member(s) working in other cities and those children are often raised mainly by grandmothers. In Nonkhong village the three generations in each household were raised mainly by a person who is not the mother at some point in their lives. There are several periods that grandparents or relatives have to take up the role of “mothering” and there are profound effects on the relationship dynamic between each generation. Migration can put a strain on both children and parents in terms of expectations and requirements of mothering (Keiko, 2012; Caffrey, 1992). In many case missing parents create dissatisfaction and increase emotional distance between children and parents where the children were raised by other family members for a long period of time, especially in the formative years. The mother is the most important role in a child’s life and the missing biological mother can create a big void in the child’s emotional needs that they will often replace with a “mother figure” or a strong female presence in the household.

Case 1: Tonk and Toey’s story

Tonk and Toey’s story illustrates a family with a skipped-generation household where a long period of migration has had a negative effect on the mother-daughter relationship. Pairee, elder mother, has a daughter. Her name is Tungoh and she spent 15 years working in the garment factory in Bangkok. Tungoh has 2 children, a son named Tonk and a daughter named Toey. They are not so close to their mother since she was always working in Bangkok when they were growing up. Tonk is 22 years old and has graduated only high school. His full name is Kaitong, which means rooster, and was given by his grandmother. Tonk is very close with his grandmother, since she is the one who raised Tonk. His mother left Tonk and Toey with her father and Pairee when they were born. Tonk remembers that his mother always came back with many things from

Bangkok. Pairee always reminded her grandchildren that their mother is working hard to send the money back home, so they can buy food and cloths.

When Tonk was young he helped his grandparent with rice farming. As a young boy, he usually went to the rice fields in the morning with grandpa and came back home to have dinner together with his sister and grandparents in the evening. Tonk can work the rice field very well. Tonk also had many jobs besides farming because it does not bring in enough income. He used to work at a restaurant in Mahasarakham Province for 8 months. After that he got job as a driver at a private company.

“I don’t know either, why I don’t feel close to my mom. But I know she loves me. I always see my grandmother working hard all the time doing farming with my grandfather. It is the hardship that we have been faced with” (Tonk son of Tungoh, middle-aged mother)

His sister Toey is 24 years old. Toey also graduated from high school (Grade 12). Toey is very close with her grandmother and her brother. She also grew up helping her grandparents and brother in the rice fields. Nowadays, Toey lives in Bangkok and works at a mall downtown selling cosmetics. Toey has a boyfriend and he does not come from the Isan region. They share an apartment together while she works in Bangkok. After Toey got a job in Bangkok, she has not visited her hometown for two years, but she knows that her brother will take care of her grandparents.

“I don’t want to be a farmer like my family. Living in Bangkok is not easy, but it’s better than going back. The only thing that I worry about is my grandmother. If I have more money, I would like to bring her to live with me.” (Toey, young daughter)

Illustrating changes of family life in rural village, Pairee (elder mother) is the main caretaker of children in this household, instead of Tungoh (middle-aged mother). It is interesting that Tonk, the grandson, stays with grandparents while Toey, the granddaughter, left home and migrated to work in Bangkok. Tonk works in Mahasarakham Province, which is near to Roiet Province so that he can stay with his grandmother on the weekend. This case study resonated with study from Masaki (2003), describing the increase of Isan women migrants working in the cities. In this case Toey, the granddaughter, trusts that her brother can take care of their grandparents so she is able to leave her hometown. Tonk’s case showed that sometimes the young son is able and willing to take up the role of grandparents’ care-taker, given that he was raised by and is close to them. Pairee can be considered a full-time surrogate mother of her grandchildren since she primarily raised them both during the 15 years that the middle-aged mother has been away. When I interviewed Pairee she also mentioned that Tonk did not feel that he belonged to his mother. Tonk has benefitted from modern Isan economic development that allowed him to work closer to his hometown.

Case 2: Panna and Tee’s story

Tee’s story shows how in a skipped-generation household children are more concerned about their grandmother, who is their main caretaker, than their missing middle-aged mother. Panna, an elder mother, is Sutta’s mother. Sutta has two daughters, who are Tee and Nam. Tee and

Num was born in Dongdang and was raised by her grandmother, Panna. Tee got married but does not have a child yet. She has an older sister called Nam. Nam left Dongdang to work in Bangkok when she was a teenager. Tee mentions that Nam is smart and brave. Nam now lives with her husband in Bangkok, but her son is living with her grandmother, Panna, in Dongdang. Tee spent a lot of time with her grandparents growing up, helping with rice farming, and animal husbandry. She remembers her mother and father always sent money to support the family. Her mother worked in Rayong Province for more than twenty years. Sutta, Panna, and Tee's house is located in the family land close to each other, but Tee usually sleeps in her grandmother's house. So far, Panna has to also raise Nam's children since Nam cannot afford the cost of living for her children in Bangkok.

“I can't move from Dongdang; I'm worry about my grandmother. Every day I have responsibility to prepare food. I grew up living with my grandparents. I wish to work in another place someday, but I cannot move away from my grandmother. I wash scallions for some cash and opened a little grocery shop in my house so that I can take care of her” (Tee, young daughter).

“I miss her every day. I miss Num so much. She works and lives in Bangkok, but she still sends money to me too. She moved from Dongdang when she was young. She moved away from me after she married with a Dongdang guy, they moved together. I took care of Num's children, since I understand that living in Bangkok is hard. She comes back on every New Year and Songkran's day.” (Panna, elder mother)

In this case Panna (elder mother) is raising the child of her grandchildren (Nam), even though she also raised her grandchildren in the past. It is interesting that grandparents became the main caretaker of two generations of children. At the same time Tee, young daughter, wishes to migrate to work somewhere else, but cannot due to her concerns for grandparents. It seems that Tee and her husband do help out a little with caring for Nam's son, but the main responsibility still belongs to Panna. Furthermore, this case also illustrated matrilocality in that Tee's husband is living in the wife's family compound. Tee mentions that her sister does not worry about her son since there are a few people in the household that can look after her child. It was mentioned that Nam did not send back remittances to support the family on many occasions. Most people in Dongdang also misunderstood that Nam's son is Tee's. Co-residency with grandparents and female relatives reflects the necessary matrilocal resources for child caring in Isan.

Case 3: Oui's story

Oui's story is about a middle-aged mother who had to migrate to work in the city and eventually returned home to take care of her grandchildren while her children are in turn working in Bangkok. Oui, middle-aged mother, is fifty-four years old and a daughter of Nunan, an elder mother. Oui is the second child from seven siblings. Oui migrated from Nonkhong when she was eighteen years old because her family was so poor and at that time Isan was struck by a long drought. Everybody in Nonkhong was moving to Bangkok. Her parents allowed her to work with her cousin at a garment factory. After that Oui went to work in Karnchanaburi Province as a manual laborer cutting sugar cane for ten years. She came back to Nonkhong when her daughter was eleven years old. Aoi and Noi, daughters of Oui the middle-aged mother, were raised by Nunan (elder

mother). Money from Oui's job has been used to help pay for the expenses of raising her children that stayed in the village with her mother.

Aoi is a single mother since she divorced her husband a few years ago. She has to work very hard in Bangkok. Since Oui moved back to Nonkhong she is now responsible to take care of her grandson Tra, son of Aoi, while Aoi is working as a masseuse in Bangkok. Aoi sends 4,000 baht every month to pay for child care expenses such as powdered milk and diapers. Oui's routine life revolves around household chores and grandchild care. Oui feels very tired.

"I don't want to let Aoi work in Bangkok, but she needs to do that, as the baby needs food. I want my daughter to live with her baby, but we must, because of money. Baby food is so expensive that Aoi has to send money. I'm so tired, I do everything in this household, everything." (Oui, middle-aged mother)

This case is interesting in that the skipped-generation household persists as generations pass where the mothers took turns migrating to work in order to support the family. Nunan, the elder mother, raised her grandchildren and when Oui, middle-aged mother, returned from migration her daughter left home to work, leaving Oui's grandchild in Oui's care. It is also interesting that Tra (son of Aoi, young daughter) called Oui (middle-aged mother) his mother. Oui mentioned that Tra is so young that he is confused to who is actually his biological mother. This illustrated the negative effect on child-mother relationship where grandparents were the main caretaker in the child's formative years. Oui can be considered the surrogate mother of Tra where Aoi's contribution is mainly through remittances that represent her love and sense of duty as a mother.

Case 5: Tuk's story

Tuk's story is another case of skipped-generation care in which the children are more concerned with their grandparents than their parents that rarely came home from working in Bangkok. Palee (elder generation) is Samai's mother. Samai (middle-aged mother) has 3 children, whom are Tuk, Nee and Num. Tuk is the oldest son who lives in Bangkok after he graduated from Ramkamhaeng University. All three children were raised by their grandmother Palee because their mother had to work to support the family in another province, while their father was working in Saudi Arabia. Samai (middle-aged mother) came back to Nonkhong village after she got married, and then left Tuk with her grandmother (Palee) while Samai returned to work at the canned fish factory. Tuk's father sends money to his mother and has come back only once in two years. Their parents ended up divorced because his father was having an affair with another Thai woman in Saudi Arabia. Samai used the saving from her husband's remittances and money from selling some land to put her children through school. Tuk, the son, lived with Palee, his grandmother, until he moved to study in the university. Tuk worked so hard to push himself through higher education. Today only Num, young daughter, live with her grandparents in Nonkhong. Nee does not live in Nonkhong, but often she will visit Palee, bringing food and gifts.

“I'm not close with my mother, she worked at fish-can factory for a long time. I'm close with my grandma, I want to take care of her.” (Tuk, son of Samai)

Tuk seems to be more concerned about his grandmother than his mother since in the interview he often mentioned his grandmother, showing more affection towards her. Migration can put strains on family relationship where in this case Tuk's parents ended up divorced from the father's infidelity. Tuk mentioned that he was really sad and that he focused on his

grandparents to help him work through rough times since during the divorce his mother still was working in another province. In this case, the three children are very close to Palee, the elder mother, always sending money and food to support Palee. They also mentioned that they are not very close to Samai, the smiddle-aged mother, since she rarely visits Palee and Nonkhong. Samai spends most of her time working in her rice field that she purchased with savings from her ex-husband's remittance. This grandchildren narrative illustrates that the grandmother is the pillar of the family, fulfilling the role of "mother" in the household.

Case 6: Dang's story

Dang's story is interesting in that she has to live with her aunt and that her aunt ended up supporting her education, while her parents were working in other places. Dang was raised by her aunt in another province and therefore she has no connection with her parents' village and she was never taught rice farming. She does not want to inherit her parents' land and settle down in Bangkok. Dang is the daughter of Som, who is the fifth of seven children. Som (middle-aged generation) ask her daughter Dang to work with her sister in Bangkok since Dang was fifteen-years-old. Dang's aunt supported her until she graduated and had a good job in Bangkok. Dang respects her aunt as a mother who took care of her.

"My life is hard. I love my parents. However, when I was 15 years old, my parent has to send me to my aunt and uncle. They were better off financially. They own a rice mill in another village. My aunt supported my education until I graduated from high vocational school. However, when I was at her (aunt's) house I had to work hard for my aunt since they spend a lot of money on me." (Dang middle-aged Interview, 2017)

This is an interesting case where the surrogate mother is a female relative that took on the role of parental guardian. Living outside of the village, Dang feels that she has no connection with the village as well as the rural lifestyle since she has no experience with rice farming. Her aunt put her through school where she also has to work to pay back some of that education cost. Thai parents usually will provide full financial support to their children's education, but in this case her aunt only supported her, given that Dang works to pay off some of the cost as well. I feel that Dang is very independent from both her aunt and her parents since she shows a desire to move to Bangkok alone in the future and she will not likely return to the village, showing very little interest in inheriting her parents' land. This case illustrates the strong matrilineal relationship between female relatives in the Isan extended family.

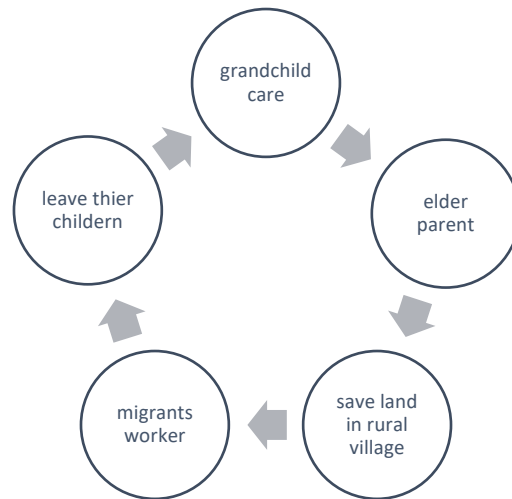
8.4 Effect on grandparents

Growing poverty can cause disintegration of families through members' migration out of necessity. The migration of women has shifted the role of childcare to the grandmother. Grandmother taking care of her grandchildren is well within the bounds of accepted social relationship patterns in Isan because it is based on daughter-mother relationship with migration as a backdrop. We can see in this move a shift in matrilocality whereby the daughter's grandchildren but not the daughter herself lives with the elder generation. From case studies we can see many grandchildren taking up the role of grandparental care in response to the skipped-generation living pattern, showing love and gratitude towards grandparents that raised them. With improvement in

local Isan economy we might be able to see the reverse skipped-generation household where young daughters and sons work close to their village in order to take care of their grandparents.

In some case studies, daughters do not come home to care for elders when someone else is taking care of the elders such as relative in their village. Many daughters expressed relief when there are someone taking care of their parents in the village. There is a communal sense of care in the rural village society. Furthermore, the head of village can often help in the case of any emergency situations. In both villages there are usually no facilities or people to offer professional elder care services.

In general women are responsible for taking care of children. In this context the duties are bound by gender but not generation. In other words, childcare duty can be transferred to any female member of the immediate family that includes grandmothers and aunts. Since childcare is a burden to the family, it is harder for distant relatives to take up the responsibility in most cases. In the past childcare was easier due to a larger traditional Isan household where many female members could share the responsibility, but due to a smaller household size now, grandparents end up taking the bulk of the responsibility when middle-aged mothers are away during work migration. For grandparents with health problems and who lack physical fitness, it is hard for them to raise grandchildren with their disabilities. This could translate to a lower quality of life for the children. On the other hand, having children in the household could give a new meaning to life for grandparents who used to live alone, giving them new purpose in life and the company of young people.



Picture 1: The relationships among the three generations in this research due to migration.

8.5 Effect on grandchildren

Interestingly, the representation of “mother” in the child’s mind can be transferred to another family member. In extreme cases where the mother was missing a lot, the young generation interviewees show more affection and respect towards the main female presence or the “mother” of the household as a replacement for their own missing mother such as Dang and her feeling for her aunt that raised her. This revelation also is tied closely with the intention of duty and gratitude that shifted towards the “mother”, such as grandmother and aunt, instead of the actual biological mother, as evidenced by many quotes that show more concern for the grandmother that raised them than for their biological mother. Even in the case where the middle-aged mother often visits the children in the village, there is still a gap in their relationship. In the case of Tonk and Toey from Dongdang village, they are so close to their grandmother that they actually call their grandmother “mother”. Once the children grow up they can also fulfill the role of those who take care of grandparent as they get older instead of the middle-aged mothers that are permanently migrated.

In other words, duties to take care of grandparents are also transferrable to the grandchildren that were raised by grandparents that forms a strong bond. This situation goes back to the concept of showing gratitude as the basis of matrilineal relationship between different generations.

8.6 Conclusion

Recent grandmother child-care patterns are the results of modern women's migration. Change in family size and migration duration impact the family childcare structure. Grandparents have to be the main caretaker of children, where in the past big families with many members could help grandparents to take care of children. The quality of life for children now depends heavily on the ability of grandparents to fulfill the role of "mother". The duration of the migration of the middle-aged mother has a big impact on the strength of bond between children and grandparents. In many cases from my study, children with severe emotional distance from their mothers are those where the duration of migration lasted longer than 10 years. There are also other factors that affect the children's relationship with migrated mothers beside duration such as at what point of the child's life the mother is away, visitation frequency, communication frequency and remittance intervals. Many children of migrated mothers show more affection and care towards grandparents than their parents since they were raised mainly by grandparents, even though remittances from their parents also play a big part in supporting their upbringing. Financial support is less visible and impacts the children less than immediate physical presence and daily support. All of the Isan children in my interviews were in some part of their lives raised by their grandmother or relatives. This is considered normal in the Isan family. The role of "mother" in the context of Isan can be considered dynamic in the sense that other female family members can step in to fulfill the

mothering role for children in the household that results in a lasting bond between children and the “mother”, as well as the redirection of gratitude from the children to their physical caretaker over a prolonged period of time.

Chapter Nine

Discussion

9.1 Changes in family relationship

This study discuss migration from the point of view of the family members that include migrant women. The results contribute to the conversation within the literature around migration that finds it necessary to see the migrant as part of a family system. Migration of women and the changes in the mother-daughter relationships are tightly linked with changes in the rural economy—jobs and agriculture. Rural families are becoming less agricultural as household size decreases. The elder mother generation will keep on doing agriculture with their land in Dongdang and Nonkhong village, even with the significant decrease in available household labor and physical strength. Many families cannot utilize all of their available land and have to rely on hired workers because the members of the young generation are more and more working outside their homes and in other places. Amount of land owned per household also has decreased as it is divided and split between children through each generation where younger generation are more seen to sell their inherited land for money and move to the big city. Many villages are also changing and are becoming more reliant on capitalism where they will earn and spend money more than grow and share food locally, since household agricultural production is reduced and availability and affordability of food for purchase from markets and convenience stores has increased. Villagers of Dongdang and Nonkhong today rely more on markets and convenience stores for food, where household farms are becoming less important. Villagers also have to rely on middlemen to sell

their products such as homemade fabric products and farm commodities such as mushrooms, since it is their main income source.

Rural families are changing from big concentrated families to smaller loose families where members of family live and work in other places and are more likely to get married and settle down outside of their hometown with their own family unit. Technology has helped to maintain family connection over distance through smart phones, social media, and internet. Many members of the older generation are adapting well to the new technology that help them stay in touch with family members far away. Social media is also a new medium that allows Isan people to reinvent themselves and create new identity that conforms to the modern capitalistic society when they are away from their roots.

9.2 Women Migration in Isan rural

Most young and unmarried women from Isan at one point in their lives will migrate to work somewhere. This is evident in all generations of Isan women from my sample group; their jobs have been non-skilled labor and manual labor in agriculture and manufacturing sector, for example, sugar cane cutter, textile factory worker, and domestic laborer are popular jobs among Isan women throughout Thailand. Migration does not only serve to satisfy financial needs, but in young adults in particular, migration also satisfies the need for freedom and travel, the need to escape boredom of the rural village life, the need to grow, the need to explore sexuality, and the need to reinvent themselves. In many cases, migration also creates opportunities for mate selection that, in matrilocality, will benefit the matrilineal households by increasing family size in terms of husbands and children.

Migrant workers traditionally return home for harvest season if the majority of their family are still living in the village and are involved with agricultural activities that need all of the available family labor. Many migrants who are not involved with agriculture will often return home during national holidays and Buddhist holidays to rekindle ties with family as well.

9.3 Relationship and identity

Remittance is a migrant women's response to the concept of gratitude, which is one of the main values that flows through every generation in Isan society from the spirit of Buddhism. Gratitude is also viewed on the flip side as "*Bunkhun*", which is the Buddhist concept of obligations and meritorious acts of compassion, sacrifice, and beneficence (Mills, 2003: 76). It is viewed that by being born the child owes "*Bunkhun*" to his parents that cannot be repaid in full in a lifetime, since parents took care of you when you were young you must take care of your parents when they are old to repay them for their love and sacrifice (Phonmphakping, 2000; Akin, 1993). Today many middle-aged mothers and young daughters are becoming more focused on sending remittances rather than staying in the village to take care of their parents since it is viewed that remittances are adequate representation of gratitude and by sending remittances to their parents they are repaying "*Bunkhun*" in a way. Monetary support can improve the family relationships, quality of life for elderly and education for children. My findings in Dongdang and Nonkhong villages agreed with work from Caffey (1992) that is still relevant today. The power that migrant women express by working hard in the big city helps their parent to get new commodities and improve their quality of life.

The changes in mother-daughter relationships are reflected in the many stories that I got from the interviews. Many daughters are not close with their mother since they have migrated to work at a young age or mothers migrated to work and left their children with grandparents for an extended period of time. In more extreme cases daughters can develop a closer relationship with a “surrogate mother”, who is a mother figure such as an older female relative that acts as their guardians or their grandmothers. Moreover, the daughter’s role in the family has changed since they are now able to provide an alternative reliable source of income besides household labor. Mother’s migration also reflects prioritization of monetary gain, due to poverty, over the negative effects of long distant relationship with daughters. Many daughters that I interviewed who did not spend most childhood with their mothers, due to migration, feel neglected and are more grateful towards the relatives that took care of them during their formative years. This is evident in the case of Tonk, Toey, and Nam. Interestingly, the role of mentor, passing of local knowledge and skills such as traditional silk making and farming know-how, that are usually done by mothers, are now the responsibility of other relatives.

Migration is one of the outcomes of capitalism which, according to Julie Gibson and Katherine Graham (2008), has the power to create many subjects and desires in society. Beside materialism, capitalism also shapes the modern city lifestyle which many women from Isan strive for. They want to make more money in order to create a new identity through spending; since most of them are from a poor background the desire for a “better life” is a strong motivation. In addition, they have a sense of family financial duty to support their parents. Being able to afford nice things and send large remittances makes them feel that they are “successful” and make their family proud. I agree with Mary Beth Mills’ idea (2003) that mobility of Isan young rural women was inspired by a new imagined identity of modern globalized women. Isan women migrants are exploring new

lifestyles and facing culture change, trying to develop an identity that is modern but can also resonate with their cultural roots.

Identities of Isan women both in the family and in the larger community are dynamic and responsive to historical changes. Construction of identities are affected by social interaction with people of similar background that in turn created trends and stereotypes. Identity change is one of the most interesting aspects in the changing mother and daughter relationship where migration helps to set the stage for transformation that has also been affected by peers. Many migrant workers found and find themselves working in Bangkok among peers from other Isan provinces that share a similar cultural background, language and motivation. Interaction with other Isan women in that setting plays a big role in forging new identities as well as shaping their modern lifestyle aspirations through collective lens. Compromises have to be made between being a modern women and being a “good daughter.” In the past daughters were supposed to stay and take care of their parents, but now daughters can leave their parents and still be a “good daughter” through sending remittance and supplying modern commodities such as smart phones and nice clothes. Many migrants that live in the big city also feel the pressure of “class identities.” When they compare their poor family background with the modern mainstream standard, it creates an inferiority complex that they deal with via a new, assumed identity. Julie Gibson and Katherine Graham mention that people can have several identities, I agreed with them on Isan women that there are conflicts between the modernistic identity and the cultural root identity where desire and sense of duty clash.

“*Habitus*” represent different identities that migrant women assume in response to different settings such as living in the city or being back to the rural village. This concept from Pierre

Bourdieu (2000) helps me to understand the dimensions of identity in Isan women. Women migrants often rely on local cultural resources to compete and fit in to each societal setting. Many children of Isan still carry their habitus from their Isan roots, but they are also constructing new habitus in the city setting as a personal interpretation of capitalistic modern inspiration that stems from the combination of desires and current social norms. In the context of Isan, the fundamental habitus that Isan daughters carry are the duty to be “good daughter” and the importance of gratitude towards parents, while the new habitus are that of a modern city woman.

9.4 *Look-sao-la* the youngest daughter: changes in mother-daughter relationship

The concept of “*look-sao-la*” represents a form of non-monetary “social security” in rural communities where aging parents expect the youngest daughter to stay with them and take care of them when they are old. The family strength as a collective is important for the wellbeing and livelihood of the elderly in the household and this responsibility to take care of parents belongs to the youngest daughter by tradition. The changes in mother-daughter relationships has inevitably resulted in changes in matrilineality and matrilocality as the implication of *look-sao-la* also changed. The significance of *look-sao-la* is illustrated in many of my interviews in that not only the parents, but also siblings and other relatives expect the youngest daughter to fulfill this role.

With the younger generation the implication of being a *look-sao-la* has changed and has lost some significance due to the effects of capitalism and modernity. Many younger generation daughters are not interested in getting involved with family agriculture, such as Jaw and Jai from my case study. Land and house in the rural village is not what they desire and once inherited will probably be sold. Many members of the younger generation don’t want to go back to live in the village; they would rather build their life in the city. In this context, where land and house will be

inherited by *look-sao-la*, parents are feeling insecure that they will not be taken care of in their old age. Arguably, the role of modern *look-sao-la* has changed where sending remittances has become their main focus, for grandparents' or parents' care. They feel that as long as they are sending remittances they are fulfilling the role of a "good daughter" where in the traditional context they should live with their parents to take care of them. That's why *look-sao-la* usually inherited their parents' home as a merit for their effort and sacrifice. There are also many expectations for *look-sao-la* by parents. For example, *look-sao-la* should be the last child to get married, she must live with parents after marriage and they should build a house near their parents' house. Parents' enforcement of this concept was stronger for the elder generation and has become less of an emphasis in the newer generation. Middle-aged mothers are more focused on giving their daughters education and are not demanding younger daughters to follow the *look-sao-la* tradition. The new role of *look-sao-la* will result in the decrease in non-monetary social security for the middle-aged mother generation and will affect not only the immediate family members, but also other community members in the rural village who will have to take up the slack in physical care.

Looking at *look-sao-la* with the concept of local economy using the iceberg model by J.K Gibson Graham, we see that: "In any society, some kind of surplus is produced and used to support the nonproducing members of the society, as well as to build the distinctive social and culture institutions that create social meaning and social order" (Julie Gibson and Katherine Graham 2008, 66). Besides the responsibility of parental care, young daughters also have to maintain women's role in the matrilocal resident. *Look-sao-la* represents an important part of the rural family structure and household economic in Isan where *look-sao-la* is the main source of household labor as well as the gatekeeper for the aging parents. *Look-sao-la* provides the invisible labor surplus in terms of running the household system and maintain favorable household environment for the elder

parents that helps to promote matrilocality in Isan rural. The concept of *look-sao-la* also represents a way of maintaining land from ancestors as well.

9.5 Grandmother raising grandchildren due to female migration

Isan is one of the most populated, least educated and poorest regions of Thailand, which is why it is the biggest source of cheap labor for Thailand and abroad. Demands for non-skilled labor in Bangkok and other industrial provinces have had a large impact on the Isan population. Working in these provinces, migrants earned more income than working in their villages. At the same time the increase in mobility of people has created new forms of family structure in which families are more spread out, yet connected. Many families are missing the middle generations, whom are working in Bangkok, leaving childcare to the responsibility of grandparents. Skipped-generation households are prominent in the poor Isan rural families since family members migrate to work out of necessity. Roles are switched, and family members need to step up to take more responsibility. Grandmothers and other relatives in the household need to care for young children when their mothers are away. This phenomenon poses challenges for both the caregivers and the younger generation. Many elders are physically challenged since they are old and not as physically fit as they were. Raising children is hard work and sometimes it might be overwhelming for families with no other relatives in the household to share the workload with the elderly. Children sometimes have to move to a different household with other relatives that can support and care for them such as the case of Dang that was raised by her aunt in Bangkok since she was fifteen years old.

On the other hand, skipped-generation households have a much more severe effect on the mother-daughter relationships. In many cases the daughter becomes distant from their mother and became closer to her “surrogate mother”, which is the dominant female relative that taken the majority of the motherly role in the household. Surrogate mothers can become more emotionally significant for the daughter, as is evidenced from one of my younger daughter who spent her childhood raised by her grandparents. She expresses more concern and gratitude towards her grandmother than her mother who migrated to work for many years. It is hard for many migrated mothers to maintain a meaningful relationship with their daughters when they cannot spend much time together. However, remittances, gifts and technology such as mobile phones and internet helped skip-generation families to stay in touch and keep the family members connected over long distances, improving the emotional connection between mothers and daughters.



Figure 9.1 applied from the iceberg model of Julie Gibson and Katherine Graham (2008)

On the other hand, skipped-generation households with grandmothers in many families do provide an adequate structure for the young generation to thrive. Looking at the grandmother as a gatekeeper in the skipped-generation household through J.K. Gibson Graham's iceberg concept (2008) from community economies is helpful to understand the grandmother's contribution in skip-generation households. The tip of the iceberg is the apparent household economic provider as migrant women that brings in income into the household. The bottom side of the iceberg represents the support system, which is the psychological and emotional support of a shared culture of symbols, love, values, traditional practice, family care, and relationship of mother and daughter such as concept of *Look-sao-la*, being a good daughter, gratitude and karma, roles and obligation that together represented the non-monetary surplus.

Using the iceberg model of J.K. Gibson Graham on the co-residency patterns of skip-generation household in Isan rural families, elder mothers are the main producer of surplus, supporting labor migrants with children when elder mothers took on the role of child caring for middle-aged mothers. In this context, elder mothers are responsible for both household duties and child care. Many middle-aged mothers are more comfortable working knowing that their children are being look after by someone they can trust and that their children have a chance to thrive, focusing on generating income for the family. On the top of the iceberg, grandmothers in many households also work part-time jobs at home that can provide income, while taking care of the children and household duties.

Isan family culture is heavily influenced by Buddhism, with the concept of "Karma" and gratitude that guided how family treat its dependent members. Thai-Isan family structure and culture had traditionally incorporated the means to care for the elderly as a way to represent the gratitude of the sons and daughters. The sense of duty from Buddhist beliefs shaped and maintained

this elder care mechanics in the family. Women's roles in Buddhism translate into their cultural roles as daughter, wife, and mother. Karma is one of the most influential Buddhist concepts that drives motivation and serves as explanation for things that happen to people. For example, Oui believes that her life is the way it is now because of karma. Her daughter Noi left her to work in Bangkok just like when Oui left her mother Nunan to work in Kanchanaburi. In turns, Oui believes that if she takes care of her mother well, her daughter will eventually take care of her too. Karma and gratitude are connected, helping to ingrain indigenous social security for elderly into the traditional family functions. Grandmother childcare which helps to support many Isan women who migrate stems not only from the responsibilities of women, love, and family duties, but also from Karma.

9.5 Economic Livelihood in Villages

Villagers are adapting to capitalism in response to poverty. Villages are a close-knit unit and it is common for them to share resources such as food, money, and labor due to poverty. Small-scale agricultural operations are not enough to yield sustainable incomes and serve more as food production. It is normal for many mothers in rural villages to find a second income source doing part-time jobs that are available in the village stem from local knowledge and skills to create a product that can be sold in the marketplace. Nonetheless, those incomes are not nearly significant enough to get them out of poverty and only help them to get by one day at a time. With local economics depending heavily on remittances it is inevitable that many people will migrate to work, sending back remittance to help sustain or even to improve the quality of life for their families. One shortcoming of many Isan people is poor money management from badly planned government loans that aim to serves as capital investment for farming activities. Many people are in great debt

because they did not use the loans effectively and spend that money buying unnecessary things such as bicycles or refrigerators that cannot yield return. That's why money made from part-time jobs and remittances are often used to pay off debts. It is also a common practice for villagers to borrow from loan sharks to pay for education and home improvements that also result in large debts with high interest rates.

Interestingly, women collectives play a big role in the local economy in income generation. One important assumption held in both Dongdang and Nonkhong village is the underlying issue of insufficient local male labor, especially middle-age men, that is inherently associated with international labor migration. Village heads in Dongdang and Nonkhong explained that most young and middle-aged men from the village migrated to work abroad as labor migrants in Taiwan and Singapore. It is useful to mention the study of Mills (1999) that explains the phenomena of Isan labor where villages are missing many of the men from long periods of migration. The story of widow ghosts or *Pi-mae-mai*¹ further illustrated the rural perception and acknowledgement of decrease in residential labor-age male population in rural villages.

¹Mary Beth Mills' study (1999) talked about the widow ghost which is a symbol of moral status in the culture. A lot of Isan men go abroad to become international laborers in Middle East countries and Singapore. The phenomena of labor movement results in the shortage in men in northeast Thailand. In addition, Mills points out the use of the supernatural in *bann na sakea* community which refers to the problems for traditional gender roles in the Isan community due to overseas migration where some men even sicken and die while abroad. Modernity has caused trouble in Isan communities compared with the past when they never faced a shortage in men. This supernatural symbolism represents the problems that have developed with modernity when the hierarchy of male and female is disturbed and the bodies and sexual powers of men are unconstrained by the controls of society.

The livelihood and local economic enterprise in Dongdang and Nonkhong village are associated with women collectives. Looking at non-economic relations in the rural village, villagers are very close to each other and they often share many resources such as food grown, money and available labor. So, it is easy for them to form a collective organization creating home-based work through collaboration using local knowledge and skills. It makes sense because without these jobs there will be nothing to do in the village. Middle-aged mothers and elder mothers usually work together in home-based work in Dongdang and Nonkhong village. These women can have an income-generating activity at home where they can raise their grandchildren and take care of their parents at the same time. These jobs are mostly low-skilled labor jobs such as sewing fabric, washing scallions, mushroom farming, and cultivation of herbs. Interestingly, these jobs are often done in group activities that promotes communication between members. For example, when a group of women in Nonkhong is washing scallions they will be talking for hours while working about their lives and families.

Along this line in both village's economies there are community-oriented enterprises which capitalize on local identity as a way of livelihood strategy to help promote their products. For example, each of the villages that I've been to research have their own products with local materials; women are usually the leaders of these enterprise with a majority of female members. These local enterprises often get full support from the surrounding local community as the income generated will be distributed to many households that participate, helping to improve the local economy and giving more meaning to living in the village. In addition, this shows the power of women as a community.

This is a positive phenomenon for those migrant women that wish to return to the villages that there are new jobs available that could allow them to be closer to their loved ones. These jobs

can also be done together between elder mother, middle-aged mother, and young daughter, providing a chance for those who return to bond with their families, improving mother-daughter relationships and promoting re-assimilation of migrants into the village life.

In the end the economic differences between both villages does also contributes to the return of young generation with the example of mushroom farming in the mushroom village that allows many young generations to make a decent living that became a better choice to stay.

9.7 Changing Matrilocality and Matrilineality of Isan Rural

The residential area of Dongdang and Nonkhong village are composed of many clusters of villagers' houses that are surrounded by rice fields. Matrilocality is reflected through the relationships of the villagers. Everyone knows each other, especially in the elder generation and middle-aged generation. From my data, it is normal for villagers to localize their house within the village area so that they can be close to their mothers and grandmothers. This housing pattern represents the importance of women in both villages, as I can see in elder mother, middle-aged mother, and some cases of young generation.

However, the intervention of migration in rural households has changed the housing patterns of the young daughter generation. Many young daughters are unfamiliar with the names of many villager as well as their loose kinship. Some young daughter migrants left home after they graduated from local school to live in cities or other provinces, even after they got married. Looking at matrilineality as it still exists in Dongdang and Nonkhong village, the elder mother usually splits her land equally among sons and daughters. In cases from both Dongdang and Nonkhong village, the son will often sell the land to his sister because he is moving away to live

with his wife or to work in cities. Looking at inheritance through matrilineality based on the data of the sample group, we can see that all youngest daughters of the family in elder mother and middle-aged mother generation have remained to live with their parents after marriage and have built new houses near their parent's houses. However, this is not true in the younger generation.

One interesting point of change in matrilineality is that not only the daughter or son will receive inheritance, but sometimes other relatives might receive some inheritance as well. For example, in the case of Tuk the grandson of Palee, Tuk might inherit Palee's house because he took care of her. Also, in the case of Numwan, the young daughter that paid off family debts in Dongdang and ended up buying more land in the rural village, has been established by her grandmother that she, the granddaughter, will inherit all of the family land after her grandmother dies, instead of her mother.

The relationship of family and their land is overlapping. Local villagers do not follow capitalistic views of land ownership by deed, but instead land ownership is based on the family as a collective and those who share the space and use the land as a whole. In this perception the land is owned by the family but passed through daughters in each generation as gatekeepers. Sometimes local land distribution is also ambiguous in the sense that land is split by portion that is not specific to a certain location, but rather as a volume of land. For example, a son might receive 1 rai of land that he could sell to his sister as 1 rai of land within the property without the need to actually locate that piece of land. In this way every sibling gets their fair share of inheritance without the need to actually split the land deed, and in reality, the land usage remains unchanged. From my interviews land is also given by permission, but not legally enforced. In the case of Srichard, she moved to live with her son, leaving her land to her daughter, Dawon, by promise, but legally Srichard's name is still on the deed.

Rural land holdings are becoming an issue as each generation passes since people are owning less land and people without land will usually end up permanently living in cities, leaving the village with aging population. Many investors can come in and buy a large bulk of land from the villagers that could result in the disappearance of the rural village once enough members of the village have relocated and migrated. Many young daughters are already looking to relocate and settle down in the city that can lead to decentralization of large collective families into smaller family units that spread out to different places around Thailand. Since people are owning less land, the traditional pattern of passing down land from mother to daughter may disappear as well as the agricultural lifestyle that has tied them to land-holding. Many families will eventually have to rent land in order to farm rice. For instance, Boonme let her relatives use her land to farm rice and after harvest her relative will repay her in rice or money. This changing trend of land-holding is especially true in young generation daughters where they are not interested in being involved with farming and would rather rent out land to other people; she is, however, still the gatekeeper of her piece of land by tradition.

Since my study focus on woman there are limitations regarding men's data, especially on husbands and sons of women in three generations. In the future, my study could touch on gender difference issues due to inheritance of land. For example, clarify the distribution of land and the changing landscape of land ownership between sons and daughters.

9.8 Closing

From my perspective I'm both an insider and an outsider since my roots and family culture are based in Isan as well as my mother's language and family traditions. While I spent most of my

life in Bangkok, living the middle-class city lifestyle, I also feel the obligation that comes with being an Isan daughter, as a *Look-sao-la* myself, to take care of my parents when they are older. My family does not own any land in Isan region and have not participated in any agriculture activities since my parents' generation so I do not have any personal experience with rice farming and farm life. My main connection to Isan is through my culture roots and my extended families living in Isan that I visited. My parents do own some land in Bangkok and that someday I might inherit the land with my brother, but we will never use it for agriculture. Mostly I will either keep it as an asset or sell it for cash to buy bigger piece of land to build my own house. This thesis is a reflection of changing mother-daughter relationship that also applied to me and that it made me think of how my family has changed as I am the second generation Isan migrant that ended up living a modern city life in Bangkok.

The Isan region has a very dynamic matrilineal society that is a great vessel to study changes in relationship between mothers and daughters where migration acts as catalyst. Along with migration goes the changes over generations that transform the Isan rural family and lifestyle, taken into account the effects of Thai development, environment and socio-economic structure. Many modern developments that we see slowly weakened matrilocality while transforming matrilineality. The biggest changes we are seeing is happening in the younger generation of daughters that could potentially affect the future of family structure, relationship and lifestyle of the Isan population that will be ultimately shaped by the new hybrid identity of future generations. Patterns of land ownership and inheritance will change. Poverty is one of the main shortcoming of the Isan region that drives people out of hometown, weakening matrilocality with the aging rural population on the horizon. Debt, poor money management and nation-state policy contribute to the persistence of poverty although families are trying to find new ways to rise above these

problems. In 50 years I think that most Isan people will become middle-class, while the manual and non-skilled labor in Isan will be replaced by migrants from neighboring countries such as Laos and Burma. It is something that we are seeing more in Thailand since the start of AEC (ASEAN Economic Community) in South East Asia a few years ago.

In the end, this field study contributes to a deeper understanding of changes in matrilocality and matrilineality in the field of women and migration in the Isan region of Thailand. Further research in the field of globalization and technology can focus in-depth on how access to global information changes the identity of Isan women of the young generation compared to the limited experiences of the older generation. We can look into how modern education has changed Isan women and transformed them into middle-class subjects. I also see that some young generation from my research are interested in living in rural areas and farming. This could be the start of a trend in reverse migration of urban to rural in the young, educated population. We can also explore deeper into the psychology and mentality of the skipped-generation households, a mentality that affects children's emotions and personality development in comparison to children from a more typical parent-headed household. Another interesting area to investigate is the question of rural land along with shifts in land ownership and land usage due to matriloal residence in rural areas. Future research might also include studies of Thai women who married with Western men and studies of ASEAN labor from neighboring countries working in Thailand.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRES AND QUESTION GUIDE FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

1. Elder Mother's Questionnaire

Interview date

Village/Location of Interview

Background

Name _____

Age of women _____ year of

birth _____

Marital status _____ (Alive or dead?)

What languages do you speak? _____

Where he/she lives _____

Could you read or write? _____

Education _____

Where are you from?

Province _____ Tambom _____

What is your current occupation? _____

What kinds of work have you done most of your life? _____

Income _____

Are you still working? _____

Where do you live? _____

Who do you live with? _____

How many children do you have? Age, Sex, and where they live?

Do any of your children take care of you? If so, which ones? In what way?

If not, who is taking care of you?

Do you have any children/kin who have come to live in from another province?

How do you feel toward children who do not help you? who do help you?

Family Relationship

I would like to start by asking you a few questions about your household. Including yourself, can you please tell me how many people live in this household?

What are three factors that are influential in your life?

What challenges did you face?

Can you tell your story about your family?

How did you take care of parents, house, land?

What were your obligations?

Did you inherit the house and land? Why? from whom?

Could you tell me about your personal life, since you were born?

Please describe where your parents were born?

Who cares for the house?

Who cares for the land?

How often do you have contact with your family living outside your household by phone, e-mail or by post?

On average, thinking of relatives/children living outside your household how often do you have direct (face-to-face) contact with them?

Do you have plans to move to another place when you are older?

Land and inheritance and inheritance

Who will inherit the land/house? And also take care of you (house/land)?

What is your relationship with that person?

Are you close with that person?

How much land do you have?

Do you have plans to give your land to several of your children or someone else?

Do some children receive more land than others?

Has arrangement been made for inheritance of your property?

Amount of land originally owned by the household (when you were young)

Amount of land currently owned by the household, if you lost land why or how?

How do you think the use of land is changing, in the area?

Have the crops you cultivate changed? (way of using land)

How many family members cultivate this?

Do you employ others to help cultivate this land?

Who is cultivating your land currently?

House construction (from observation)

- Thatch
- Wood
- Wood and cement
- Cement
- Other

Please can you tell me how much your household's income per month is? If you don't know the exact figure, please give an estimate.

Which of your sources of income is the largest?

- Farming
- Own business
- Money given children or other kin
- Other

Who is the major income provider?

What is the current occupation of the person who contributes most to the household income?

In the past year, did your household give regular help in the form of either money or food to a person you know not living in your household (e.g. parents, grown-up children, other relatives, or someone not related)?

What is the secondary source of income for this household?

How much of your income for household comes from your own land? (agriculture on your land)

Do children send enough money to meet your needs?

2. Middle-Aged Mother's Questionnaire

Interview date

Village/Location of Interview

Background

Name _____

Age of women _____ year of birth _____

Marital status _____ (Alive or dead?)

What languages do you speak? _____

Where he/she lives _____

Could you read or write? _____

Education _____

Where are you from?

Province _____ Tambom _____

What is your current occupation? _____

What kinds of work have you done most of your life? _____

Income _____

Are you still working? _____

Where do you live? _____

Who do you live with? _____

How many children do you have? Age, Sex, and where they live?

Work

What is their work?

How much money dose he/she send home?

Where is your husband? What is his work?

Are you taking care of grandchildren?

Which one do you think will take care of the household and land?

Do you think work in another place would improve your life?

Inheritance and Land

What challenges are you faced in your life?

Did you inherit your house or land from the older generation?
Why did you inherit?

What obligations have you had?

What challenges have you faced in taking of the household and parents?

What is the situation now in your household relations? Could you describe them for me?

- Your responsibilities?
- Your support for family?

Could you tell me about your house at your hometown, is this house from your parent? (if not) could you tell me how do you get your house/land?

Who is going to inherit the house/land?

Who is going to get your house/land?

Do you want to sell your house/land?

Who would you want to have your land? (to sell your land to?)

Do you want to buy more land or build a house? In hometown? or in another place?

Do you want to sell your house/land? Or do you want to keep your house/land to someone else?

Household and income

Who do you send money to?

Do you have land for farming? How much? What crops do you raise on your farm?

Whom do you get money from?

- Parent
- Husband
- Mother or Father
- Children
- Grandparents
- Cousin
- Yourself
- Other

Why do you find job at another place?

- Economic hardship
- Better opportunities
- Freedom
- Connection network

If she is not living with mother?

How much do you spend on your mother, especially for your mother?

Do you hire help or someone to taking care your parent?

Are you close with your mother?

Could you tell me about your relationship with your mother?

Do you live with your mother?

(if yes) _____

(if no) _____

How often do you come back home?

How frequently do you contact her?

Where is your mother?

What is your image of your life?

(Are you emotionally close to your mother?)

What are your obligations to the household now?

What are you doing to take care of the house/land?

- By yourself
- Remittance
- Aging parent take care

Who is taking care your parent?

- No
- Children
- Cousin
- Hire someone
- Other _____

Do you have your own house?

Do you have your own land?

Do you have plan to come back your hometown in the future?

-
- Yes, why?)
 - No, why?)
 - Not sure
 - Live in another place
 - Live with husband
 - Other_____

How do you feel about all of this?

-
-
- Take care of parents
 - Inheritance household/inheritance

Who do you think is going to take care of you in the future?

3. Young Women's Questionnaire

Interview date

Village

Background

Name_____

Age of women_____ year of

birth_____

Marital status_____ (Alive or dead?)

What languages do you speak? _____

Education_____

Where are you from?

Province_____ Tambom_____

What is your current occupation? _____

What kinds of work have you done most of your life? _____

Income _____

Are you still working? _____

Where do you live? _____

Who do you live with? _____

Could you tell me about your life? What challenges have you faced in your life?
(3-4 influential events in your life?)

Where is your husband? _____

Does your husband send money to your mother? _____

Do you have plan to move in another place with your husband? _____

Do you have children? _____

How many children do you have? _____

Where are the children? _____
(prompts)

Who do you live with? _____

What kind of work? _____

Who do you live with? _____

Do you have plan to move or find job places in the future? (why?)

- Yes, why?
- No, why?
- Not sure (because?)
- Other _____

Who raised you when you were a young child?

- parent
- mother/ father
- grandparent
- cousin
- other

Could you tell me about your story, how did she raise you?

Sending money

Receive money from their children

What is the nature of the relationship?
(Her relationship with you? (your mother, your grandmother))

Could you tell me about your relationship with your mother?

Are you emotionally close to your mother?

How often do you go home? _____
How often do you contact her? _____
How often do you meet your mother? _____

Does your mother work in a place other than your hometown? Could you tell me about her life?

What is your image of her life?

What are your responsibilities in your household now? Why do you have their responsibilities?

Who is going to take care of your parents when they get old?

Who is going to take care of the house? the land?

(Ask about sibling or cousins will they help take care of house, land, or parents?)

What do you think your responsibilities in your household will be in the future?

What are your responsibilities for taking care of the household in the future? Why...?
If so, when will that's start?

How will you take care of your parents?

How will you take care of the land?

(If you take care of the land and house)

Do you have a plan to rent your house or land? To whom would you rent it?

What would you cultivate on your land?

Do you think your parents are going to give the house or land to you?

Plans

Do you have plans to work in your village? Do you have plan to go elsewhere to work?

Do you have plans to go back to your village?

Do you have plans to go elsewhere to marry?

Do you want to sell your house or land to someone? Who would buy it?
Why would you want to move?

Could you tell me about your plans in the future? Please give me five expectations or hopes for your future?

From what you know about your family, how has the mother-daughter relationship changed over the generations?

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