

CHAPTER V

THE TRANSFORMATION OF GENDER ROLES IN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The transformation of the Karen gender role on access to and control over resources occurs: 1) when the Thai state starts to control all resources in the country, especially forest area, and sends forestry officials going to demarcate the preserved forest, and 2) when both government and non-government agencies encourage the villagers to grow cash crops for opium replacement and supplementary family income in tribal communities.

While the state claims its legitimate rights through state property system and conservation policies, the Karen claims its access to and control over resources on the basis of traditional system of usufruct rights. Furthermore, the penetration of market mechanism into the community forces the villagers to adjust themselves to change. When considering sustainable agricultural land management, especially shifting cultivation land, it is found that the Karen manipulate cultivation land differently in 3 patterns described in Jesada's study, *Sustainable Land Management: A Case Study of the Karen's Shifting Cultivation in Chiang Mai Province* (1999).

First, the Dependence an Unsustainable Shifting Cultivation Pattern. Most of the villagers of Ban Dok Dang try to divide the land into small plots to maintain a suitable fallow period. But the yield still decreases so that there is not enough harvest annual adequate. Meanwhile, some of the villagers opt to grow cash crops in the same plot of land by relying on outside means of production such as fertilizer, insecticide, and seeds. The pattern of cultivation using cash cropping is unable to assure secure livelihood for the villagers, even through they take great effort to manage it because they have to depend more on the outside market.

Second, the Transitional and Unsustainable Pattern. Some of the villagers of Ban Dok Dang try to adjust themselves to the changing conditions by exploring alternative systems of cultivation. It is dynamic and has the potential to be transformed into a sustainable system in the future. This pattern is at an infancy and unstable stage. The villagers still depend on purchasing means of production as well as market mechanism from outside.

Third, the Alternative and Sustainable Pattern. The villagers of Ban Dok Dang do not yet practice this pattern, because there is no longer a large amount of land area providing a long fallow period for rotation. They try to find out the third pattern by starting from the second pattern. The third pattern combines a sustainable rotational cultivation, permanent commercial cultivation, and agro-forestry by keeping fruit trees and other trees on cultivation land. In other words, presently the villagers are finding "integrated farming" for sustainable resource management.

Furthermore, there are two common characteristics shared by the above three patterns in Jesada's study. *First*, the villagers tend to practice intensive cultivation and agro-forestry in order to hold the land for ownership rights. *Second*, the villagers maintain the usufruct rights over the fallow land and natural resources. These two land-holding systems manifest that the villager tries to integrate the complex land-holding system by combining private property with common property. This complex system provides the opportunity for reducing conflict within community.

However, the development of the production of Ban Dok Dang, from subsistence to commercial, relates to gender and resource management. The Karen traditionally value women and men equally. According to their traditional beliefs, the Karen believe that there are "guardian spirits" residing in and protecting resources such as land, water, and forest. They have established some taboos and regulations for utilizing natural resources that relate both men and women's roles to nature. On the other hand, the Karen Christian believes that nature is the creature of given to human beings both men and women utilize and protect nature as their ancestors did.

The villagers of Ban Dok Dang view gender role in resource management from the past till present, as cooperative work in a difference job; while men and women mostly relate to domestic and public spheres in the community, men mostly take the role of outside-community-public sphere. Presently, women gradually take this role side by side with men, since the state wanted to declare the "Mae Tho National Park" over the community. The declaration intrudes both domestic and public sphere in the community. Nowadays, they are finding out several ways for the right of natural resource management.

However, when the villagers currently began commercial production, women worked on upland field or terraced field, domestic work, and also in cash crop production such as cabbage, tomato, and sweet-bell pepper. Therefore, women sometimes do not have enough time to do her other often jobs such as weaving, sewing, and house cleaning, while men are tired from cash crop work and do not help women in domestic work as they did in the past.

This chapter describes the transformation of gender role by concentrating on 3 perspectives: 1) the change of gender role in agricultural production, 2) the change of gender role in community level, and 3) the change of gender role in political sphere.

5.1 The Change of Gender Role in Agricultural Production

The agricultural production of Ban Dok Dang can be divided into 2 types: 1) subsistent production, and 2) commercial production or cash cropping. The changing of gender role in these two types is different from each other and also related to social economic status that we mention in chapter three.

5.1.1 Subsistence Agriculture

Subsistence Agricultural production of the Karen at Ban Dok Dan has been practiced from the previous period and continued until now. Subsistence production very much depends on natural resources such as land, forest, water. This production system has helped to sustain the biodiversity. They use local wisdom in producing and increasing the agricultural production for sufficient consumption as well as management of natural resources in a sustainable way for the balance of nature.

Rotational swidden cultivation and irrigated rice farming are the main sources of subsistence production of Ban Dok Dang.

Rotational Swidden Cultivation Social Status

The villagers of Ban Dok Dang are primarily subsistence rice farmers who have been practice rotation swidden farming since their ancestors time. This cultivation system, or method, does not use chemicals and pesticides and has rain fallow from 6-7 years in order to allow the soil to regenerate and re-fertilization of the soil surface. This type of farming has encouraged an equal gender role based on the relationships at the family and community level. Currently intervention policies by the government; forest conservation is implemented and reinforced by the local forest officials prohibiting rotational swidden farming. The increased population density of the up land communities has led to limited use of upland rice fields in all areas.

Due to the above reasons, the duration for soil re-fertilization is shorter to 1-3 years and results in insufficient rice for consumption throughout the year. At the same time, there is increasing development in community that requires the increased frequent use of land resulting in soil disruption and use of fertilizer, and chemical pesticides.

The practice of rotational swidden farming is recognized as the main source of life for poor people who have no irrigated rice fields. The production of rice and other food crops on upland fields has sustained and people. These two types of cultivation have not required high inputs from outside the community. Rather they use a natural method based on traditional knowledge and wisdom to increase agriculture production. This is especially true for women who have taken major part in the system of production as shown in the calendar of the Karen's life cycle in Table 5.1.

There are 19 poor households at Ban Dok Dang who have occupied the land for rotation swidden cultivation on average 1.8 rais per household, while there are 3 land-less households which have to cultivated the land of their relatives to plant rice and food plants and other useful crops for their own consumption. However, these 3 household do not have adequate rice throughout the year. Therefore, after finishing their main work, the young women and men work as wage labors, either in the community or the city, to supplement the family income.

The rotational swidden cultivation at Ban Dok Dang currently has been practiced among the poor families who do not have irrigated fields. The rotational swidden cultivation system encourages the villagers (women, men and children) in working together based on equal sharing or exchange of labor.

The exchange or the contribution of labor depends on the type of work. For example, the women play the major role, almost in every step in the rotation swidden farming. At the same time, the men help in terms of a heavy work ,such as swidden cutting, seed dibbling, fencing ,etc. The women are recognized as the owners of rotation swidden fields. . Normally men is major role in irrigated rice field.

Currently, the role of men in subsistence production has decreased and shifted into the commercial cash crop production system. At the same time, some women, after they completed their major work, intend to work as wage laborers both in the community and in the city to help the men gave additional income for the family.

There are 44 households considered as moderate economic status. There are 20 households amongst the 44 households who have continued to cultivate in rotation swidden farming, because farming system is considering as necessary for rice production and to sustain the variety of food they consume, and also encourage the role of women and the utilization of local wisdom in sustainable development.

There are 9 rich households who occupied the rotational swidden fields on average 3 rais per households. Two households have continued to practice subsistence farming and the remaining 7 households have adapted their rotational swidden field into perennial fruit orchards for their children and also for cash crops cultivation in the future.

There is currently a discussion among the housewives on the issue ceasing of rotational swidden at the persvasion and restriction of the government policy. However there is no other choice for their survival, they insisted that they have to continue and practice this system in a sustainable way based on management of the natural resources using local knowledge and wisdom. The result of this management is clearly apparent as it has created a sustainable and balance of nature, compared to the intensive farming system.

Subsistence production in the rotation swidden farming system has been practiced the Dok Dang villagers for a long time. Especially, the poor and the land-less families who mainly produce rice and other necessary food plants for their daily. While the middle class families have cultivated both for subsistent production and the market.

The rich families have less of a subsistence production system and are more involved in market production. At the same time, the restriction policy of the government strongly implements and reinforces the conservation of the forest. The remainder of the subsistence production in rotational swidden farming is the main

responsibility of women. The participation of men is based on physical ability. Actually, in the former time, there was no division of labor between women and men.

Because of the state policy on forest preservation, the villagers of Ban Dok Dang have to decrease the period of rotational shifting, or upland cultivation, from 6-11 years to 1-3 years. Furthermore, they presently decrease rice cultivation area but increase cash cropping area in upland fields.

In upland rice production, both men and women work together in every step of the production according to gender division of labor. In periods of subsistence production, men and women access and control over resources equally. Furthermore, they consult each other before making a decision about their resources.

During the cultivation period, the Karen firstly practices "*Nif sau kho*" rituals before arranging the field. In this ritual the woman prepares liquor, while the man is a conduct the ritual. This shows that there is no separated gender place/space in the Karen rituals. Man and woman attend in the same place, but they do different jobs that depend on one another.

Traditionally, in upland cultivation, the man takes responsibility for hard labor such as finding the field, cutting big tree, drying cut-trees, clearing the burned field, growing rice, harvesting, and carrying rice to granary, the woman helps as supplementary labor. Moreover, the woman take responsibility for time consuming and elaborate work such as weeding, foraging food in the field, and seeding (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Calendar of Upland Cultivation and Gender Role

Comprehensive Activities	Month											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1. " <i>Nif Sao hko</i> " ritual	MF	MF										
2. Cutting trees			FM									
3. Foraging food in upland field		F										
4. Drying cut-trees			M									
5. Burning				M								
6. Clearing wood				F								
7. Growing rice					FM							
8. Growing other plants					F							
9. Weeding						F		F				
10. Rituals in Upland field							FM					
11. Rice Harvest										FM		
12. Seed Collection												F

F = Female, M = Male, FM = Female and Male

Source: Village survey in 2001

The woman spends more time than the man in upland cultivation because it is her duty to be responsible for domestic food consumption. Therefore, she has to take care of upland cultivation in a good manner for her and her families consumption. There is a saying that, the upland cultivation belongs to women and the irrigate rice cultivation belongs to men (Karen idiom heard during field research, 2001).

Table 5.1 shows that when the villagers from the rich and middle class households enter to commercial production, especially cash cropping, the woman takes main roles in every step of the upland rice production while man helps to work only occasionally on hard jobs. This is because the man spends most of his time on cash cropping that is grown year round. Men do not help women as they did in the past. This is different from the poor and land-less households, in which men and women still work together in both upland fields and cash cropping.

Irrigated or Wet Rice Cultivation

The irrigated rice cultivation system of Ban Dok Dang is inherited from their ancestors. The irrigated fields located in the basin valley and the terrace fields near the foot of the mountains and rice terrace are commonly practiced in Ban Dok Dang. The period of terraced field clearing is considered as heavy work, therefore the gathering of labor in the form of labor exchange and labor sharing is very important, because this kind of work consumes a lot time and labor. In this village, irrigated rice production can be planted only once a year, due to inadequate water during the dry season. This irrigated rice production requires a lot of water, instead the villagers plant cash crops for their family as additional income.

Irrigated rice cultivation has been practiced by 9 rich households, who occupied irrigate field an average 8 rais per households, and 44 middle class households, who occupied irrigated fields an average 4 rais per households. Both rich and middle class households have continued to plant rice and other food for their basic consumption. The existence of the labor exchange system is needed among the villagers in every household category in Ban Dok Dang.

The rich households mostly occupied irrigated fields for wet rice cultivation during raining season and plant cash crop agriculture during the dry season. The middle class households occupied mostly terrace field which can be cultivated once a year and dry up during the dry season, cash crop can not be plant in these terraced fields.

Currently, the people wanted to extend their farm land for both rice and cash crop production before the declaration of the national park. However, this is quite difficult due to the policy mentioned earlier. Therefore, the intensive use of land increase causing soil disruption and intensive use of chemical and pesticides, because cash crops promoted by companies it can not grow without chemicals. This is a sign of the ending of subsistent production.

The previous period, wet rice belongs to men because men play a major role in irrigated rice cultivation. Now during the day, the women have more roles in irrigated rice cultivation while the men spend most of their time in the commercial production because this production requires high investment.

The preparation and collection of the seeds for terraced fields are the women's responsibility. Both men and women sow rice seeds together from May to June. After that, men plow terraced field from June to July. In the past the Karen, like lowlanders, use buffalo to plow rice fields. Nowadays, they increasingly use a "plowing machine" instead. Man and woman transplant rice together from July to August.

After rice growing, they practice rituals in terraced fields. While the woman prepares food, liquor, and things for offering in the ritual, the man conducts the ritual. The relatives and neighbor attend this ritual. After that, there is an exchange of labor for weeding amongst women in September. At the end of October until the beginning of November, they harvest, thresh, and carry paddy to the granary by exchanging labor among relatives and neighbors. Both men and women work side by side for these jobs. But for seed selection and collection at the end of November, the woman takes a responsibility (see Table 5.2)

Table 5.2 Calendar of Terraced Field Cultivation and Gender Roles

ACTIVITY	Month											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1. Seed Preparing			F	F								
2. Rice sowing					MF	MF						
3. Plowing							M					
4. Transplanting							FM	FM				
5. Practicing rituals								FM				
6. Weeding									F	F		
7. Harvesting										MF	MF	
8. Seed Collecting												F

F = Female, M = Male

Source: Village survey in 2001

Traditionally the man takes the main role of terraced cultivation by devoting most of his time for digging the earth to make a terrace for cultivation. It takes 10-30 years for digging an amount of terraced field. But nowadays, they can not extend terraced fields anymore. While women takes the main role on upland cultivation by devoting most of her time foraging for food, weeding, and taking care of the crops. Furthermore, the man takes responsibility for the hard labor while women are involved in every step of cultivation. Presently, in the period of commercial production, women had to take on the man's responsibility a laborer on both upland and terraced cultivation, because the men concentrate on cash cropping for family income.

5.1.2 Commercial Production or Cash Cropping

The changing mode of production at Ban Dok Dang is from subsistent production to the commercial production. It has occurred since the state development that viewed highlanders as destroying nature and environment, because they practice rotation shifting cultivation. The state prohibited anyone cultivating in the forest area by promoting and encouraging cash cropping. For these reasons, the villagers of Ban Dok Dang are forced to intensive commercial production.

The commercial production requires extensive water use so it practiced in the irrigation area, such as the terraced field, orchard and upland field after the rice harvest. The commercial production depends on capital from outside as well as modern technology and market mechanisms. The villagers in the rich and middle class households can access the means of production while the poor and the land-less households are involved in the commercial production as wage labor.

The villagers of Ban Dok Dang have grow tomato, cabbage, and sweet-bell pepper as cash crops for 20 years. They have grown coffee and some kinds of fruit trees such as persimmon, peach, and plum as cash crops. But the price of coffee is very low so that the villager is not interested in it. The fruit tree has become a cash crop because they have found out a way to produce good product. Nowadays, the village would like to grow tomato, cabbage, and sweet-bell pepper because these plants are short-lived species. They can harvest 2-3 times a year.

For tomato cultivation, the man takes responsibility for all 10 steps: preparing land for sowing, sowing, uprooting, growing, making a stand, plucking the leaf, weeding, spreading fertilizer, spraying insecticide, harvesting, and selling. Women only help men growing, plucking, weeding, and harvesting. This is because the villager views that men go to work as wage labor in cash cropping at Ban Mae Tho (Hmong) and Ban Kong Loi (Lau), the adjacent villages, so that men have more knowledge on cash cropping than women.

The villager views that men have to concentrate on cash cropping because this production requires a large amount of money, time, and labor. If they could not have a good product, or the price of the cash crop is lower than the investment price, they go into debt. Then, their families are in trouble economically. Therefore the man has to spend most of his time on cash cropping (see Table 5.3)

Moreover, in cabbage cultivation, men take responsibility in every step of cultivation: preparing land for sowing, sowing, preparing land for growing, uprooting, growing, spreading fertilizer, spraying insecticide, and so on. Men also take good care for cabbage cultivation as they do for tomato cultivation (See Table 5.4)

In cabbage cultivation, women help men with some jobs, such as preparing land for sowing, sowing, uprooting and growing, weeding, and harvesting. These kinds of jobs are traditionally the woman's role, so they have knowledge in both upland and terraced cultivation and can cope with these jobs at ease. But, the man

takes a responsible for selling because the man has a duty to contact outsiders. Furthermore, the man goes to find the information about the price of agricultural product, and sometimes goes out to sell the product in the city, while the woman take responsibility for domestic production and consumption.

Table 5.3 Calendar of Tomato Cultivation and Gender Roles

Activity	Month											
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1. Preparing land for sowing		M										
2. Sowing		M										
3. Uproot sowing			M									
4. Growing			MF									
5. Making a stand for tomato				M								
6. Plucking tomato leaves, weeding				MF	→	MF	→					
7. Spreading fertilizer				M								
8. Spraying insecticide				M	→							
9. Harvesting						MF						
10. Selling						M						

F = Female, M = Male, MF = Female and Male

Source: Village survey in 2001

From the villager's point of view, the commercial production of Ban Dok Dang does not cause either the man or woman to have more or less status. But both men and women are exploited from commercial production. While women work harder, both in domestic and cultivation work, men also work harder in cash cropping. However, women have less access and control over resources, especially cash cropping and financing. The result of this study is different from the study of Hutheesing (1990) and Sarintip (1999). Hutheesing concludes that in the changing gender role of Lisu society, Lisu women can adapt to modern production better than Lisu men. And, Sarintip concludes that in the changing gender role of Karen, Karen women can use traditional knowledge in commercial production. This can make some women sometimes have a higher status than some men.

There are different views of gender roles in the community. From the point of view of over 40-year-old women is *"we have to help each other, both man and woman. We have to support and assist each other. Woman has to take responsibility for woman's work even if its hard to do."* But from the point of view of under 40-year-old women *"Why do we have to take responsibility like this? Both domestic and*

production work, and sometimes communal work? While the man concentrates on only cash cropping and lets woman do domestic work alone”.

Table 5.4 Calendar of Cabbage Cultivation and Gender Roles

Activity	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1. Preparing land for sowing							FM					
2. Sowing							M					
3. Preparing land for growing								M				
4. Uprooting and growing								FM				
5. Putting fertilizer in the holes								M				
6. Spraying insecticide									M			
7. Take caring							M					
8. Weeding									FM			
9. Spreading fertilizer									M			
9. Harvesting										MF		
10. Selling										MF		

F = Female , M = Male , MF = Male and Female

Source: Village Survey in 2001

Furthermore, the young generation, who enter commercial production and work for their parents and families, have begun to control means of production. (especially cash) instead of their parents. From this phenomenon, it shows that the old generation is still familiar with subsistence production and does not like to be involved in cash cropping. While the young generation has to find new ways to cope with the present situation for the survival of their family. And the villager thinks that the cash cropping is an alternative way for increasing their financial assets.

In cash cropping of Ban Dok Dang: (cabbage, tomato, and sweet-bell pepper) presently the man takes a main role in every step of cultivation, especially selling and finance management. In the past, men and women consulted each other for making decisions on agricultural production, and women controlled the money. But presently men keep and allocate money for the family consumption and debt. While women have less role in resource management because they are involved in only some steps of the production and know very little about family finance. Women only keep the rest of money after paying debt. If they are in debt, both men and women have to be responsible for this together.

In other words, gender roles in Ban Dok Dang have changed, men have access and control over resources in every step of the cash crop production while women have access and control over resources in upland and terraced cultivation.

Even though the role and status of women in rich and middle classes have changed, especially in terms of access and control over resources, women are quite unaware of these changes.

5.2 The Changing of Gender Roles at the Community Level

The changing of gender roles in Ban Dok Dang is impacted from not only the changing of the agricultural production, but also the changing of religion and socio-political context.

5.2.1 The Changing of Belief and Gender Role

In Ban Dok Dang, there are 43 traditional households from a total of 75 households. Presently, there are 3 "*Hif hko*", (socio-religious leaders) in Ban Dok Dang. Traditionally, there is only one "*Hif hko*" in a community and women can not be "*Hif hko*". Therefore, the several "*Hif hko*" phenomenon is interesting. In the first period of village settlement, there was one "*Hif hko*" who belonged to "*Chor Por*" family. Later, a second "*Hif hko*" arrived for the following reason:

First, the "*Hif hko*" of "*Chor Por*" family adjusted some regulations and do not practice rituals seriously. This is because some of their children have gone to study outside the village and some of them converted to Christianity. Traditionally, everybody in the family, especially in the women lineage, had to attend the rituals, especially "*Au Ba*", ancestor worship. Therefore, the "*Chor Por*" family has to change some regulations to suit the family context. Because of this difference in ritual practice, the "*We Thu*" family that had come to settle down during the first period of the village settlement decided to separate from another traditional village. They established another "*Hif hko*" for 9 households and kept on practicing rituals seriously. They did not allow their children go outside the village. Later, some of "*We Thu*" children converted to Buddhism so that the "*We Thu*" family had to change some ritual practices. Presently, some of the descendants of both families converted to Christianity or Buddhism.

Second, the villagers discussed changing the role of "*Hif hko*" according to the present situation. The situation is that the extension of the village, or population pressure causes the "*Hif hko*" to practice the rituals longer and longer. Nowadays, the villagers concentrate and spend most of their time on cash cropping while is determined from outside. And, the "*Hif hko*" understands that the villager does not like time consuming rituals so he practices "*Nif sau hko*" ritual within 1 ½ - 3 days.

Third, presently the "*Hif hko*" is an old man so that somebody has to help him conduct the ritual correctly. If they do not practice the ritual correctly, they have to do the ritual again. Furthermore, since the "*Hif hko*" has to drink liquor in every house, and man get very drunk so he has to take a rest. Also as families get larger in the community he has to practice the ritual longer. Therefore, some of the families separate into another traditional cluster within the village to solve this problem.

Later, a third "*Hif Hko*" cluster was formed when the brother-in-law of the "*Hif hko*" of "*Chor Por*" family had to separate. According to the reason of the traditional practice, if the member of "*Hif hko*" family marries a member of another "*Hif hko*" family, these two families can not participate in the same under rituals using pork or chicken, however if there is a larger ritual requiring beef or buffalo the two *Hifhko* can participate in the same ritual. Furthermore, there are 4 households descending from "*Chor Por*" family.

Usually, the Karen village is quite small comprised of 2-20 houses. They have to separate the village because of many reasons as describe above. In fact, there are many taboos that forced the Karen to move out from the former village and establish a new village. In a small village, they can contact "guardian spirits" and follow the regulation of the village more easily than in a big village. But, nowadays, it is very hard to establish a new settlement so that they demarcate the "invisible boundary" for a new traditional village within the physical village.

At the same time, the village also points out the importance of the participants because women not only considers and determines the suitable time for the rituals, but also checks the perfection of the rituals. Women who are an observer and examine the rituals by using traditional norm; the way to solve the problematic circumstance. If there is a "problematic circumstance" in the community, especially in the rituals, women will consult the elder who has such knowledge in considering the perfection of the rituals. They sometimes have to practice the rituals again.

In comparing to Thawit's study, he concluded that women can adapt to capitalism better than men in the changing of Lisu society. Moreover, Lisu men use the rituals as the identity expression mechanism for reconstructing power that give new role for men through the rituals. For the Karen of Ban Dok Dang, the villager values the rituals, not only the men who conduct the rituals, but also women who determine the time for as well as prepare food for offering in the rituals. Therefore, the rituals are not only the expression of self and identity of men, but also women.

The village has to adjust and manipulate the traditional rituals and regulations to the "new" beliefs based on religion conversion. This adjustment and manipulation impacts gender roles. In Christianity and Buddhism, the "*Hif hko*" is not the religious leader or conductor anymore. But is replaced by the "Catechist", or priest, who are male and become responsible for this job. Women only take role of arranging the place for the ritual, and sometimes reading the gospel in the rituals. (Sarintip, 1999) Both the Christian Karen men and women are only the attendants of the rituals.

The changing to commercial production, as well as the religious conversion, cause changing of gender roles in Ban Dok Dang. However, the villager does not recognize this change. This can be considered from the case of commercial production conflict of a Karen couple that the male accesses and controls over the means of production while the female is scarcely involved in this matter. When analyzing the inequity of the case, the villagers reconstruct the traditional ideology

against this analysis for keeping "equilibrium" of the society. The villagers still value the traditional belief and practice in everyday life. They usually tell the story for reminding the importance of women's role:

Once upon a time, there is a Karen couple. The husband wants to go for trade in the foreign land for months. Therefore, the wife arranges things for the husband as well as ties wrist and pours sacred water on the head of the husband. After the husband goes out to trade, the wife stays at home and does her duty the best she can such as cleaning the house, taking care of herself and her domestic animals. Her body and clothes are cleaned. And she always is in a cheerful frame of mind to neighbors and visitors. The husband was able to trade very well. He sold his product in short time and got very good benefits. He went back home with happiness and self-pride. When he arrived home, he showed the benefit to his wife. The wife feels very happy and says, "This is because of us helping each other." But the wife's voice is displeasing to the husband's ear. Therefore, the husband replies, "You only stay at home. How can you tell that you help me trading?" The wife says, "No, what you got is also my part." But the husband confirms that he does it by himself. Therefore, the wife keeps silent and gives up interest in caring for the husband. When the money is gradually used up, the husband informs the wife that he wants to go out to trade in foreign lands again. This time, the wife does not care and give any opinion. Moreover, she does not arrange any things for the husband. She lets him arrange things alone. Furthermore, she does not tie the wrist and pour sacred water on the head of the husband. When her husband goes to trade, she does not do her duty. She does not clean the house and take care of domestic animals or herself. When the visitor or neighbor come to visit her, they hardly remember her. The husband, wherever he goes, can not sell the product and nobody greets him. The more he trades and goes, the more he loses his capital. Eventually, he goes back home and is in debt for a large amount of money. When he arrives home, he is stunned when he sees the house and his wife. The wife asks the husband, "how is your trade?" the husband replies wearily, "I lost all capital and in debt for a large amount of money." Then the wife says, "I ever had told you that I am involved in the last benefits. But you did not listen to me. This time, I did not help you so that you lost all of your capital." When the husband hears these sentences, he only swallows his spittle and accepts it in his mind. From then on, the husband accepts his wife and does not look down upon the wife's duty or work.

This folktale becomes the lesson and crucible of the Karen society, which emphasize on the equality of the value, role and dignity between the Karen man and woman. The villagers have many folktales that their essences or main ideas are the same as the above folktale, for example:

"... 30 males flaunt that their ability of upland cultivation is better than 30 females. The males select cultivation plot at virgin forest. After burning the plot, they take all of unburned wood out of the plot because they think that it would be orderly and more beautiful. The females select an abandoned plot that does not have many big trees because they think that they are weak. After harvest, The females get more rice than the men. The males do not have enough rice to eat. Eventually, they go to ask for rice from the females.

"... 30 males flaunt that they are strong. When building a house, they cut bamboo tree for making the roof. They lay down the wood by falling into line on the top of the house. And 30 females cut small bamboo trees, then split them into two. When they make the roof, they lay the splited wood overlappingly: invert one and turn up one alternatedly. When is rain, the males can not stay in their house because the water leaks into the house. But the female's house can protect them from rain. Eventually, the males run into female's house to take shelter from the rain.

These two folktales are told from generation to generation. But it does not mean that the ability of female is better than male. It rather emphasizes on the value and role of both male and female that have to rely on each other. In other words, *in the differences between male and female, each has its own dignity, value, and role, equally. Both male and females work side by side, cooperate and support each other for making a living.* Furthermore, the emphasis of gender role is not only told in folktale, but also in folksong. There is a folksong that can be used as summary of the Karen gender role:

<i>Only woman, can not stay</i>	<i>Only man, can not survive</i>
<i>Let stay both banks of stream</i>	<i>According to our ancestor who tied us</i>

The opinion of the villager on gender role is that it is a difference role. But it does not cause conflict or the problem of power relation between man and woman because both traditional and modern productions are for the family. The villager usually says, *"when there are the difficult days, we have distress together. And when there are happy days, we have joy together. Human beings have to depend on each other whether man or woman, as our ancestors had practiced and transmitted to us".*

In fact the society has changed, especially mode of production and land limitation. These changes cause the transformation of gender role in the community and the villager does not recognize this transformation; from the cooperative work in every step of the production to division of labor. At the same time, the woman role on access and control over resource has decreased, especially cash that presently is in the hands of men. The reason for this phenomenon is for the survival of the family.

5.2.2 Gender Roles in Communal Activity

In 1995, the housewives of Ban Dok Dang, from 55 households, cooperated to establish the "housewife group" comprised of rich, middle class and poor households and supported by DISAC-CM. The DISAC-CM encourage them to make supplementary income for the family, and educate them about the wider society and raise the awareness of woman's role in family and community. The woman or housewife group, is one of the projects that DISAC-CM operated in the community.

The first activity of "Housewife group" is "Saving Group" for use in emergency. The activity emphasizes on "helping the distressed and relieving the suffered" because they need cash for investment in commercial crop production. They started to save 100 Baht per person and can collect a total of 5,500 Baht. And DISAC-CM joins them in money saving with 2,500 Baht so that they had a total of 7,500 Baht in money saving project. They use this money as a "revolving fund" for use in emergency, educational fee for the children, cash crop investment, and former debt payment.

Each housewife can borrow 500-3,000 Baht and pay interest 2 Baht per month. They rotated the fund that everybody can borrow to support the family. The money saving project can be considered a success at some levels so that the husbands admire the saving activity of housewife group, because they can borrow the fund in need. In fact, the male villagers once established "the male saving group". But their activity ceased because they did not have good management.

Nowadays, "the female saving group" is divided into 2 groups, because the group of 55 housewives is too big. The first group has 19 members and the second group has 10 members. The remaining of 25 housewives stop the activity because they do not have time and money to participate but they can borrow money from each group in an emergency. Each group has a committee consisting of a president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer.

The committee in each group work very hard. But, they feel tried both in private and collective work. They collect money 3 or 4 times a year or 400 Baht per person per year for raising savings. Moreover, they give dividend money to the members every year. The housewife is very proud of this activity because they were able to pay money back to DISAC-CM in 1999. It is very clear that "the female saving group" benefits the villager both at household and community level.

In the past, if the villagers of Ban Dok Dang wanted to buy goods that they could not produce, they had to walk to the lowlander's village for buying the goods. Sometimes traders brought goods to sell at the community, such as salt, fish, and vegetables. But the price was higher than market price. Furthermore, the villager got low equality goods and can not select the goods.

Therefore, in 1995, the housewives of Ban Dok Dang established a "cooperative store" and sell products in fair and just price for responding to the need of the villagers. At the beginning of the establishment, they cooperated as a whole village so that they confronted the management problem. Later, they divided into 2 groups according to "the female saving group"

At the beginning of the "cooperative store", they collect money from the members, 100 Baht per person, for capital investment of the store. Then, they elect one housewife from each group to work as a "seller" at the store. The store opened at the 2 sellers' houses.

The goods price at the store is more expensive than market price at 1 Baht per item. This pays the cost of transportation, material for packing the goods, and remuneration for the sellers: 150 Baht per year. The rest of the money is divided to the members at the end of year. The person who goes to buy goods is the president or the vice-president or the treasurer. But the 2 representatives of the housewives have to go with one of the committee members to buying goods. They go to buy once or twice a week according to the amount of the goods in the store. The transportation cost depends on the amount of goods, from 50-100 Baht. The goods that they usually buy are dried fish, instant noodle, cane fish, salt, eggs, vegetable oil, candle, candy, and so on.

One housewife recalls that "the store" is operated very well, especially in cultivation period because the villager works "in a hurry", from dawn till evening. Therefore, mackerel fish, cane fish, and dried fish are the main food that can be cooked in limited time. Some of them take cane fish and instant noodle when they stay over night at the hut in the cultivation field

However, some goods are expensive and can not sell. These goods will be discounted. Furthermore, the store does not sell liquor and drugs. The problem and obstacle of the store operation is the misunderstanding among the members about the management of the committee and financial distrust. Therefore, the committee holds a meeting for explaining the situation to the members and proposing to change the committee. At present, there is still no change in the committee.

The women cooperative store sums up the balance account once a year, usually in December. In 2000, the first store can give dividend money for the members of about 250 Baht per person, while the second can give about 345 Baht per person. The receiving of divided money makes the housewife have moral principle to do such activity because it benefits both the family and the community.

5.3 The Changing of Gender Roles in Political Sphere

In the traditional rituals, the women's role in the community is hidden. But in modern organization, women's role has its own space such as "the women saving group" and "the cooperative store". These two spaces are not only for saving money, selling goods, and meeting among the members, but also for discussing about how to make a living, especially upland cultivation. Presently, the women have increasingly entered to be a leader in public sphere to protect their rights on cultivation land.

5.3.1 Gender Roles in Community Resource Management

Nowadays, the natural resource management of Ban Dok Dang has changed both in the pattern and gender role perspectives. In the modern pattern of resource management, they establish written regulations and structure of the organization that the committee has only 1% women. This is different from the past, when women worked with men, side by side, to preserve nature.

Table 5.5 shows women's participation in communal activities. The first activity is natural resource conservation activity: forest firebreak making, forest demarcating, board making, committee members, and attending meeting. This activity is influenced from the outside, both GOs and NGOs. The villagers established the "The environmental and natural conservationist-villager group" organized as a modern organization: committee, structure and function of the committee, written regulation, activity, and so on. The establishment is to show the public that the Karen are environmental by nature.

The second activity is religious and ritual activity related to natural resource management. The main propose of the activity is to ask for permission from "guardian spirits" in land use as well as to thank "guardian spirit" for helping them make a good living. Traditionally, woman determine the time and cook for offering at the ritual, while the man is a conductor of the ritual. The villagers say that women can not be the conductor. Nobody dares to do this because they fear that they would made a mistake in nature, "the Absolute", and human being. And it would also cause damage to production or even their life.

The third activity is communal activity. They do this activity from April till December periodically, or when the villager is free from cultivation work. In the past, only men were involved in the village development. But presently, both men and women are involved the activity. For attending the meeting, housewives go to participate when their husbands do not have time for the activity.

5.3.2 The Women's Strategy in Bargaining with Forestry Officials

The national park officials first come to visit the village in 1999. At that time, the head of the national park official held a meeting to explain the national park policy. Both men and women attended the meeting and asked to cancel the "Mae Tho" national park declaration because it is a resource they depend on to land a

living. Furthermore, the village has lived for generations on that and has used forest conservatively.

Table 5.5 Calendar of Community Activity in Natural Resource Management and Gender Roles

Activity	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1. Natural resource conservation activity												
- Making forest fire break belt		MF										
- Demarcating forest area		MF										
- Making boards		M										
- Committee member	MF											
- Attending the conservation group meeting	MF											
2. Religious, believe, and ritual activity												
- Practicing "water spirit" and "mountain-water supply" rituals				MF								
- Cooking food for offering				F								
- Ritual conductor	M			M								
- Cleaning				MF								
3. Communal activity												
- Developing the village				FM								
- Attending the meeting				FM								

F = Female, M = Male, FM = Female and Male
Source: Village Survey in 2001

The state answered their request by declaring "Mae Tho" national park on 2002. The villagers are very worried about this declaration, especially how they can make a living in such situation. The villagers think that their life will be worse off. Because of some of them have experience running away from forestry officials while cutting trees on upland field, and some have presented a petition about cultivation land to national park officials, and waited for the result. However, the villagers are ready to appeal or to find out a way to maintain their rights. The women also discuss this issue both formally and informally.

The women views that upland cultivation may damage nature, but at the same time, the villager preserves nature. Their rotational shifting cultivation does not harm nature. Moreover, the villagers know that if the forest is damaged, it will impact their life dependent on nature. Therefore, because of their belief and survival, the villagers have consciousness and awareness in their role and duty to protect forest, at least for themselves.

The housewife group prepared food for forestry officials whom visited their community for the meeting. This is one strategies of the Karen women for bargaining with forestry officials. They use their own space to appeal their fundamental rights in making a living by cooking upland rice for the officials. When the officials have finished their meal and went out to talk and thank the villager for the meal. At that time, one of the housewives from the middle class asked the head of National Park *"Is our rice delicious?"* The answer was *"Yes, it's very delicious"*. Then, the housewife said, *"the rice you eat is upland rice. Nowadays, our land is limited. If our rice is delicious, please allow us to practice upland cultivation for our family. This is the only land that we inherited from our ancestors"*. The head of the National Park replied that *"No, because it is a state policy that does not allow anybody to practice any cultivation in the national park area. The state has made its a restricted area."*

The women told the author that *"Even we refer to our ancestors that stayed here for generations, as well as population pressure at present time, to ask for our right to stay here, the RFD officials do not listen to us. The state still limit our cultivation land."* Both men and women ask themselves who will have control over forest once it is declared as national park. They also wonder if this is a common problem affecting all of Thailand.

This phenomenon, shows the women's role in political sphere by bargaining with forestry officials for their rights on cultivation land. When there is permission, the villagers grow rice in the remaining area and meet the shortage of rice. Therefore, they go out to work as a wage laborer to earn cash for buying food and rice. The villagers question what is the standard of development, which emphasizes on the resources of wealthy, not human resources, and those who have a shortage of rice.

Later, on April 8, 2001, after finishing praying in the Christian church, the villagers were gathered under the church because the national park officials had made an appointment with them for explaining the national park declaration. The officials informed them of the reason for this appointment was that when they surveyed the forest by helicopter, they saw a large amount of burned area for upland cultivation. Therefore, the officials think that the villagers do not respect forest law and regulation, and destroy the forest. The officials view that upland cultivation causes enormous deforestation.

Furthermore, the forestry officials informed them that when they surveyed forest area by foot, they met the villagers cutting trees for upland cultivation.

Therefore, they seized agricultural instruments such as swords, axes, and spades, and asked who is the practitioner of this field. The villagers, 8 females and 2 males, accepted that they are the practitioners, and asked for the rights to cultivation in this area.

During the meeting, the officials explained that *"the national park officials who come to visit the village are going to help the villagers demarcate the cultivation and forest area. This demarcation benefits the villagers. And in the future, the villagers can get 'land title'. Because there is no clear demarcation so that the state does not give 'land title' to the villager yet. Therefore, we have to survey the area clearly. Anyway, the state will definitely declare 'Mae Tho National Park' by the year 2002. Presently, it is the stage of surveying and preparing the decree."*

The officials said that they would survey the area 3 times. *The first time*, the officials survey alone because they survey for demarcating the boundary of the villages between Ban Kong Loi and Ban Dok Dang. This time, the officials would mark or make a symbol at the boundary. Later, *the second time*, the villagers and the officials check the boundary between cultivation and forest area together. If the forest area overlap the cultivation area, the officials will cancel that forest area and allow cultivating at that area. *In the third time*, the officials from the Department will survey the area and determine the national park area within 2002. After that, RFD will give a kind of land title called *"Sor Thor Kor"* means the rights for utilize to the villager.

The officials reaffirmed in the meeting about natural resource management. They explained that :

"The villager has traditional regulations for natural resource management. But RFD has The Act that gives authority to RFD to manage forest area. We, all Thai citizen, have to respect and practice according to the law. Moreover, it is the state policy that followed our King and Queen concept. The state wants RFD protecting for fertility of nature. Please do not destroy the forest and help the state preserve the forest. If the villagers live in strait circumstance, RFD will contact the District office coming to help the villagers. About the declaration of the national park, it is for conserving our forest forever. And this forest area can also be operated as tourism area, and can make income from entrance fee for the state. And this income will be the state budget for protecting the forest. Furthermore, the villagers can get income from tourism too by selling some forest product or handicraft. It is a supplementary income for the villager."

The villagers, who attended the meeting, were interested in the declaration of the national park over their community area. Both men and women intensively inquired with the officials. One man stood up and discussed with the officials with rationality and sensitivity while women talked about how hard their living is. The villagers asked the officials for the right to stay and make a living in the forest as well

as preserving the forest by local knowledge. And the villagers already established the "Assembly of Wild Life and Forest Conservation" to deal with this activity.

The villagers informed the officials that they establish village committee to take responsibility for forest conservation. And they cooperate with the state growing trees in the forest as well as protecting forest fire and practicing according to the law. Therefore, they asked for the rights on natural resource management as they did in the past. But the officials refused and referred to Thai law and state policy on natural resource management that the villager has to accept.

From the meeting, it can be viewed that the standpoint of the national park officials about natural resource management is based on the assumption that natural resource is, valued material that can be exchanged, bought and sold. The way to keep the forest fertility is that human beings have to move out of the forest. This idea is opposite to the villager's idea. The villager views natural resources as not only valued as material, but also source of the villager's life. It is the spiritual value and related to the way of life of the villager. The villager makes a living by utilizing nature in a sustainable way till the present and the future.

Therefore, the concept of natural resource management of the villager comes from the basic needs of the villager that focuses on human being as the center that not only depends on, but also preserves natural resources. This is the discourse against the main concept of the state resource management that not only discards natural resource management as a whole, but also ignores gender perspective. Because in the past, the Karen resource management is related to gender role that is the main factor supporting the survival of human being and nature. It differs from the present that natural resources are exploited and eventually damaged.

Furthermore, the discussion and bargaining of the Karen women in the meeting was interesting because the Karen traditionally let men contact outsiders while women avoid this matter. In this meeting, the Karen women dare to discuss with the officials. This shows that the Karen women had to enter outside-community-public sphere because the survival of their family and the community is shaken. They have to fight side by side with men for the right to their land.

5.4 Conclusion

Nowadays, the Karen gender role in resource management is changing rapidly and distinctively, especially when they enter commercial crop production. And the conversion to the new belief of the villagers and the state policy of the declaration of the national park in the cultivated area. There are 3 main factors that cause the transformation of the Karen gender roles in resource management at Ban Dok Dang.

First, the changing mode of production, from subsistence to commercial production cause class and gender differentiation in Ban Dok Dang. The result is that men in the rich and middle class can access and control the production process and

natural resource management both in household and community level. Even in the past, men and women from every category worked together in upland fields. Now women are spending more time and work in every step of the production process, while men are involved only in hard work and land selection of upland cultivation.

Although the men from rich and middle class households are intensively involved in cash cropping, women work both in upland, terraced fields and also help men in cash cropping. While the access and control over the means of production, especially money and finance decision making which used to be in the hands of women, now belongs to men.

Even though the women in every category do not take a main role in commercial crop production, they have established the "Saving Group" and the "Cooperative store" for helping each other in economic dimension. In other words, because of the "saving group" and the "cooperative store" they are supported and able to survive in the changing economic system, both at the household and community level.

Second, religious conversion causes the changing of gender roles. In the traditional belief system, the Karen, both men and women, are the participants of the rituals. In "the new religion" Buddhism and Christianity, they become attendants of the rituals. This changing of the belief and practice has impacted the "*Hif hko*", because commercial production not only emphasizes on money and market, but also does not value the relationship between human beings and nature. So that the role of the "*Hif hko*" in practicing the rituals has decreased. The "*Hif hko*" has to practice the ritual in a hurry. At the same time, women who used to play an important role in traditional belief has become an attendee in the "the new belief", which is male oriented, while men take a major role as a representative of "the Absolute".

The women who converted to "the new belief" do not ignore traditional practice. They still play their role such as arranging things for offering in the rituals and participating in the rituals. The new belief give the women a chance to have more education so that they can analyze and understand social situations which cause their serious problems on their rights in access and control over their resources. At the same time, the women have more opportunity to leave their village which somehow puts them in a disadvantageous position. They are taken out of the local context that is no longer any continuity in terms of mother- daughter relationship, thus no continuity on local knowledge transition. Furthermore, the decreasing access of upland cultivation also adds disadvantage to women.

At the same time, the villagers are continuing to practice traditional rituals by reconstructing the new pattern of resource management from the traditional, which emphasizes on the relationship between human being-nature and absolute beings; such as "mountain-water supply ritual and "Kong Bun Kao (rice donation merit). These activities are participated equally by both women and men from each socio-economic category household in taking part in difference roles.

Third, Thai State policy, especially land control, impacts the Karen gender roles. Thai state policies are mostly written according to the main stream of development concept, for instance, separating human beings and forest, prohibiting rotational shifting cultivation, and declaring more and more conservation forest. It has effected the women's role, especially the women from the poor and land-less households who practiced the rotation shifting cultivation. From these policies, the Karen women created a new strategy by grouping women for women activities, are bargaining with forestry officials, and participating with men to fight for their rights in community natural resource management in the changing gender roles in the political sphere. The Karen women dare to protect their rights and land. They attended the meeting with the Karen men in bargaining with forestry officials for the right resource management based on their local knowledge. Furthermore, they asked for participatory resource management for keeping their identity and the survival of the community.