

Thesis Tittle The Making of Rural Community Leadership : A Case
Study of Kaw Sub-district, Li District, Lamphun
Province

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Abstract

This study examined concluding propositions of rural community leadership resulting from dynamic interactions within rural forest-based communities. There were three main objectives in this study : to investigate the leadership socialization process leading to the acceptance of the leaders authority ; to identify the roles of leaders in and to examine the associational network of leaders and influence/ power existing both inside and outside their communities.

This research employed a combination of field surveys and qualitative analysis techniques. The methods included a thorough review of secondary sources, participatory and non-participatory observations, structured and unstructured interviews. The study site was Tambon Kaw, Amphur Li, Changwat Lamphun located in the far-reaching rural boundary of state's power. In this Tambon, two critical problems have been noted : deterioration of natural environment and poverty. Ten formal and informal community leaders were investigated.

Findings are as follows : In the past, the studied communities were isolated, thus, naturally making self-reliance a most dominant mode of living. Community members were brought up inevitably tough and strong to withstand both natural disasters and bandits. Community leaders educated from the Buddhist temples. They gained power and authority on the basis of accumulated merits and charisma in protecting and leading their communities. In this regard, there existed a small, if any network with outsiders. Community life, therefore, focused and promoted community solidarity.

On the other hand, in the modern era in which the communities have been affected by construction of a large dam nearby and suddenly exposed to the outside world, new community leaders have become those community representatives shaped by new circumstances and capable of dealing and bargaining with outside modern market forces and bureaucracy. The new leadership role has, thus, become more complex in order to maximize the benefits from the influx of state-sponsored development projects and activities. Community leaders were found to lean more to the bureaucracy and in many instances serve as brokers between their communities and outside market forces, consequently gaining personal interest from such new association. Leadership power and authority has been accepted because it is seen as capable of patronizing community members economically, socially and politically. At the same time, it was also seen as capable of somewhat reducing certain conflicts within the communities.

However, it was also discovered that such leadership power and authority results from leaders' own ascribed status, i.e., community kinship, and possession of more information untypical of the rest of the communities on top of their better education and more experience plus their relationship network with other individuals and groups both inside and outside of their communities.