

**Thesis Title:** The Expectation of the Family and the Daughter's Role in "the Prostitution Community": A case Study of a Village in Phayao Province

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### Abstract

This thesis is an anthropological study of the relationships between families and daughters in the "prostitution community". In order to identify the significance of the continuity of prostitution in the community, the study analyzes the relations between the dialectics of family expectations and the daughter's roles, and the definition of "prostitution" from the perspectives of the daughters, the parents, and the neighbors. The theoretical framework is shaped by three dynamic concepts; daughterhood as defined in the "*phii puu njaa*" ideology, female sexuality as conceptualized and regulated in the community of the North, and daughterhood as conceptualized in the "prostitution community."

Under contemporary social conditions, prostitution is widely recognized as a "social problem". It is depicted as an evidence of the decaying morality in rural communities whereby parents sell their daughters in order to lead a comfortable lifestyle, and an indicator of young rural girls' obsession with materialism and luxurious lifestyles enough to sell their bodies.

Such an understanding renders prostitution a widespread problem of the rural community. But, it ignores the impacts of uneven development and externally induced changes which have a great deal of impacting the social conditions of production at the community level. Significantly, it excludes the dynamic account of prostitution given by the women, the parents, and the community members. Since the prevailing definition of prostitution does not adequately explain the continuity and reproduction of prostitution in the rural community, the

study attempts to discuss prostitution from the perspectives of the daughters, the parents and the community members.

The study presents three main findings. First, the women's entry into prostitution demonstrates the reproduction of the daughter's roles for the survival of the family. As an important social condition for production and labor management under the "*phii puu njaa*" ideology, the management of the daughter's sexuality and marriage is employed as a strategy for the expansion of the family's network of production relations by the parent, the elderly, and the daughter themselves. Such a practice reflects the family's expectations towards the daughter: the latter's capacity as the agent responsible for family survival becomes tremendously critical when emerge the new social conditions of production afflicted by the cash economy and consumerism. As a consequence, prostitution becomes a "coerced choice" in the reality of the rural community. The reproduction of the management of the daughter's sexuality and body serves as the family's means of production and orient the daughter's role fulfillment towards material provision for the family.

The second finding concerns the daughter's agency. The daughter herself also choose to maintain [reproduce] her role as the family breadwinner in order to relieve the stigma of "*Mae Ying Hai*" (the bad woman). Changes in the community's social conditions of production and, consequently, its economic failure have pressured the daughter to be accountable for the well-being of the family before and throughout their presence in prostitution. By choosing to reproduce the image of the good daughter and to reposition herself in the corresponding roles, the daughter creates a legitimate ground for self-esteem and public perception of her kind at the community level.

The last finding involves the continuity of prostitution as a means of livelihood for the community. The daughters, the parents and the community members explain prostitution on the basis of the relationship between the family's expectation and the daughter's roles. The continuing welfare of the family is considered as the success of the family, and its failure as the daughter's failure. Such a view critically indicates the community's use of particular, local lenses in looking at a women's journey into prostitution. It also implies that the community

condemns the prostitute daughter much less than the bad woman who neglects her responsibilities for her parental family.