

People's participation in rural development is nothing new to Thai bureaucrats and concerned individuals. While the conventional approach tends to pay more attention to the characteristics of popular participation and practical techniques of facilitating it, I agree that factional politics in rural communities functions as a constraint and condition to people's participation in rural development.

The data of this study derived from an intensive field work in a village of Nakorn Sawan Province from March to October 1986. The concept of faction was used to understand the formation organization, and political processes of factions in the village. The dynamics of factional politics was analyzed in a framework of role theory, exchange theory and the concept of group dynamics. To understand the impact of factional politics upon the characteristics of people's participation in the village's development activities, the concept of people's participation advanced by Norman Uphoff and his colleagues was operationalized.

The dynamics of village power structure resulting from the interaction of internal and external forces affected the nature of formation organization, and political strategies of factions. When internal forces were relatively dominant, conflicts in the village were rather intense, factions were based on kinship ties to gain control over internal resources, and political strategies ensued were relatively overt. In the contrary, when external forces triumphed over internal forces, conflicts once occurred were less intense, factions were formed on the basis of economic ties to

exploit external resources, and political actions were relatively covert.

The dynamics of village power structure and factional politics in the village were shown to have a significant impact upon the characteristics of people's participation in development activities. The more the dominant faction was strong, the less the people, especially the poor, could in the real sense participate in development activities, and vice versa. Factional politics thus constitutes a major constraint upon the opportunity of local people to partake and gain benefits in development activities. I suggest that concerned government officials and individuals should recognize the particular phenomenon if they wish to promote the successful people's participation in rural development.

10.14457/TU.the.1986.5
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