

ABSTRACT

This research entitled "Cooperative labor and the way of life of Esarn people" is a qualitative research. The study was carried out at Ban Duang 6, Numpong sub-district, Amphur Numpong, Khon Kaen Province and Ban Haewkum 8, Non sub-district, Ging Amphur Sumsung, Khon Kaen Province. The farmer is a village in an irrigation area as the latter is not part of it.

The objectives of the research are as follows :

- (1) to study the model, method, the change of model and method used in cooperative labor to suit the way of life of Esarn people at the present time.
- (2) to study the customs and beliefs in the roles of cooperative labor in the economy and
- (3) to study the trend of existing cooperative labor.

The study has revealed that the cooperative labor, was adjusted tremendously from the former time, in that in the past cooperative labor was to help to each other in running their activities without any work in return. At present some kinds of cooperative labor have changed their models and methods to suit the way of life of the Esarn people.

There are two types of cooperative labor : one is the exchange of their labor for other labor which would exist in both of the villages mentioned above and that the other is the exchange of labor for goods. The latter still exists only in Ban Haewkum and the method used is the exchange of commodities such as pork or meat to the workers in advance to make sure that they have to come to help with the harvest since this village has a lack of labor compared with Ban Duang

Roles of cooperative labor have many aspects such as economic as it can reduce the capital in reproduction, solve the labor force problem and also help to finish the work faster. As a social aspect, it is a mechanism to create love, unity, community power leading to self-reliance in order to make the community stronger. As a belief aspect, it can prolong the community custom and even create a new culture or sub culture.

The trend of the existing cooperative labor depends on many conditions. One of those is heavy work activity which depends on a large labor force, such as those who carry the rice in sacks from a threshing floor up to a karn. Thai farmers rely on this every year and the trend seems as if it will continue. Besides, the lack of labor, social net work in the community and the acceptance or not of technology should be the important conditions of the existence or even gradual decline of the cooperative labor system.