

Title : Occupational Change of Isarn People in Suburban Areas
of Major Cities From Their Foundation to the Present

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to study certain community history with respect to its occupational change, the causes of the change in agricultural occupation, and the socio-economic consequences arising from such change.

The research method was the qualitative method, with quantitative supplementation. Field data collection was conducted during a two and a half month period, from March to May, 1992. Three sample communities were selected: Ban Kok, Ban Ped Sub-district, Muang District, Khon Kaen Province; Ban Don Taew, Khok Kruad Sub-district, Muang District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province; and Ban Non Kamin, Nong Bua Sub-district, Muang District, Udonthani Province. Fifty-two key informants and 368 family heads or spouses were interviewed.

It was found that during the first period of the villages, there were very few changes of occupation among suburban dwellers.

Rice farming was the major occupation while many of them grew vegetables and cotton along the borders of their rice field or grew mulberry and other fruit trees near the houses. People also collected wild vegetables, or caught fish and forest animals for household consumption. The urge for commercialization came with the arrival of railroads, the establishment of rice power mills, the state's requirement for poll taxes, and the value of ordination. The occupations resulting from these incentives included middlemen who bought rice from further districts to sell to the rice mill, sugar cane growing for the production of sugar cakes, distillation of illicit liquor, and robbery of cows and buffaloes for selling.

During the later period, although it lasted only three decades, a lot of occupational changes could be witnessed. The main reasons for the changes were: the decrease of subsistence land, road construction, the arrival of commercial crops, the utilization of modern farming technology, the increase of non-farm employment, the increase of expense among the villagers, and the increase of age and education of able-bodied workers.

One of the economic impacts arising from these changes is the fact that agriculture has become an occupation for the minority. In the three studied communities, only 2.17 to 11.46 per cent of the total households still carry on farming occupation. 55.21 to 71.59 per cent now hold non-farm occupations. Approximately a third hold farm and non-farm occupations at the same time. Farming has become the occupation

with the least income, or only 31% of other non-farm occupations. However, non-farm occupations bring about many varying incomes due to the great difference from one occupation to another.

One account of the social changes could be seen in the declining relationships among family members and among people in the same community. Marriage with people from the outside becomes more common because non-farm occupations bring them to other places. The fact that married couples have to work outside their community, and the increase of expense have reduced the number of children to be born. At the same time, social values for being government officials is more and more recognized since the income is ten times higher than farming, the occupation is more stable, and fringe benefits are greater.

The case study conducted with 7 households reveals that four households have lost their subsistence land, and have undergone failure or great troubles from their non-farm occupations, one family had failed after eight years of contract laborers for a factory. Only two households are successful, one by being a land-fill contractor and a village head, and the other by being a land broker, a rice paddy and a pig raising farmer at the same time.