

Thesis Title LOCAL GROUPS AND PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN RURAL
DEVELOPMENT. : A CASE STUDY OF HUAI MENG VILLAGE,
CHIANG-KONG DISTRICT, CHIANGRAI PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

Besides policy, methodology, methods of development management, the quality of the people, success in promoting people's involvement in community development still depends of economic, political, social, and cultural conditions of the village and its community. This study was conducted for the purpose of examining whether an indigenous group still plays a major role in a changing community in terms of development. This group was studied both as it obstructs and as it supports people's participation in various activities. In any case, data on the longstanding group presented in this study were gathered from January-June 1988 in Huai Meng Village, Tambon Wiang, Chiang Khong, Chiang Rai Province. The research was carried out by using high-quality methods of examining community socio-cultural events. Data were collected through participant observation and by interviewing important persons in the village. The principal themes in this study stressed local groups and people's

participation in development. These were studied by examining group organization, group process, and the effects of this phenomenon on people's participation in community development. Also examined were conflict theory, exchange theory, interaction theory, principles of human ecology, structure and function theory, together with Cohan & Uphoff's conceptions (1977) of people's participation in community development.

This study found that the Tai Lu of Huai Meng Village migrated from Muang Ou Neua in Sipsong Panna (now located in Laos), starting in 1887, which was during the reign of King Chulalongkorn. Through assimilation and acculturation, the Lu of Huai Meng Village have integrated themselves in manyways according while at the same thime maintaining their identity at one various groups which carry out different activities involving relatives and neighbors that have arisen in groups of many different types that have existed for a long time. These groups include people who moved here from the same village who were friends since childhood, groups of close friends that emerge among people of the same age, an orange group, to solve problems of orange growers, old-people's groups made up of knowledgeable persons accepted as such by the villagers, and political groups, made up of politicial party members that have emerged through the village patronage system. Such local groups plan an important role in development. This is because when development activities come to the village from the outside, each of the different local groups will come to play a part in those activities, because as a part of the village, they help in the provision of basic services by the government.

And even though some groups in Huai Meng get together only occasionally over the year or when there are events in the village, the continued existence of these local groups indicate that the members of each group believe that they have a sense of belonging and that they interact socially. This causes such groups to endure in a continuous cycle through many generations. Activities of the village are managed through the support of the local groups. Factors facilitating this are the groups unity, managerial freedom, fundamental decision-making ability, their equality in giving the opportunity to participate as village members, and the cultural structure supporting the local groups. However, local groups sometimes serve as obstacles to cooperative development. This is because of conflicts and competition over benefits between groups which causes privileged groups and inequality in the community. Furthermore, local groups lack authority for dealing effectively with outside agencies. Their importance has diminished and they are being replaced by groups set up by the government from outside.

Nonetheless, this study has shown that local groups in Huai Meng Village play an important role both in supporting and in obstructing village participation in development. To bring them into government development work, the understanding and behavior of the villagers should be studied in terms of the physical and social environment that depend on the village cultural system.