

This thesis was aimed at examining the community social structure and social mechanisms used in resolving conflicts manifested in the Upper Northern rural community. Qualitative in nature, the researcher undertook field observations and inquiries well as in-depth interviews in order to obtain needed data and information. Key informants comprised a village head, community leading figures, local temple monks and school teachers, local organizations' members, factory owners, government officials in the area, and the elderly. Such people were key figures in handling and resolving conflicts within the community. The study site was Ton Pueng Village, Mae Raeng Sub-District, Pa Sang District, Lamphun Province.

Research findings were as follows :

The rural community social structure studied was found to have brought about the conflicts found in the study site. That very structure itself had been brought into being by the external, larger social, economic, and cultural changes which drastically altered existing beliefs, values, social interaction/relationship patterns and networks, economic interests, production, consumption and other cultural systems and practices, as well as political power equations. Such conflicts were both of explicit and implicit nature. Some were conflicts of interests generated by different occupations held by community members. Some were those between villagers in general and factory owners, between the latter and those villagers who worked for the factory on a consignment basis. Yet, others were those among organizational

members instigated by underpaid wage, unequal and unfair share of responsibility, different degrees of organizational activity participation, work-based suspicion, violation of organizational rules and regulations.

Culturally and traditionally induced conflicts were those between local villagers and outsiders manifested mostly during community fairs and festivals in the form of physical brawls. However, as regards conflicts between new and old beliefs they were found to have been between the village elderly and youth.

Politically and administratively speaking, conflicts also occurred between villagers and local politicians instigated, for example, by the latter's imposed longan levies. The government agency mishandling of the batik factory waste water disposal problem also led to conflicts between it and villagers in general.

However, not only did the community social structure play a part in generating conflicts, it was also seen and used as a problem-solving instrument as well. Problem-Solving in this context meant problem prevention, problem solution as well as preventing the problem from becoming worse. Elements of such social structure included kinship system; social relationships; cultural power dimensions such as community members' sense of consideration, interdependence and mutual assistance, respect for the elderly, recognition of the community leader role, etc.; utilization of traditions as a binding force within the community; traditional beliefs-based conduct; and the application of community-generated rules and regulations.

As regards the conflict resolution process the community was found to have adopted a variety of methods and mechanisms in preventing, controlling, resolving and settling conflicts depending upon their causes, origins, nature, circumstances and levels as well as involved figures or parties. Such methods and mechanisms involved negotiations, compromises, bargaining, verbal orders, rule regulating, ostracizing, criticizing, and exchanges of interests.