

Changed in the Community's Livelihood Along Chee River Under The Process of Capitalism: Case Study Chee Wang Kan Village, Mancha Khiri District, khon kaen province.

Asst. Prof. Dr. Bodee Putsyainunt

Faculty of Integrated Social Sciences Khon Kaen University Nong Khai Campus
122 Moo7 Chalearnpakrait Rd. Nong Kom Kao Sub-district Muang District Nong Khai Province 43000
Tel. (66 89) 6357535, E-mail: bodepu@kku.ac.th

Abstract : The objective of this article is to understand the general context of the Chee Wang Kan village, including of change in Chee Wang Kan livelihood under the process of capitalism. This study employed the concept of community economy. In-depth interviews with 10 key informants and 103 household representatives were applied together with guided questions. The study found that the previous pattern of community economy in Chee Wang Kan village, since 1924, was agriculture, based on cropped rice for their own consumption and fish from the Chee River for their own consumption and for sale. Since 1989, the advance of agriculture technology meant that they started to use walking tractors on their farms. The pattern of the community economy in Chee Wang Kan village changed to be agriculture products for sale. Prior to 2000, area suffered flooding that led more laborers in the community to migrate to find work in Bangkok. Consequently, this changed the villagers' livelihoods, which became a mixture of non-agriculture and agriculture products for sale. This situation continues to the present time. However, the pattern of community economy in Chee Wang Kan village has adapted to suit the context of the community, having not only agriculture but also a non-agriculture pattern. This has ensured the maintenance of the community economy pattern, under the influence of capitalism, to the present time.

Keywords : Community livelihood, Community economy, Capitalism, Chee River, Chee Wang Kan

1. INTRODUCTION

Drought and a scarcity of natural resources were representative of the Northeast region in Thailand. However, some areas of the region do not suffer these conditions. In the case of Khon Kaen province; some areas are urban, some are rural, some areas possess good natural resources such as good quality soil and irrigation systems, but some areas do not have these. These are the conditions faced by Chee Wang Kan village that is found in Mancha Khiri District, 57 km. away from Khon Kaen city. In the geographical context, the

area consists of land and the river that is suitable for agricultural use but they face flooding during August to October each year. It is due to these conditions that Chee Wang Kan village became more affected by the capitalist system, when compared with other similarly remote areas. However it is considered that the pattern of community economy, in the early period of the village (1924), was based on the agriculture for consumption and sale pattern. This pattern continued until 1989 when modernization became more visible in the village as the pattern of the community economy moved towards commercial agriculture and

fishery. This remained until 2000 when some laborers were starting to migrate to work in Bangkok, causing the pattern of community in the village to be changed from an agricultural base to become mixed pattern between non-agricultural and agricultural for sale. Moreover, there was some village migration abroad, to Germany and Switzerland, in 2007.

This phenomenon is demonstrated in the way that the Chee Wang Kan community has been modified in ways that are appropriate to the economic changes taking place. (Vichitwong Na PomPhet,2007) It has also adapted to survive as an economic community within the realms of capitalism.

2. OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study is to understand the general context and the pattern of change in the community, under the process of capitalism, in Chee Wang Kan village, Khon Kaen Province.

3. SCOPE OF STUDY

The scope of this study focuses on an area that is remote, suffers from flooding, and is located some distance away from Khon Kaen city. The study includes the process of capitalism and its effects on the pattern of the community economy, in Chee Wang Kan Village, Moo 13, Soun Mone Sub-district Mancha Khiri District, Khon Kaen Province, from 1924 to the present day.

4. CONCEPT AND THEORY OF STUDY

The Community Economy was the model used in this study, allowing for an alternative way of development by looking at it from a backward point of view, considering the communities as a base. This opened the way for communities to become independent by using their own resources, for their own development, in a

manner that could enhance their quality of life. This concept looks holistically at the economic, social, political, and cultural environments.

5. Research Methodology

Research was conducted using qualitative methods by employing qualitative data from reviewed literature and other documents. It included the use of semi-structured, guided interviews with ten, older generation, respondents. The aspects covered in the interviews were; the history of Chee Wang Kan village, the context of the village, culture, and career groups. Furthermore, questionnaires were distributed to one hundred and three households; the descriptive analysis method was used to obtain results from the data collected.

6. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

6.1 General Context of Chee Wang Kan village, Mancha Khiri District, Khon Kaen Province

The study found that Chee Wang Kan Village had been settled since 1924, in an area beside the Chee River. In those early days the pattern of community economy was of agriculture for consumption and sale. Rice became the main consumption crop while other plants, such as corn and chilly, were produced for both consumption and sale. However, when modernization process began from 1995, Chee Wang Kan villagers were forced to migrate for work in the other areas, such as Bangkok, and this continues to the present day.

Considering the context of households in the community, it was found that there was an average land holding of 5.4 Rai per household, with 95.05% of total households being the owner of their land and only 4.95% renting land in the neighborhood. It was found that the average income, per

household, was 13,586.77 baht per month. Considering the ratio of their income, 37.34% was from the agricultural and fishery sector and 62.66% was from the non-agricultural sector. Average household expenditure was 10,212.24 baht per month. The proportion of spending was around 55.61%, spent on consumables followed by career investment at 28.83%, 8.36% spent on education, while 4.17% was debt repayment and 3.03% was spent on tourism, medical treatment, house rent, house maintenance, etc. However, when considering their ability to save, it was found that all of the households in the village were able to save, with 18.73%

saving their money at home, 79.55% depositing their money at a commercial bank, and a further 1.72% invested in gold and economic animals such as chickens, cows etc. Household debt was found in 97.09% of households and the average debt was around 70,767.04 baht per household. Career investment was the main cause of the debt with 69.23% coming from the Bank of Agriculture Cooperative Ltd. Moreover, 20.64% had debt with the village fund and 10.13% had debt with the poverty reduction fund. These were the results of the capitalist approach on the ways of community life as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Showing the general context of Chee Wang Kan village

Issue	Amount
Family Average members (Person)	5
Average Labor force per household (Person)	5
Pattern of Career	
Agricultural and Fishery (%)	45.36
Non-Agricultural (%)	54.64
Household average income per month (Baht)	13,586.77
Income from agricultural and fishery sector. (%)	37.34
Income from non-agricultural sector. (%)	62.66
Household average expenditure per month (Baht)	10,212.24
For consumption (%)	55.61
For career investment (%)	28.83
For family education (%)	8.36
For debt payment (%)	4.17
For others as medical treatment etc. (%)	3.03
Household ability to save (%)	100.00
At their home (%)	18.73
At a Commercial Bank (%)	79.55
Others such as Cows, Chickens etc	1.72
Household debt (%)	97.09
Household average debt (Baht)	70,767.04

6.2 Analysis of the Community Economy Pattern in Chee Wang Kan village, Mancha Khiri District, Khon Kaen Province

Since 1924, when Chee Wang Kan village was first settled, their community economy can be described in three patterns as follows:

6.2.1 Pattern of Community Economy – Agriculture and Fisheries for Consumption (1924-1989)

The results of the study found that the pattern of community economy in Chee Wang Kan village, since 1924, had been of the agriculture for consumption pattern, brought about by the good conditions provided by natural resources such as the Chee River and the good quality of the soil. These were the main influences on their community economy pattern at that time. However, when considering the pattern of the agricultural sector, it was found that the community continued to grow rice as their main crop for consumption along with fishing and collecting vegetables, such as morning glory from the swamp, which was for sale as mentioned by Charles F. Keynes (Sited from Rattana, 2009) where he said “The production mode in the Northeast region, in the past, was consumption mode, rice became the only main crop during that time”. Until 1957 they grew corn and chilly for sale at Mancha Khiri market.

Considering the types of plant at Chee Wang Kan village during that time, they can be divided into three groups as:

1) Rice: Most Chee Wang Kan villagers grew rice for their own consumption. Until 1947 it was grown for sale at Mancha Khiri market, the price was around 0.10 Baht / Kg. However, in 1966 they started to sell their products at the Chonnabot Market in Chonnabot district, where the price level was a little bit higher than at

Mancha Khiri market (0.12 Baht/Kg.). By this phenomenon, the farmers still grow rice for consumption and for sale to the present day.

2) Fishery: This pattern started in 1924, with rice grown because their village had been settled beside the Chee River. The study found that Fishery was very important for their livelihood because they could make money from this pattern by catching White fish and Sroy fish. However this pattern could not be pursued all year round because during the summer months of April-May, the Chee River would run dry making it difficult to find the fish. The study found that the villagers still catch fish for consumption and sale, as part of their livelihood, at the present time.

3) Vegetables, such as sticky rice corn and local chili: It was found that the farmers grew these vegetables for consumption and sale at Mancha Khiri Market from 1957 until 1966, when Chonnabot Market was constructed and some farmers took their products to be sold there. However, the study found that the villagers continue to grow these plants for consumption and sale, as part of their livelihood, to the present day.

Consider that during this period of time, it may said that capitalism had not had much effect upon their traditional livelihood. They still continued their way of life as in the past.

6.2.2 Pattern of Community Economy – Commercial Agriculture and Fisheries (1989–1999)

The results found that, during these years, the pattern of community economy in Chee Wang Kan village had been changed from the agricultural for consumption pattern to develop a more agricultural and Fisheries for commercial purposes pattern, as the farmers began to use machines such as walking tractors from 1989, which were

becoming widely used by 1995. Moreover, they were using chemical fertilizer and water pumps by 1999. At this time, the agricultural sector became focused on the yields of their farms. That is, if production yields increased they would receive more income. The types of plants grown in the community were; Rice, Chili, Tomato and vegetables. They had to adjust to be suitable for market demands. (Chattip, 1998; Suwit, 2003) The study found that, in this period, electric power arrived in the village, during 1991. This made life more convenient for the villagers at night time, while television was the boom item, in every household, in 1993. It was this event that changed the traditional way of life of the villagers, as they started to wear slacks or Jeans and had access to news channels, much faster than in the past. This phenomenon impacted on household expenditure such as electric bills and debt payments, caused by buying electrical equipment. In terms of Fisheries, they continued to catch fish for sale at Mancha Khiri and Chonnabot Markets, as before.

During this period of time, it may be said that the capitalist system had approached the village and changed the traditional lifestyle of Chee Wang Kan village, in their way of dressing, finding food on their farm, community participation etc. This would have an effect on their livelihood, into the future.

6.2.3 Mixed Pattern: Non-Agricultural, Commercial Agriculture and Fisheries (2000 – Present)

The community economy in Chee Wang Kan village became one of a mixed pattern and this was a consequence of the prosperity that came into the community due to its expansion. The agricultural sector became modified in response to market demand for various types of crops. There is now a

school, transport, technology including various types of media such as television and internet. This has caused a further shift in the economic pattern of the community and can be explained as follows:

1) In terms of agriculture, the study found that there was no major change in the kinds of crops grown, but they had used more chemical fertilizer, insecticide, and machinery on their crops, since 1999. However, there are some new kinds of plants, such as sugarcane, now being cropped in the village. It may be said that capitalism has made them change to become more responsive to market demand in their production and changed their mode to mass production. That would explain their income being commensurate with their production quantity.

2) In terms of the fisheries sector. The study found that over the period of expansion, more households were employed in fishing which resulted in a decrease in the quantity of fish in the Chee River. It was noticed that, from 2002, the volume of certain fish, such as white fish and Sroy fish had been reduced. However, it was further found that the amount of fish, per fisherman, per day fell to 30-40 kilograms. The nets developed to a 30 mesh size during this period time; they started using a motor boat to catch fish. However in term of their fish market, they were sold at Mancha Khiri and Chonnabot Markets, as in the past.

3) In terms of the non-agricultural pattern, the study found that the non-farm community economy pattern began in 2000. This was due to the flood. The study found that they had migrated to work in Bangkok, to become construction laborers, waitresses in restaurants and to work in garment factories. For these reasons, not only

improved community infrastructure, but also because the new generation of

laborers had more opportunity for migration to work outside because they had higher education levels which were due to the expanded and improved transportation links with the community. For these reasons, they were given opportunities beyond the agricultural or fishery pattern, as seen by their going out to work in Bangkok in construction or for a company, at a car factory in Chonburi province, in Pattaya or Rayong province. Moreover, it was found that they were able to send money back to their families at a level of around 2,000-6,000 Baht per month. However, in terms of migrating abroad, it was found that they had started to go to Germany and Switzerland in 2007, working as cell phone equipment factory laborers or in Thai massage shops. Moreover, it was

found that they could sent money back to their families in the range of 30,000-40,000 baht per month.

This phenomenon can be seen in the pattern of the community economy in Chee Wang Kan village, as they are unable to live 'on their own' anymore, they must now rely on resources from outside to help them adapt the theme of their economy and their livelihoods under the steam of capitalism.

7. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS.

7.1 Discussion

Discussion of the findings of the study of the community economy pattern at Chee Wang Kan village showed that the changes can be classified into four types as classified in the two tables below.

Table 2a Shows the change in the community economy pattern in Chee Wang Kan village

Pattern of Community Economy	Type	Period	Purpose	Remarks
1.Agriculture and Fisheries for consumption (1924-1989)	<u>Agricultural</u> 1.Rice	1924	Consume	
		1947	Consume	1. Sold at Mancha Khiri Market
		1966 to 1994	Commercial	1. Sold at Chonnabot Market and Mancha Khiri Market
	2. Fisheries	1924	Consume / Commercial	1. Sold in the village 2. Sold at Mancha Khiri Market
		1957 to present	Commercial	1. Sold in the village 2. Sold at Chonnabot Market and Mancha Khiri Market
	3.Sticky rice Corn	1947	Commercial	1. Sold at Mancha Khiri Market
		1966 to 1994		1. Sold at Mancha Khiri Market and Chonnabot Market
		1995 to present		1.Middle man
	4. Chili	1947	Commercial	1. Sold at Mancha Khiri Market
		1966 to		1. Sold at Mancha Khiri

		1994		Market and Chonnabot Market
		1995 to present		1.Middle man
	Fisheries 1.Fish catches	1924 to 1947	Consume/ Commercial	1. Sold in the village and Mancha Khiri Market
		1966 1987	Commercial	1. Sold at Mancha Khiri Market and Chonnabot Market
Commercial Agriculture and Fisheries (1989–1999)	Agricultural 1.Rice	1995 to present	Consume / Commercial	1.Middle man
	2. Tomato	1995 to present	Commercial	1. Sold at Mancha Khiri Market and Chonnabot Market
	3.Chinese Cabbage			
	4.Cabbage			
	Fisheries 1.Fish catches	1989 to 1999	Commercial	1. Sold at Mancha Khiri Market and Chonnabot Market

Table 2b shows the change of community economy pattern in Chee Wang Kan village

Pattern of Community Economy	Type	Period	Purpose	Remarks
Mixed Pattern: Non-Agricultural and Commercial Agriculture and Fisheries (2000 – Present)	Agricultural 1.Sugarcane	2013	Commercial	1. Middle man
	Fisheries 1.Fish catches	2000 to present	Commercial	1. Sold at Mancha Khiri Market and Chonnabot Market 2. Net 30 mesh size. 3. Motor boat.
Mixed Pattern: Non-Agricultural and Commercial Agriculture and Fisheries (2000 – Present)	Non-agricultural 1.Domestic Migration	2000 to present	garment factory and construction laborers	1. They sent money back to their family of around 2,000-6,000 Baht per month
	2.Migration Abroad	2007 to present	Labor in cell phone equipment factories in Switzerland and The owner of Thai massage shop in Germany	1. They sent money back to their family of around 30,000-40,000 Baht per month

Remark: Information from in-depth interview with 10 respondents

7.2 Summary

The results found that the pattern of community economy in Chee Wang Kan village was changed by the

community adopting the process of capitalism. It seems that the village tried to change its mode of production from household consumption to produce

goods for sale such as rice, corn, and chili, which were grown in the community since 1924. Moreover, in terms of consumption they stayed with their traditional lifestyle, finding some of their food in the community forest. Although a grocery had been opened in 1996, it did not change much regarding their traditional livelihood, because they were still poor. Considered in terms of community tradition or belief they continued with their tradition of Hee 12 Klog 14, exchanging labor on their farms and they had some traditional medicines such as tendon medical, traditional bone medical and Kajam (a person who can contact with a villager's spirit). It was found that at that time, there was only one group that had worked in the community, as a cremation group, since 1978. And in terms of natural environment, there was more forest along the Chee River and more wild animals such as wild boar etc. For these reasons the pattern of community economy in Chee Wang Kan village was created, at that time.

However, by 1989 modernization had reached the village, with the use of machines such as walking tractors and fertilizer or insecticide on their farms that made the mode of agricultural production become more mass production. In 1995, some new plants had been cropped in the village such as; tomato, chili, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, and sold to middle men and nearby markets at Chonnabot and Mancha Khiri. For these reasons there was an effect in terms of community resources, as deforestation of community forest, to be used as land for crops, reduced the quantity of wild animals such as wild boar, foxes etc. (Gribson J.K. & Reelvink G., 2009) Regarding the fisheries pattern, they continued with the fisheries pattern as in the past. These conditions had an effect

in terms of the consumption mode for the villagers as there was reduced food to be found around their farms. Moreover, there was an effect on the community tradition in term of participation in village activities as they used rotation among their family members in order to participate in village activities. Furthermore, the study found that electricity had been expanded in to village in 1988, making it more convenient during the night and allowing for televisions in the households so villagers received information faster, it changed the way they dressed and changed their way of life. Modernization arrived in the village and created the pattern of community economy in Chee Wang Kan village at that time and will effect upon their livelihood in the future.

The present pattern of community economy was started from 2000, caused by villagers migrating to work in Bangkok, due to the village being faced with a big flood that also led to migration abroad during this period time, to Germany and Switzerland. However, in terms of agricultural production, new kinds of plants, such as sugarcane, had been cropped in 2013 and sold to middle men from outside village, but the mode of agricultural production remained as mass production mode and they needed more land for cultivation that had an effect on the forest areas in community, as they had become reduced. In the consumption sector, the study found that since 2002 there were some mobile sellers who came to sell food such as pork, garlic, vegetables such as kale and sea foods, in the village. After 2007, the concrete road had been constructed in to the village and there were some pickup truck sellers who came to sell food and household equipment such as brooms, shirts, etc. For these reasons, their

livelihoods changed to become more dependent on external resources and their traditional ways to find food around their farm began to disappear. However, in terms of groups in the village, in 2005, they started a savings group and they had a mat weaving group. Even so, in terms of community tradition and belief, they were still following Hee 12 Klong 14 and other community beliefs with local medicine as tendon medical, traditional bone medical and Kajam, while they still exchanged labor on their farms and had rotation among family members to join in village activities.

Moreover, improved community transportation has led to higher education levels for the new generation of laborers. This has effected on their options to select the best career for them to earn a higher income than provided by the agricultural pattern and has resulted in the abandonment of agricultural livelihoods and a move towards a full-time, non-agricultural pattern; more than in the past they work in Pattaya, Chonburi, Rayong, and Bangkok. It may be said that the process of capitalism brought about a change in terms of the community economy pattern of Chee Wang Kan village. That indicates they may not be able to rely only on their internal resources, but they must also seek external resources to find a suitable pattern to maintain the community economy, under the pressure of capitalism that is exerted upon the community at the present time.

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