

## Chapter 6

### Conflict over land occupation in a suburban-influenced village

A university should have a capacity for searching, accumulating and creating knowledge. The way in which the university might help villagers is not to directly terminate the land dispute because it does not have duty and capacity to do so. However, the university could open the gate to understand the people's problem and analyse it, as a neutral body, to offer academic service to the public. The aim is to find a way out which justly satisfies both sides [referring to the military and villagers]. At the same time, that way out may create wisdom in answering similar problems which are injuring the present-day Thai society.

Nidhi Aieosrivongse<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter, I shall examine the NGO interventionist role in a land dispute case between the military and villagers in Village 3 which is located near the city of Chiang Mai. The expansion of the city had encouraged investors of capital to purchase plots of land nearby for tourist and recreational facilities. This caused the land dispute to intensify since the military were afraid that villagers would sell land to private urban developers.

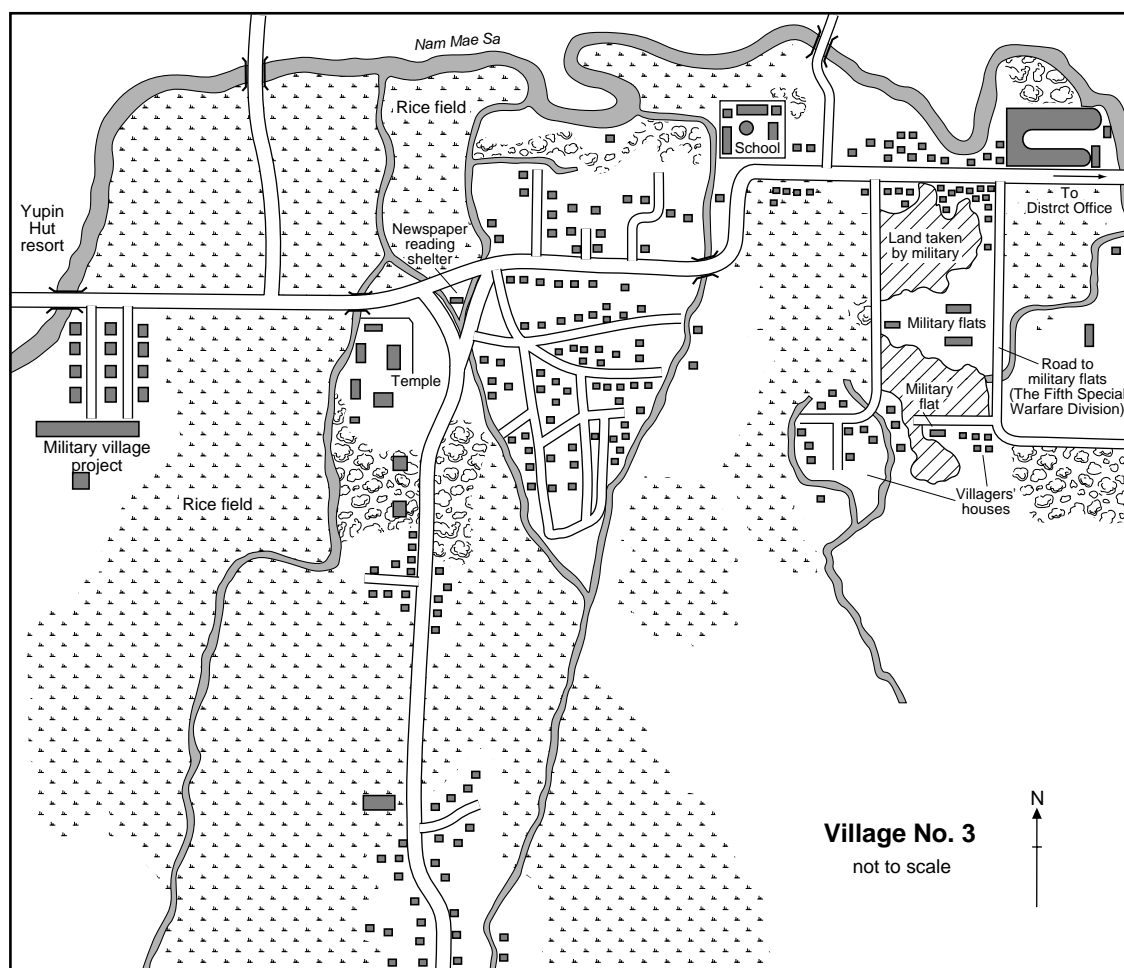
The chapter argues that articulation of a social meaning of “self-reliance” by the villagers and committed NGO workers in opposition to the military's domination becomes a key factor of political intervention. The NGO intervention should not be seen in isolation from individual workers, organisations and networks extending from the village to the nation. Although the land dispute between the villagers and military occurred at the village level, NGO intervention was unlikely to be successful without the prominent support of the media and the public in an open political system. However, while some NGO workers see rural areas as no longer remote but as amalgamated, with traditional and modern cultures and city and village sitting side by side, many other NGO workers perceive rural situations in isolation from modern culture and urban influence. The latter workers are inclined to adopt a conservative and non-political approach in their work. The difference in their approaches to social analysis without consensus results not only in tensions within the organisation but also the departure of many active NGO workers.

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<sup>1</sup> *Matichon* 11 July 1992 (2535). Prof Nidhi Aieosrivongse is a historian at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University.

## Village context

Village 3 is situated about 20 km northwest of Chiang Mai and about 3 km from the Chiang Mai-Fang highway.<sup>2</sup> A number of factors make this village different from many others. First, the prolonged land dispute between the military and the villagers has meant there is uncertainty as to the security of village settlement and the development of agricultural commercialisation. Secondly, the dispute has affected the official treatment of the village. Village 3 is, in fact, a cluster of three separate villages, but the officials deal with them as a single administrative unit (see Maps 1.1 and 6.1). An elected village head is in charge of the cluster with the help of two assistants, each elected from the other two sister villages. Thirdly, the village is situated directly in the line of the expansion of Chiang Mai city along the Chiang Mai-Fang highway, with a build up of small industries, tourist facilities and housing.



Map 6.1 Village 3

<sup>2</sup> During my fieldwork in Village 3 in December 1992, I observed that most villagers commuted daily from their village to the city to sell fresh vegetables at *Tonlamyai* market (*talat tonlamyai*), to work at the Green Valley Golf Course, located not far away from the District Office and to earn off-farm income as motorcycle-taxi drivers. It seems to be misleading when Darlington, an anthropologist, argues that: "Most villagers have never gone to the city". Darlington, 1990, "Buddhism, Morality and Change...", p. 62.

Since the late 1980s, Village 3 has become the focus of a struggle for land occupation between the military, the villagers and potential investors. Many investors have already bought land near the village and built tourist resorts, restaurants, a butterfly farm, an orchid farm and other related businesses. It is likely that Village 3 is seen as a prime location for further similar investments. The interest of investors in the area has aggravated the tensions between the military and the villagers as the military feared that if disputed land was sold to influential private investors they would find it more difficult to pursue land claims. The land dispute with the military in Village 3 is not unique in Thailand where similar disputes occur in 55 out of 72 provinces.<sup>3</sup>

The dispute began in 1940 when the Bangkok government issued two royal decrees authorising the Royal Thai Army to expropriate 27,000 rai of “unoccupied land” (*thi rokrang wangplao*) in Mae Rim district for military use. The area included Village 3 land. In a situation where the military and bureaucrats had overwhelming power over rural people who lived in a remote peripheral area, the villagers understood little of what would happen to them. All they knew was that *Khunphra* Thawiprasat, the district head at that time, ordered them to hand in their land ownership documents (*stamp na*) to the District Office. For this, they were promised compensation of 15 baht per rai. Many villagers complied with the order of the district head but a few quietly resisted by hiding their ownership documents away. The people sought to live and farm on the land on the basis that the Army’s Animal Breeding Unit (ABU) (*krom phasomsat*) needed the village to supply food for it. However, the ABU imposed a rental of 15 thang of paddy per year per rai of land cultivated. After 1957, the ABU asked the villagers to pay the rent in cash at the annual rate of 42 baht per rai instead of in paddy. The payment of rent in cash stopped in 1981 as a new unit, the Fifth Special Warfare Section (under the Second Fighting Service Division), prepared to take over the land from the ABU and build its office and residences on the village land.<sup>4</sup> The villagers continued farming their land hoping thereby to prevent the military from taking over the rest of the land. They invited FEDRA to assist them in coping with the economic, social and political pressures imposed upon them. In the early 1990s when the military attempted to claim further land by proposing a plan to move 79 families

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<sup>3</sup> Interview, INT-153-GOV, 25 March 1993, Bangkok. See also Office of the Prime Minister and Royal Thai Army, 2533 (1990), *Khumu’ kan kae Khai panha ko:rani ratsado:n yu a-sai thamkin nai phu’nthi sa-nguan huangham kho:ng thahan* [The Manual for Solving Problems Concerning the Case of People Residing and Farming in Restricted Area of the Military], [in Thai], Bangkok.

<sup>4</sup> Interview, INT-055-VIL, 25 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai; NGO-CORD/Upper North, 1992 (2535), “Lamdap hetkan ko:rani thahan lai thi chaoban” [Chronological Events of Land Dispute Case], [in Thai], Chiang Mai. The Royal Thai Army allocated about 8,000 of the 27,000 rai to the Fifth Special Warfare Section in 1985. See Memorandum dated 6 September 1990 (2533) from the Deputy Commander of the Second Special Division to the Commander of the Chiang Mai Army Province.

onto the farmland of their neighbours, the village leaders sought help from a number of NGOs and academics in Chiang Mai and Bangkok.

In 1992, Village 3 was composed of 212 households with a population of about 800. There were 200 households in 1985.<sup>5</sup> The villagers farmed about 1,000 rai of village land situated in a relatively fertile area at an altitude of about 350m above sea level. The land is surrounded by a range of mountains which are the source of three streams running through the three cluster villages all year round. Thus, the villagers have been able to utilise the natural resources of abundant water and fertile land for cultivation. They have received minimal support by way of irrigation systems and other infrastructure from the government due to the land dispute with the military.

Glutinous rice and soya bean were the basic crops for household consumption so far as elderly villagers could recall. A 73-year-old man recalled that when he was a boy, he saw his parents rotate rice and soya bean after the harvest of each crop, as he explained: “taking rice out, putting soya bean in; taking soya bean out, putting rice in” (*ao khao o:k ko: ao thua sai; ao thua o:k ko: ao khao sai*).<sup>6</sup> Around 1960, some villagers began to earn off-farm income by working in a Chiang Mai prince’s lychee garden in Rintai sub-district, which is about 2 km from Village 3. The villagers came to know the Chinese merchant who looked after the prince’s garden. Over a period of time, the Chinese merchant introduced different kinds of cash crops, such as turnip and cabbage, to the villagers. The people began to experiment and the merchant’s nephew became the middleman linking the producers of Village 3 with the Chiang Mai markets.<sup>7</sup> By 1970, the Chinese middleman was providing vegetable seeds, chemical fertiliser and insecticide to villagers on credit and accepting payment when the crops were harvested.<sup>8</sup> Soya bean, which the villagers originally grew for household consumption had, by the early 1970s, also become a cash crop. During the period from the 1960s to the early 1970s, the people had become increasingly involved in cash cropping which signalled a shift in agricultural production from household subsistence to commercialisation. This trend was not irreversible.

The land dispute in Village 3 prevented villagers from expanding their cash cropping further as had occurred in Village 2. As the villagers did not own land certificates, they

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<sup>5</sup> Interview, INT-069-VIL, 29 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai; SRI, 1985 (2528), *Laksana thang setthakit sangkhom...*, Appendix, n.p. When asked about the increasing number of households in this village, the present Village Head told me that the increase was minimal and only from extended families. The migration in this village was also small. The villagers were more inclined to move out of the village rather than to move in.

<sup>6</sup> I am grateful to an assistant village head who lent me a cassette about the village history told by elderly villagers.

<sup>7</sup> Interview, INT-061-VIL, 26 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

<sup>8</sup> Interview, INT-058-BUS, 26 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

lacked the guaranteed assets necessary to borrow money from established financial institutions to invest in agricultural production. In addition, the military had intimidated the district administrators and prevented them from providing welfare services to Village 3. The military also consistently thwarted the participation of Village 3 in the government's annual budgetary and infrastructure development projects, for example, it banned a weir construction project for irrigation and electricity generation in 1973.<sup>9</sup> Few government officials visited the village cluster, regarding it as "situated in the military area".<sup>10</sup>

Villagers tried various ways to cope with the consequent constraints on their productive resources, especially on land and farm investment. During the Thanom-Praphat military regime (1964-1973) in 1969, the district administrators proposed that the villagers be relocated to a cooperative area in Mae Taeng district, to the north of Mae Rim. In 1972, a group of villagers led by *Pho:luang* Kao, a former village head (1957-1982), sought patronage from General Sa-nga Kittikachorn, a high-ranking military officer who was the younger brother of the Prime Minister.<sup>11</sup> General Sa-nga protected the villagers from the interference of the military and hence also from Mae Rim district authorities. As the political climate began to move towards increased democracy, villagers promised their vote in 1975 to a local MP who, in return, agreed to help them lobby the government for funds to build village infrastructure such as a weir to generate electricity and a bridge to allow all-weather access to the village. Although the infrastructure was eventually provided, generally during the period from the mid to late 1970s when there was nationwide political unrest, villagers adopted a low profile and made few demands, fearing both military suppression and communist infiltration.<sup>12</sup> In 1982 after *Pho:luang* Kao resigned as village head, *Pho:luang* Jamnuan was elected in his place because he was seen to be outspoken and likely to be good at negotiating with the authorities. The villagers were very pragmatic in selecting their village heads believing that they needed good communicative skills to deal with outsiders and manage the dispute.

From the late 1970s, villagers had observed FEDRA activities and, in particular, that a FEDRA worker was helping young people nearby to grow vegetables and raise ducks and fish to contribute additional cash to family income. The villagers asked *Phrakhru*, the abbot of the village temple, to seek assistance from FEDRA on their behalf. Subsequently, *Phrakhru* invited the FEDRA Chairperson to visit Village 3 and

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<sup>9</sup> Interview, INT-062-VIL, 26 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

<sup>10</sup> Letter dated 28 October 1992 from the District Head addressed to the Village Head.

<sup>11</sup> Field Marshall Thanom Kittikachorn, the Prime Minister from 1964 to 1973.

<sup>12</sup> Interview, INT-056-VIL, 25 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai; Interview, INT-039-VIL, 1 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

organised a meeting between the Chairperson, several FEDRA staff members and a group of villagers who were interested in working with FEDRA.<sup>13</sup>

## NGO involvement and activities

### Organising a youth group

As Alliband argues, community development does not have any “tested corpus of scientific laws or well-grounded theories”.<sup>14</sup> Development workers have to explore how their concepts can be applied and in what circumstances. In the early 1980s, FEDRA was exploring its development principles based on the experience of a 67-year-old monk who had several retired public servants as his advisers. The meeting which had been arranged by *Phrakhru* took place early in 1980, and the FEDRA Chairperson asked villagers about their current problems and how they thought that FEDRA would be able to help them tackle these.<sup>15</sup> Villagers replied that they would like to earn cash income for agricultural investment and that they could not get assistance or loans because of the military land claim. The Chairperson then explained FEDRA’s development principles. One, which he often emphasised, was that: “Economics and spirituality must be used together to solve problems” (*setthakit jitjai to:ng kaekhai pro:m kan*).<sup>16</sup> That is to say, if villagers received economic assistance from FEDRA’s development projects, the Chairperson expected social outcomes, namely that the villagers be diligent (*khayan*), economical (*prayat*), dedicated (*sia sala*) and united in their community (*samakkhi*). Thus, FEDRA’s economic assistance was seen as a “tool kit” (*yu’a*) which the Chairperson expected to encourage social values among the villagers.

Some FEDRA development activities, such as the rice bank, buffalo bank, revolving fund and handicraft projects, were explained to the villagers. To help them increase their agricultural investment, FEDRA would provide 1,000 baht loans without any collateral from its revolving fund project at 10 per cent per annum interest to each household. After the third year of harvesting, a borrower would have to have returned the capital of 1,000 baht to FEDRA while the annual interest would be kept in a village savings fund. FEDRA proposed to set up a village development committee (four to five members) – which was distinct from the village committee (eleven members) appointed

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<sup>13</sup> Interview, INT-041-VIL, 1 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

<sup>14</sup> T. Alliband, 1983, *Catalysts of Development: Voluntary Agencies in India*, West Hartford: Kumarian Press, p. ix.

<sup>15</sup> Villagers and *Phrakhru* were not sure of the date and I could not find a record at FEDRA.

<sup>16</sup> Vanpen, 1989, “Issues and Experiences in the Use of Community Participation...”, p. 81.

by the local authorities – to run the revolving fund project and the village saving fund. There was no restriction against an individual being on both committees. The FEDRA Chairperson anticipated that after three years training by FEDRA, the committee would be able to run the project on its own, at which time FEDRA would leave and let the villagers manage their own development.<sup>17</sup>

As happened elsewhere in rural Thailand during the late 1970s and early 1980s, many of the villagers were sceptical of NGOs and their offers of development projects, mainly as a result of government propaganda concerning communist infiltration. Many wondered where FEDRA gained its money and why it would lend it at low interest. This was unusual behaviour from moneylenders. They were reluctant to become involved in a FEDRA revolving fund project, especially after a village head spread a rumour accusing FEDRA of handing out a “communist fund” (*ngoen thun kho:mmunit*).<sup>18</sup> However, in November 1980, ten young villagers from poor families expressed their preparedness to be involved in the revolving fund project.<sup>19</sup> After electing their committee to take care of the project, they used a FEDRA loan to plant vegetables, such as soya bean and turnip, to gain additional cash income for their families. An NGO worker, whom FEDRA asked to take care of the village activity, often paid a visit. He not only discussed problems emerging from the project but also encouraged the young villagers to apply “self-reliance”, which he said was inherent in Buddhist teaching, to manage development.<sup>20</sup> The NGO worker also contacted a government extension officer and soya bean expert from the Royal Project (*khroṅkan luang*) to help advise on some agricultural techniques.<sup>21</sup> After several setbacks, the young villagers were able to manage the project successfully and repaid the loan to FEDRA in 1981. At this time the military were concerned only at the prospect of large infrastructure projects and did not take much notice of the NGO work in the village. More importantly, the FEDRA Chairperson was cautious about relations with the military leaders who normally gave respect to him as a senior monk.

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<sup>17</sup> Interview, INT-137-NGO, 26 February 1993, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

<sup>18</sup> Interview, INT-051-NGO, 23 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

<sup>19</sup> Interview, INT-041-VIL, 1 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai; and FEDRA, 1983 (2526), Annual Report, July 1982 (2525)-June 1983 (2526), [in Thai], Chiang Mai, p. 20.

Darlington said that *Phrakhrū* invited FEDRA to come to Village 3 in 1982. However, she described FEDRA's first project as a revolving fund which she said was brought into Village 3 in 1980. See Darlington, 1990, “Buddhism, Morality and Change...” pp. 86 and 213.

<sup>20</sup> Interview, INT-062-VIL, 26 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai; Interview, INT-063-VIL, 27 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

<sup>21</sup> FEDRA, 1983 (2526), Annual Report..., p. 27.

### Shifting from the youth to adult groups

The success of this project convinced adult villagers that they should approach FEDRA for economic assistance. In July 1981, fifteen adult villagers submitted plans to borrow 1,000 baht each from FEDRA's revolving fund project.<sup>22</sup> The FEDRA Chairperson not only lent the money but also gave them several buffaloes as a form of agricultural investment.<sup>23</sup> The agreement between FEDRA and villagers was different from one village to another. In Village 3, it was agreed that a buffalo caretaker would return the first calf to FEDRA and keep any calves born in the following years. The caretaker also agreed to donate 5 thang of paddy annually which would be kept in a rice bank set up by FEDRA. The members of the rice bank decided to pay 1 thang interest for a 5 thang paddy loan; or in another words, 20 per cent. The period of rice borrowing was between July and August each year. These agreements were made verbally, thus respecting the social trust which it was considered existed among the villagers themselves and between the villagers and FEDRA.

*Pho:luang* Jamnuan, the village head (1983-1986), became a member of the village development committee which was set up with FEDRA's help to run the revolving fund project. He was involved in both governmental and non-governmental positions which were likely to enhance his power to control development channels to this village. The new village development committee also took over the youth activities which soon began to disintegrate.<sup>24</sup> Over the next few years, NGO fieldworkers responsible for development activities in Village 3 encountered various problems resulting from socio-economic change being imposed from outside and also occurring within the village. For example, it was alleged that during this period, *Pho:luang* Jamnuan had withdrawn money from the village savings fund (about 5,000 baht) without the knowledge of other committee members.<sup>25</sup> FEDRA chose not to respond to this misconduct by calling the police to investigate as it did not have enough evidence to make a claim against *Pho:luang* Jamnuan and because its development activities were based on trust and the honesty of villagers. It was, FEDRA said, up to the villagers to handle the problem of the alleged misappropriation by themselves. In addition, FEDRA was afraid that if it dealt with the problem itself, it would degrade the relationship between FEDRA and villagers who participated in the FEDRA projects. This, in turn, put pressure on the relationships between villagers and subsequently prevented others from participating in FEDRA projects. Without effective methods for dealing with tensions among villagers involved in such projects, Darlington argued that this kind of development practice

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>24</sup> Darlington, 1990, "Buddhism, Morality and Change...", p. 213

<sup>25</sup> Interview, INT-051-NGO, 23 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.



becomes “symptomatic of the problems of using cultural values in development”.<sup>26</sup> Due to the misappropriation issue remaining unsettled, the youth withdrew from the project. At the same time, the failure of some adult villagers to repay FEDRA loans meant that others, who had waited to observe how the project would work, did not want to participate.

Between 1983 and 1985, *Pho:luang* Jamnuan was also allegedly involved in persuading some villagers to sell land to 20 soldiers to build houses in Village 3. He also facilitated the occupation of 160 rai of farmland by the Fifth Special Warfare Section without compensation to the villagers who lost their land.<sup>27</sup> Allegedly, this was done in exchange for assistance to enable him set up a restaurant in a tourist resort area under military influence.<sup>28</sup> *Pho:luang* Jamnuan’s betrayal infuriated villagers who passed a vote of no confidence in him. The district head organised an election for a new village head. *Pho:luang* Rat was successful and took up the position in 1986.

The alleged activities of *Pho:luang* Jamnuan made it difficult for the other members of the village development committee to accept responsibility for management of the revolving fund project. They consequently asked *Phrakhru*, the abbot of the village temple, to look after the village savings fund (which grew to 47,000 baht between 1981 and 1988).<sup>29</sup> The members of the revolving fund project subsequently agreed to new guidelines for the committee to manage the fund. They decided, in particular, that a new loan should not be granted until all previous loans were repaid. When *Phrakhru* did not release the loan following the agreement, Jamnuan accused *Phrakhru* of breaching the monk’s code of conduct by wanting to engage in economic activities and to create a financial base for his own political career in the future.<sup>30</sup> Due to the accusation, *Phrakhru* asked the committee to manage the fund by themselves.

### **Facing tensions in economic and social practice**

Thailand’s Fourth Plan (1977-1981) designated Chiang Mai as a regional growth centre of the Upper Northern Region (see Chapter 2). The ensuing expansion of Chiang Mai impacted directly on the six districts surrounding the city, including Mae Rim. Many villagers who lived near the town sold their land to developers and changed their careers from on-farm to off-farm activities. Although FEDRA tried to prevent villagers from selling land by promoting agricultural occupations, it was unsuccessful for several reasons. First, the cost of agricultural investment kept on increasing. As well as

<sup>26</sup> Darlington, 1990, “Buddhism, Morality and Change...”, p. 211.

<sup>27</sup> Interview, INT-063-VIL, 27 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

<sup>28</sup> Interview, INT-051-NGO, 23 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

<sup>29</sup> Darlington, 1990, “Buddhism, Morality and Change...”, p. 215.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 214-215.

purchasing chemical fertiliser and insecticide, small-scale producers had to hire labour for farming instead of being able to depend on their traditional exchange of labour as in the past. The producers also had to pay daily wages equivalent to the minimum wage paid in a local factory. This pushed up the cost of agricultural investment. Secondly, unpredictable seasons had affected crop yields and small-scale cultivators were not inclined to take any further risk in capital investment to develop their farming. Thirdly, the price offered for land by urban developers was so attractive that many villagers decided to sell.<sup>31</sup>

Situated in the line of Chiang Mai's expansion, Village 3 felt the pressure of the developers' land speculation and this also served to aggravate the prolonged dispute between the military and villagers. The villagers realised that since the mid 1980s, they had suffered more from the high cost of living than in the previous decade. They had struggled to attain a cash income to cope with increasing household expenditures on health, education and some commercial goods (e.g. electric rice cookers, televisions, and stereos), but even a middle-income villager could not earn enough to keep up with payments (*ha mai than chai*).<sup>32</sup> A low-income villager felt unhappy (*tuk jai*) when he saw other people enjoying luxury goods which he could not afford.<sup>33</sup> The tensions in Village 3 were therefore related to external factors, such as the high cost of living, land speculation and the military land claim, as well as internal ones between rich and poor villagers.

The social differentiation in the village seems to have been overshadowed by the land dispute problem. In the late 1980s, after the military encroached on parts of the village land, the villagers organised a meeting to express their unity and determination to protect the rest of their land from being taken over. They agreed to divide the remaining land among all the village households, which meant that each household received two rai of land. The main reason for this was to create the sense of belonging and solidarity among the residents. Although many villagers, especially the young, began to earn off-farm income, they still worked their land, treating it as a valuable asset to be protected. Those villagers who worked in Chiang Mai city and Mae Rim district (as public servants, technicians, teachers, gardeners in resorts and orchards, greenkeepers and caddies in the Green Valley Golf Course, and wage workers in the city and on construction sites along the Chiang Mai-Fang freeway) would labour with their wives and children on their farms at weekends and, if possible, on returning home each evening.

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<sup>31</sup> Interview, INT-051-NGO, 23 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

<sup>32</sup> Interview, INT-069-VIL, 29 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

<sup>33</sup> Interview, INT-064-VIL, 27 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

While continuing to face economic pressure, some villagers claimed that FEDRA economic activities were “slow” and “inadequate” to cope with their daily needs. For instance, a former village head asserted that a 1,000 baht loan from the FEDRA revolving fund could be used up simply growing vegetables for household consumption. He claimed that the amount of money was too little for agricultural investment at that time.<sup>34</sup> Most female villagers whom I interviewed said that the FEDRA handicraft activity no longer interested them because it was too slow to make enough money for the daily spending needs in a family. They explained that it took them at least three to four days to finish a piece of handicraft and to earn 20 to 30 baht from FEDRA compared to 80 to 100 baht a day from selling food or being a wage worker in a resort area. They added that their husbands disagreed with the handicraft activity for the same reason. The male villagers considered this kind of work unsuitable for poor people like themselves who had “to spend tomorrow what we earn today”.<sup>35</sup>

Many villagers declined to become involved in the buffalo and rice bank projects although some others saw them as still viable. In 1988, Darlington recorded that there were 54 buffaloes in the village fields and over 200 thang of paddy stored in the village rice bank.<sup>36</sup> During my fieldwork in December 1992, there were only 19 buffaloes, 13 oxen and just over 100 thang of paddy in the rice bank.<sup>37</sup> Some villagers explained that the amount of paddy and the number of buffalo were declining because there were few people available to look after buffaloes as all family members worked both on-farm and off-farm while their children were going to schools in the city.<sup>38</sup> The few villagers who continued taking care of buffaloes had a different view. They at least expected to earn a lump sum from selling the buffaloes (about 5,000 baht each in late 1980s) to subsidise their otherwise meagre income.<sup>39</sup> Such conflicting views made it difficult for FEDRA to conclude that its activities were no longer helpful to the low-income peasants whom it aimed to help. The daily needs of villagers meant they wanted to earn a quick income. FEDRA projects were too slow in some villagers’ view because they started with small resources and took a number of years to accumulate adequate savings. Villagers who had other options were, therefore, no longer interested in FEDRA projects. The poorer villagers who had no other choice remained with the projects.

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<sup>34</sup> Interview, INT-039-VIL, 1 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

<sup>35</sup> Interview, INT-036-VIL, 30 November 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

<sup>36</sup> Darlington, 1990, “Buddhism, Morality and Change...”, p. 215.

<sup>37</sup> Interview, INT-046-NGO, 19 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

<sup>38</sup> Interview, INT-053-VIL, 25 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai. Her husband received a monthly income from working as a greenkeeper at the Green Valley Golf Course.

<sup>39</sup> Interview, INT-064-VIL, 27 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai; Interview, INT-057-VIL, 25 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

FEDRA fieldworkers tried various ways to help villagers reduce the economic pressures. One example was the introduction of the new species of soya bean from Village 2. However, after enjoying good profit from selling soya bean seeds for propagation, the people suffered losses when the soya bean price dropped in 1989 (see Chapter 5). Some people from Village 3 joined the SBGA protests.

Another example was an attempt to cut out a middleman. The fieldworkers believed that bypassing the middleman would help villagers gain more from their agricultural products through higher returns. In reality, however, to sell produce direct was not so easy as the NGO workers had anticipated. When villagers brought their fresh vegetables to sell directly at the city markets, they came across several problems. For instance, they found it difficult to find a place to sell their produce – selling on the footpath was against the law and they ran the risk of being arrested by municipal police (*tamruat thetsakit*). When a few villagers were fined, their experience frightened others. The villagers were unable to establish marketing networks and to provide a continuous supply of vegetables because of such factors as unpredictable weather conditions and pests. In the circumstances, the villagers could only accept the prices offered by the middleman.<sup>40</sup> A similar attempt to bypass a middleman in Village 2 achieved a satisfactory result, showing that although FEDRA fieldworkers influenced each other in terms of ideas, different situations could yield different results.

To summarise, while government officials refused to provide any assistance to the villagers who lived in the land dispute area, FEDRA played an important role in helping them to cope with economic and social pressures since the early 1980s. Although some villagers found opportunities to earn off-farm income and became less dependent on FEDRA development projects, others who had no alternative source of income still considered FEDRA agricultural promotion activities to be helpful. This conflicting response meant FEDRA could not conclude that its approach was unsuitable for rural development. However, FEDRA's presence in Village 3 gave moral support to the villagers to maintain their settlement; this was perhaps more important than the economic support.

### **Trying to tackle the land dispute problem**

The land takeover by the military during the mid 1980s with *Pho:luang* Jamnuan's help prompted villagers to seek assistance from other independent NGOs. The villagers understood the limitations of FEDRA as a religious, grass-roots organisation whose relations interfaced with officials in everyday phenomena. However, Suk, who was in

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<sup>40</sup> Interview, INT-058-BUS, 26 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai. The middleman claimed that the break between him and Village 3 did not harm his trade because he had many other villages to deal with.

charge of FEDRA activities in Village 3, decided to act outside FEDRA's normal framework of operation. After discussing various ways of tackling the land dispute problem, a group of village leaders went with Suk to consult with representatives of the UCL and NDWA in Chiang Mai.

Under the Prem government (1980-1988), many politically oriented NGOs were reluctant to extend their role because of the prospect of official interference. The UCL, a human rights NGO working in Chiang Mai, was a case in point. For a number of reasons at that time, it could not act further than giving advice about legal issues and procedures. First, it was under pressure from the Internal Security Operation Command (ISOC). ISOC accused UCL of having provided information to AI concerning a group of Thai soldiers who allegedly tortured several Cambodian refugees at the Khao I-Dang refugee camp in Prachin Buri province. This infuriated Squadron Leader Prasong Sunsiri, the ISOC Director at that time.<sup>41</sup> As a result, the activities of UCL were paralysed by ISOC's close surveillance. Secondly, the UCL received little moral support from other Northern NGOs which were not inclined to engage in political issues and tended to discredit a political approach to development.<sup>42</sup> After receiving little support from the Chiang Mai NGOs, the villagers lost the motivation to improve their farm production and livelihood. They "were in despair, working just enough for survival" (*mot alai taiyak, hakin pai wan wan*).<sup>43</sup>

Having nowhere to go for help, the villagers reassessed a Buddhist concept of "self-reliance", often mentioned by FEDRA workers. They developed a social meaning of "self-reliance" as "helping oneself, helping others and uniting ourselves to achieve a legal and political struggle" (*chua'ilu'a tua-eng, chua'ilu'a kan-eng, samakkhi kan to:su thang kanmu'ang lae kotmai*).<sup>44</sup> More importantly, they turned the meaning into practice to protect their land and other properties. As mentioned above, the villagers agreed to redistribute among themselves the land remaining after the military takeover. Those who received land in the redistribution affirmed that they would work together with other villagers to remove the military interference.<sup>45</sup> The reassessment of the self reliance concept by the villagers themselves revived their collective power.

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<sup>41</sup> Squadron Leader Prasong Sunsiri became the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Chuan government (1992-1995).

<sup>42</sup> Interview, INT-043-NGO, 8 December 1992, Bangkok. During that time, I worked with the UCL. While we were having problems with the ISOC authority, our overseas funding support was running out. These two main problems constrained all UCL activities in the mid-1980s.

<sup>43</sup> Interview, INT-062-VIL, 26 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

<sup>44</sup> Interview, INT-063-VIL, 27 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

<sup>45</sup> Interview, INT-059-VIL, 26 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

### Formulating collective action to protect the land

Several factors influenced villagers to take collective action to protect further land from being taken by the military. The FEDRA workers and their networks in Chiang Mai and Bangkok played a crucial role in providing a political space for villagers to claim their rights over the land. In 1990, the Bangkok Supreme Commander reportedly gave 14 million baht to the Fifth Special Warfare Section to build a road from its barracks to the main village track which ran eastward to Mae Rim district and westward to the military housing project (*muban khrongkan thahan*). Without investigating the village boundaries, the military cut the road through the rice fields of some villagers.<sup>46</sup> *Pho:luang* Rat wrote a letter dated 25 May 1990 to the Third Army Commander in Chiang Mai asking him to arrange new land to relocate affected village families.<sup>47</sup> He also asked the FEDRA Chairperson to write another letter confirming the village head's letter and requesting the Commander to sympathise with suffering villagers.<sup>48</sup> Then, a group of 30 villagers went to see the Commander and handed in the two letters. As a result, the military suspended the road construction. During my fieldwork in 1993, I met a deputy village head growing vegetables on a mound which was, he said, a part of the unfinished road. As he had only a small piece of land for cultivation he had to take this risk despite the ongoing dispute.

The Third Army Commander responded to both letters by ordering the Chiang Mai Provincial Army Commander (*phubanchakan jangwat thahanbok chiang mai*) and the Provincial ISOC Commander to find a solution to the problem.<sup>49</sup> Four months later, Major-General Thira Lekwichian, the Chiang Mai Provincial Army Commander at that time, presented a proposal to divide the village rice fields in the north of the Village Temple into 95 plots. He proposed to relocate 16 families from the southeast and 63 families from the south of the Temple onto those plots.<sup>50</sup> He also instructed the Commander of the Fifth Special Warfare Section to advise the district head to withdraw the villagers' household registrations (*sammanokrua*) and replace them with temporary documents provided by the military. Moreover, he directed the village head to instruct the 79 families designated for relocation onto the military-managed land, to *jap salak* or

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Letter dated 25 May 1990 (2533) from *Pho:luang* Rat (name used in this thesis) to the Third Army Commander in Chiang Mai.

<sup>48</sup> Letter dated 25 May 1990 (2533) from the FEDRA Chairperson to the Third Army Commander in Chiang Mai.

<sup>49</sup> FEDRA, 1990 (2533), "Sarup khwam klu'anwai ko:rani panha thidin" [A Summary of the Movement Concerning Land Dispute Problem], [in Thai], Chiang Mai.

<sup>50</sup> The proposal was based on the letter dated 6 September 1990 (2533) from Colonel Yutthana Mu'angmangkhang, the Deputy Commander of the Second Special Warfare Division, to the Commander of the Chiang Mai Army Province.

draw lots to select their new plots of land.<sup>51</sup> If the military's proposal had proceeded, it would have affected over half of the village families as the 79 were to be settled on the land of some 20 or 30 other families.

In response, the villagers tried once again to seek help from outside. They approached Jaroen Chaoprayun, a local MP, who sent a letter, together with a villagers' letter of complaint, to the Military Committee in the House of Representatives in Bangkok (*khana kanmathikan thahan sapha phuthaen ratsado:n*) asking it to help the villagers who would be affected by the relocation. The Committee replied on 19 October 1990 that the military had already resolved the villagers' land problem by providing one quarter of a rai of land per family for the village relocation.<sup>52</sup> Having been advised of this, the villagers concluded that the local MP could not help them sort out the land dispute. Nevertheless, they did not give up and approached the provincial governor for assistance. They asked the governor to help them identify the village and military boundaries to terminate encroachments on either side. Without looking into the issue, the governor replied that he had no power to do so; moreover, he claimed that the villagers were illegally occupying military land and ordered the district head to immediately relocate them.<sup>53</sup> The response of the governor disappointed the villagers particularly as he did not even undertake any investigation into their complaint.

Tension over the land dispute erupted again on 5 December 1990 when the Fifth Special Warfare Section forbade villagers to plant any crop on the rice field north of the Village Temple. It also told them to return their household registration and ID cards to the District Office.<sup>54</sup> This frightened the villagers who did not know how to respond to this critical situation. Some of them began to pack their belongings and to move out from the village, despite having nowhere to go. Having seen this, Suk decided to intervene to prevent the village's disintegration. One villager described how the villagers reunited when Suk reminded the villagers of their long history, and their dependence upon "self-reliance" to work and keep the land for the past 50 years and asked why the villagers were going to leave.<sup>55</sup> Encouraged by the NGO worker, the villagers organised a meeting at the small newspaper reading shelter in front of the Village Temple. Together, they discussed the tactics which they could use to stop the military

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<sup>51</sup> The process of "land management" was pursued in a similar fashion to what the Military Land Re-settlement Project had done in other areas of rural Thailand especially in the Northeast (see Chapter 2).

<sup>52</sup> Letter dated 19 October 1990 (2533) from Admiral Siri Sirirangsri, the Chairperson of the Military Committee in the House of Representatives, to Jaroen Chaoprayun, a local MP.

<sup>53</sup> FEDRA, 1990 (2533), "Sarup khwam klu'anwai ko:rani panha thidin".

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Interview, INT-040-VIL, 1 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

interference. Following the meeting, Suk contacted other NGO networks in Chiang Mai and Bangkok while villagers set about preparing for collective action.

On 13 December 1990, about 400 people demonstrated at the District Office to bring public attention to their predicament. As the public outside Bangkok and other big cities respected religious practice, the villagers announced their misfortune through a *tho:dphapa* ceremony by carrying tree branches decorated with their household registrations and ID cards.<sup>56</sup> Instead of quietly taking them back to the district as instructed by the military, the villagers thereby publicly demonstrated their abandonment of citizenship as a result of the failure of the Thai state to take care of its citizens.<sup>57</sup> Some villagers even displayed a red flag over their village politically symbolising a liberated area, just as “communist insurgents” often did in areas under their sphere of political control. The display of the red flag indeed brought the attention of the public and media to the villagers’ distress. It prompted the military to stop further action, while begging the villagers to pull the red flag down.<sup>58</sup>

The different tactics devised by the villagers to resist the military land takeover were supported by many NGO workers from NGO-CORD, NDWA and UCL who also assisted the villagers in putting together a village history covering the causes and effects of the land dispute. They made posters and also produced an exhibition showing the plight of the people living in a situation of conflict with the military.

The FEDRA Chairperson, afraid that a confrontation between the military, villagers, NGO workers and students would occur, tried to intervene by arranging a meeting between the Commander of the Second Special Warfare Division and villagers’ representatives to settle the land dispute. The meeting took place on 15 December 1990, two days after the demonstration. To express peace and non-violence in negotiation, the male villagers decided to stand aside. Fifteen female villagers including young, old and children, all dressed in white, went with *Phrakhru* to negotiate with the Commander. Suk and a female news reporter also accompanied them.

At 2 p.m. on 15 December 1990, the village representatives met Major General Han Phethai, the Commander of the Second Special Warfare Division, in a meeting hall on the second floor. Suk received the Commander’s permission to take photos during the

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<sup>56</sup> The *tho:d phapa* ceremony is a form of merit-making activities which Buddhists organise yearly. The organisers set up a place where they stand a tree branch on which people from all walks of life donate money, soaps, toothbrushes, toothpastes and so on by hanging them on the tree branch which will be taken to the monks in a temple. In this case, the people of Village 3 used the ceremony as a form of resistance against the authority by hanging their ID cards and household registrations on the branches.

<sup>57</sup> *Daily News* 16 December 1990 (2533).

<sup>58</sup> Interview, INT-041-VIL, 1 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.



negotiations. Unexpectedly, the Commander questioned whether Suk was behind the village protest. When a soldier present affirmed this, the Commander had Suk removed from the room. He was then dragged down to the first floor where he was badly beaten by several soldiers. *Phrakhru* and elderly villagers cried out begging the Commander not to hurt Suk but their appeals were in vain. An elderly lady, her sister and the female news reporter, ran down to be with Suk who was almost unconscious on the first floor. The soldiers locked them in an extremely cold air-conditioned room for two hours. The elderly lady told me she had been afraid that the soldiers might have killed Suk and she kept on begging the soldiers not to injure him and tried to explain to them the reason why he had accompanied the village representatives:

I have no knowledge. I came here to seek your mercy. I asked him to come with me because I did not know how to explain my grievance to you so that you would be able to understand my problem.<sup>59</sup>

About 5 p.m., *Phrakhru* and other villagers went to find Suk and the three ladies. *Phrakhru* told them that the Commander had not proposed any solution to the land dispute problem. He had agreed, however, to pass on the villagers' letter to the Army Commander in Bangkok. The male village leaders who had stood by for the sake of peace and non-violent approach felt angry about the result of the negotiations. It made them even angrier when they saw that Suk had been badly hurt by the soldiers.<sup>60</sup>

The military violence against Suk gained press attention, and the resultant publicity alerted top-brass military leaders in Bangkok to the risk of damage to the image of the military. The NGOs took this opportunity to bring the land dispute case to the attention of the Deputy Army Commander in Bangkok through his niece who worked with an NGO. General Wimol Wongwanit, the Deputy Army Commander at that time, agreed to meet the villagers' representatives at the Army Meeting Hall in Bangkok on 17 December 1990.<sup>61</sup> At the meeting, he stated that he would send an Army envoy to investigate the case. On 18 December, Colonel Phichai Siriwibun, the Deputy Secretary of the Royal Thai Army, made a short visit to the village from which he concluded that the villagers had invaded military land with the backing of "capitalists"

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<sup>59</sup> Interview, INT-066-VIL, 28 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai. Letter dated 21 December 1990 (2533) from *Phrakhru* to the President of NGO-CORD explaining the event on 15 December 1990. NGO-CORD/Upper North, 1990 (2533), "Nathi to: nathi: Thahan at nakphatthana ongko:n phatthana ekkachon" [Minute to Minute: The Military Injured an NGO Worker], [in Thai], Chiang Mai.

<sup>60</sup> *Sayam Rat*, 17 December 1990 (2533); and NGO-CORD/Upper North, 1992 (2535), "Lamdap hetkan ko:rani thahan laithi chaoban".

<sup>61</sup> Interview, INT-051-NGO, 23 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

and “communists”.<sup>62</sup> The rhetorical discourse of the 1970s resurrected by the Army envoy attracted further media focus and the dispute was reported nationally.<sup>63</sup>

Following the media reports, Colonel Surin Phikuntho:ng, the Director of Logistics who was responsible for this issue, came from Bangkok to Mae Rim district on 24 December 1990. He asked the district head to arrange a meeting in which the new Commander of the Second Special Warfare Division, the district head and village leaders participated to negotiate and hopefully settle the conflict. The village leaders were able to propose, for the first time, that the Army set up a neutral committee to investigate the facts and to identify the land ownership. The village leaders agreed that if it were proved that the land belonged to the military, they would resettle wherever officials decided. However, if it were shown that the land belonged to the villagers, the authorities must give land title deeds to the villagers following the 1985 government land directive. During the fact-finding process, both military and villagers agreed not to resume any action which might provoke confrontation. Colonel Surin acceded to the request for an investigation on condition that the villagers refrain from giving further information to the press, as this was damaging the military’s image.<sup>64</sup>

On 25 December 1990, the Sub-Committee for Solving the Problem of Rural Populations Residing in Military Reserved Areas (*khana anukammakan kaekhai panha ratsado:n yu asai thamkin nai phu’nthi sa-nguan huangham kho:ng thahan*), Office of the Permanent Secretary, took charge of the matter. The Sub-Committee, chaired by Sitthichai Liangchayet, a senior public servant from the Office of the Prime Minister, comprised delegates from the Ministries of Interior, Justice, Agriculture and Cooperatives, Finance, the Royal Thai Army and university academics.<sup>65</sup> It did not include a representative of the villagers, so *Pho:luang* Thit wrote to the Sub-Committee asking it to include at least one.<sup>66</sup> That person should, he argued, be an academic who understood the land dispute problem. He suggested either Dr Chayan Vaddhanaphuti (the Director of SRI, Chiang Mai University at that time) or Prof Saneh Chamarik (the

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<sup>62</sup> *Sayam Rat* 18 December 1990 (2533); NGO-CORD/Upper North, 1992 (2535), “Lamdap hetkan ko:rani thahan laithi chaoban”.

<sup>63</sup> For example, *Daily News*, *Sayam Rat*, *Thai Rat*, *Matichon* and *Bangkok Post*.

<sup>64</sup> NGO-CORD/Upper North, 1990 (2533), “Bantu’k kan prachum Colonel Surin Phikuntho:ng”, [Record of the Meeting with Colonel Surin Phikuntho:ng], [in Thai], 24 December, Chiang Mai.

<sup>65</sup> The Sub-Committee was set up by Office of the Prime Minister and the Royal Thai Army to handle the problem of poor rural people residing in the military reserved areas throughout the country. See also Office of the Prime Minister and Royal Thai Army, 1990 (2533), *Khumu’ kan kaekhai panha ko:rani ratsado:n yu a-sai thamkin...*; and Colonel Surin Phikuntho:ng, n.d., “Thidin nai khwam khro:pkhro:ng kho:ng ko:ngthapbok” [Land under the Control of the Army], The Royal Thai Army, Bangkok.

<sup>66</sup> Letter dated 30 December 1990 (2533) from *Pho:luang* Thit (name used in this thesis) and other village leaders to General Wimol Wongwanit, Deputy Army Commander at that time.

Director the LDI). However, the request was turned down and, as a result, the villagers doubted that their case would be handled fairly.

### Scaling up to seek support from the public and media

While the Sub-Committee investigation was under way FEDRA, with other people-centred NGOs which worked at the regional and national levels, helped the villagers to re-examine the causes of the land conflict. The NGOs undertook a parallel study to ensure that the Sub-Committee investigation would be conducted thoroughly and fairly. Suk contacted the UCL to consult on legal matters, and the NGO-CORD to help organise contacts at the national level. The links between different NGOs in the political arena depended heavily on personal contact and relationship rather than institutionalisation.<sup>67</sup> As the President of NGO-CORD, Saneh was aware of the land dispute and he asked his friend, Niyom Tiwutthanon, a retired judge of the Supreme Court, for advice on legal matters relating to the case.

Niyom's investigation revealed that the legal basis of the land dispute derived from two Royal Decrees (*Pharatchakritsadika*) issued by the Phibun Government to restrict land availability for the military use. They were the Royal Decree Restricting Access to Undeveloped Public-Domain Land B.E. 2483 (1940) and the Royal Decree Specifying the Boundary of Land in Areas Restored in the Locality of Mae Rim District, Chiang Mai Province B.E. 2483 (1940).<sup>68</sup> The government subsequently cited these two Decrees issued under the Restriction of Undeveloped Public-Domain Land Act of B.E. 2478 (1935) and the Expropriation Act of B.E. 2477 (1934) respectively.<sup>69</sup> The Acts indicated that the expropriation and restriction of eminent domain had to be issued in the form of Royal Decree, as well as published in the Thai Royal Gazette, so that the public would have access to the information. The Acts also required that the Royal Decree should: provide reasons for the land expropriation or restriction; specify the officials who would be in charge of the task; identify the boundary of the land to be restored; and include a map showing the land boundary.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Interview, INT-014-NGO, 1 October 1992, Bangkok.

<sup>68</sup> *Phraratchakritsadika kamnot khet huangham thidin nai tho:ngthi amphoe mae rim jangwat Chiang Mai phuttha sakkarat 2483*; and *Phraratchakritsadika kamnot khet thidin nai bo:riwen thi thi ja wenkhu'n nai tho:ngthi amphoe mae rim jangwat Chiang Mai phuttha sakkarat 2483*. See *Ratchakitjanubeksa* [Thai Royal Gazette], [in Thai], 16 July 1940 (2483), Vol. 57, pp. 232-233 and 234-235.

<sup>69</sup> *Phraratchabanyat waduai kanhuangham thidin rokrang wangplao anpen satharana sombat kho:ng phaendin phuttha sakkarat 2478*; and *Phraratchabanyat waduai kanwenkhu'n a-sangharimmasap phuttha sakkarat 2477*. See *Ratchakitjanubeksa* [Thai Royal Gazette], [in Thai], 8 April 1936 (2479), Vol. 53, pp. 32-34; and 21 April 1935 (2478), Vol. 52, pp. 47-67.

<sup>70</sup> See *Ratchakitjanubeksa* [Thai Royal Gazette], [in Thai], 1935 (2478), p. 50; and 1936 (2479), p. 33.

Based on these Acts and Decrees, Niyom wrote an article arguing that the land still belonged to the people for a number of reasons.<sup>71</sup> First, the Army's citation of the Act of B.E. 2478 to support its claim ignored the conditions to be complied with by the law. This Act specified that to come under the law, the land had to be "undeveloped public-domain land" (*thidin rokrang wangplao anpen satharana sombat kho:ng phaendin*). In fact, the land had not been a "no-man's land" as claimed by the Army. The rural populations had already occupied the land before the Army's claim. Hence, the Army would need to cite the other Act of B.E. 2477 to endorse its claim. Although this Act allowed the resumption of occupied land, it was specified only for the purpose of mining and of infrastructure building – not for security or other military purposes. Secondly, the Army had not completed the necessary legal procedure required under the Act to occupy the village land. While the military had advised the government to issue two Royal Decrees required to restrict access to the land, and to specify the land boundary, it had failed to have the government pass the legislation required by Article 8 of the Act to expropriate the land. Because of this, Niyom argued that the takeover in 1940 of the village land by the military was "voidable" (*moka*). He strongly argued that the land still belonged to the people, and advised them to return the fifteen baht per rai compensation to the military to terminate the dispute. The conclusion of this former judge of the Supreme Court gave great hope to the villagers who had resisted, for over 50 years seemingly against all odds, surrendering their land to the military.

Contrary to the argument of the retired judge, however, the Sub-Committee asserted on 5 April 1991 that the land belonged to the Army. It also advised the district head to arrange new land in Saluang sub-district for the village's relocation.<sup>72</sup> As a result, the former judge wrote an article to comment on the lack of independence of the Thai judicial system from the administrative power:

The judgement of the Committee was influenced by a lawyer from the Royal Decree Committee Office (*samnakngan khana kammakan kritsadika*) who expressed an opinion that the land belonged to the military.

I feel extremely sad to know that most of the [Sub-] Committee members are lawyers who seldom used the in-depth knowledge in legal consideration of their own except the representative from the Justice Ministry who finely and deeply explained relevant legal concepts and interpretation in the land dispute case. He subsequently reached a conclusion that the land still belonged to the villagers.

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<sup>71</sup> Niyom Tiwutthanon, 1991 (2534), "Ratsado:n bukrak thidin kho:ng thahan ru' thahan yaeng thidin kho:ng ratsaso:n" [The People Invaded the Military's Land or the Military Seized the People's Land], [in Thai], *Sayam Rat*, 30 January.

<sup>72</sup> NGO-CORD/Upper North, 1991 (2534), *Sarup phon kan prachum phijarana ko:rani phiphat thidin* [Summary of the Result of the Meeting in Considering the Land Dispute Case], [in Thai], 5 April, Chiang Mai.

He struggled for maintaining his independent opinion as an arbitrator despite the fact that he is also an government official.<sup>73</sup>

Moreover, the retired judge volunteered to lead an independent Fact Finding Committee organised by the LDI to collect first-hand information from the villagers concerning the land dispute. On 18 May 1991, the Committee, which included 30 participants from different occupations such as lawyers, journalists, academics, NGO workers and university students, arrived in Village 3. The villagers warmly greeted the Committee members and kept them informed about various aspects of their village community.<sup>74</sup> Elderly villagers revealed to the Committee the land occupation documents which they had hidden for the past 50 years. Having seen such evidence, Niyom suggested that they should pursue the case in the civil court. The lawyers affiliated with the UCL and CGRS agreed to follow up the court case with the assistance of FEDRA and NGO-CORD. On 20 June 1991 the Committee released a report of its finding. Journalists from both Thai and English newspapers took up the story and informed the public about the prolonged land dispute case, claiming that, according to the villagers, the military had used a part of the land to build houses for high-ranking officers while preparing another part to be rented by private entrepreneurs.<sup>75</sup>

As a result of the publicity, Colonel Surin came to Mae Rim on 5 July 1991 for the second time to clear up the military image.<sup>76</sup> In a meeting with representatives of the military, officials and villagers, Colonel Surin asked the village leaders and *Phrakhru* to stop the villagers from informing the media about the military land takeover and thus smearing the image of the Army. The village leaders took the opportunity to propose to Colonel Surin that the dispute be handed over to the provincial court. They proposed further that during conduct of the case, both the military and villagers should mark a temporary boundary between them to avoid possible confrontation. In response to this request, on 17 December 1991, the Army instructed the Chiang Mai prosecutor to conduct lawsuits against 210 families accused of invading military land.<sup>77</sup>

As the boundary line had not been marked, a clash between military and villagers was likely. In June 1992, a group of soldiers used a tractor to demolish a villager's fence

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<sup>73</sup> Niyom Tiwutthanon, 1991 (2534), "Ratsado:n mai pho:jai nakkotmai kho:ng rat thi khao khang thahan khap lai ratsado:n" [The People Are Not Satisfied with the State's Lawyers Who Took Side of the Military Driving Off the People], [in Thai], *Sayam Rat*, 10 April.

<sup>74</sup> This also happened to me a year later during my visit to the village; my queries were fully answered by the villagers' overflowing responses and clarifications.

<sup>75</sup> *Matichon*, 20 May 1991 (2534); NGO-CORD, UCL, CGRS and NDWA, 1991 (2534), "Rai-ngan khana kammakan truatso:p kho:thetjing" [The Report of the Fact Finding Committee], [in Thai], 20 June, Bangkok.

<sup>76</sup> Colonel Surin Phikuntho:ng, 1992 (2535), "Panha thidin kromrop phiset thi ha amphoe mae rim jangwat chiang mai" [Land Problem of the Fifth Special Warfare Section, Mae Rim District, Chiang Mai Province], [in Thai], 1 September, The Royal Thai Army, Bangkok.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

and to destroy crops in his garden near the site for construction of a military residence to the east of the Village Temple.<sup>78</sup> Accused by the press of abusing its power, the military offered 10,000 baht compensation to the villager for the damage. The villager refused to accept the money. Rather, he wanted the police to arrest the wrongdoers. On 30 June 1992, *Pho:luang* Thit handed in a letter to the district head asking him to delineate the village area from the military domain. This request being ignored, a group of villagers went to Chiang Mai University to seek help. However, they found that the University administrators had ordered security guards to shut the gates to prevent them from entering the campus.

Prof Nidhi Aieosrivongse, a historian at Chiang Mai University, rejected the University administrators' excuse that the villagers might mobilise students to help them protest against the government. Furthermore, he pointed out that the role of university in dealing with conflicts over land occupation was to search for knowledge and propose ways to assist in resolving such problems, occurring widely in rural Thailand since the late 1980s. He drew an analogy with a gate to illustrate his point:

The administrators of Chiang Mai University shut not only the gate but also the access to wisdom which has emerged sharply and widely in the present-day Thai society. They did not want that reality to be related with the university's affairs.<sup>79</sup>

Unable to enter the University, the villagers moved on to seek help from Dr Chayan Vaddhanaphuti, Director of the SRI. On 4 July 1992, the SRI organised a meeting between the village leaders, some like-minded academics and NGO workers to find an immediate solution, so as to prevent a clash between the villagers and military. After visiting the village on 9 July 1992, the SRI Director said that he would write a letter to the Cabinet proposing that it allow the people the opportunity for negotiation in respect of this land conflict which fundamentally affected their well-being.<sup>80</sup>

In summary, following their interpretation of "self-reliance", the villagers and NGO workers realised that they had to scale-up to seek support from other elements of civil society, especially the public and media, and to use the bureaucratic and legal system to argue their case. Through various NGO contacts the villagers and NGO workers received essential assistance from individual officials and journalists who stood for the principle of social justice against what they saw as an abuse of power by the military. As a result of the publicity given to the case in a period of open political system, military aggression was reduced to some extent. This gave the villagers and NGO workers an opportunity to seek a political space for negotiation to stop the military taking over the village land. The Army agreed with the villagers' proposal to pursue

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<sup>78</sup> NGO-CORD/Upper North, 1992 (2535), "Lamdap hetkan ko:rani thahan laithi chaoban".

<sup>79</sup> *Matichon*, 11 July 1992 (2535).

<sup>80</sup> *Matichon*, 15 July 1992 (2535).

the land dispute case in the Chiang Mai civil court. During the court procedure, the villagers received legal assistance from members of the provincial lawyers' council and of NGOs such as the UCL and CGRS. Thus, the villagers secured the right to stay in the village while waiting for the court's decision.<sup>81</sup>

## **Discussion**

### **Transformation, conflict and intervention**

The tension between the military and small-scale peasants over land occupation in Village 3 emerged and has been prolonged since 1940 when the Army attempted to take over the village land. It has been heightened since the national development planners proposed to extend Chiang Mai city as a regional growth centre. The growth would embrace six districts, including Mae Rim which would become one of the dormitory town areas (see Chapter 2). Similar to the other two villages under study, the situation of competition and conflicts over productive resources in Village 3 occurred in two periods. In the period up to the mid-1980s, the competition and conflict over resources occurred between the military, bureaucrats, small-scale producers and middlemen. In the second period from the mid-1980s, the major focus was on conflict over land after the military seized land with the help of a former village head. The conflict was even more intense in the early 1990s when the military announced further plans to take over the village land, fearing that the dispute would become more complicated if some villagers sold their land to urban developers.

During the period of the closed political system in the 1960s, a group of village leaders chose a patron and client relationship to protect the village land by asking for help from a brother of the military leaders who was in charge of the development of the Northern region. After the military regime was toppled by the urban middle class and students, and the political system became open in the mid 1970s, the village leaders chose to vote for a local politician who would support the building of infrastructure in their village. In the early 1980s, villagers asked the abbot of the Village Temple to invite the FEDRA Chairperson to help them tackle their economic problems, especially the shortage of agricultural investment. FEDRA thus became a part of the social relations and interaction between the military, officials, villagers, middlemen and investors of capital. While the villagers received little assistance from the government formally, FEDRA played a crucial role in supporting them in different aspects of their everyday lives. In response to the people's immediate needs, the FEDRA workers acted as an

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<sup>81</sup>

The action is still proceeding and is likely to take some years yet.

intermediary between extension officers and villagers, by asking government officials to give advice to the villagers concerning agricultural innovation.

While working in the village, FEDRA fieldworkers had to deal with competition and tension between villagers and a village head who betrayed the villagers' trust. FEDRA tried to encourage the villagers to behave in accordance with the social values of trust, honesty and solidarity among themselves but was unsure how to implement these spiritual values, in accordance with the FEDRA Chairperson's belief that economic development projects were "tool kits" to encourage villagers to perform "good deeds". The economic handouts by FEDRA made existing village tensions more complicated so that a number of NGO fieldworkers found they were unable to tackle villagers' social problems. Other NGO workers argued that FEDRA failed in its "tool kit" approach (*long yu'a tua-eng*),<sup>82</sup> due to the lack of social analysis within the village community and failure to implement appropriate projects at the right time. These fieldworkers asked that administrators pay attention to analysing the difficulties they were facing. The result, however, was increasing tension within FEDRA over the validity of its development projects in the context of the land dispute problem.

The dissatisfaction lay in the fact that each side held different approaches concerning the people's poverty, and that neither could find an appropriate approach to local politics in which social interfaces were predominant factors. The FEDRA Chairperson assumed that the poverty derived from individual behaviour such as laziness, and addiction to drugs and alcohol. The FEDRA fieldworkers, however, who were university educated, and maintained social networks with social activists both within and outside universities, were more inclined to assume that the cause of people's poverty lay in the unequal development and distribution of wealth as a result of government policies and priorities. They wanted to help the villagers through the political process, by protesting to the government, an approach which could lead to political confrontation with local authorities.

FEDRA administrators were not keen to consider a 'political' approach for the FEDRA development projects. A FEDRA personnel manager, who had been working with FEDRA since the early 1980s and had rarely been in touch with other NGOs, told me that he had never agreed with group organising activities which he considered to be the same as "*kan jadtang*" (the political mobilisation activities of the CPT). When asked how FEDRA should deal with the influence of urban culture and expansion, the manager explained that FEDRA's main objective was to promote agricultural occupations and rural development.<sup>83</sup> He went on to explain that FEDRA interpreted its

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<sup>82</sup> Interview, INT-086-NGO, 16 January 1993, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

<sup>83</sup> Interview, INT-073-NGO, 11 January 1993, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.



areas of operation according to geographical landscapes of highland (*thido:i*), steep land (*thido:n*) and lowland (*thirap*). Although a FEDRA fieldworker suggested considering the area of operation in terms of more or less urban-influenced areas following the notion of regional development, his ideas have not become the basis of the FEDRA development approach.<sup>84</sup> The lack of discussion within FEDRA about developmental approaches to rural transformation over time caused frustration and confusion for the fieldworkers in the areas where socio-economic changes were occurring rapidly and impacting on the people's livelihood. Between 1981 and 1986, five FEDRA workers simply turned their backs on the work to which they had committed themselves due to their confusion and disillusionment.

From the mid-1980s, when the military began to take over village land, the villagers needed FEDRA's support, both spiritually and politically. Due to the land price boom in the late 1980s, the military were afraid that the land in Village 3 would be transferred from villagers to private entrepreneurs. As Colonel Surin argued:

The capitalist (*naithun*) might buy land from villagers and get it registered by some corrupt politicians and bureaucrats. The problem of land transaction to business's hands would be more complicated for the Army to solve than the problem of land occupation by villagers.<sup>85</sup>

He based this on his experience in other dispute areas, especially in Kanchanaburi province, where investors of capital became involved in the land conflict between the military and villagers, and the entrepreneurs used the villagers as “*nang na fai*” or “the first line of defence” to confront the Army.<sup>86</sup> I was curious to know what Suk, who had stood by the villagers to fight for their land, thought about the potential for land transaction in Village 3 if villagers had had the rights to sell. He replied, without hesitation, that the villagers would certainly have sold the land to cope with economic pressures and to enjoy access to consumer goods. Due to the dispute, the villagers could neither use the land for production, nor sell it for profit like other villages nearby in the suburban-influenced area.<sup>87</sup> Suk's response made me think further that if the NGOs intended to help villagers undertake the land claim, they would need to anticipate this issue beyond individual ownership of land title deeds; or otherwise they could simply accelerate the process of landlessness among small-scale producers.

Like many other grass-roots organisations, FEDRA worked daily interfacing with local government officials, traders, urban developers and rural people of different economic and social status. The FEDRA Chairperson had a role which, in some situations, enabled him to intervene to assist those disadvantaged by circumstances. For example,

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<sup>84</sup> Interview, INT-049-NGO, 23 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

<sup>85</sup> Interview, INT-153-GOV, 25 March 1993, Bangkok.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Interview, INT-051-NGO, 23 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

he asked FEDRA workers to contact business companies in Chiang Mai to help villagers obtain a good deal in purchasing agricultural inputs such as seeds, chemical fertiliser and insecticide. When the Army began to build the road across the villagers' farmland, he wrote to the Third Army Commander, asking him to carefully consider the plan with regard to the villagers' livelihood. In other situations of conflict, the Chairperson's hands were tied by his role as a senior monk and by his inadequate understanding of social conflict and intervention. "I did not have formal education except the monastery training" (*Luangpho: mai dai phan kansu'ksa thang lok, phan thang phra yang dieo*),<sup>88</sup> he explained to me. He understood the monk's role in helping people affected by economic development but he was probably still searching for an appropriate way to intervene. As *Phra Prachak*, a monk who helped villagers protect the Dong Yai Forest in Buri Ram province from encroachment by a logging company and some corrupt soldiers once said:

Monks do not live in a vacuum. Villagers are affected from all sides by external forces, and we cannot ignore their problems. For me, it isn't a question of whether monks should get involved, but a question of how.<sup>89</sup>

While many NGOs criticised the "non-political" role of FEDRA in response to the land conflict, the villagers argued that they tacitly received the support of the FEDRA Chairperson. While interfacing with local officials and soldiers in everyday events, the Chairperson hardly expressed any obvious support for the villagers but "turned a blind eye" (*tham mai ru mai hen*) towards the conflict while allowing his workers to take action independently.<sup>90</sup> I find two interesting aspects in the villagers' argument. First, it shows how FEDRA played its interventionist role in the land conflict, by allowing individual fieldworkers to participate in the formulation of the collective protest by the villagers. Secondly, the intervention was provided by individual FEDRA workers, and their networks in Chiang Mai and Bangkok. Without FEDRA support behind the scenes, as an umbrella organisation at the community-based level, and as a mediator for negotiation, the interventions would, I think, have been much more difficult to pursue. Thus, the intervention in this case would not have been achieved without the support of the three pillars of the NGO movement, which are the interrelationships between individual workers, organisations and networks.

The successful intervention in Village 3 derived from the following key factors. First, the NGOs, through Suk in particular, helped the villagers to articulate the social meaning of "self-reliance" against the domination of the military. The "self-reliance" notion which had been inspired by former FEDRA workers and later interpreted by

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<sup>88</sup> Interview, INT-137-NGO, 26 February 1993, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

<sup>89</sup> *Thai Development Newsletter*, 1994, No. 26, p. 62.

<sup>90</sup> Interview, INT-057-VIL, 25 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

villagers as helping oneself and others in everyday life became the key concept for the villagers to formulate their collective activities. This shows that, even though Village 3 was located near the city and had been influenced by urban culture and economy, the villagers were still able to make use of their traditional culture to help them tackle their most pressing land dispute problem.

Secondly, the NGOs recognised different social actors playing their roles in the fabric of the social structure. As well as having a clear objective to defend their land, the villagers had a group of active village leaders who were also members of the village development committee responsible for the FEDRA development projects. The committee members were composed of villagers from different social and economic backgrounds, such as low-income and middle-income peasants, low-rank officials and technicians who commuted daily between the city and the village. For the collective protest, they received a great deal of help from the NGO network of supporters who had been long-standing social activists since their university days. The NGOs had realised for some time that a village problem could not be solved at the village level alone. To combat the aggression of the military, the NGOs sought the support of other members in civil society such as the media, public servants, human rights lawyers, students and university scholars. This led to negotiations which provided a political space for the village leaders to set out their demands for settling the dispute. This intervention provided great hope for the villagers that they would be able maintain their settlement on the land of their forebears.

Thirdly, it was true in this case, as Touraine and McAdam argue, that the degree of openness of the political system decisively determines the nature of the social and political movement.<sup>91</sup> This can be seen in the nature of the movement organised by the villagers and NGO workers over the course of time in this case. The collective protest was an outcome of the interpretation of social meaning (self-reliance in this case) in daily life. Throughout the period of the land dispute, from 1940 onwards, the villagers and grass-roots NGO workers used “everyday resistance” to deal with local situations where various social actors interfaced (see Chapter 1). They could not, however, mobilise the collective action against the domination of military power until the early 1990s when the national political system had become more open. Although the NGO intervention infuriated the military leaders, including Colonel Surin, they had to reduce their aggression and accept the role of the NGOs and the rights of the villagers to make claims in an open society. Colonel Surin told me that: “If there were no NGOs, the military and villagers would have already settled the dispute case” (*tha mai mi ongkan*

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<sup>91</sup> Touraine, 1977, *The Self-Production of Society*, p. 429; and D. McAdam, 1994, “Culture and Social Movements”, in Laraña, Johnstone and Gusfield (eds), *New Social Movements...*, p. 39.

*phatthana ekkachon thahan kap chaoban khong toklong kan dai laeo*).<sup>92</sup> The public too began to accept that there was a diversity of social interests, especially the rights of the common people over land and, so long as they had enough evidence to prove their continuity of occupation, their right to challenge a military claim in the provincial court.

### **Some issues from fieldwork**

From this case study, some important issues emerge for further attention. First, when we consider how political intervention in the land dispute case was achieved, we can see that the relationship between individual NGO workers, their organisations and networks contributed to the achievement. Although Suk showed courage in taking action beyond the organisational mainstream and becoming involved in political conflict, he would not have been able to accomplish this task if FEDRA had withdrawn its support from him. He might have found the task a lot harder without FEDRA's tacit support. Through their networks, the NGOs working in different political arenas searched for and contacted like-minded social actors in various organisations ranging from NGOs to government departments, to help villagers sort out their immediate problems with the military. Thus, the NGOs played an interventionist role through the linkages between individual workers, organisations and networks from local and regional to the national level. The scale-up activities did not come from a pre-planned strategy.

Secondly, many NGO workers who worked at the regional and national levels claimed that FEDRA was politically passive and did not assist the villagers affected by the military land claim. However, this claim is not entirely correct. Throughout the 1980s, FEDRA had played a significant role in helping the villagers in the land dispute area cope with economic and social pressures emerging from both within and outside. The villagers' everyday resistance against the military domination undoubtedly received support by FEDRA's very presence in the village. At the same time, the villagers' own initiative to undertake collective action was promoted by FEDRA workers over a number of years and provided the inspiration for village cooperation. Thus, the relationship between everyday resistance and collective protest should not be analysed in isolation.

However, I disagree with the FEDRA administrators who chose a defensive reaction towards political action for fear of damaging the image of the FEDRA Chairperson. The departure of 'progressive' fieldworkers from FEDRA showed that such a reaction resulted in a widening gap between FEDRA and those fieldworkers who proposed that FEDRA review its development projects and strategy to cope with the rural

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<sup>92</sup>

Interview, INT-153-GOV, 25 March 1993, Bangkok.

transformation in its areas of operation. For instance, five FEDRA fieldworkers who were responsible for work in Village 3 departed from FEDRA. Some of them encouraged FEDRA to reassess its economic and social activities in relation to changing situations in suburban areas.<sup>93</sup> In December 1992, I asked Suk, the sixth fieldworker who was responsible for the FEDRA projects in Village 3 between 1987 and 1992, how FEDRA had responded to the transformation in Village 3, which is now located in the area of the city's expansion. He revealed that FEDRA had not yet discussed the socio-economic change in Mae Rim and other districts near the city; nor adjusted its development approach to cope with the change; nor did it have anyone mediating tensions between its fieldworkers and administrators.<sup>94</sup> If FEDRA had paid more attention to the request of its fieldworkers, it would probably have found its development activities more able to help villagers cope with the pressure of rapid change.

Thirdly, Suk's argument interests me when he said that if individual villagers owned land in Village 3, they might have sold it to urban developers to cope with their economic pressure. Suk's statement was in line with comments from a veteran NGO worker working with UCL, which also dealt with the land dispute case, who pointed out that the NGOs needed to look beyond the campaign for land ownership to the security of village land utilisation. In her opinion, the NGOs should seek to cooperate with some governmental individuals and institutions which work to secure the land utilisation for small-scale producers.<sup>95</sup> To strengthen the poor and alleviate their poverty, the NGOs need to work beyond a simple counter-government model.

### **Concluding remarks**

This chapter has demonstrated that between the early 1970s and early 1990s, the land dispute in Village 3 reflected rural transformation in two periods before and after the mid-1980s. Before the mid-1980s, the competition over land between the military and villagers appeared in forms of the military: banning a weir project from being built for village irrigation and electricity; blocking the government's annual budget from being distributed to Village 3; buying different blocks of land and building houses here and there in the village, thereby establishing military land occupation and ejecting villagers. Besides the land dispute, competition occurred between villagers and middlemen over

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<sup>93</sup> TVS, 1983 (2526), "Sarupphon kan sammana lae kan pramoenphon kan patibatngan asasamak run si krop wara kan thamngan nu'ng pi" [Summary of the Seminar and Evaluation for the Fourth Group of Volunteers after One-year Working Experience], [in Thai], 1-3 June, Chon Buri.

<sup>94</sup> Interview, INT-051-NGO, 23 December 1992, Mae Rim, Chiang Mai.

<sup>95</sup> Interview, INT-044-NGO, 14 December 1992, Bangkok.

the low price given for their agricultural produce; and between the villagers and agricultural companies which charged high prices for chemical fertiliser and insecticide. Amidst the competition over productive resources between villagers, military and business, the villagers seemed vulnerable both to military domination and business exploitation.

Villagers invited FEDRA to help them cope with these socio-economic pressures. The FEDRA fieldworkers found it very difficult to implement socio-economic projects to assist the villagers because they faced not only the land dispute between the villagers and military but also many other tensions between different actors on different issues. For instance, tension arose between FEDRA and a corrupt village head who used FEDRA's loan for his personal gain and thereby inhibited the "participation" of villagers in the FEDRA projects. Tension also occurred between FEDRA and some villagers who claimed that its projects were unlikely to help them cope with increasing economic pressure in the urban-rural-link area. This led to further tension within FEDRA between fieldworkers and administrators on the issue that FEDRA had inadequate analysis of socio-economic change.

After the mid-1980s, competition over land became more intensified than in the past. One of the main factors was the penetration of urban developers into rural areas. This prompted the military to speed up the process of land expropriation for fear that it would have to deal with powerful businessmen rather than powerless villagers, if the villagers sold disputed land to private entrepreneurs. In the early 1990s, the military planned to relocate the villagers who lived to the east of the Village Temple onto the farmland belonging to their neighbours to the north of the Temple. While the villagers did not know how to respond to this, a FEDRA fieldworker, with the support of his colleagues in FEDRA and NGO networks, helped the villagers organise themselves to prevent the military land takeover.

The achievement of the NGOs in playing an interventionist role in this case depended on a number of factors. First, FEDRA helped villagers to elaborate the social meaning of "self-reliance" from their daily life to organise the people's collective protest. Secondly, FEDRA and its networks in Chiang Mai and Bangkok helped the villagers scale-up to seek assistance from different actors in the sphere of civil society such as some retired public servants, university lecturers, lawyers, student activists and journalists. Thirdly, the NGOs had an opportunity during the open political system of the early 1990s to halt the forced village relocation by the military and take the dispute case to the provincial civil court. However, after the land dispute case had been taken to the provincial court, the NGO fieldworkers were confronted with disputes within their organisation and among NGOs at different levels, over the analysis of social change and how to respond to the change. For instance, how would NGOs deal with

problems resulting from interpenetration between rural and urban areas; with the empowerment of local individuals and groups; with the encouragement of economic effectiveness and changes in social values? Can NGOs ignore opportunities for cooperation with the government for example, to secure land rights for small-scale cultivators? These questions remain for the NGOs to take into consideration.





**Plate 17** A female villager driving a motor-cycle taxi to earn additional income to support her family.



**Plate 18** Some villager work at a tourist resort near Village 3 for extra family income.





**Plate 19** FEDRA's handicraft project to help villagers earn additional family income.



**Plate 20** Handicraft products being sold in the compound of Wat Pa Temple, Mae Rim.





**Plate 21** Villagers and NGO workers receiving sacred water (*nam mon*) from the abbot of the village temple before going to protest against the military land take over.



**Plate 22** Posters explaining the cause of the land dispute to the public.





**Plate 23** ID cards hung on a branch of a tree (as is done in the *Tho:d pha pa* ceremony) and carried to the District Office as a form of protest against inadequate state assistance for the welfare of the village.



**Plate 24** Household registration documents were also carried to the District Office as a form of protest against inadequate state assistance for the welfare of the village





**Plate 25** Female elders dressed in white go to negotiate with the military to save the village land. Their presence and attire demonstrate the intention to seek peaceful negotiations.



**Plate 26** Through NGO networks, villagers receive the support of lawyers, intellectuals and university students from middle class backgrounds who undertake fact finding and report to the media