

SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL THESIS

Name: Sukontip Vianmana

Title: A study on Conditions for Continual Operations and Activities, Management, and
Income Improvement of Silk Weaving Groups in Northeast Thailand

(タイ東北部における絹織グループの運営・活動継続条件、経営管理および所得向上
に関する研究)

In this study, I emphasized analysis of the improvement of community business groups such as silk weaving groups which has become an important issue to realize, together with economic and social development, which have been raised in the Thai National Economic and Social Development Plans. In recent years, silk weaving activity is well-known and can generate supplementary income and create jobs/employment for farmers and people in rural areas, especially in Northeast Thailand. Although the number of silk weaving groups has been increasing, most silk weaving groups could not show high performance and the implementation of group activities was not good, eventually some of the groups quit group activities. The low performance and discontinuance of the groups might be caused by several reasons or factors. Improvement in the additional income level is also vital from the economic aspect for the weavers. Therefore, this study emphasizes on making clear the important factors which contribute to the continuance of group operations and activities, committee characteristics and functions of the silk weaving groups, and additional income creation for further improvement of the groups.

The study was conducted in Khon Kaen province in Northeast Thailand. This province is the sixth largest among Thailand's northeastern provinces. The province is an area of intensive commercial silk production. I purposively visited silk weaving groups several times from 2016 to 2020 and interviewed key informants (group leaders or committee members) using questionnaires. All of the surveyed silk weaving groups were introduced by officers from the Khon Kaen provincial Agricultural Extension Office and the Community Development Department. The introduced groups are categorized as relatively good and excellent. Therefore, the results from this study are mainly applicable to good and excellent silk weaving groups. I used descriptive statistics and/or multiple regression analysis to analyze the data depending on each chapter.

The findings from Chapter 3 showed that factors related to production, marketing, and financial functions contribute to a groups' continuance, excluding organizational function. From the perspective of production function, the popularity of the continuous groups, the high price of silk products and products' quality, and several ways to support weavers, i.e. such as loans, materials, hiring, and funds, contribute to the groups' continuance. The continuous groups could sell silk products at a higher price than the discontinued groups; this might be due to the popularity of the continuous groups and the quality of the products is controlled well. Moreover, the continuous groups had sufficient funds to purchase silk fabrics from weavers, which implied that the weavers can sell their products to the groups directly and get paid quickly. However, the discontinued groups provided only the method of consigned products for the weavers. Therefore, the weavers have to wait until the products could sell before receiving funds and get back the ones that could not be sold. From the perspective of marketing function, providing various places and ways of sales for weavers contributes to stable receipts which drive the groups continuing

operations and activities. The continuous groups mostly have various ways to sell their products, while the discontinued groups mostly sold their products to walk-in consumers inside the village. Likewise, many ways to sell products result in liquidities of weavers' income and group funds in order to support re-production which contributes to a groups' continuance. The continuous groups had more ways to sell their products than the discontinued groups, while the discontinued groups did not sell products through their groups; this leads to a lack of liquidity of group funds cycle for weavers to engage in re-production. From the perspective of financial function, obtaining subsidies from several organizations such as government and NGOs, several ways to collect group funds, financial strategies of the groups i.e. the groups purchased silk products from weavers via cash, and keeping some of the profit in group funds after selling silk products, contribute to enriching the group fund and driving re-investment and re-production in the next cycle. The continuous groups obtained financial support from various organizations, while the discontinued groups obtained the support from only two organizations. The continuous groups collected group funds in many ways, while the two discontinued groups had not. Thus, the adoption of several ways to collect group funds is one of the reasons to maintain the continuance of group activities. Various financial strategies, especially purchase of silk products from weavers by cash, contribute to enrich weavers' income and the groups' funds. As the continuous groups had more liquidity of group funds and the ways of financial strategies than the discontinued groups. Moreover, keeping some of profits after selling silk products in group funds brings about the groups' continuance. The groups' profits after the sale of silk products will be used for marketing activities such as sellers' wage (sellers are group members/committee members/leaders), transportation costs and the rest of the profits will be kept in group funds.

The results of the multiple regression analysis shown in Chapter 4 revealed the number of group members, amount of receipts, the number of silk product types, age of the groups, and production or non-production of several silk product types are the factors generating variety in committee characteristics. However, each factor only partially influences the committee characteristics, and there are no factors influencing all aspects of the committees' characteristics. According to binary logistic regression analysis, the aging of the groups influences only the designation of committee members with non-specific functions. Between the variety of committee characteristics and the factors generating their variety, the following are intervening elements: 1) the possibility of quality differences among group members, 2) the necessity to develop many patterns, 3) the necessary number of group members to whom important information should be shared, 4) the degree of necessity for marketing activities (e.g. the degree of order based production, the degree of procession and fashionableness), 5) the trade-off relationship between functions where there is an increasing percentage of committee members in charge of specific functions, 6) the necessity to make committee members' responsibilities clear, and 7) the characteristics and required level of production skills and marketing activities of each silk product type. On the other hand, it has become clear that the degree of similarity between any pair of functions varies because of differences in the relational degree between the pair of functions. However, the degree of similarity is not influenced by the differences in fundamental characteristics.

The results of multiple regression analysis shown in Chapter 5 presented factors creating additional income which are the percentage of group members who were younger than 50 years old, traditional knowledge transfer, and sales activities supported by the groups having significant influence on additional income creation. It is important for silk weaving groups to endeavor to increase the percentage of younger members. This can be done by promoting the training of young people who are not group members in silk weaving techniques, as this training will also help in the recruitment of new weavers. The activation of traditional knowledge transfer should be practiced by increasing opportunities for skillful members of silk weaving groups to teach younger members to enable them to become masters in producing silk products. Finally, the activation of sales activities should be practiced by improving the functions of marketers (committee members in charge of marketing) within the groups, as they are responsible for sales and for promoting sales activities.