

**COMMON PROPERTY AS ENCLOSURE: A CASE STUDY
OF A COMMUNITY BACKSWAMP
IN SOUTHERN LAO PDR**

KANEUNGNIT TUBTIM

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

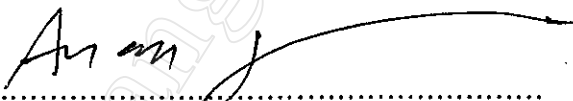
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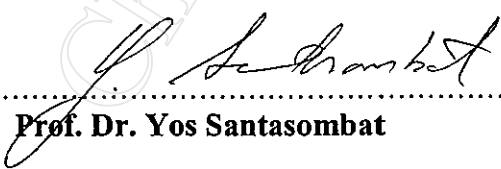
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THIS THESIS HAS BEEN APPROVED
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EXAMINING COMMITTEE


..... CHAIRPERSON
Lect. Dr. Anan Ganjanapan


..... MEMBER
Prof. Dr. Yos Santasombat


..... MEMBER
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Philip Hirsch

19 December 2001

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Finally, I am at the last stage of my thesis completion. YES! While I am writing these acknowledgements I feel as if I am at last eating the meatballs at the bottom of the bowl of noodles, to use a Thai metaphor. But I also have good memories of the noodles.

“What are you doing here, Tubtim?”, one of my supervisors asked me when I went to see him during my thesis writing. I paused for 7 seconds to sense his meaning. I was thinking: (a) why am I studying here? Or (b) why did I come to see him today? I chose (b) and answered him, “you made an appointment with me to discuss Chapter 5!” It is his strategy to free some memory to work on other things. His ideas are dynamic, in that I wish you could see my previous versions of this thesis! My friends also tell me that I have become more complex since working with him. But all this would not make me think again about whom to choose as supervisor, for he has kept me in the big picture throughout the whole thesis process.

Another one of my supervisors is like the ten-handed *Todsakan* in the Ramayana, who is always working on ten different things. He seems quite paradoxical to me. I did not appreciate his persona and mask from the first class so I intended to annoy him by choosing him as an advisor on that day. When I got to know him better, I felt lucky that I made the right decision. Oh! The other thing, I like the contrast of the sign on his door that reads: “No thesis consultation anywhere in the Kingdom during the summer break” and the reality behind that door as he still advises students in a sustainable and friendly way whenever they need him.

Number three is another very busy Doctor. He is a lecturer abroad and also my colleague in the SWIM project where I was based in Laos. I am lucky that he is busy enough to travel to the region so often that I can take a hundred small chances during his coffee breaks at the meeting places and at the airports to ask for discussion and advice! Apart from that he is so kind to give me quick responses through a thousand emails. I think the time he has given me for this research could help three students. He knows that I am allergic to academia, but with his endless support and friendship, I am thinking of extending my studies!

You may see that my three supervisors are all busy like supermen. Why did I choose these three super stars (you can see them in Appendix A) – Drs Anan Ganjanapan, Yos Santasombat and Philip Hirsch? At first I thought that they were all well known internationally and that my thesis would be guaranteed quality for ISO 2001 from the names on the cover page alone. Please do not believe that now – read it. While there are imperfections in the thesis, I do hope that their investment in the thesis and me was worthwhile. I had thought coursework is tough but writing

the thesis is three times heavier. However, it is triple time learning for me as well. I would like to worship and hang them garlands for allocating me their precious time, knowledge and for imparting me some of their supernatural powers! In addition, I thank their families, share their relief and congratulate them that this student has finished, but also warn them that I am surely not the last one.

At RCSD, Chiang Mai University, I would like to thank Dr Pong-In Rakariyatham who helped with practical matters in his role as Director and tries to make sure the program's results are not mass production. I owe Achaan Benja who was so kind in helping me with everything from a toothpick to a spaceship. I thank Kanchana, Phii Fongchan, and Jum who worked hard to kick the students out of the program painlessly and successfully. Thanks also to many Achaans and especially staff at the University who were behind the scenes of this completion and become good friends of mine.

At Silpakorn University, where I studied for my Bachelor Degree many years ago, I would like to acknowledge Achaan Songyote Waewhongsa for his encouragement and his interest in my studies. Achaan Utong Prasasvinichai has been special in her comments on life throughout. I am lucky to know her and hope there will be more Achaans like her in this tense academic milieu. Also Dr. Peter Vandergeest at York University gave valuable comments when the idea was formed.

In Laos, I would like to thank Prachit Noraseng (you will meet him in sections 4.2.1 and 5.2) from the Champassak Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office who made me feel at home during my work in Laos. The staff of the Provincial Livestock and Fisheries Office and the SWIM project always helped me with logistics and as friends. Sanasomboun District Agriculture and Forestry Office facilitated my fieldwork and Serd Manotham (see him in Appendix A, sections 4.2.1 and 5.2) accompanied me in the field, on motorcycles and in boats.

Thank you to the people of five villages who spent time with me and who treated me to fish, chicken and liquor, especially those in Kaengpho Village for their patience in answering the same questions five times! I did not mind if the villagers were wearing masks during the data collection as all researchers tend to do the same as well. *Maethao Kammai* gave me great and literal spiritual assistance during my thesis defense (she comes into the story in sections 3.3.1 and 5.1). Thanks also to the fish in Nong Bua who provided me basic food security and have unwittingly changed their property regime.

I express my gratitude to the International Development Research Centre and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research for supporting the SWIM project. In particular, Dr Stephen Tyler from IDRC is not only the project donor but also gave me valuable advice and friendship. Thanks also to Barney Smith from ACIAR and Elaine Tang from IDRC for their encouragement. Terry

Warren, my colleague in the SWIM project encouraged me for the study and I want to do the same when he decides to continue his study.

The 5 Area Studies Program of Thai Research Fund supported the process of thesis writing that allows me to complete my study conveniently.

Thanks to my cohort of students, Su, Yoshimi, Piseth, Phii Naiyana, who shared joys and sorrows of abstracting the real world into a Master of Sustainable Development thesis. Thanks to He Jun and Nitinan who helped me proof editing at some parts of the thesis. I wish the other students succeed in their theses.

I have to massage my team of editors who helped me communicate in the world-dominant language and made sure readers would not get headaches through the end of the thesis. Kym Leggett carefully edited first three chapters; Larra came later to save my life at short notice for Chapter 4 and 5; and Mc rescued me for the last chapter at the last second. If you find some language mistakes in this research, that probably happened when I was working after 2 a.m.

My sustainable gang includes Lek, Eang, Yayoi, Kiyoko, Puk, Phii Djim, and Ono, most of whom I met in Laos. Thanks to them for endless support and for reminding me of the basic truth, “Tubtim, *bo pen yang*”. I want also to give special thanks to my friend, Pierre Dubeau for inspiring me in my youth to continue studies.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents. As farmers, they would prefer for their children to have a high education so that we do not need to get our hands and feet dirty anymore. But in fact the process did not involve air-conditioned surroundings. On the contrary, I found myself in villages behind the mountains (sometimes) with (always) bushes and no electricity. Thanks to Noun, my sister for looking after everything at home, allowing me to concentrate on my studies. For me as a practitioner, a Masters Degree does not turn me into an academic but I can feel it moving invisibly inside me.

Finally, I would like to recall the words of my dear and respected friend, Hmong village headman Pho Jeukao in response to my complaints over my studies when I went to see him at Nam Ngum in central Laos. “Tubtim”, he said with smile. “Many people who want to study cannot. You, daughter, have such a good opportunity. Learning is like counting the stars in the sky. The more you count, the more you see are there waiting to be counted”. My complaints pale in the wider context of all there is to gain, for myself and I hope for some others, in the process of learning that this thesis has entailed. Tomorrow I am going to make merit so that my further study for PhD (perhaps in next life!) will be successful and wish I could ask for the same teams of advisors and editors for their service again (^_^).

Kaneungnit Tubtim