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S. J. Tambiah

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IN NORTH-EAST THAILAND

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## PREFACE

From 1960 to 1963 I spent three happy and rewarding years in Thailand as a UNESCO 'expert' attached to the International Institute for Child Study (now called the Bangkok Institute for Child Study). The Institute was sponsored by UNESCO and the Government of Thailand. The greater part of my time was devoted to participating in a programme of multi-disciplinary research on problems wider in scope than the name of the Institute implies. The project that engaged most of my time and effort was the study, with the assistance of Thai colleagues and other UNESCO experts, of three villages in their regional setting. The villages were situated in the Central Plain, the North-east, and the North. My share of the work was wholly devoted to anthropological investigations relating to kinship, economy and religion. The material presented here pertains to the north-eastern village and its region and was collected in 1961-2 (and subsequently in the course of two long vacation trips made from Cambridge in 1965 and 1966). I express my grateful and warm thanks to two successive enlightened, energetic and stimulating Directors of the Institute, Professor Hugh Philp and Dr Lamaimas Saradatta, for supporting the study in every way, and to my other colleagues in the Institute, particularly Mr Tahwon Koedkietpong and Mr Aneckun Greesang, whose field assistance, co-operation, and friendship were invaluable in collecting, translating and interpreting the information. Much insight was also gained from my association with Mr Anders Poulsen, who has provided most of the plates that adorn this book. I hope that by dedicating the book to the Bangkok Institute for Child Study I can pay at least a fraction of my debt to my colleagues in Thailand, to UNESCO, to the Government of Thailand (particularly the Ministry of Education) and, most importantly, to the villagers and monks of Baan Phraan Muan who taught us something of their culture with patience, kindness and accommodation.

I came to Cambridge in September 1963 and it was there that much of the material was analysed and written up in first draft. In my writing I have received much intellectual stimulation and guidance from my friends and colleagues, particularly Edmund Leach (who has taught me most of the anthropology I know) and Professor Meyer Fortes.

I am also deeply grateful to the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences for affording me leisure, library facilities, editorial and secretarial assistance in order that I could complete the book. The meticulous and creative editorial assistance of Miss Miriam Gallaher is

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remembered with admiration. Thanks are also due to the secretarial staff in the Bangkok Institute, and in the Department of Anthropology at Cambridge, for typing assistance given at various stages of preparation. I thank my wife, Mary Wynne, for her patient and skilful editorial and bibliographical assistance and moral support.

The text contains numerous names and concepts which originate in the Sanskrit and Pali languages: their orthography follows the normal conventions of romanization but omits all diacritical signs. There are even more numerous references to Thai words, especially in the north-eastern dialect, for which no proper system of transcription into the roman alphabet has as yet been devised. I have therefore transcribed these words as best I could, omitting all diacritical marks.

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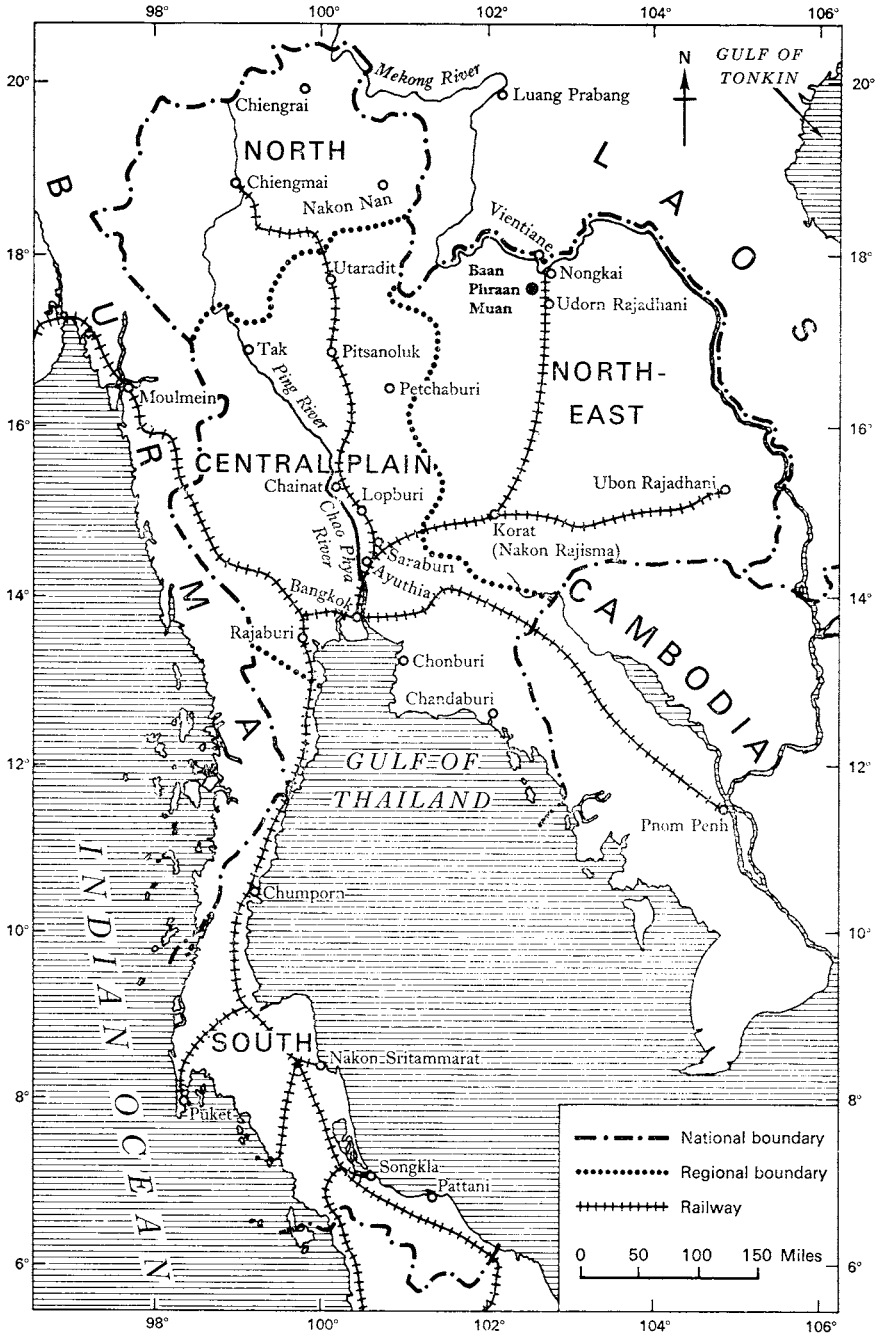


Fig. 1 Map of Thailand, showing natural regions and place-names