

CHAPTER 2

NATION AND LOCALITY

Pitsanoulouc, which the Portugueses do corruptly call Porselouc has formerly had hereditary Lords, like the City of Me-Tac: and Justice is at present executed in the Palace of the Ancient Princes. 'Tis a City of great commerce, fortified with fourteen Bastions, and is at 19 degrees and some minutes Latitude.
Simon de la Loubère 1693: 4.

The hamlet of Hua Kok straddles the Wang Thong river in north-central Thailand. Despite its apparent isolation from the outside world its inhabitants are deeply involved in wide-ranging chains of relationships which spread far beyond national boundaries. For present purpose it is sufficient to merely note the existence of these supra-national dimensions to life in Hua Kok. As for the national context, the state of Thailand, it is essential to review only those events and features which have direct bearing on the experience of the people studied or which form part of the background to my analysis of social organisation.

THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

Traditional Government and Administration

Until the revolution in 1932 Siam was ruled by absolute monarchs. Prior to the administrative reforms instituted in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the pattern of Thai kingship and government was similar to that found at certain periods in most of Southeast Asia with the exception of Vietnam. This pattern of political organisation was derived from India, as was the Hindu-Buddhist religious system with which it was usually associated. Unlike the structure of government of its predecessor, the state of Sukhothai, that of the kingdom of Ayuthaya (1350-1767) was greatly influenced by the system developed at Angkor prior to the eclipse of Khmer power in the latter part of the fourteenth century. The king became a *deva raja* and within the

9. The word group is sometimes said to have a special meaning for social anthropologists, that it stands for "a corporate body with a permanent existence" (Mair 1965: 13). Such a definition appears too restrictive on the following counts. Firstly, as Mair herself notes it is "almost impossible completely to avoid the use of 'group' for collections of people who do not form corporate groups" (ibid.). Secondly, great emphasis has been placed on the notion that corporate groups have a permanent existence. While such an emphasis is quite legitimate there are many aggregates which exhibit the characteristics of corporateness save for the assumption of permanence, even though they may be long lasting. Such groupings possess the characteristics of corporateness in being "a collection of people recruited on recognised principles, with common interests and rules (norms) fixing the rights and duties of the members in relation to one another and to these interests" (ibid.). Thirdly, the degree to which corporateness is carried may vary considerably as to the extent to which joint responsibility is admitted for the actions of any individual member, etc.

Boissevain has divided the many definitions of group into 'interactionist' and 'corporationist'. The former "base their definition of the group on intensity of interaction" whereas the latter "add such criteria as common interest, rights and obligations, organisation and structure to the criterion of consciousness of kind" (1968: 545).

10. Whatever their cultural origins the people of Hua Kok describe themselves as *thai thē thē*, genuine Thai.

11. These spheres of activity are similar to what Edward Jay has defined as 'fields'.

A field may be delineated by social, economic, political or other types of relationship. Hence I would prefer to speak of 'activity field' rather than 'social field' if a general term is needed. Thus an activity field of any given individual or group maintains a certain type of relationship. The boundaries of such a field are meaningful only with reference to the individual or group under consideration. The units of a field may be individuals, families, communities, or other social aggregates, but the field as such does not constitute a 'group' with corporate qualities and cohesiveness (1964: 138).

However, Jay's approach is unacceptable for reasons already enumerated in that he focuses on a "type of relationship" rather than the activities themselves.

Burmese (Mon) war captives settled in Siam were allowed to retain their own local village leadership (Graham 1924 vol. 1: 129), and Laotians were appointed to head provinces incorporated into Siam after the fall of Vientiane in 1828 (Vella 1957: 87). Had the official bureaucracy extended to the village level the increase in the number of officials would have been vast and the system would have been expensive and probably grossly inefficient. In these circumstances one may say of traditional Thai government that where control was impossible a considerable degree of freedom was recognised, the central government only taking action when its interests were directly threatened.

The general pattern of development in Thai administration until the end of the nineteenth century was the attempt to spread the net and bring the more distant cities in the kingdom under greater and more effective control. This policy included reducing vassal principalities to the status of provinces and replacing their ruling families by officials responsible to Bangkok. In this way the area under semi-direct rule was increased, but there was no attempt to take the formal institutions of government down to a lower level. The changes introduced by Chulalongkorn in and after 1892 were thus particularly important in establishing a new government bureaucracy which attempted to increase control over the rural population and incorporate it within the framework of a modern nation state.

Changes in Government and Administration

The fact that Thailand has been the only country in Southeast Asia to avoid direct colonisation by a European power is frequently emphasised. Government and administrative reforms in the latter part of the nineteenth century were both instigated and implemented by Thais with the aid of foreign advisors. The impact of European and American ideas on the governing elite was tremendous and, while many students have spoken of the continuity that resulted from the avoidance of colonisation, the introduction of a universalistic type of bureaucratic government and administration was a significant break with the past. In this context it is pertinent to note that though the reforms came from the top of the traditional Thai hierarchy the new models of government were derived from external sources, being based on British and other types of colonial administration.

The basic structure of the administrative system established in 1892 has been retained until the present day although the period of absolute monarchical rule ended with the revolution in 1932 (Riggs 1966: 117). That was engineered by a tiny group of intellectuals recently returned from Europe, notably France, and some other malcontents, most of whom belonged to the

armed forces (cf. Wilson 1962: 11-13). They succeeded largely because the drive for change inspired by the monarchy had lost its impetus and many who were not of royal blood but trained abroad found the channels for advancement closed to them. The democratic constitutional type of government established by the revolution did not last long; there was no tradition of participation by the populace in the choice of national leaders and the revolution had occurred with little reference to the masses. [2] Those who were finally elected to office had no experience of constitutional government and so the army soon took over. With the exception of a few brief intervals, factions of the armed services have controlled the country ever since. In 1966-67 Thailand continued to be in a state of Martial Law promulgated in 1958. The Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces had plenary executive power and the King exercised his legislative powers through an appointed National Assembly (*Thailand Year Book 1966-7: A 5*). All laws and commands relating to affairs of state had to be countersigned by the Prime Minister and one other member of the Council of Ministers.

For the purposes of administration the country is divided into seventy-one provinces (*changwat*) each with a Governor appointed by, and responsible to, superiors in Bangkok in the same way as are all other senior provincial and district officials. Phitsanulok is divided into seven districts (*amphōe*) and a city municipality. [3] The District Officers are immediately responsible to the governor and all belong to the Ministry of the Interior. Other subordinate officials in the provincial headquarters are appointed by their respective ministries in Bangkok though they are also subject to the authority of the Governor.

The District Officer (*nāi amphōe*) is assisted by subordinate officials drawn from the various specialist departments and ministries. Although possessing the formal authority to supervise and co-ordinate these functional specialists, in practice the District Officer may possess little control over them as they are also responsible to both their provincial heads as well as to superiors in Bangkok (Riggs 1966: 203). The senior officials in a district are rarely local residents and, since they change posts quite frequently, they tend not to become part of the local community whose affairs they administer. In these circumstances locally recruited junior officials may play an important role as intermediaries between the local inhabitants and the government.

Each district is divided into a number of *tambon*, a term usually inappropriately translated as commune. Its head is the *kamnan*, a part-time official who is supplied with a uniform and paid a small honorarium by the government. At the time of research the *kamnan* continued to be elected by the headmen (*phū yāi bān*) of the constituent administrative villages (*mū*

bān) of the commune. Prince Damrong's introduction of this form of local government was influenced by the British systems in Burma and Malaya as well as by traditional Siamese procedures (Siffin 1966: 72).

The old laws of the kingdom had instructed the governor to 'select a man of honesty and appoint him to be *nāi bān* (equivalent to *phū yāi bān*) in each district in consideration of his ability to supervise the inhabitants'. Under the the *thêtsaphibān* system, the substance of village government was to be different; the villagers were to be integrated into a governmental system which would no longer be merely exploitative, and they were to be positive participants in the effort to achieve peace, order, increased productivity, and better revenue collection. In keeping with this change in orientation, the villagers were to designate their own leader, and a group of village leaders were to choose a *kannan* from among themselves, for official appointment by the governor (Siffin 1966: 73). [4]

Today this system continues much as before; the *phū yāi bān* is elected by all the adult members of his village from a list of candidates which has been approved by the District Officer. The office is a part-time one, the headman receives a small monthly payment and a uniform. As was the case at the time of the reforms, the village (*mū bān*) is an administrative division and does not necessarily coincide with geographical and other boundaries. In 1965 there were 4,922 communes and 41,668 villages in Thailand. (*Changwat-Amphoe Statistical Directory 1965: F-1*).

Religion

The vast majority of the inhabitants of Thailand are Buddhist. Table 1 shows the break down in percentages of the total population of all religions.

Table 1: Population percentages for all religions

Buddhist		93.6
Islamic		3.9
Christian		0.6
Confucian		1.7
Other		0.1
Hindu	Under	0.1
None	Under	0.1
Unknown	Under	0.1

(*Thailand Population Census 1960, Whole Kingdom: Table 9*)

Most of those professing Islam are of Malay origin and live in the four southernmost provinces of Thailand. Christians tend to be concentrated in the north around Chiang Mai where missionary activity has been greatest. Only a small percentage of the Chinese are Confucians; Skinner estimated that in 1955 11.3% of the total population was Chinese (1957: 183). Although there are some Mahayana Buddhist temples, most Chinese adapt easily to the practices of the Theravada school of Buddhism found in Thailand, Burma, Laos, Cambodia and Ceylon.

Buddhism is the state religion, the king has to be a Buddhist but at the same time he is the protector of all religions and freedom of worship is granted. The Sangha, the community of bikkhus [5] or monks, is linked to the government by the Department of Religious Affairs which is part of the Ministry of Education. The most important functions of the Department are the organisation, in conjunction with senior bikkhus, of ecclesiastical education, the administration of Central Church Property and the maintenance of records (Bunnag 1973: 26). The structure of Sangha administration closely parallels that of secular government. The old regional (*phāk*) division has been retained but beneath it are units coinciding with the province, district and commune. Finally, there are the individual temples (*wat*) which in 1966 numbered approximately 24,105 (ibid.).

The present form of religious government dates from the Buddhist Order Act, 1962. The Supreme Patriarch is appointed for life by the King acting in consultation with senior members of the order. In turn, the Patriarch appoints, with the royal approval, senior bikkhus to form a Council of Elders which performs combined legislative, administrative and judicial functions. The Council is linked to the state through the Director-General of the Department of Religious Affairs who is its ex-officio Secretary-General. The line of authority devolves upon the respective heads of the *phāk*, provincial, district, and *tambon* administrations to the most junior ecclesiastical official who is abbot of an individual *wat* (cf. Bunnag 1973: 24-26; Ishii 1968: 870). An abbot used to have full authority over the affairs of his *wat* once he had been appointed by the *chao khana amphōe* or *chao khana changwat*. Nowadays his independence is limited by the tighter control exercised by the religious administration and, at least in theory, by the temple congregation which elects the lay members of a committee that manages many of the *wat*'s affairs.

THE RESEARCH AREA

Environment and Agriculture

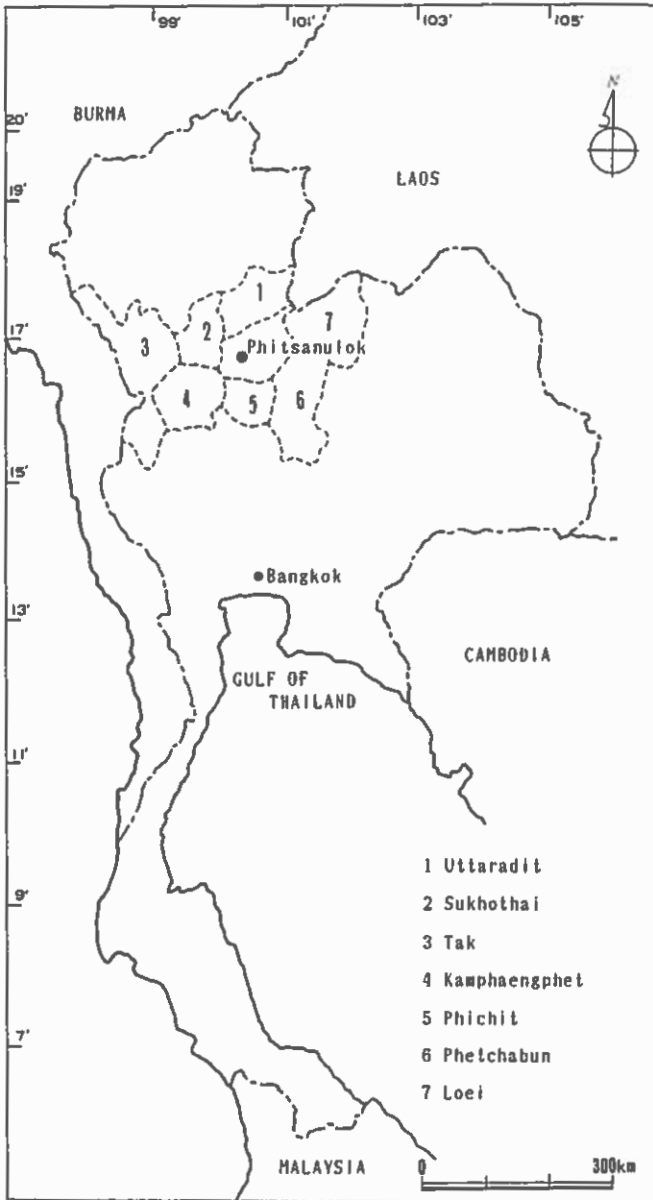
The city of Phitsanulok [6] is located 390 kilometres (240 miles) by rail from Bangkok. It is halfway between Bangkok and Chiang Mai, Thailand's second city and capital of the north. Phitsanulok is connected to the main north to south highway by a road running west through Sukhothai to Tak. The river Nan bisects the city and was traditionally the most important route to the south, joining the Ping and Yom rivers near Nakhon Sawan to form the Chao Phra Ya. [7] Pendleton designates the area north of the junction of the three rivers as the Upper Plain of the Central Valley. In this physiographic area:

three associated forms repeatedly occur; narrow plains of deposition along the rivers, low outcrops of rock and foothill lands protruding here and there through the plains of deposition, and finally, higher elevations including separate mountains and mountain ranges (1962: 39).

The alluvial soils of the Upper Plain are lighter than those of the Bangkok Plain below Nakhon Sawan. One readily observable result is the use of oxen for ploughing whereas they are not strong enough to plough the heavy clays further south.

The pattern and timing of the agricultural cycle in Thailand is mainly determined by the monsoon. Farmers in Phitsanulok province are more dependent upon local climatic conditions than those to the south. Below Nakhon Sawan much of the Chao Phra Ya valley is flooded every year during the rainy season from July to October and becomes a huge freshwater lake (Pendleton 1962: 38). In Phitsanulok the Nan and other minor rivers have cut deep into the earth and do not overflow regularly even at the peak of the rains. From Bangkok to Nakhon Sawan the annual rainfall decreases the greater the distance from the sea but Phitsanulok is fortunate in that the local rainfall is enhanced by its proximity to the northern mountains (ibid.: 118). However, this advantage is to some extent negated by the greater irregularity of rainfall caused by local features.

In the Central Region the average rainfall varies from 40 to 63 inches per annum (Nuttonson 1963: 13). [8] Figures collected at the meteorological station in Phitsanulok show a mean annual rainfall of 57.8 inches, but in sixteen available readings for the years 1927 to 1955 annual rainfall varied from 27.3 to 81.9 inches. [9] Most of the precipitation occurs within the wet season from July to October; very little falls in the other two seasons, the cool from November to February and the hot from March to around mid-July (ibid.: 10). This rainfall, even though concentrated within the agricultural



Map 1: Map of Thailand with Phitsanulok and surrounding provinces

growing season, is barely adequate for rice. Both in Thailand and the rest of tropical monsoon Asia, rice requires about 70 inches of rain during the growing and ripening period from June to November in order to produce the best yields (Pendleton 1962: 135).

For the reasons already outlined, local climatic and physiographical factors affect farming patterns in a number of ways. Broadly speaking the Phitsanulok farmer faces to a greater degree the same problems which beset farmers further south in the rice bowl of the country. Paddy fields tend to be located close to the major and minor rivers and a large part of the province is unfit for rice cultivation. [10] Where the land and water supply enable rice farming, the fields are frequently much smaller than those on the Bangkok Plain because of variations in ground level. Artificial irrigation is still relatively poorly developed though increasing use is being made of small imported pumps. Only one crop per year is grown and the introduction of double-cropping presents greater difficulties in this area than in the Delta because of the lack of water and absence of any natural replenishment of the soil's fertility by annual depositions of river silt.

Although rice is still the major agricultural product in Phitsanulok there has been a rapid increase in the amount of maize grown since the early/mid 1950s; before 1950 little maize was cultivated anywhere in Thailand (Brown 1963: 8). In 1966 1,218,573 metric tons of the crop were exported, bringing in a revenue of over 1,519,936 million baht (*Thailand Statistical Yearbook 1967-69*: 350). In the part of Phitsanulok province (Wang Thong District) in which fieldwork was conducted the maize is usually followed by mung beans, a leguminous soil-building plant which enables double cropping to be practised with only a very limited use of fertilisers (cf. Sato 1966: 130).

Demography

At the time of the 1960 population census the total population of Thailand was 26,257,916. By 1966 it was about 32 million, the annual rate of increase being just over 3%. In 1960 74.6% of the total population lived in agricultural households (*Thailand Population Census 1960, Whole Kingdom*: Table 1) and 81% of the economically active population of eleven years of age and over was involved in agriculture and livestock production. In Phitsanulok province the population in 1964 had reached 399,790 (*Phitsanulok City Council 1965*: 3). In 1960 when it was 351,642, 80.7% of the inhabitants lived in agricultural households and 84.25% of the economically active followed occupations connected with agriculture or livestock production. The dominance of these agricultural activities was even more pronounced in Wang Thong district where 44,011 (91.06%) out of a total population of

48,331 were classed as living in agricultural households (*Thailand Population Census 1960, Changwad Phitsanulok: Tables 1 & 19*).

Phitsanulok

At first sight there is little to suggest that Phitsanulok is an ancient city. The central area was completely replanned following a disastrous fire in 1958 so that only old temples and an occasional glimpse of the remains of the city wall hint of a notable past. The first city, *mīang song khwāe*, was about five kilometres to the south but the site was moved to the present one in the fourteenth century. During the Ayuthaya period Phitsanulok was of major significance as a bastion against Burmese incursions. It was a first class jurisdiction possessing considerable local autonomy and for twenty-five years (between 1463 and 1488) was capital of the whole kingdom. [11]

In the unsettled period following the fall of Ayuthaya to the Burmese in 1767 Phitsanulok was attacked and finally burnt after a four month siege in 1775 (*Phitsanulok City Council 1965: 7*). Thai sources indicate that the city was subsequently abandoned; Prince Damrong wrote in his account of Phitsanulok:

It was a stronghold in battle on many occasions. There were two fortified walls with the Nan river passing through the centre of the city. But in the end it was completely demolished in the Thonburi period or in the time of the first king of the present Bangkok period. This was because at that time they did not have enough troops to keep the town. They feared the Burmese as an enemy who might capture the city and use it as a base in waging war against the Thai. (B.E.2504: 9).

Huan Pinthuphant in a recent handbook on the area locates this evacuation as having taken place in the face of the Burmese invasion of B.E.2328 (1785) (1971: 24). Nevertheless, as the Chakri dynasty prospered so Phitsanulok was repopulated and once more became an important city. In 1834 it was visited by Bishop Pallegoix who estimated that the Siamese and Lao population numbered no more than 5,000. The principal occupation at this time was connected with the felling of teak and construction of log rafts which were floated down to Bangkok. On the city outskirts the Chinese especially had established large plantations of cotton and high quality tobacco (1854: 93).

As a result of the major administrative reforms launched in 1892 Phitsanulok became a *monthon* capital. [12] To-day it is the major city in the north-central region of the country. In 1966 it was the eleventh largest city with a population of 38,411 (*Thailand Statistical Yearbook 1967-69: Table*

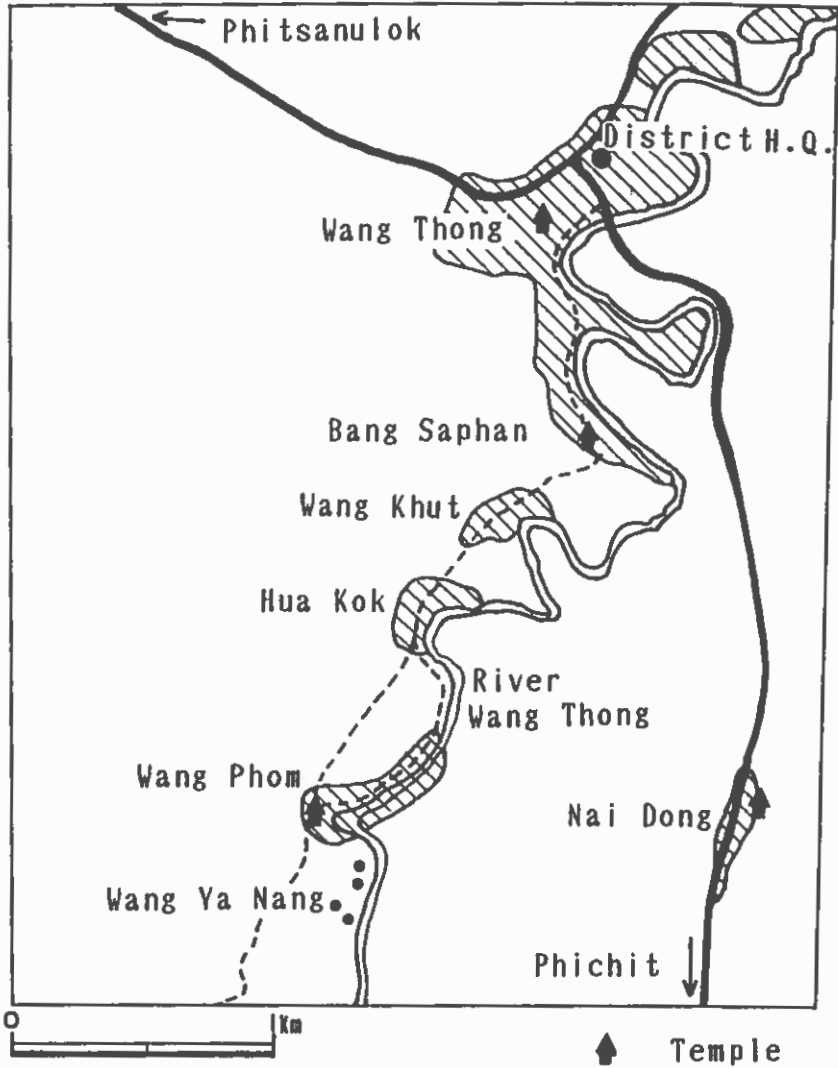
19). It derives much of its importance through being a communications centre (roads, railway and airport), with a large hospital and nurses' training school, teachers' training college and army head-quarters. The main temple, *wat phra sī ratana mahāthāt*, popularly known as *wat yāi*, the big temple, houses what some consider to be the most beautiful Sukhothai style Buddha image in Thailand, the *phra phutachinarāt*. The fair held there for a week in January is the major annual event in the city and is attended by tens of thousands of people from Phitsanulok and neighbouring provinces.

Wang Thong, District and Town

Wang Thong district lies to the east of Phitsanulok city. [13] It is bounded on the west by Bang Krathum and City districts, on the north by Nakhon Thai district, on the east by Loei and Phetchabun provinces and to the south by Phichit province. The total area is 2,307 sq. kms., only 14% of which was cultivated in 1965; there were then 8,282 agricultural holdings with an average size of 24.8 rai [one rai = 0.4 acre]. This figure was similar to the provincial average of 23.2 rai but the percentage of irrigated land was lower, 31% as compared with 41% (*Changwat-Amphoe Statistical Directory 1965: 8*). [14] Much of the land in the district is covered by mountain forest and considered to be unsuitable for cultivation by the usual techniques of the main crops, rice and maize.

The small market town from which the district takes its name is located 17 kms. east of Phitsanulok to which it is connected by an excellent all-weather metalled road. Communications were bad before its completion (the Phitsanulok to Lomsak highway) in 1956. Now there are regular bus services to the city and to Phichit along a laterite road which joins the highway at Wang Thong. The chief features of the town are the district offices, school, temple, market and river.

The market area consists of the large market building, open stall area and a number of permanent shops and restaurants. Warehousing operations are also located there and in surrounding parts of Wang Thong. Within this trading complex local farmers are able to buy most of the items they need. The river Wang Thong rises in the hills to the north-east of the town and flows south to eventually join the Nan; with the development of road transport it has declined in general importance. However, shops in the market are still restocked each year with large earthenware water jars and heavy pots brought by Mon boatmen. Other bulky goods such as salt are also delivered in this way, traders selling part of their stock to villagers along the banks as they proceed upstream. Yet another use of the river is to float huge rafts of teak logs from Wang Thong and Nakhon Thai down to mills in the



Map 2: Hua Kok and neighbouring settlements

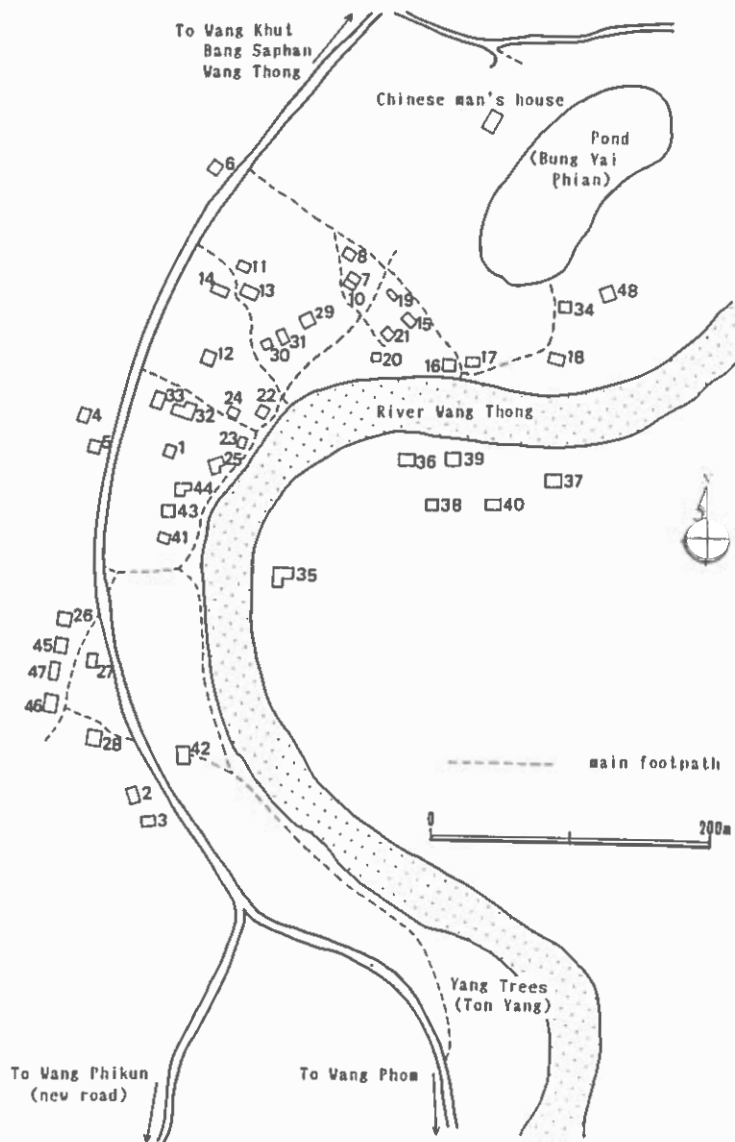
south. A recent development in river transport has accompanied the introduction of maize cultivation with dealers bringing their craft to buy direct from farmers in the riverside villages. The rice crop is not transported in this way but taken by truck to Phitsanulok or centres to the south. The river also has a seasonal importance in the transport of people. In the dry season it is too shallow but passenger boats operate in the monsoon rains when many of the small tracks are flooded.

From Wang Thong a small dirt road runs south along the west bank of the river. Settlement is continuous for one and three quarter kilometres. The road then turns inland behind the temple of Bang Saphan and continues through rice fields past Wang Khut, a small hamlet facing the river, to Hua Kok, the northern end of this settlement being 3.5 kilometres from Wang Thong market. Beyond Hua Kok it returns to the river bank after passing through about 200 metres of maize fields and orchards and continues through Wang Phom hamlet to *wat* Wang Phom. Between Wang Thong and Bang Saphan this road is usable throughout the year. Beyond the temple it becomes an ox-cart track and, despite recent improvements, a number of low lying places make its use by motor vehicles difficult if not impossible at times during the rainy season.

Hua Kok

At the end of December 1966 there were forty-eight houses in Hua Kok. Six were on the east bank of the river and the rest on the west bank along which the road runs. There is no obvious focal point to the hamlet, not even the river, as many houses are set back some distance away from it. Where houses are grouped together it is usually an indication that residents are closely related and that the cluster derives from the division of what was originally a large house site into smaller units on which children have built their own homes after marriage. The only permanent shop in Hua Kok is in the house of the village headman (no.6). He has the advantage of having two wives, one to work with him in the fields while the other keeps shop and prepares the food. The shop is a general store selling liquor, batteries, kerosene, dried peppers, fish-sauce, matches, sweets, soap, betel, etc., all the day-to-day necessities in which households are not generally self-sufficient.

With the exception of the shop-house and residence of the Chinese immigrant, all houses in Hua Kok conform to a general pattern though there are major variations in size and the materials used for construction. They are one storey high and raised between two and eight feet above the ground. Where possible, the space beneath the house (*tai thun*) is used for storing implements and carts or as a corral for livestock. It may also serve as a



Map 3: Hua Kok

(January, 1967)

(House numbers coincide with those on the genealogy.)

No house no.9 is shown because the members were living in house no.8 while preparing to build a new house.)

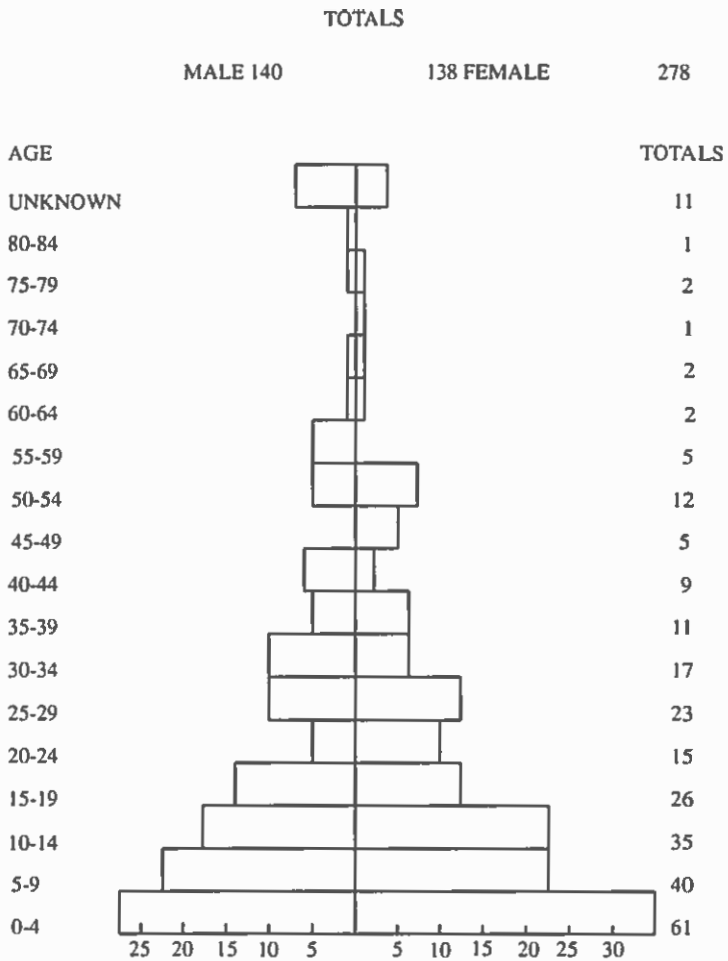
work/recreation area, especially during the hot season. Size and the materials used are a good indication of wealth; a house can be built without any significant cash outlay if the roof is of thatch, the main posts cut by the builder himself and the floor made of bamboo strips and matting. Small versions of this type of structure are often built out in the rice or maize fields as temporary homes during the agricultural season when the farm is far from the main house. Buildings may be improved by replacing the bamboo flooring with planks, which are usually bought in Wang Thong, and by the addition of a roof of corrugated metal. The best houses have walls of horizontal overlapping planks into which are set shuttered windows and doors allowing the main body of the house to be locked up when the occupants are away.

Most buildings are open on at least one side and all have a gallery in some form or other on which people spend much of their time when at home. Part of this usually forms the kitchen area. Cooking is on charcoal stoves and the household's water supply is stored in the large glazed jars kept on the gallery so that water from the roof may drain into them during the rains. In the dry season water is taken from the river or from a spring in the river bank in Wang Phom. Many of the larger houses have a lockable storeroom in which is kept sacks of milled rice, valuables and any domestic equipment not in everyday use. Unmilled rice, if stored before sale, is placed in a granary (*yung*) located at the side of the house. There are no longer any structures with the steep roof commonly considered typical of the Central Valley, the last one was replaced in the mid-1950s.

The accompanying map of Hua Kok illustrates the geographical distribution of houses in the hamlet. Forty-nine households have been distinguished although there were only forty-eight structures at the time for which the statistics are given. The group of people forming household 9 were living with relatives in house 8 after demolishing their old home. A new house was finally built and occupied in early 1967. Houses 7 and 10 were superficially a single building with a central gallery but in fact each half was separately owned: these were said by some to be a *riian faet*, twin house.

At the end of 1966 the total population of the forty-nine households in Hua Kok was approximately 278, an average of 5.7 persons per household. The chart (Figure 1) shows the breakdown of this population into age and sex categories. The most striking features are that half the population is under the age of 15 and that there is a surprisingly small number of people in the 20-24 age group. The former is an illustration of the very high national birthrate. A plausible explanation for the latter feature would be that the small numbers are in some way associated with the Second World War

Figure 1: Hua Kok estimated population and age distribution



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though I have no information on whether the Japanese occupation had any direct impact on villagers in this area.

The History of Hua Kok: A Conjectural Reconstruction

Although there are the remains of two abandoned temples in Hua Kok, of the Ayuthaya period or earlier, the hamlet is of fairly recent origin. The mode of resettlement has had an important and lasting effect on the patterning of social life within it and with neighbouring settlements. Examination of the genealogical record of residents showing the various ways in which most of them are related is most appropriate to the following chapter on kinship. However, it is also useful to refer to it (Figure 2) in conjunction with the following rather conjectural outline of the history of Hua Kok based on statements by some of the older people in the hamlet.

The area from Wang Thong southwards to Wang Phom and possibly beyond appears to have been heavily populated as evidenced by ruined temples. This population disappeared, probably as a result of the Burmese invasions associated with the fall and destruction of Ayuthaya in 1767. It may have been that people withdrew when Rama I abandoned the city of Phitsanulok in 1785 or, as is more likely, that they had earlier fled from or had been captured by the Burmese. That the latter was the case is indicated by the folk belief that the *ngīeo* (Shans) ravaged the area and by the discovery of old objects in places which suggest to present-day villagers that they had been hidden for safe-keeping by people expecting to return.

Whatever the cause or means by which the settlements were depopulated, the area reverted to forest. Resettlement must have commenced fairly quickly or perhaps a few remained because there is still an old pre-Bangkok era *bôt* [15] at Wang Thong temple (*wat talāt chum*). Had this building fallen into decay it would have been rebuilt rather than repaired as it is more meritorious to build new temples than repair the old. Thus one may guess that either Wang Thong itself was not completely abandoned or it was resettled fairly soon after the exodus.

The repopulation of Hua Kok originated from the north, that is, in a downstream direction and most of the early settlers of whom we have information had previously lived in Bang Saphan. No date can be obtained for the establishment of the first houses in Hua Kok but in about 1909, when Biab (house 7) moved to Hua Kok with her parents to join her mother's younger brother, there were only four or five houses and she remarked on the existence of tigers and wild pigs in the vicinity. Bang (house 13) came to Hua Kok between 1910 and 1915 and he also remarked on the small number of houses. It is important to note that even at this stage both Biab's parents

and Bang were able to clear forest in Hua Kok for large house sites but had to go further south to find land for rice cultivation. Bang cleared two plots of forest to make his paddy fields; the first is south-west of Hua Kok at the back of Wang Phom and the second is to the south of Wang Phom beyond the far end of that hamlet. The house site was originally 3.5 rai though in the past five years about one rai has been converted into a rice plot and the rest now contains the houses of Bang and three of his daughters.

The example of Bang closely parallels that of Biab's parents. They too cleared a large house site in Hua Kok but sought forest for their rice fields some distance south of Hua Kok, on the west bank of the river. Partly this was due to the quality of the soil: most, if not all of the land best suited to rice farming in the vicinity of Hua Kok had already been claimed by those living in Wang Thong and Bang Saphan. This land is on the west bank of the river, some distance inland; land near the river had not been claimed because it is sandy and less suitable for rice which thrives best on heavier soils. The ground along the river bank is also higher because of the sedimentation that occurs when the river overflows and flooding has gradually built the river bank up above the level of the surrounding countryside. The bank area is thus advantageous for settlement because of its relative dryness and proximity of the river both as a channel of communication and source of water. The latter is particularly significant in an area where the water-table drops to forty feet or so below ground level. In 1966 the river flooded for only one day when it poured through a cut-away section of the bank into the fields beyond, leaving the hamlet safely above the water level.

Probably for the same reasons as Bang, Biab's parents and others in Hua Kok did not move to Wang Phom where they would have been considerably nearer their fields. Similarly, people in Bang Saphan and Wang Khut did not move to Hua Kok when they had land there. At the start of the rainy season, when the ploughing takes place, a long string of ox carts passes through Hua Kok going south in the morning and returning in the early evening. Most of these carts belong to people from Wang Khut whose fields lie immediately south of Hua Kok. Many of the fields behind Hua Kok itself continue to be owned by people in Bang Saphan even if, as sometimes now happens, they are rented by families in Hua Kok. The overlapping pattern of settlement and rice field holdings probably arose because Wang Khut and Hua Kok were what might be described as colonies of Bang Saphan. Early inhabitants would have been involved in relations with the people of Bang Saphan which were too important to reduce or sever in favour of proximity to their fields. The first settlers in Hua Kok could, even in the early days, have moved to Wang Phom which is older than Hua Kok though it was then very small but many chose not to do so, presumably because it was just that little

too distant from Bang Saphan and Wang Thong. Just as existing social relations in the past affected settlement so present residence patterns and the distribution of land increase interaction between hamlets today. This is particularly so during the work season when people from other hamlets join co-operative work groups recruited by those in Hua Kok and vice versa.

So far almost all the settlement and claiming of farm lands that we have been considering took place on the west side of the river. On the eastern bank the land is less flat and unsuitable for paddy cultivation, so that what little was cleared was for other crops. In the latter part of the 1950s maize was introduced to Hua Kok and quickly adopted by many people, especially those who owned few or no rice fields. This led to the large-scale clearance of forest on land which until then had been unclaimed and without value. Those in Hua Kok who first became maize cultivators claimed the area immediately east of Hua Kok and others have subsequently moved further out and southwards. In some cases, when the forest was cleared the land became wetter and so was subsequently converted to paddy fields. The speed with which a new agricultural mode of life was adopted reflects both the existence of market opportunities and the full utilisation of available rice land in the immediate area. Despite the potentially high returns from maize farming, the higher risks involved and need for cash capital cause many farmers to indicate a preference for growing rice.

It is only slowly by a process of consolidation that a distinct neighbourhood of rice fields owned and farmed by hamlet members is being created. In this respect Hua Kok is significantly different from the riverine settlement of Lao Khwan in the nearby Phitsanulok district of Wat Bot. Clark Cunningham characterises Lao Khwan, which may equally be spoken of as a hamlet or village (cf. Ch. 1: Hua Kok - a Unit in Social Space?) as being of "middle age". Despite fairly continuous settlement along the river, each of the three neighbouring villages "is a discrete entity; each has a separately defined area of rice fields behind the village; each marks the limit for the formation of co-operative groups for aspects of rice farming" (1966: 10). The basis for the designation of middle age is that the "rice field area is fully cleared, well-developed, and productive, with only certain areas viewed as declining in fertility. People neither face problems of clearing new land (as in upriver villages) - though some distant land is being cleared for broadcast sowing - nor over subdividing of plots that requires throwing off population" (ibid.: 11). Hua Kok may be placed in the same category though it appears to be somewhat younger than Lao Khwan. However, the picture complicated by the way in which the settlement was colonised and by the rejuvenation prompted by adoption of a new type of land use.

Bang Saphan and Wang Phom

In the absence of a school, temple, or shops providing anything other than simple day-to-day requirements, the people of Hua Kok are forced into a series of interactions and relationships with the inhabitants of other places where the desired goods and services are to be found. These are most intense with those living in Bang Saphan and Wang Phom where they add to and reinforce existing relationships derived from kinship, contiguity, common economic interests and co-membership of common administrative divisions.

The two main attractions in Bang Saphan for people from Hua Kok are the temple and school. All Hua Kok children who go to school attend the one beside the *wat* in Bang Saphan. To date no child from Hua Kok has progressed beyond the compulsory four grades of primary education; should a child eventually do so, he or she would have to attend the secondary school located in Wang Thong. The temple at Bang Saphan while relatively small is the most important religious centre in the district. At present it is the residence of both the *chao khana amphōe* (the premier religious official in the district) and the *tambon* religious head, the *chao khana tambon*. In the Buddhist lenten period (*phansā*) upwards of twenty bhikkhus and a small number of novices are usually resident. Most of the ordinations in the district take place there because the present *chao khana amphōe* is the only bhikkhu qualified (*upachā*) to conduct ceremonies. Ordinations cannot be held at many temples in the district because they lack a *bōt*.

The small *bōt* in which ordinations take place is in the country style with a large plaster image of the Buddha. Most religious ceremonies which involve participation of the laity take place in the *sālā*, a raised, open-sided pavilion. The main *sālā* at Bang Saphan can hold several hundred people and has an elevated platform running the entire length of one side upon which the bhikkhus sit. A second *sālā* is surrounded by *kuti*, the living quarters of the bhikkhus, and becomes a classroom where religious studies are conducted during *phansā* when the *wat* is crowded. Other features of the *wat* compound include a modern well and a number of stupas (*chēdi*) containing ashes and various sacred objects.

Most of the inhabitants of the northern half of Hua Kok habitually attend *wat* Bang Saphan whereas those in the southern part of the hamlet tend to frequent *wat* Wang Phom. Such a division is by no means absolute, and those who usually attend *wat* Wang Phom are especially likely to go to Bang Saphan for ordinations and other major ceremonies which draw in a large congregation recruited from a wide area. While educational and religious ties with Bang Saphan are strong, commercial ties are weak. Generally speaking, people from Hua Kok ignore the commercial facilities in Bang

Saphan. The only major exception to this is patronage of a small rice-mill at which several Hua Kok households process paddy for domestic consumption.

The school in Wang Phom is at the side of the temple; though new the building is inferior to the one in Bang Saphan. The contrast between the two temples is even more striking. There is no *bōt* and the main *sālā* was in such poor condition that it was pulled down in mid-1966 in preparation for the construction of a new, enlarged building. The remaining structures are a drum-tower and a somewhat ramshackle *sālā* surrounded on three sides by *kuti*, on which all religious services subsequently took place. The eight or nine *kuti* were never fully occupied, even during the lenten period, and at other times usually only a single bhikkhu remained in residence.

The four or five shops in Wang Phom are similar to the headman's in Hua Kok. A couple of women supplement their shop incomes by seamstering and two very small rice mills process rice for local consumption. Wang Phom is about three times the size of Hua Kok, but other than possessing a school and temple it appears very similar to the latter. In this respect it contrasts noticeably with Bang Saphan which is considerably influenced by the proximity of Wang Thong market.

Notes to Chapter 2

1. From the seventeenth century onwards high officials were given an annual bounty by the king which became an expected part of their remuneration, but this remained a gift and not a payment for services (Siffin 1966: 32).
2. For the most detailed account of this period available in English see T. Mokarapong (1972) *History of the Thai Revolution*.
3. The province has subsequently been subdivided further, it now consists of 8 districts and a sub-district.
4. *Thēsaphibān* is "the system of territorial (or local) government" (Siffin 1966: 71; cf. Riggs 1966: 139).
5. Both SANGHA and BHIKKHU are Pali terms which have attained general acceptance and are therefore not italicised. The common usage of monk for one who is fully ordained as a *phra* is unsatisfactory in that this status is so different from its Christian counterpart. However, total avoidance of the word seems unnecessarily pedantic. The term bhikku was originally applied to mendicants in pre-Buddhist times but it later became a specific term for the followers of the Buddha. It is used for those who are over 20 years of age who have received the Higher

Ordination, such people are referred to by villagers as *phra*. Younger men may be given only the Lower Ordination and are called *nēn*, novices.

6. The word Phitsanulok is derived from the Sanscritic *Visnuloka*, The World of Lord Visnu or Narayana (*Phitsanulok City Council* 1965: 3).

7. Correctly the *māe nam chao phra yā*, commonly designated in atlases as the Menam (*māe nam*), Menam being the Thai word for river.

8. Nuttonson takes as the Central Plain of Thailand from Uttaridit southwards to the head of the Gulf of Siam.

9. Nuttonson 1963: 23. The mean annual temperature is 82.2 degrees F, with an absolute maximum of 105 degrees and absolute minimum of 46 degrees. The coolest months are November, December and January with an average absolute maximum temperature of 96 degrees and minimum temperatures of 60, 50 and 46 degrees. April and May are the hottest months with an average absolute maximum temperature of 105 degrees and minimums of 63 and 71 degrees F.

10. Indeed, even with the introduction of maize and production of vegetables near the city and orchards only 19% of the total area of the province was under cultivation (*Changwat-Amphoe Statistical Directory* 1965: 8).

11. A four-fold classification of types of local government indicated the relative importance of the various provinces and the degree of autonomy exercised by their governors. According to Quaritch Wales, Phitsanulok was the only first class province in the northern part of Siam (1965: 109).

12. The *monthon* was a sub-regional unit introduced in the reforms of Prince Damrong which consisted of several provinces placed under the authority of a commissioner.

13. Formerly it was combined with the present day Bang Krathum district as *amphōe pā māk*, Areca Palm Forest district (Phintuphant 1971: 143). The term *wang* which is also part of the name of several other riverine settlements refers to a loop in the course of the river. The original market was called *talāt chum* after its founder, a Chinese woman (war captive?) from Laos. The name was changed at the time of the formation of *amphōe Wang Thong*.

14. Although the proportions may accurately reflect differences the figures themselves appear inflated, probably because of the way the census questions were phrased. Rao and Kulpradist comment that they appear "unrealistic in relation to what the Royal Irrigation Department

reports" (1963: 8).

15. The hall standing within a consecrated area which is marked by *śemā*, boundary-stones. Ordinations can only take place within this building.