

# Acknowledgements

I have dedicated this book to three people. Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, friends for many decades, have made huge contributions to Thailand's cultural and political life through their research projects, books and journal articles, newspaper columns, op-ed pieces in the international press and public presentations. Chris, a Cambridge-trained historian who enjoyed a reputation as a specialist on Tamil India before he moved to Thailand and Thai studies, and Pasuk, a political economist who ventures forth fearlessly where few dare to tread, share their expertise and ideas with each other on everything from the black economy to literature and history. Their prize-winning English translation and exegesis of *Khun Chang Khun Phaen*, a folk epic that may be likened to the Japanese *Tale of Genji* and the Vietnamese *Tale of Kieu*, is a monumental work of scholarship. For years to come, scholars will be reading their translation and making their way happily through the forest of footnotes to learn of Siam's past and how the Thai elite codified the folk epic, preserving some themes but suppressing the parts for which it did not care. I salute Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit.

The other dedicatee, Pinyo Srichamlong (1934–2009), was a dear friend I met years ago in Krabi. We were both outsiders. I was an American Peace Corps volunteer assigned to the local boys' school as an English teacher; he had been exiled to the then remote province by the Ministry of Education for reasons I never understood. A native of Nakhon Si Thammarat and a proud graduate of Suan Kulap School, where he came second in his class, Pinyo was an author of short stories and novels and a poet of uncommon talent from an early age, who won competitions on Thai TV for his improvised verse (*klon sot*). He described himself truthfully as a 'champ', and a tribute at his passing called him a *nak leng* of the genre. He was steeped in the Thai literary canon and, on his visits to my bungalow behind the school, would regale me with tales of Siamese kings of yore and their literary accomplishments. He spoke often of his

poet-hero Sunthorn Phu. I imagined that Pinyo had been transported by a time machine from an earlier century where he composed poems in the court of a Siamese prince. He was what the Australian language calls a *larrikin*, a maverick with little regard for convention. I would arrive at school on Monday mornings to hear the teachers' disapproving reports of Pinyo's embarrassing exploits in the market over the weekend.

Pinyo's historical novel, written when he was a young man, dramatised the life of Khun Phrai, a courtier in the early seventeenth century who was born into a modest family and worked his way up to minor noble rank in the palace only to be cheated and abused. He fled to take up the outlaw life. To community acclaim, he freed people held in bondage, joined a gang of pirates and returned to civilisation to successfully defeat his enemies. When challenged to defend the veracity of his seventeenth-century account, the novelist demurred and quoted Napoleon: 'What is history, but a fable agreed upon?' (Pinyo 1994: 7–10; Phanida 1997: 111). Pinyo was witty and lots of fun, but his own life was no romance. He had problems with money, was always in trouble with his bosses and his *larrikin* behaviour deprived him of the literary awards he expected and deserved. His daughter, Sriyapha Srichumlong, has been a loving custodian of his legacy.

This project is the most collaborative I have ever undertaken, and I have many people to thank for their help. Nasan and Chanthip Phantarakrajchadech took time to talk about their father and shared not only information about his life, but also an understanding of the world in which he lived. Samphan Kongsamut, Khun Phan's most prolific biographer, also spent many hours telling me about his interviews with the southern policeman.

Patrick Jory, Kasem Jandam, Jirawat Saengthong, Suwit Maprasong and Wannasan Noonsuk introduced me to the mid south and its society that they know so well. It would take many pages to explain what 'Sem, a poet and international scholar of birds' nests, has taught me about the region where he was born. Davisakd Puaksom, also from the mid south, took me on an unforgettable journey with his students through northern provinces, where we visited monasteries and the Nam Phi iron mine. In Uttaradit, where the southern policeman acquired his Red Sword, we planned to visit a spirit medium at Mueang Laplae who channels the eighteenth-century warrior Phraya Phichai, but we just missed her. She had departed to conduct a *séance* near the Bangkok airport.

Nick Cheesman, Patrick Jory, Maurizio Peleggi, Peter Zinoman, Jim Ockey, Ronit Ricci, Maria Myutel and David Chandler read drafts of chapters and enthusiastically shared their reactions. Over the years, I have had productive conversations about the project with Davisakd Puaksom, Chalong Soontravanich, Thongchai Likhitphonsawan, Charnvit Kasetsiri, Sujit Wongthes, Varunee Otsatharom, Villa Vilaithong, Suphot Jaengraew, Atthachak Satayanurak, Saichol Satayanurak, Paritta Chalermpow-Koanantakool, Roger Hillman, Samson Lim, Thak Chaloehtiarana, Chatthip Nartsupha, Jakkrit Sangkhamanee, Tamthai Dilokvidyarat and Poonnatree Jiaviriyaboonya. In the course of my research, colleagues suggested what I should read and gave me books, journal articles and newspaper clippings to make sure I read the material. Lindsay Falvey sent me, out of the blue, a book about bullfighting in the mid south.

Conversations with these colleagues and friends often brought to the surface ideas and connections I had not thought of, and I shamelessly picked these up and made them my own in what I was writing. Some people simply asked sharp questions, forcing me to consider something I had ignored. Even now, I can remember scraps of conversation that gave me insights into the southern policeman's world. Archaeologists at Sujit's Ruen Inn dinner table suggested that I should read Mana Khunweechuay's remarkable environmental and political study that set me on the right path. Simon Creak once expressed in a concise sentence what I was trying to say in the whole book. I must acknowledge the last communication I had with the late Benedict Anderson: a lengthy, good-natured and typically provocative challenge to my ideas that has never left my mind since I received it in 2011. Among the many people who saw value in the project and offered encouragement were Sulak Sivaraksa, Tej Bunnag, Ronit Ricci, Chris Baker, Pasuk Phongpaichit, Tyrell Haberkorn and the late Ian Proudfoot. Suzanne Davey and Ahmad Farshid provided invaluable assistance that made it possible to go forward at a critical time. Warm thanks to all the Gazys for good fellowship in their busy home.

My colleague at The Australian National University, Chintana Sandlands, who was born into a police family in Nakhon Si Thammarat, answered endless questions and in so doing passed on her insights into what made Khun Phan an effective policeman. I could not have completed the book in its present form without convenient access to the National Library of Australia in Canberra and its magnificent Thai-language holdings. The former head of the Thai section, Saowapha Viravong, and her successor, Chenwilai (Jane) Hodgins, as well as Vacharin McFadden and Suthida

Whyte helped in inestimable ways. In 2012, I benefited from a Harold White Fellowship at the National Library of Australia that allowed me privileged access to the Thai collection and the expertise of library staff.

Early in the project, Sue Rider suggested I could embed audio-video clips in the book as an auxiliary medium to tell the southern policeman's story, and Nicholas Farrelly, who was enthusiastic about this idea from the outset, was instrumental in bringing it to fruition. In late 2017, I spent two days in Nakhon Si Thammarat with Khun Tanavit and his HD Team Production crew filming monasteries, monuments, statues, parks, the Songkhla lakes, the Khrua Thale restaurant and the surrounding countryside. Kasem Jandam and Piyachat Suongtee, who accompanied us, were able to open doors with their native proficiency in the southern Thai dialect and, in one place where we were filming, were able to get us out of a sticky situation. I thank Alex Nichols in the College of Asia and the Pacific marketing unit for her cooperation and Peter Mahon for studio filming. Oliver Friedmann devoted many hours to crafting the audio-video clips that accompany each chapter. He worked through a busy schedule in difficult circumstances, and I appreciate his energetic and expert contribution to the publication.

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'He doesn't argue, he tells'—a statement once made by an art critic about painting—was a dictum I took to heart while formulating my ideas and expressing them in words. The statement is quite contrary to the instructions supervisors in the humanities and social sciences give to their thesis students, who are urged to present an argument. As Sue Rider, my spouse, knows all too well, this project has taken a long time to complete. A lover of live radio, podcasts and interviews with academics who can speak to a wider audience, she has urged me to write in a way that is accessible to non-specialists and to put myself into the policeman's story wherever it seemed appropriate. I have tried to heed her advice and abjure scholasticism. Our sons, Simon and Oliver, will finally be able to find out why the southern Thai policeman was so important to their father.



Map 1 Thailand

Source: ANU CartoGIS.



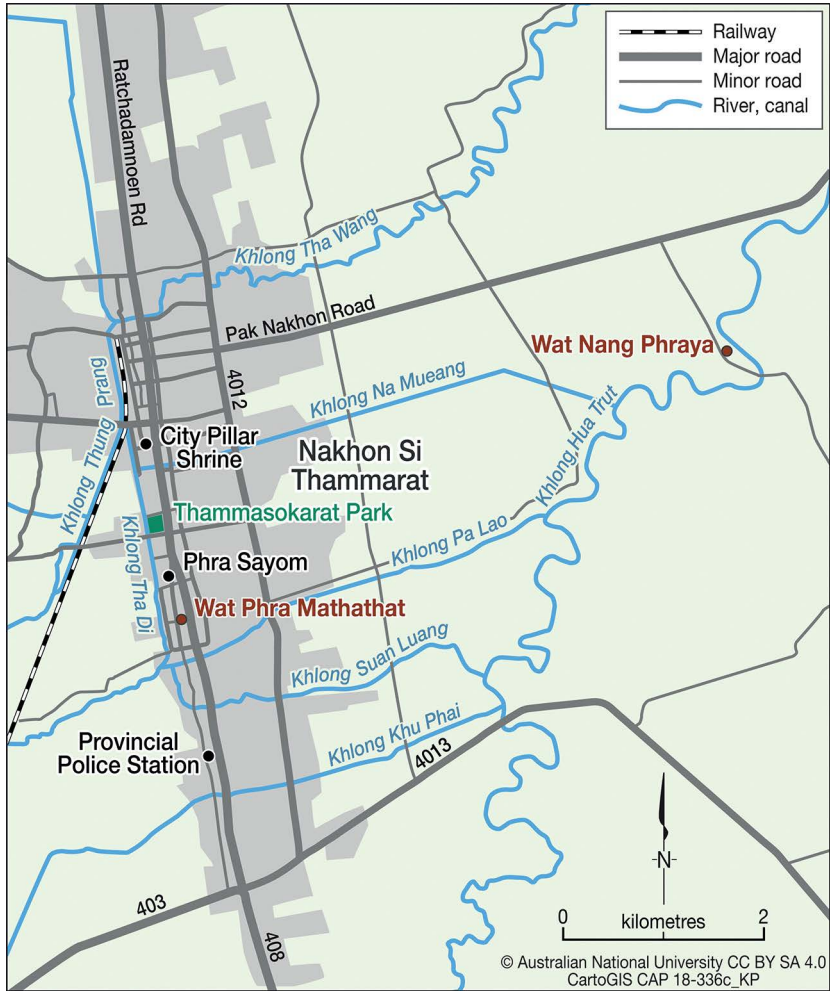
Map 2 Thailand's mid south

Source: ANU CartoGIS.



Map 3 Thailand's mid south from Crawford 1967 [1828], courtesy of Christopher Joll

Source: ANU CartoGIS.



Map 4 Nakhon Si Thammarat town

Source: ANU CartoGIS.



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