

Acknowledgements

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However benign and philanthropic they may be in supporting research, even by the unimportantly impecunious, research institutions, funding agencies, and universities do not — at least in my own experience — act out of some anonymous impulse. I therefore feel compelled to acknowledge my debt of gratitude to Professor Kernial S. Sandhu, Director, ISEAS, for his unflinching but always unobtrusive support, patience and, if I may say so, a realisation that the “art of the possible” is possible; Peter Geithner of the Ford Foundation for initial encouragement; Wolfgang Wittwer of the Stiftung Volkswagenwerk for his interest and considerable patience; E.C. Chapman who, as consultant to the UNU-CMU Project (and another master of the “art of the possible”) made the UNU Fellowship indeed possible; and James J. Fox (yet another master of what can be made possible) for administering extreme unction, as it seemed then, in the form of the grant from the Director's Discretionary Fund, RSPacS.

Theses are, of course, written under supervision of one sort or another and, just as it is usual to acknowledge one's intellectual debt to one's supervisors, it is also usual to absolve them of any shortcomings and deficiencies. I do not see why this should be so. Apart from a certain fallaciousness in the reasoning that underlies this reprehensible practice, it seems rather unfair that they should

share in any credit, if there is any, and yet be excused from blame, should it come to that. I therefore feel obliged to say that I am profoundly indebted to my supervisors, Ted Chapman, James J. Fox, and Gehan Wijeyewardene, for all that I have been privileged to learn from them and that this thesis is in large part a testimony of the intellectual debt I owe them; but, if there are any shortcomings and deficiencies in it, we are all collectively responsible. This may not be a refraction of some Theravada Compact, but it certainly makes good Durkheimian sense.

Nevertheless, there is also a great deal else for which I am grateful to them which, as with all that I have learnt from them, made everything worthwhile. Not being a practitioner of the art of the possible, I consequently find it impossible to express it all, but some things seem to stand for everything else, rather like dominant symbols and the totality of the ideological structures which, as I claim, they uphold and help to reproduce. They are: with Ted, an introduction to the mysteries of field-book-and compass-traverses and elementary map-making at Kioloa, an initiation into the somewhat complex and confusing world of applied research in Northern Thailand, an awareness of the importance of commonsense, a fear of prolix, and the question of Karen identity; with Jim, an introduction to the ethnography of the societies of Eastern Indonesia, the critical roles of the Head of the Earth, **ina**, and **ama**, the issue of procreative models, and occasionally relentless “bemused” questioning; with Gehan, Meskin functions, a pathological fear of sociological fallacies, a painless introduction to Chiang Mai and **kham myang**, that things like **Ayutthaya maa tii Chiang Mai** are worth thinking about, Northern Thai cuisine, olive planting and an introduction to chain saws (fortunately well away from the forests of Northern Thailand), and epistemological problems. There is in all of this another debt I owe them, and Professor Sandhu as well, rather more difficult to express; it is of the kind that generally leaves prodigal sons thoroughly abashed. That, perhaps, comes closer to saying all of it.

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Fieldwork in Chiang Mai is, I believe, always regarded by the old Chiang Mai hands, or most of them anyway, as an extremely rewarding and pleasant experience. Though I may not have eaten as much rice as they have had salt, and presumptuous though it may seem, that too has been my experience. Much of it was due to Cecilia Ng Siew Hua to whom I owe amongst a great many other things an interest in Karen clothes and cloths even if they may not appear to be splendid symbols, Donald Gibson for his friendship and hospitality, Thra Phy and Thra My Phi Ta Moo for showing me what being Karen meant to them, and Phongwattana Na Chiang Mai. It would be remiss of me if I did not also mention

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