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### **Small Muslim settlement in the village of Sao Phao**

This note relates something that maybe should have been noted in my PhD thesis (I can't recall now if it was but I doubt it). I feel a little bad about not relating this fact in the thesis but not too bad.

My study area was located on the beach. It was made up of two villages, numbers One and Two, in the Tambon ("sub district" or "sub county"). The beach side was about five kilometers long. At either end of the beach was the mouth of a small stream. Each stream mouth served as both a natural and political boundary. The southern mouth was called "Paak Duad", "mouth boiling", so named because of all the small eddies through broken mud and sand. On one side of the stream and stream mouth was Village Two. On the other side was another village in another Tambon and Amphoe ("district", like a county). The northern mouth was "Paak Tha Maak", "mouth with a dock for selling maak and other goods". Both sides of the stream and mouth were in the same Tambon and Amphoe. My side was mostly Village One of my study area while the other side was mostly Village Seven. However, the boundary was not always clear to me or the residents. At the time, the boundary didn't matter much because the land was swampy and not worth much. Now it might matter a lot.

At Paak Duad (south), but not at Paak Tha Maak (north), was a small settlement of Muslim fisher people. The number of houses varied from about 10 to 20. The total population might have been 100 people. I never did a formal survey. Most of the houses were built of fronds and bamboo. Legally, these Muslims belonged in Village Two but culturally and politically they remained apart. They did not have a mosque. They had some people who knew a bit more about Islam and so served as modest leaders. They were not strict or observant Muslims. Their cultural-ethnic background is not clear. They spoke Southern Thai but they also had words from other languages. I could not judge how well they spoke Southern Thai. I did not know enough to tell if they were Malaysian in background. Physically they were small, more like the small curly-haired hunting people of the mountains rather than like the Malays. They never voted in elections, and never participated in general community activities. The settlement did not have a name that I knew other than "Paak Duad". The individual people did not appear in censuses although I think the settlement at Paak Duad might have been noted at government offices. Few of the 2000 plus Buddhist residents knew any of these people as individuals. I got to know some, and they always knew me. Sometimes they worked for a good friend of mine (not named here) doing odd jobs, mostly coconut processing, and separating crab meat from shell for sale at a market. I have only pleasant memories of talking to them and eating with them.

I found small clusters of Muslim fishers at many mouths of small streams all over Southern Thailand. There might have been such a settlement a long time ago at Paak Tha Maak but they got displaced by Buddhists. I did not know if once a long time ago the settlement at Paad Duad was bigger but had dwindled by being displaced. I got to know some of the Muslims at other small villages but not systematically. I think all of them knew about me. There was a very large Muslim settlement at the local District (Amphoe) capital of Sichon (Sichol).

I hoped one day to return to find out more about several of these settlements. I hoped to do them justice at that time. That would have been better than mentioning them in a note in my thesis, or mentioning them here. For many reasons, I was never able to return to survey the settlements of Muslims along the coast and do them right. I regret that. Eventually my wife and I did work a year in a large Muslim fisher village further south. I hope that helps.

I am fairly sure I did mention this Muslim settlement to at least two people on my thesis committee but nothing came of it. I am not sure why nothing came of it, but, if there was any oversight, that was my fault. I think my committee believed I would return to do it right because I had just spent almost three years in the field. Alas.

Because of big changes in the economy and ecology, I doubt that small settlement exists anymore. I am sure most of the small ones have vanished, and it would be impossible to recover a good history now. I wish the Muslims luck.