THE NATURE OF THAI VILLAGE NAMES: A CASE STUDY OF KANCHANABURI PROVINCE

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1. Introduction

Hymes (1964:176) defined the investigation of the toponym as "the study of linguistic designations for places and other aspects of geographical reference." To this he added that

> Often the interest is historical or local curiosity, but especially when approached in terms of structural analysis, involving the organization of such designations into sets and on the basis of underlying components, the topic broaches the problems of spatial orientation in general, both as a cognitive activity and a factor of social life and cultural values.

Also Franz Boas in his article "On geographical names of the Kwakiutl Indians" (1964:171) stated that "geographical terminology does not depend solely upon cultural interests, but is also influenced by linguistic structure."

So far, there is no study of toponyms, specifically those concerning the village names of the Western region of Thailand[1]. Therefore, the aims of this paper are: 1) to analyze the linguistic structure of village names in Kanchanaburi Province[2], 2) to set up dimensions or categories of meaning of the generic nouns used in the village names and 3) to see the spatial orientation of the village names in Kanchanaburi.

2. The Data

The village names studied below are drawn from a complete list of names in **Tham-niap Thongthii 2535BC** (2535:55-74)[3] (**Provincial Records 1992**, 1992:55-74). It

states that Kanchanaburi has 10 amphoes (10 districts) and 1 king-amphoe (1 sub-district) as follows:-

1. Amphoe Muang Kanchanaburi	88	mubaans (villages)
2. Amphoe Thaa-ma-kaa	130	mubaans (villages)
3. Amphoe Thaa-Muang	98	mubaans (villages)
4. Amphoe Boo-Ploy	83	mubaans (villages)
5. Amphoe Pha-nom-thuan	127	mubaans (villages)
6. Amphoe Sai-yook	52	mubaans (villages)
7. Amphoe Thong-pa-pum	38	mubaans (villages)
8. Amphoe Sang-khla-buri	19	mubaans (villages)
9. Amphoe Lao-Khwan	61	mubaans (villages)
10. Amphoe Sii-sawat	29	mubaans (villages)
11. Amphoe Daan-makham-tia	36	mubaans (villages)
The total corpus for this study is	761	village names.

3. The linguistic structure of village names in Kanchanaburi Province

In his article, Boas (1964:171-176) illustrates how the affixation in Kwakiutl expresses "the specific location of a place," and "the range of concepts," that is, how the geographical names "[are] influenced by linguistic structure." He also compares the structure of the Kwakiutl geographical terms with those of other American Indian groups, especially the ones that use compounding to express concepts which can co-occur with place names. In his own words "...the form of each language limits the range of terms that can be coined."

As is known, Thai is dominantly a monosyllabic language. Unanalyzable polysyllabic words also exist. Moreover, word-compounding and reduplication are very productive procedures in Thai. Modifiers follow the words they modify and, of course, the possessor follows the possessed. And Thai has prepositions. While its morphology differs from that of English, the Thai sentence has the same basic order as that of English, i.e., Subject-Verb-Object. Thus, we can say that Thai is typologically a (SVO/Pr/NP/NA) language.

Given that there is no productive inflection in Thai and that compounding is a very lively process, Thai village

names should reflect this linguistic special structure. From the 761 village names in Kanchanaburi, the findings are:

1. One single noun, a preposition or an adjective. There are just a few village names of this construction. Examples are:

บ้านบึง (*bâan* 'a village'[4] - *bɨŋ* 'a large swamp'), บ้านดอน (*bâan* 'a village' - *dɔɔn* 'highland'), บ้านนอก (*bâan* 'a village' - *nɔ́ɔk* 'outside'), บ้านใน (*bâan* 'a village' - *nay* 'inside'), บ้านใหม่ (*bâan* 'a village' - *mày* 'new'), บ้านงาม (*bâan* 'a village' - *ŋaam* 'beautiful'), etc.[5]

2. Two nouns. Both of the two nouns are monosyllabic, the first noun being usually geographical terminology, plant or animal names, or gathering places, and the second noun a plant or animal name or geographical terminology, for example:

หนองทราย (*nɔ́ɔŋ* 'swamp, lagoon, large pool' - *saay* 'sand'), บึงหล่ม (*bɨŋ* 'a large swamp' - *lɔ̀m* 'a muddy place'), โคกไผ่ (*khôok* 'mound, knoll' - *phày* 'bamboo'), ดอนงิ้ว (*dɔɔn* 'highland' - *ŋíw* 'cotton tree, bombax malabaricum'), ต้นมะพร้าว (*tôn* 'tree' - *maphráaw* 'coconut'), ตลาดลูกแก (*talâat* 'market' - *lûukkææ* 'unknown meaning')

3. Two nouns. The first noun is a monosyllabic noun of geographical terminology or plant name and the second noun is a compound noun, for example:

บึงหัวแหวน (*bɨŋ* 'a large swamp' - *hǔa* + *wǽæn* 'head + ring'), ดอนเตาอิฐ (*dɔɔn* 'highland' - *tau* + *ʔìt* 'stove + brick'), ตอไม้แดง (*tɔɔ* 'stump of a tree' - *máy* + *dææŋ* 'tree + red')

4. Two nouns and adjectival modifiers or prepositions. The first two nouns are usually monosyllabic nouns expressing geographical terms. The third word, which expresses a signifying characteristic, shape, age or direction, modifies the first two head nouns. For example:

หนองบางเก่า (*nɔ́ɔŋ* 'swamp, lagoon, large pool' - *baaŋ* 'waterway, locality along a waterway' - *kàw* 'old'), วังลานใต้ (*waŋ* 'a deep pool (in a large body of water)' - *laan* 'an open,

wide, level area' - *tây* 'south'), ท่าไม้ยาว (*thâa* 'port, harbor, pier, wharf, landing' - *máy* 'wood' - *yaaw* 'long'), หินดาดตะวัน ออก (*hǐn* + *dàat* 'a rock ledge' - *tawan?ɔ̀ɔk* 'east')

There are also some villages in Kanchanaburi that have Sanskrit or Pali names or modifiers of the head nouns of the names, for instance:

เจริญทรัพย์ (*caraan* 'to progress, advance' - *sáp* 'wealth, money, treasure'), ศรีมงคล (*sǐi* 'splendor, beauty, excellence' - *moŋkhon* 'auspicious sign'), หนองศรีมงคล (*nɔ̌ɔŋ* 'swamp' - *sǐi* 'splendor, beauty, excellence' - *moŋkhon* 'auspicious sign'), สระเศรษฐี (*sà* 'pool, pond' - *sèet-thǐi* 'rich person'), ดอนสมบูรณ์ (*dɔɔn* 'highland' - *sǒm-buun* 'to be abundant, plentiful'), etc.

One can thus summarize the linguistic structure of village names in Kanchanaburi Province as follows:
    1. About 90% of 761 village names in Kanchanaburi consists of two nouns, the first word is monosyllabic word, the second word may be a monosyllabic word or a compound word.
    2. Most of the two-word village names consists of a noun and a noun, a few consists of a noun and an adjective or a preposition.
    3. If there is the third word in a village name, the third is usually a modifier of the first two nouns.
    4. The word order of words in a village names follows the basic word order of the linguistic structure of the Thai language, i.e., a head noun followed by a modifier. And the compounding process is also very productive in the naming of villages.

4. Semantic dimensions of the village names in Kanchanaburi province
    Based on meanings of the generic nouns that are the first or the head words of village names[6], there are five major categories or dimensions as follows:

4.1 "Geographical Features" Dimensions. This category can be divided into three sub-categories.

4.1.1 Water, a source of water or a section of water. There are 319 village names beginning with the following 15 noun morphemes:-

แก่ง	[kæ̀ŋ]	'rapids'
น้ำ	[náam]	'water'
บ่อ	[bɔ̀ɔ]	'well, pond, pit, mine'
บึง	[bɨŋ]	'large swamp'
ปลัก	[plàk]	'mud hole, mud puddle'
พัง	[phaŋ]	'well, puddle'
พุ	[phúʔ]	'water spout'
แม่น้ำ	[mæ̂æ-náam]	'river'
ราง	[raaŋ]	'groove, trough'
ลำ	[lam]	'course-way, passageway'
วัง	[waŋ]	'a deep pool (in a large body of water)'
สระ	[sàʔ]	'pool, pond'
หนอง	[nɔ̌ɔŋ]	'swamp, lagoon, large pool'
ห้วย	[hûay]	'brook, stream, creek'
อ่าง	[ʔàaŋ]	'reservoir'

4.1.2 Elevated land area is usually an area of land of relatively higher elevation compared to surrounding areas. Seventy four villages in Kanchanaburi begin with one of the following 7 noun morphemes:

โคก	[khôok]	'mound, knoll'
ดอน	[dɔɔn]	'highland'
เนิน	[nəən]	'knoll, mound'
เขา	[khǎw]	'mountain, hill'
พนม	[phanom]	'mountain' (Khmer)
ภู	[phuu]	'mountain, a shorten from of *phuukhǎw*'

4.1.3 Other geographical areas. There are 135 village names in this sub-category. Three morphemes in this sub-category have to be defined in terms of a body of water.

เกาะ [kɔ̀ʔ] 'island'
แหลม [lɛ̌æm] 'cape, peninsula'
ท่า [thâa] 'port, harbor, pier, wharf, landing'

The next three morphemes are generic noun signifying lowland or basin. They are:

ทุ่ง [thûŋ] 'field, meadow, open field'
ลาด [lâat] 'slope, incline'
ลุ่ม [lûm] 'lowland, basin'

The two more noun morphemes referring to land areas along the canals, rivers or seas are:

ตลิ่ง [talìŋ] 'bank (of a river or canal)'
หาด [hàat] 'beach'

In this sub-category also belong to the four noun morphemes referring to an opening or a passageway through land or water. They are:

ช่อง [chɔ̂ŋ] 'opening, hole (through something)'
ตรอก [trɔ̀ɔk] 'lane, alley'
สะพาน [saphaan] 'bridge'
โกรก [krɔ̀ɔk] 'gorge, ravine, gully, canyon'

The last four in this sub-category are:

โป่ง [pòoŋ] 'salt-lick, a place in which the earth is saline'
ถ้ำ [thâm] 'cave'
หลุม [lǔm] 'hole'
หิน [hǐn] 'rock'

4.2 "Non-geographical Features" Dimension. There are 7 sub-categories as follows:

4.2.1 Plants. There are 46 village names that begin with plant names or common nouns referring to plants or plant parts, e.g., บ้านต้นมะพร้าว (*bâan* 'a village' - *tôn* 'a classifier for 'tree'' - *maphráaw* 'coconut'), บ้านไทรงาม (*bâan* 'a village' -

say 'bunyan tree' - *ŋaam* 'beautiful'), บ้านดงไม้แดง (*bâan* 'a village' - *doŋ* 'jungle' - *máaydææŋ* 'red+wood'), etc.

    4.2.2 Animals. Only 2 village names begin with animal names. They are บ้านจระเข้เผือก (*bâan* 'a village' - *cɔɔrakhêe* 'crocodile' - *phĭak* 'white'), บ้านกระต่ายเต้น (*bâan* 'a village' - *kratàay* 'rabbit' - *tên* 'to dance').

    4.2.3 Uncultivated or cultivated lands. Generic nouns in this sub-category refer to land areas having to do with vegetation, whether it is not cleared for cultivation or whether it is cleared for cultivation. There are 26 village names in Kanchanaburi Province beginning with one of the following noun morphemes:

ไร่	[rây]	'farm, plantation'
นา	[naa]	'paddy field'
ป่า	[pàa]	'forest'
ดง	[doŋ]	'jungle'
ชัฏ	[chát]	'dense jungle, deep forest (mostly used in written literature)'
ไพร	[phray]	'forest, jungle'
พง	[phoŋ]	'brush, thicket'

    4.2.4 Constructed objects or gathering places. Common noun morphemes refer to constructed objects or gathering places or to both comprise 23 village names. The 23 village names begin with one of following noun morphemes:

ตลาด	[talàat]	'market'
สำนัก	[sămnák]	'lodging place ; residence'
ศาล	[săan]	'small shrine in the form of a house, intended as a residence for a spirit'
ทับ	[tháp]	'dwelling place'
สนาม	[sanăam]	'lawn, yard'
อู่	[ʔùu]	'place where something is harbored, cradled, stored'
นิคม	[níkhom]	'settlement'
วัด	[wát]	'temple'

    4.2.5 Numbers. Village names in this sub-category begin with cardinal numbers: สาม (*săam* 'three'), สี่ (*sìi* 'four'),

เก้า (kâaw 'nine'), etc. The head word of these village names is the word บ้าน (bâan 'a village') - number – classifier. There are 12 village names of this construction, for example: บ้านสาม ยอด (bâan 'a village' - săam 'three' - yɔ́ɔt 'top, tip, peak'), บ้านเก้าหลัง (bâan 'a village' - kâaw 'nine' - lăŋ 'a classifier for house'), etc.

4.2.6 Persons. Noun morphemes refer to a person, the most commonly occur are morphemes นาง (naaŋ 'title placed before the first name of a married woman, Mrs.' + Proper noun, แม่ (mɛ̂ɛ 'mother'). There are 3 village names in this sub-category. They are บ้านนางแอ้ง (bâan 'a village' - naaŋ 'Mrs.' - ʔɛ̂ɛŋ 'Proper name'), บ้านนางงาม (bâan 'a village' - naaŋ 'Mrs.' - ŋaam 'beautiful, Proper name'), บ้านแม่ กระบุง (bâan 'a village' - mɛ̂ɛ 'mother' - krabuŋ 'Proper name').

4.2.7 Other ethnic languages. The names of 31 villages in Kanchanaburi are of either of Karen or Mon origin. For example:

วังกะ (waŋ 'a deep pool (in a large body of water)' - kaʔ 'a Mon word meaning fish'), ซองกาเรีย (sɔŋkaaria 'a Mon word meaning the other side or that side'), ไล่โว่ (lâywôo 'a Karen word meaning a red cliff'), สเน่ห์พ่อง (saneephɔɔŋ 'a Karen word meaning a landing or a pier for bamboo rafts'), etc.

4.3 "Locatives or Directional Features" Dimension. The 2 sub-categories are:

4.3.1 Noun locatives. The meanings of terms for body parts are extended to the initial morpheme of a village name. They occur before a geographical features dimension in 4.1. Terms refer to the relative locative or position of a village to other geographical features. They are:

ปาก (pàak 'mouth'), ท้อง (thɔ́ɔŋ 'stomach'), ไหล่ (lày 'shoulder'), คอ (khɔɔ 'neck'), หลัง (lăŋ 'back'), หัว (hŭa 'head'), For example:
ปากลำปิล๊อก (pàak 'mouth' - lam ' course way, passageway'- pilɔ́k 'a proper name of the mine'), ท้องคุ้ง (thɔ́ɔŋ 'stomach' - khúŋ 'bend of a water course'), ไหล่น้ำ (lày 'shoulder' - náam

'water'), คอเขา (*khɔɔ* 'neck' - *khǎw* 'mountain'), หลังเขา (*lǎŋ* 'back' - *khǎw* 'mountain'), etc.

      4.3.2 Prepositional locatives. The prepositions: นอก (*nɔɔk* 'outside'), ใน (*nay* 'in, inside'), กลาง (*klaaŋ* 'in the middle') can be used as village names, i.e., บ้านนอก (*bâan* 'a village' - *nɔɔk* 'outside'), บ้านใน (*bâan* 'a village' - *nay* 'in, inside'), บ้านกลาง (*bâan* 'a village' - *klaaŋ* 'in the middle'), or as modifiers of the head nouns.

      Of all the 761 villages in Kanchanaburi Province, there are 31 village names of this category.

      4.4 "Auspicious Features" Dimension. The Sanskrit and Pali words are the language of Buddhism., They are regarded by the Thai as the language of good luck, prosperity and progress. There are 19 village names with Sanskrit or Pali words in Kanchanaburi, for example:

เจริญทรัพย์ (*caraɔn* 'to progress, advance' - *sáp* 'wealth, money, treasure'), ศรีมงคล (*sǐi* 'splendor, beauty, excellence' - *moŋkhon* 'auspicious sign'), อุดมสุข (*ʔudom* 'plentiful' - *sùk* 'happiness'), etc.

      4.5 "Descriptive Features" Dimension. Adjectives or adjectival verbs can occur alone as a village names, i.e., they modify the generic name บ้าน (*bâan* 'a village'), or occur after the other geographical or non-geographical features. They are words that tell size, age, or some other states such as depth, beauty, etc. Examples are:

บ้านใหม่ (*bâan* 'a village' - *mày* 'new'), บ้านงาม (*bâan* 'a village' - *ŋaam* 'beautiful'), บ้านห้วยใหญ่ (*bâan* 'a village' - *hûay* 'creek' - *yày* 'big'), บ้านพุน้อย (*bâan* 'a village' - *phú* 'water spout' - *nɔɔy* 'small'), บ้านห้วยลึก (*bâan* 'a village' - *hûay* 'creek' - *lʉ́k* 'deep'), etc.

      There are also miscellaneous village names of unidentifiable or questionable origin. The meaning of these names are unknown, some names may be from dialectal lexicon, some may have undergone much change and one village name *khɛ̌ɛk* 'an Indian'. If further and in depth

investigation is done in the field, all of these miscellaneous items may be classified. Also, several items that are already classified may be rearranged. Finally, all of the categories above together with their frequency of occurrence in each Amphoe of Kanchanaburi Province are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 presents a frequency count of semantic dimensions of generic nouns used as an initial morpheme of village names in Kanchanaburi Province. The first column is a list of semantic dimensions from the highest frequency of the generic noun morphemes of water or a source of water or a section of water to the lowest frequency of those of animals. From the second column to the eleventh are the ten Amphoes of Kanchanaburi Province. The last two is the total count and the percentage.

Table 1: Frequency of semantic dimensions of generic nouns used as initial morphemes of village names in Kanchanaburi[7]

	Muang	Thaa-Ma-Kaa	Thaa-Muang	Boo-Ploy	Pa-nom-thuan	Sai-yook	Thong-pa-puum	Sang-khla-buri	Lao-Khwan	Sii-sawat	Daan-ma-kham-tia	total	Percentage
1. Water or a source of water	29	40	48	51	51	25	9	5	42	5	14	319	41.92
2. Other geographical areas	32	21	10	9	12	15	6	2	5	11	12	134	17.74
3. Elevated land areas	7	20	7	5	24	2	1	-	4	1	3	74	9.72
4. Plants	2	8	14	4	11	2	-	-	-	2	3	46	6.05
5. Unclassified items	5	8	3	5	10	-	2	-	4	-	-	38	4.73
6. Locatives or directions	7	7	7	2	3	1	1	1	1	4	-	34	4.46
7. Other ethnic languages	-	-	-	-	-	3	15	9	-	3	1	31	4.07
8. Uncultivated or cultivated lands	4	6	4	2	6	-	2	-	2	-	-	26	3.42
9. Constructed objects or gathering places	1	10	4	-	3	-	1	1	-	1	2	23	3.02
10. Auspicious items	-	1	-	4	5	4	1	1	2	-	-	19	2.50
11. Numbers	-	8	1	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	12	1.58
12. Persons	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	3	0.39
13. Animals	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	0.26
Total	88	130	98	83	127	52	38	19	61	29	36	761	99.99

The following discussion of Kanchanaburi village names focuses on the generic noun morphemes that belong to the "geographical features" dimension, i.e., from number 1 to number 3, and on those that are names from other ethnic languages, number 7, in Table 1.

The village names of Kanchanaburi Province which come from other ethnic languages can be assigned to two languages. Since the western part of Kanchanaburi borders Myanmar, Karen and Mon States, and with political and economic situation in Myanmar, migration of those people along the borders is unavoidable, as a result, 31 village names from the total of 761 names are in either in the Mon or the Karen languages. To be exact, the two Amphoes which have the highest counts are Amphoe Thong-pa-pum and Amphoe Sang-khla-buri, with 15 and 9 village names, repectively (See Map 1)[8].

Kanchanaburi consists of mountains and valleys in the northern and western region, it is named for its mountain ranges. The alluvial plain is in the central and southern region with the Kwai Noi and Kwai Yai rivers.
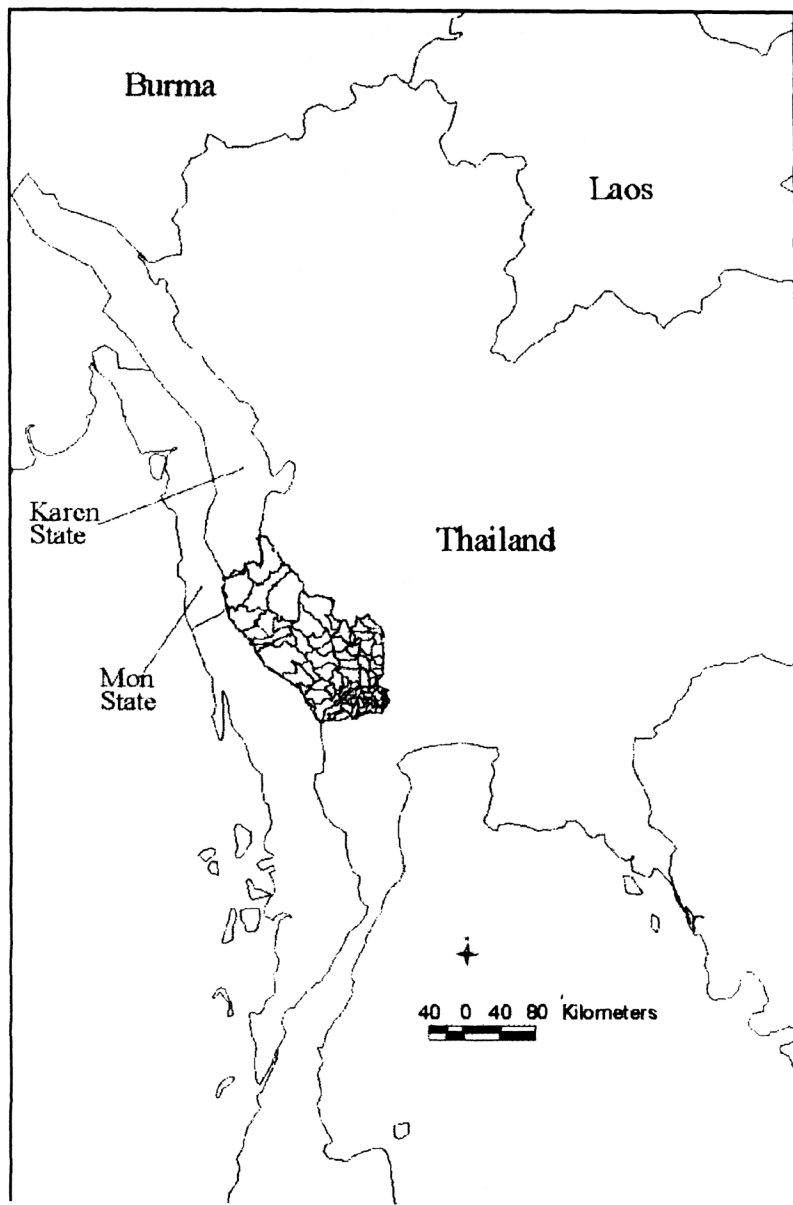
The names of villages in Kanchanaburi correlate with the physical geography of the area. From Table 1, of all the 761 village names, there are 319 names that have an initial morpheme which relates to water, a source of water or a section of water, this can be concluded as an indication that the major interest of the early inhabitants of Kanchanaburi was its water supply, 134 are names whose initial morphemes relate to various features of the earth's surface, such as islands, peninsulas, lowlands, flooded-lands, soil or rock composites, etc. and 74 names of high elevated land areas compared to nearby surrounding land areas. All of these "geographic features" dimension total 528 village names from 761. They are definitely spatially significant. (See Map 2)
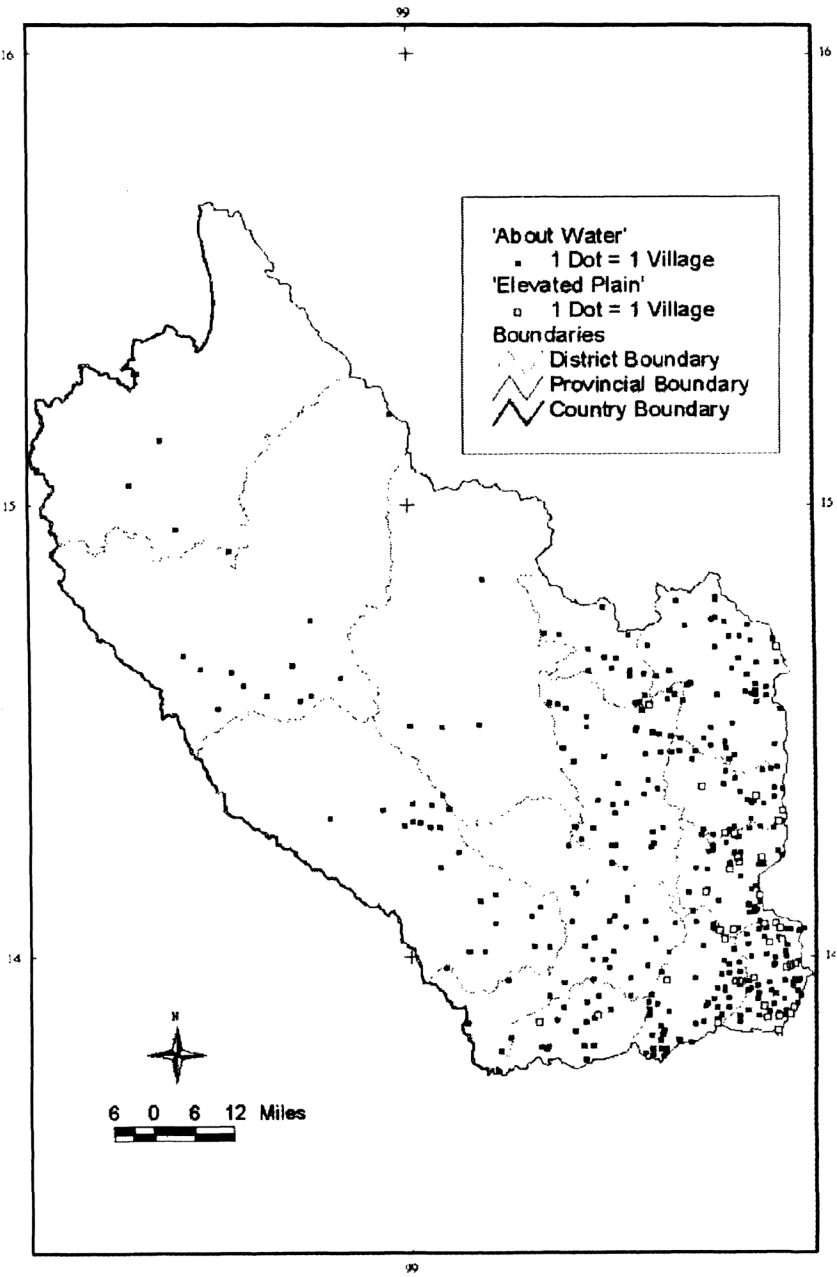
5. Conclusions

From the point of views of linguistic structure, the village names in Kanchanaburi Province represent very well the basic characteristic of the Thai language: the monosyllabic structure, the compound rich, the word order of a head noun followed by modifiers. And on the basis of "semantic features"

dimensions, village names in Kanchanaburi rely significantly on physical geography of the area: they tell us about the environment, the geographic and cultural life and people of the area.

Map 1. Kanchanaburi Province

Map 2. Village Names in Kanchanaburi Province

Notes

[1] There was one study done by Jerry W. Gainey on the eastern and southern Thailand in 1984, which has given a lot of useful guidance for this study.

[2] Kanchanaburi Province is one of the provinces located in the Western Region of Thailand. The eight provinces of the Western Region in this study are: Kanchanaburi, Nakhon Pathom, Phetchaburi, Ratchaburi, Prachuap Khiri Khan, Suphan Buri, Samut Songkhram and Samut Sakorn. This project was funded by Mahidol University.

[3] This is the 1992 edition, the latest is the 1998 edition.

[4] Pranee Kullawanijja (1992:32) stated that the word "บ้าน" is the word used in various languages of the Tai Language Family to mean village. It had this same meaning in the older days in Thai, but nowadays the meaning was narrowed down to mean "a house, home." Thus, it is possible that all these village names may consist of two nouns or a noun and a preposition or an adjective.

[5] Most of the Thai translations are taken from Haas (1964).

[6] For the analysis of meaning, the study emphasizes the first noun after the word บ้าน (bâan 'a village') as an initial morpheme of a village name.

[7] If the study includes the second morpheme of a village name, the frequency count will be different.

[8] Thanks to the Ethnolinguistic Map Project of Mahidol University and Mr. Isara Choosri for the two maps.

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