Childbirth and Tradition in
Northeast Thailand

Forty Years of Development and Cultural Change

Anders Poulsen

(Edited by Pernille Askerud. Ritual texts translated with a commentary
by Supranee Khammuang and Pernille Askerud)

Description
This beautifully illustrated volume offers a rare study of Isan-Thai cus-
toms and belief associated with pregnancy and birth and how they have
changed over almost half a century. It discusses the function of vari-
ous birth rites while giving an unmatched description of all traditions
specifically connected to pregnancy and birth. The author includes an
interesting description of the tradition of confinement by fire (yuu-fai)
and documents that it is still widely practiced, contrary to what has
been reported. He also puts forward a theory of why some traditions
maintain their importance while others fade away. The findings of this
study are supported by the transcription in Isan (and translated into
English) of the ritual texts that are used in these rites.

Online presentation
An online presentation of the book is available at www.sac.or.th, the
website of the Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre.
This augments the study with almost 400 illustrations as well as re-
cordings of the same texts chanted by the ritual masters as found in
the book.

Critical acclaim
‘Anders Poulsen has made a major contribution in bringing his research
study ... to term. It is a unique and very valuable research study ... As
a Thai researcher, I feel appreciative and indebted to Anders Poulsen’s
research work because his mission successfully provides very rare infor-
mation on precious customs and rites ... ’ (Professor Chancha Suvannat-
hat, formerly Director, Behavioral Science Research Institute, Bangkok)

‘The distinctive feature and achievement of Anders Poulsen’s study
is that it is longitudinal in scope spanning some forty years. ... For
this reason alone it is unique in the social science ethnographic literature ...
It is a tour de force ... ’ (Stanley J. Tambiah, Harvard University)

‘Dr Poulsen’s focus on childbirth in this rural area serves as the most
in-depth analysis of this topic ... [ever] attempted. ... I found the read-
ing to be fascinating.’ (Thomas Oakland, University of Florida)

About the author
Anders Poulsen has long worked in the field of child psychology, in
which he is well known internationally. This book derives from his in-
volvement in a Unesco-funded project in 1961–62 in Isaan, to which
he has returned frequently since then to study the experience and rich
culture related to pregnancy and childbirth in the area.

How to order this book
All NIAS books can be ordered via any bookseller including online
bookstores like Amazon. Otherwise send direct orders as follows.

Orders and price/availability inquiries to
SILKWORM BOOKS
6 Sukkasem Road, Suthep
Chiang Mai 50200, THAILAND
Tel: +66 53 22 6161
Fax: +66 53 22 66 43
E-mail: orders@silkwormbooks.com
Web: http://www.silkwormbooks.com/

Nordic Institute of Asian Studies
www.niaspress.dk