

# 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 customs and belief associated with pregnancy and birth and how they have changed over almost half a century. It discusses the function of various 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](http://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 recordings 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 information on precious customs and rites ... .' (Professor Chancha Suvannathat, 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 reading to be fascinating.' (Thomas Oakland, University of Florida)

## About the author

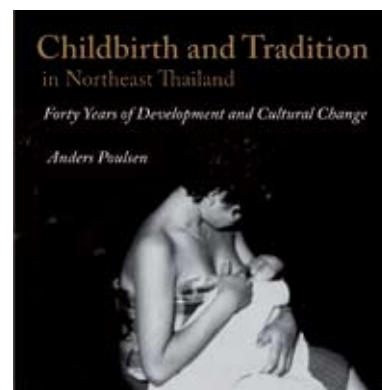
*Anders Poulsen* has long worked in the field of child psychology, in which he is well known internationally. This book derives from his involvement in a Unesco-funded project in 1961–62 in Isaan, to which he has returned frequently since then to study the experience and rich culture related to pregnancy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

## How to order this book

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## Categories

Cultural studies, folklore and religion, development studies, Thailand

## Market

Scholars working in anthropology (including medical anthro), sociology, development studies, folklore and religious studies, Thai language and linguistics; general public interested in Thai customs and belief.

## Key points

- ✓ A unique longitudinal study spanning some 40 years of childbirth practices, cultural change and social development in NE Thailand.
- ✓ Publishes (and acts to preserve) very rare information on precious customs and rites related to pregnancy and childbirth in NE Thailand.
- ✓ Advances a theory of why some traditions maintain their vitality while others fade away.



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