Beyond the Assimilation Fixation: Skinner and the Possibility of a Spatial Approach to Twentieth-Century Thai History[1]

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G. William Skinner's early work on the Chinese of Thailand anticipated the spatial concerns that he later brought to the study of Chinese history. The present article revisits Skinner's 1957 classic "Chinese Society in Thailand" to highlight its overlooked spatial dimension and its emphasis on the role of Chinese in patterns of spatial change in Thai history. It then applies the formal approaches pioneered in Skinner's work on spatial dimensions of Chinese history to the Thai case. A two-factor regional-systems model for twentieth-century Thailand is developed in explicit imitation of Skinner's modeling of China's "macroregions." The model illustrates long-term trends toward the tighter integration of Thailand's Bangkok-centered national-level regional system, the importance of numerous patterns of more local spatial change, the significance of extra-systemic influences on the system, and the role of Chinese as significant participants and agents in each of these processes. Results also suggest the need for further work on spatial dimensions of modern Thai and Southeast Asian history and on the role of Chinese as agents of spatial change in the region.

Introduction: Hainanese Mug a Teochew on Samui Island

In 1936, near the end of his long posting in southern Thailand (Landon 1941: 105; Wells 1958: 124–48), American missionary Kenneth Landon paid a visit to the island of Samui. He was puzzled at one point during his stay to witness

> … a Teo Chiu [sic] Chinese [being] beaten up on a public street on that island. Later, while sitting in a tea shop with some Hainanese friends, an explanation was given. The Hainanese

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> said, with indignation, that the man was a Teo Chiu merchant who deserved to be beaten because he was attempting to compete with and undersell the Hainanese merchants. Reason enough! (Landon 1941: 150)

Landon seems not to have appreciated the significance of either the beating or the explanation offered. He took them as confirmation of the organization of Chinese "secret societies" in Thailand on the basis of speech-group. But he made little of his friends' stress on factors commercial rather than criminal. He showed little curiosity about the particular fear of Teochew competitors among the predominantly Hainanese population of Samui in the late 1930s (Landon 1941: 150–51).

In the dozen years immediately following the end of World War I, Chinese immigration to Thailand reached levels unknown both before and since. This immigrant surge had three important consequences. It reinforced the numerical and commercial pre-eminence of Teochews among the country's Chinese. It triggered the spread of large numbers of recently arrived Chinese from the competitive setting of Bangkok to the markets of the provinces. It accelerated the emergence of that Teochew-dominated primate city as the nerve-center of an increasingly integrated Thai national economy (Skinner 1957: 45–51, 83,172, 178–80, 208; Landon 1941: 200–202; Montesano 2001: 138–47, 149–50, 1998: 680–710).

Lying off Suratthani Province on the east coast of peninsular Thailand, Samui was the northernmost in a belt of concentrations of Hainanese to which G. William Skinner called attention in his 1957 classic, *Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History*. The belt extended at least as far south as Narathiwat on the border with Malaya (Skinner 1957a: 211). By the mid-1930s the appearance of Teochews, with their strong commercial connections to Bangkok, represented a clear threat to the status quo in the Hainanese market centers of the east coast. It is in this context that the beating described by Landon and the role of people like its victim as agents of Thailand's commercial integration take on their full significance.

The context for and significance of Hainanese animosity toward Teochew interlopers into southern Thailand during the fourth decade of the twentieth century underline both the importance and the neglect of the spatial dimension to modern Thai history and to Chinese roles in that history. A focused, systematic understanding of that dimension informs processes of change in any number of arenas: economic, commercial, social, political, and even cultural. Without that understanding, the origins and consequences of many of those changes must remain obscure. Likewise, appreciation of the participation of Chinese in those changes cannot transcend anecdote, generalization, and cliché.

What makes this neglect so surprising is that G. William Skinner, from whom generations of scholars have learned so much of what they know about the Chinese

of Thailand, also pioneered spatial approaches to history, albeit in the Chinese rather than the Thai context. Before single-handedly making spatial approaches to Chinese history central to that field, Skinner devoted two major books and a pair of influential articles to the study of the Chinese of Thailand (Skinner 1957a, 1957b, 1958, 1960). The first of those books, *Chinese Society in Thailand* — once described as "[a]rguably the best single book on modern Siam"(Anderson 1978: 244) — remains indispensable nearly half a century after its publication. But scholars have paid scant attention either to the significant spatial dimension of that work or to its vivid illustration of Chinese agency in effecting Thailand's national integration. They have, rather, regarded Skinner the unsurpassed student of Chinese society in Thailand and Skinner the pioneering student of "regional systems" in Chinese history as if they were two different men.

In noting continuities in G. William Skinner's work on Thailand and on China, this article asks how "the second Skinner" might speak to "the first Skinner." The answer offered contributes to the study of Chinese populations overseas in two ways.

First, it revisits and builds on one of the fundamental, enduring works of scholarship on those populations, *Chinese Society in Thailand*. It makes clear that a significant aspect of that work's contribution to the study of Chinese overseas has long remained unappreciated. It argues for the value of attention to that aspect of Skinner's work now.

Second, the article seeks to join Skinner in moving beyond the essentially anecdotal and the very general in academic studies of the roles taken by Chinese overseas in recent Southeast Asian history and even in contemporary Southeast Asia. It aims to affirm in a systematic way the well-known contention in another classic, half-century-old contribution to the study of the Southeast Asian Chinese — T'ien Ju K'ang's *The Chinese of Sarawak* — that "many of the sources of social change in South East Asia [sic] as a whole lie in changes in the communities of overseas Chinese … geared into the whole complex of Asia wide [sic] social change" (T'ien 1997: 1).

More specifically, through the presentation of a very basic national-level regional-systems model of Thailand during the twentieth century, the article takes a small step toward redress of the neglect both of space in the study of Thai history and of the significant roles taken in that history by Chinese in the Thai provinces. This model is conceived in explicit imitation of Skinner's regional-systems work on China. Developed with data for the period from the mid-1930s to the late 1980s, the model serves inter alia to highlight what those data suggest about the role of Chinese as agents of Thailand's national integration during the latter two-thirds of the twentieth century. It underlines the need for considerable further research on Chinese roles in the making of modern Southeast Asia from a spatial perspective.

On the basis of the model presented, the article argues for a clear pattern of spatial change in Thailand in the five decades between 1937 and 1988. A pattern of limited differentiation between notional "core" and notional "periphery" in Thailand as of 1937 seems to have given way in the late 1940s to one of pronounced differentiation. Subsequent decades saw Thailand's national-level regional system resemble its 1937 pattern more and more. Interpretively, this development reflects progressive national integration in Thailand during the four decades following the end of the Pacific War. Statistical results highlight the significance of Chinese populations in the Thai provinces in this process of integration.

Along with this kingdom-wide pattern of integration, the model also points to a series of other, locally important patterns that unfolded during the same decades. In calling attention both to national and to local trends and suggesting some of the underlying factors, the basic regional-systems model for twentieth-century Thailand presented here aims to stimulate fresh perspectives and further research. While not conceived as a contribution to cutting-edge methodology in geography or regional science, the model opens new perspectives on modern Thai and Southeast Asian history and on the place of Southeast Asian Chinese in that history.

One Skinner or Two?

What Jennifer Cushman pointed out a decade and a half ago remains true today: Skinner's "assimilation paradigm" dominates, implicitly or explicitly, scholarship on the Chinese of Thailand (Cushman 1989: 222). Skinner presented his ideas on the process of Chinese assimilation to Thai identity in studies drawing on fieldwork undertaken in the early 1950s; those studies are now nearly a half-century old (Skinner 1957a, 1957b, 1958, 1960). Nothing attests to the enduring hold of those ideas so well as the criticism that they continue to provoke, as in a deft, widely cited article by the prominent Thai-Chinese cultural historian and public intellectual Kasian Tejapira (Kasian 1992, cf. Kasian 1994b) and in a recent collection of articles on the Chinese of Thailand (Chan and Tong 2001).

These critiques may or may not be fair to Skinner, to his ideas, or to the Thai case. Whether or not scholars may have misread Skinner's arguments on Chinese assimilation in Thailand is not the point here. What is significant is that these critiques confirm continuing fixation on a single theme of his work on the Thai Chinese to the practical exclusion of any attention to its other themes, arguments, and findings. Especially in the case of *Chinese Society in Thailand*, that fixation has led scholars to overlook both the richness and, in the light of his later interest in regional systems in Chinese history, the suggestiveness of Skinner's early work. They slight, in short, the stress in his narrative on Chinese participation in some of the basic historical developments that have shaped modern Thailand.

Among the neglected features of *Chinese Society in Thailand*, Skinner's concern with space figures prominently. The book repeatedly evinces its author's interest in the crossing of space, in patterns of spatial integration and connection, and in the spatial distribution of Chinese populations in Thailand. Its attention to the role of specific steamer routes between the coastal cities of South China and Bangkok in the determination of speech-group proportions among the Chinese of Thailand is a noteworthy example (Skinner 1957a: 40–52). Other examples include the book's account of Teochew penetration of the Lower North of Thailand after rail connected the region to Bangkok and the importance of immigration northward from Malaya rather than southward from Bangkok in the history of the Chinese population of southern Thailand (Skinner 1957a: 50–51, 88–89, 209). A final example among the many possible is Skinner's classic account of Col Phin Chunhawan's use of the War Veterans Organization's control of rolling stock to cut a deal with the Chinese millers of first the Northeast and then the North of Thailand in the late 1940s. That deal allowed those millers to overcome the determined efforts of their rivals on the Central Plains to prevent their rice from reaching foreign markets via the port of Bangkok (Skinner 1957a: 346–51).

None of these examples from *Chinese Society in Thailand* concerns assimilation. They illustrate, rather, Skinner's interest in relating the spatial feature of Chinese society in Thailand to a process of ongoing integration of the country's provinces ever more tightly with its commercial core and chief Chinese center of Bangkok. At a more abstract level, these examples from his 1957 masterpiece suggest the potential usefulness of systematic attention to patterns of spatial change in twentieth-century Thai history and to the centrality of Chinese participation in that change.

Two maps in *Chinese Society in Thailand* point to a similar concern with core and periphery in the history of twentieth-century Thailand. One displays the rail and river networks of the Chao Phraya basin, together with its significant commercial centers (Skinner 1957a: 85). The second uses data at the district (*amphoe*) level from 1947 to present an "index of concentration" of Chinese residents across Thailand. Districts whose levels of Chinese concentration fall into one of six ranges are shaded in different patterns. Centers of densest concentration include Hat Yai in the South, Phitsanulok in the Lower North, Paknampho (or Nakhon Sawan) in the north of the Central Plains, and of course Bangkok and the entire region surrounding the Bight of Bangkok (Skinner 1957a: facing 202).

These maps do more than merely anticipate Skinner's concern with regional-systems analysis. They also prefigure several of the fundamentals of his approach to regional systems in the Chinese case. For Skinner attributes a physiographic basis to the "macroregions" into which he divides China; that basis is the river basin. He also makes use in the long course of his work on systematic spatial

differentiation within those macroregions of composite quantitative indices developed from the historical data available.

In comments made on the final day of a conference on the Indonesian Chinese held at Cornell University in July 1990, Skinner himself called for the adoption of a regional-systems approach to Southeast Asia, specifically to the history of the Chinese in Indonesia.[2] In a modest way, the present article takes him up on that suggestion. For the second of these maps in *Chinese Society in Thailand* described above is as far as Skinner has in his own work gone in offering a systematic analysis either of such space or of interactions across it in his work on Southeast Asia. But, like this map, the spatial concerns of that book do suggest strong intellectual and methodological continuities between Skinner's work in the 1950s on Thailand and from the 1960s onward on China. In effect, his scholarship on China saw him treat systematically themes which were first introduced in that earlier work.

This evident intellectual continuity, the influence of Skinner's work on the spatial dimension of Chinese history, and the absence from his work on Thailand of a rigorous formal consideration of spatial dimensions of Thai history together motivate the quantitative exercise undertaken below. The promise of the exercise lies both in opening historiographical perspectives on Thailand as stimulating as those which Skinner opened on China and in situating Chinese populations in the Thai provinces in those perspectives. Realization of this promise requires a brief review of Skinner's spatial approach to Chinese history, the details of which have remained largely unfamiliar to historians both of Southeast Asia and of the Chinese overseas.

Skinner argued that ten great "macroregions" shaped China's historical urban hierarchy. These macroregions, among which the high cost of long-distance transport limited significant interdependence, functioned as systems not only of commerce but also of society, culture, and politics broadly defined. Physiography determined both the extent of Skinner's Chinese macroregions and the patterns of systematic differentiation within them. Those macroregions — rather than China as a whole or such formal political units as provinces — represented the relevant units of historical study (Skinner 1964: 9, 10–16, 40–43; Cartier 2002: 94; Skinner 1977b: 269, 1977c: 282, 285–86, 344, 1985: 280–81, 1977a: 211–20).

In its most developed form, Skinner's model divides systematically differentiated space within each of China's macroregions among as many as seven zones ranging from "inner core" to "far periphery." Population density and land fertility, commercialization, capital investment, and urbanization, along with various institutional and social correlates of these factors, vary systematically from core to periphery (Skinner 1994: fold-out map, 17–20, 1965a: 210, 1965b: 369, 1988: 2–4, 5–17, 1985: 280, 1977c: 283). The shaded maps that Skinner used to present his regional model and the patterns of differentiation within macroregions without

doubt played a huge role in making his approach clear, appealing, and influential (Skinner 1977a: 214–15, 1977c: 289, 1994: fold-out map). As the geographer Carolyn Cartier notes, the model served from the 1970s to frame much of the most important American scholarship on modern Chinese history. Historians so internalized the Skinnerian macroregions as to treat them "simply … as a locational device," as a series of fixed, timeless, and unquestioned features of the Chinese landscape (Cartier 2002: 93).

While geographers and regional scientists may deem it methodologically obsolete and intellectually unfashionable (Cartier 2002), the enduring influence of Skinner's spatial approach on historians of China is unmistakable. Assessment of its applicability to cases like that of Thailand nevertheless demands mention of several persistent, related criticisms of the approach: that its influence has imposed "a certain spatial determinism" on the study of China, that it makes inadequate allowance for human agency, and that it fails to allow for change in what it identifies as the most salient arena of human activity — the macroregion itself (Cartier 2002: 82, 90–92,101, 107, 127).

Little brings these criticisms of Skinner's spatial approach to Chinese history into such sharp focus as his de-emphasis of long-distance trade in what one might take as the strong formulation of the macroregional model (Cartier 2002: 81, 99, 117–18; Cochran 2002: 2–8).[3] Such trade represents nothing less than a means through which human agents might define and redefine the spatial contexts for the overlapping commercial, social, cultural, and political processes that the Skinner model promises to clarify.

Both long-distance trade and its human agents have played significant roles in the history of Thailand's twentieth-century national-level regional system; the analysis presented below makes these roles clear. But spatial approaches to Thai history, whether or not inspired by Skinner's work, have never given rise to an influential let alone dominant or confining paradigm. Spatial determinism, let alone such a specific manifestation thereof as a neglect of long-distance trade, is not an issue. Rather, in its application to Thailand and the role of its Chinese populations a less restrictive formulation of the Skinner model opens a series of valuable new historical perspectives.

Building a Regional-Systems Model for Twentieth-Century Thailand

Thailand is, of course, not China. In scale alone it can hardly serve as an analogous case, unless perhaps analogous to a single Chinese macroregion. That latter approach is the one taken here, in modeling Thailand's national-level regional system.

Still, a number of its characteristics commend Thailand to the regional-systems analysis that Skinner applies to each of his macroregions. The most important is physiography. Much of central and northern Thailand lies in a single important

drainage basin, defined by the Chao Phraya River and its tributaries. Other regions of the kingdom present a less compliant picture. In the peninsular South, for example, long coastlines and an elevated central spine make for only small drainage basins. Northeastern Thailand lies in the great basin of the Mekong River, which sprawls across many national borders. But the Northeast has not known integration into any regional system defined by that basin for well over a century, if ever.

If the territory lying within Thailand's modern political borders lacks the physiographic coherence that Skinner attributes to each of his macroregions, why seek to submit the country as a whole to regional-systems analysis at all? Central to Skinner's research program is the caution against identifying functionally integrated regional systems with formal political units. This caution surely has relevance to the Thai case. But its relevance lies not so much in rendering futile work toward a regional-systems model for twentieth-century Thailand as in highlighting in at least two ways the potential value of such a model.

First, a Thai regional-systems model requires engagement with the question of systemic autonomy. As has been shown above, the lack of explicit attention in Skinner's model to the importance of extra-systemic influences — above all in the form of long-distance trade — on the dynamics of a macroregional system has emerged as one of its most noted deficiencies. Thailand's geography recommends application of a weaker variant of systemic coherence than Skinner's. It urges attention to spatial dimensions of contacts beyond the country's borders. As the analysis presented below makes clear, this modified approach improves the explanatory power of a Thai regional-systems model. Most importantly, it highlights the impact of transnational or extra-systemic influences and the agents — so frequently Chinese — of those influences on the Thai regional system.

Second, and more generally, the model focuses attention on the role of such human agents in closing the gap between apparent physiographic incoherence and the systemic coherence suggested by its results. The discursive processes traced by Thongchai Winichakul in his history of Siam's "geo-body" (Thongchai 1994) had, that is, their mundane, material complements in the domains of commerce, society, politics, and administration. In these domains, countless ordinary men and women took a hand in defining a Thai regional system and its boundaries. In this connection, for example, the nameless Teochew and Hainanese whose altercation Kenneth Landon witnessed on Samui Island come to mind.

Lines on a map might not delimit the extent of regional systems in any absolute sense but, neither is the centralizing territorial state (Wyatt 1984: 201ff; Tej 1977) irrelevant to the working of those systems. Its schools, its roads, its financial system, and even its police and soldiers do not re-make the regional system in the polity's image. Rather, through participation in the arenas of activity that these manifestations of the state open up, human agents may carry the spatial patterns of the polity and of the system toward congruence. Those agents' participation

in other activities may, at the very same time, challenge that congruence. The Thai regional-systems model helps make apparent the differential effects of this dynamic across space and time. It serves as a template for investigating the reasons for that differentiation in far greater detail than a single article like this one can offer.

In one regard, Thai polity, Thai regional system, and Chinese society in Thailand have long been congruent: the importance of Bangkok. The city lies in the deltaic lowlands of the river basin that gives the Central Plains and North physiographic coherence. But the city also functioned, at least throughout the twentieth century, as the highest-order central place in the life of much of the Northeast and the South. These latter relationships have defied physiography. They have instead reflected Bangkok's extreme primacy in the Thai urban system (Rigg 1991: 133–34, 135, 138–39; Sternstein 1984: 68). The significance of a primate city lies in its functional dominance of its urban system (Rigg 1991: 133–35; Sternstein 1984: 59, 60, 64–65, 68), and Skinner himself notes that, from a regional-systems perspective, this dominance may suggest "a role for the primate city that extends beyond its regional hinterland" (Skinner 1977a: 238). Urban primacy may thus see human agency trumping physiography, as in the case of Bangkok's functional dominance of a regional system that extends well beyond the Chao Phraya basin.

Available data permit the analysis of differentiated space in Thailand over much of the twentieth century. The model presented herein frames its analysis at the provincial level rather than that of district, sub-district, or even village. The level of disaggregation characteristic of provincial-level data permits cruder results than might be ideal. Indeed, it pales in comparison with what Skinner was able to accomplish in the Chinese case, for which historical data are far more abundant.

Nevertheless, focus on the provincial level is not without its advantages, both practical and analytical. The province (*changwat*) has served as the basic subnational level of Thai administration since the 1930s (Landon 1939: 45; cf. Horrigan 1962). The total number of provinces has remained relatively stable; in the rare event of the creation of a new province, its territory has come from that of a single extant province rather than from a number of provinces. The development of useful historical statistics thus presents few difficulties. Over time, the combined traits of small size, great administrative salience, and local politicking have given to Thai provinces a coherence transcending territory between lines drawn on a map (cf. e.g. Nishizaki 2004). Human agency has, that is, given systemic coherence to structures of the state.

Figure I shows the division of Thailand into 73 provinces, including Bangkok, that obtained from the early 1980s to the 1990s. Heavy lines divide the kingdom into its four basic regions: Center, North, Northeast, and South.

The essence of Skinner's Chinese macroregions — the historiographic claims that he makes for them and their enduring heuristic appeal — lies in their *systemic*

Figure I. Thailand by Provinces, Early 1990s

nature. The functional systems bounded by each of his macroregions serve as arenas for and hierarchies of not only commerce, but also social, cultural, and political life. Their analysis calls for a multi-dimensional — or, in statistical terms, multivariate — approach. In the next section of this article, a multivariate statistical technique called factor analysis is thus adopted to capture the changing patterns of spatial differentiation in twentieth-century Thailand.

Development of the model involved testing variables drawn from the available data on Thailand and selected on the basis of Skinner's theoretical predictions about variations across regional space (Skinner 1994, 1988). The procedures followed are outlined in the Methodological Appendix to this article. The 15 variables specified, each expected to rise in value from periphery to core, included measures of population density and such aspects of agriculture as proportion of total area under cultivation and proportion cultivated to rice (and, in some provinces, to rice and rubber combined). They also measured aspects of commercial life with indicators of urbanization, concentrations of Chinese nationals, and numbers of branches of commercial banks. Limitations in census data required that the proportion of China-born in the population serve as a proxy for the size of the Chinese community as a whole in cross-provincial comparisons. (For further discussion of the correlation between nationality status and place of birth among Chinese in twentieth-century Thailand, cf. Methodological Appendix.) This proxy had the advantage of directly capturing the spatial and social dynamism of twentieth-century populations of Chinese origin in Thailand. For the China-born were, by definition, migrants to the provincial Thai locales in which they settled. Their movement into the Thai provinces exemplified just the sort of movement across space that so interested Skinner himself in *Chinese Society in Thailand*. Lastly, measures of the area and population of administrative districts (*amphoe*) were intended to indicate "administrative intensity" as a form of institutional density.

The discussion and maps presented below draw on factor analysis carried out with the variables noted above. A two-factor model is employed. One of the factors suggests the effects of variables measuring total population density, population density of Chinese nationals, size of administrative districts, and concentration of commercial bank branches per square kilometer. Values for each of these variables are expected to increase from periphery to core. The model assigns provinces with high scores on this factor to the notional core and those with low scores to the notional periphery. The second factor indicates variation among provinces on a *per capita* basis. It suggests the effect of variables for proportion of the population living in municipal areas, proportion of Chinese nationals in the total population, and concentration of commercial bank branches *per capita*. Again, the expectation is that values of each of these variables increase from periphery to core. In the discussion below, provinces with high scores on this factor fall in the Thai core and those with low scores in the Thai periphery.

Neither of these factors is meant definitively to represent any sort of previously unrecognized reality in recent Thai history. Instead, the multivariate composition of the two factors merely reflects the theoretical expectation, drawn from Skinner, that social, institutional, demographic, and commercial phenomena vary systematically across space. Interest lies in that variation, and not any reified factors revealed through factor analysis. That interest is above all heuristic.

Mapping Thailand's Twentieth-Century Regional System

The two-factor model of Thailand's regional system between 1937 and 1988 opens a robust yet finely grained perspective on changing patterns of spatial differentiation during the period. It suggests a sharp increase in the proportion of provincial Thailand falling into peripheral classes in the years after 1937, followed by a gradual evolution of the system back toward the pattern that prevailed in that year, and noteworthy local variations in that process of evolution. It also underlines the centrality of Chinese populations in this sequence of developments. As with Skinner's work on China's macroregions, graphic presentation of the results of the Thai model renders these processes of change vivid and concrete. At the same time, the divisions of Thailand's provinces into five notional classes ranging from core to periphery serve illustrative purposes. They are not intended to specify fixed units of analysis for future scholarship. Rather, scholarship motivated by this graphic interpretation may well propose very different historico-spatial divisions of Thailand, yielding fresh perspectives of their own.

(1) *Population density, population of Chinese nationals, size of administrative districts, and concentration of commercial bank branches*

The factor indicating population density, density of population of Chinese nationals, size of administrative districts, and concentrations of commercial bank branches per square kilometer among Thailand's provinces from the late 1930s to the late 1980s has greater explanatory power, in a statistical sense, than does the factor that indicates proportions of the population living in municipal areas and of Chinese nationals in the total population, and concentrations of commercial bank branches *per capita* for each of the five years analyzed: 1937, 1947, 1963, 1978, and 1988 (cf. Methodological Appendix). As a means of understanding the structure of regional systems in Thailand, this first factor best suggests the spatial density of human activity, not least as represented by population and the patterns of differentiation that accompanied the settling of various land frontiers during half a century.

Figures II–V reflect scores on this factor for 1937, 1947, 1978, and 1988. (A figure for 1963 has been omitted owing to considerations of space, both here and in the discussion of the second factor.) These figures offer graphic

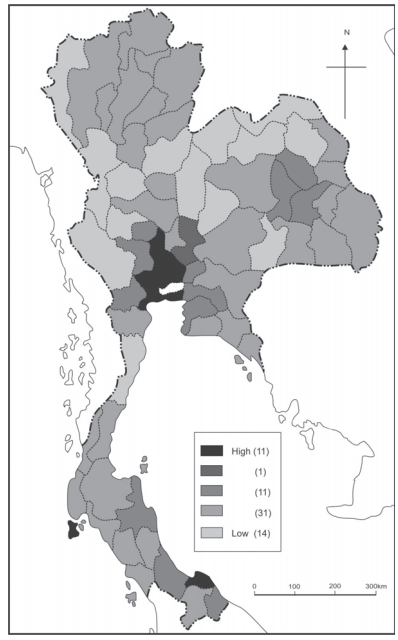

Figure II, 1937

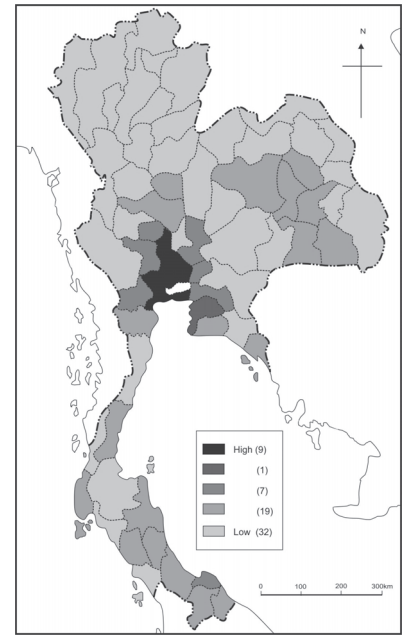

Figure III, 1947

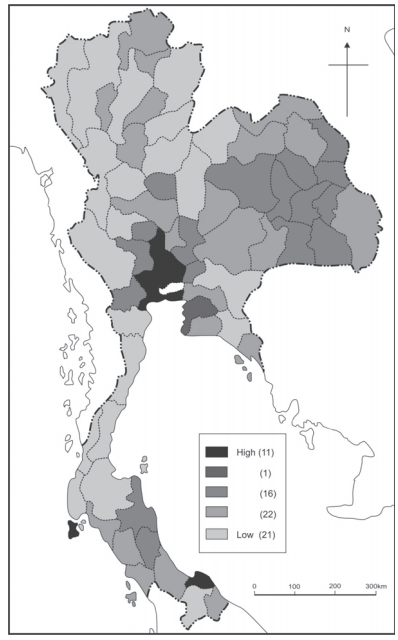

Figure IV, 1978

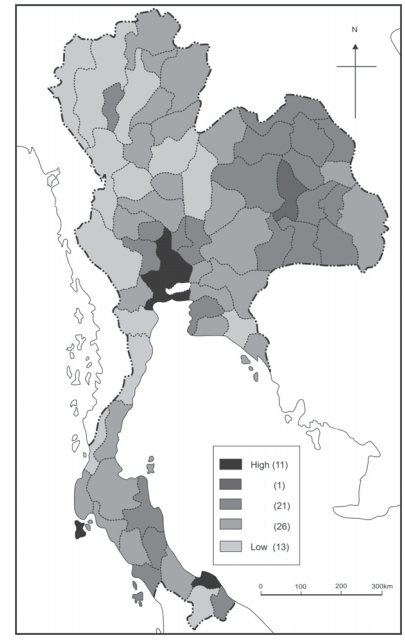

Figure V, 1988

Factor scores for factor indicating population density, population density of Chinese nationals, size of administrative districts, and concentration of commercial bank branches per square kilometer, by province (numbers of provinces in each cluster in parentheses)

representation of Thailand's changing regional system, and prove most useful as indicators of trends rather than as specific counts or distributions depicted for any given year. Nevertheless, the results for this first factor and their presentation in these figures suggest that, from a regional-systems perspective, less of Thailand had peripheral status in the late 1930s than at any time until fairly recently. They also point to some of the possible underlying dynamics at work during the decades concerned. For the duration of the period after the late 1930s the same densely populated group of nine provinces in the Chao Phraya's historic delta and at the head of the Bight of Bangkok lay — along with the primate city and demographic anomaly of Bangkok — in the model's functional core, as indicated by the factor indicating population density, population density of Chinese nationals, size of administrative districts, and concentration of commercial bank branches per square kilometer. These provinces and many of those adjacent to them display a clear pattern of differentiation from core to periphery on the Central Plains that resembles the neat concentric zones that distinguish Skinner's macroregional maps.

For other regions of Thailand, patterns are less regular. Rather than representing aberrations from the model, however, they reflect sub- or trans-national developments of precisely the sort that the model is meant to highlight. For example, the Chinese commercial and tin-mining center of Phuket and the important Malay (and Chinese) center of Pattani (Skinner 1957: 7, 203) fell in the notional core category for all years modeled, except 1947. These results underline the usefulness of what is characterized above as a weaker formulation of Skinner's regional-systems approach.

The notional core status of each of these southern centers is a clear legacy of long-term commercial orientation not toward Bangkok or any other center within Thailand's national-level regional system. Rather, Phuket participated in the trade of Malaya, the Straits of Melaka, and the Indian Ocean (Skinner 1975: 211; Suliman 2001: 33–35; Dhiravat 2002; Donner 1978: 403, 511), while the commerce of Pattani linked it with both numerous other centers in the Malay world and with Southeast Asian, European, and Chinese traders active in the South China Sea (Surin 1985: 27ff; Suchit 2004). The high modern population density of each center (Donner 1978: 460; Kermel-Torrès et al. 2004: 168) indicates the role of historical linkages *outside* the Bangkok-centered system in its emergence and persistence as a local hub. At the same time, *within* that system, Phuket and Pattani have come to count among a number of increasingly important secondary centers. The relative significance of extra-systemic ties and of integration with Bangkok in the emergence and activity of those centers ranks, along with the identities of the agents who maintained those ties and furthered that integration, among the research questions to which the crude regional-systems model presented here directs attention.

Among the years represented in Figures II–V, 1947 marks the point at which more of provincial Thailand stood at the model's notional functional periphery, as measured by this first factor, than at any other. In 1937, for example, some 66 percent of the provinces fell in the two peripheral classes; by 1947, that figure had risen to 75 percent. Thereafter, this figure fell steadily: to 70 percent in 1963, 61 in 1978, and to 54 in 1988. A similar pattern is evident in the distribution of provinces between those two peripheral categories. In 1937, some 21 percent of all provinces fell in the most peripheral category, while 46 percent fell in the next most peripheral category. Ten years later, the same classes held 47 and 28 percent of all provinces, respectively. Again, the pattern began thereafter to move toward that of 1937. In 1963, each of these two peripheral classes held 35 percent of all provinces. In 1978, the most peripheral held slightly less than 30 and the second most peripheral slightly less than 31 percent. And, in 1988, those figures totaled some 18 and 36 percent, respectively.

If, by 1978, the two peripheral classes at last held fewer provinces than they had in 1937, movement into the middle class accounted for this transition. As is noted above, the notional core class showed remarkable stability. The almost-core class, never holding more than one province at a time, proved almost irrelevant to the structure of the regional system as defined by the factor indicating population density, population density of Chinese nationals, size of administrative districts, and concentration of commercial bank branches per square kilometer. In 1937, the middle class held some 16 percent of all provinces. By 1947, it fell to its level of least importance among the five years in question with ten percent. And, familiarly, its importance increased steadily from 1963: it held 13 percent of all provinces in that year, 23 percent in 1978, and 29 percent ten years thereafter.

Both these maps and those in Figures VI through IX below show a sharp contrast between Thailand's regional system in 1937 and the same system in 1947. The analyses for these two years draw on data sets that have more in common — in terms of coverage, design, and collection — with each other than either has with the data sets for later years (Department of the Interior 1941, 1948). Analytically, this contrast presents a serious problem, either methodological or interpretive.

Methodologically, the contrast in the model's results for 1937 and 1947 and above all the gradual decline in the percentage of notionally peripheral provinces after 1947 might at first glance seem to be due to the exclusion of variables relating to commercial banking for 1937 and their inclusion for later years (cf. Methodological Appendix). In the case of the factor indicating population density, population density of Chinese nationals, size of administrative districts, and concentration of commercial bank branches per square kilometer mapped in Figures II–V, however, those data are included only from 1963 onward. In the case of the factor — mapped in Figures VI–IX — indicating proportions of the population living in municipal areas and of Chinese nationals in the total population and

concentrations of commercial bank branches *per capita*, they are included from 1947 onward. As the discussion accompanying those latter figures suggests, however, the inclusion of data on commercial bank branches from 1947 has no apparent bearing on the question at hand: 1947 still represents the year in which more of provincial Thailand is notionally peripheral, in regional-systems terms, than in any other year modeled. The long-term post-1945 trend is for Thailand's national-level regional system to move back toward the level of integration shown for 1937.

Of course, a much less complicated explanation of the sharp contrast between 1937 and 1947 suggests itself: that the data for 1937 are simply unreliable. In that case, perhaps, as much or more of provincial Thailand lay in notionally peripheral classes in that year as a decade later, and the progress toward greater national integration between the 1930s and the 1980s proved unidirectional, unfailing, and steady. Absent any justification for deeming the 1937 data unreliable, however, the apparent difference in Thailand's regional system between 1937 and 1947 is most significant as an interpretive rather than as a methodological problem. What, one needs to ask, might have been going on in the Thai provinces during the interval in question?

At one level, the increasingly peripheral status of much of provincial Thailand during the decade between 1937 and 1947 might appear surprising. The extravagant nationalism of Field Marshal Phibun's 1938–44 premiership had, after all, a pronounced economic component (cf. Wyatt 1984: 252ff; Phanit 1978; Kobkua 1995: 144ff; Suehiro 1989: 106ff). But the automatic equation of Phibun's statist economic policies — relatively unsuccessful policies, at that (Kobkua 1995: 149) — with rapid progress toward greater integration of the provinces is simplistic. Available evidence suggests that Phibunist state-sponsored enterprise in provincial Thailand did promote such integration, but that process unfolded over a period of several decades (cf. Montesano 1998: 429–679).

Analytical focus falls here on movement toward greater integration over the course of many decades. If close scrutiny of developments across a single decade must then be deferred, the explicit purposes of the basic regional-systems model presented include putting such scrutiny on the historiographical agenda. The question of "what happened?" in the Thai provinces during the 1937–47 period is but one among many questions toward which the systematically conceived spatial approach to Thai history directs attention. Did the first half of the 1940s in some way retard pre-war patterns of national integration in Thailand? Or did the late 1940s see the early integration of some provinces into the national regional system through mechanisms that would only reach other provinces over time? The emergence as significant commercial players across much of provincial Thailand during the 1950s of members of the post-1918 Chinese immigration surge and their offspring would certainly lend support to that latter possibility (Montesano 2000, 2001). The value of models like the one developed here lies in calling

attention to such new questions and their likely importance in the history of twentieth-century Thailand.

The implications of the results shown in Figures II through V come into sharper focus with their examination on a regional basis. Results for the Central Plains are stable throughout the decades analyzed; they require no further discussion in connection with the factor indicating population density, density of Chinese nationals, size of administrative districts, and concentration of commercial bank branches per square kilometer. In contrast, the North was from 1947 through 1988 more peripheral than in 1937, though it became less peripheral over time. The period after 1963 saw the Northeast move almost entirely out of the most peripheral class. By 1988, most of the region's provinces fell into middle class. Relative population density is likely to have played a significant role in these two regional outcomes.

The South tracked the national pattern fairly closely. In 1937, none of its provinces fell in the most peripheral class, Phuket and Pattani lay in the functional core, and three important provinces on the east coast were in the middle class. By 1947, Pattani lay in that middle class. The rest of the region fell into the two notional peripheral classes. The following decades saw gradual and partial regional emergence from peripheral status, as measured by the factor indicating population density, density of Chinese nationals, size of administrative districts, and concentration of commercial bank branches per square kilometer.

In sum, analysis according to this first factor suggests three basic characteristics of Thailand's regional system during the period covered. First, in the late 1930s less of provincial Thailand lay in the system's notional periphery than during the three decades after the end of the Pacific War. Second, those decades nevertheless saw patterns of differentiation within Thailand's national system gradually approach their state in 1937. From the late 1970s, peripheral classes as measured by the factor indicating population density, density of Chinese nationals, size of administrative districts, and concentration of commercial bank branches per square kilometer included less of provincial Thailand than in 1937. Third, and of particular interest here, the consistent statistical significance in the model of the variable capturing the number of Chinese nationals per square kilometer makes clear the participation of Chinese populations in the Thai provinces to these patterns of spatial change (cf. Methodological Appendix). The concluding section of this article returns, briefly, to this participation as it relates to the question of human agency.

(2) *Per capita municipal population, proportion of Chinese nationals in the population, and commercial bank branches*

In statistical terms, the second factor, indicating proportions of the population living in municipal areas and of Chinese nationals in the total population and

concentrations of commercial bank branches *per capita*, describes a completely uncorrelated notional dimension of the Thai regional system (cf. Methodological Appendix). As noted above, its results have weaker explanatory power than those for the first factor.[4] At the same time, as regards trends in the numbers of provinces falling in notional classes from core to periphery, the results for the second factor point to the same broad pattern of change in the system that the first factor suggests. The statistical results similarly suggest the significant, systematic participation of Chinese populations in the processes captured by the second factor (cf. Methodological Appendix).

This pattern of change includes the abrupt rise in the number of notionally peripheral provinces in the decade after 1937. In addition, and the relatively weak statistical results notwithstanding, the factor indicating proportions of the population living in municipal areas and of Chinese nationals in the total population and concentrations of commercial bank branches *per capita* complements the results for the first factor in at least two ways. First, it amplifies understanding of some of the underlying dynamics of the broad pattern of change illustrated by both factors. Second, and more important in the discussion that follows, the second factor suggests a number of rather local variations in that pattern that the first factor fails to capture.

The maps in Figures VI through IX display provincial groupings by scores on the second factor for 1937, 1947, 1978, and 1988. Again, the value of these groupings lies in the trends that they suggest, rather than in any specific divisions of Thai territory that they reveal. Similarly, the classification of provinces by scores on this factor and the graphical presentation of that classification are once again meant to serve as heuristic stimulus rather than simple positivist assertion.

In many regards, these maps recapitulate the story suggested by the thematic maps already displayed. They depict, for example, a similar chronological pattern with respect to the percentages of provinces falling into the two notionally peripheral classes. In 1937, those classes held some 91 percent of all provinces; ten years later, the figure was 97 percent. Again, 1947 marked the year — among, that is, the five for which data are available — in which the highest percentage of provinces fell into the two notionally peripheral classes, as measured by the factor indicating proportions of the population living in municipal areas and of Chinese nationals in the total population and concentrations of commercial bank branches *per capita*. Thereafter, the prewar pattern was reasserted and even surpassed. Only 83 percent of all provinces fell into those peripheral classes in 1963, and for 1978 and 1988 the figures were some 59 and 60 percent, respectively.

This sequence of events, like chose charted on the maps illustrating differentiation by the factor indicating population density, population density of Chinese nationals, size of administrative districts, and concentration of commercial bank branches per square kilometer, also saw a decreasing proportion of the provinces

in these two peripheral classes fall into the most peripheral class after 1947. But that proportion still remained greater than that in the next most peripheral class. From 88 percent of all provinces in the most peripheral class and nine percent in the next most peripheral class in 1947, the distribution moved to 32 and 27 percent, respectively, in 1978. It was in that year that these totals moved closest to parity. In 1988 some 36 percent of all provinces fell in the notionally most peripheral class, as gauged by scores on this second factor, with 24 percent in the next most peripheral class.

The figures displaying differentiation by provincial scores on the factor indicating proportions of the population living in municipal areas and of Chinese nationals in the total population and concentrations of commercial bank branches *per capita* and those showing differentiation by the factor indicating population density, population density of Chinese nationals, size of administrative districts, and concentration of commercial bank branches per square kilometer share additional features. Both sets of maps show a decline in the percentage of provinces in the notional middle class between 1937 and 1947 and the pronounced rise in that percentage thereafter. In the case of the factor indicating proportions of the population living in municipal areas and of Chinese nationals in the total population and concentrations of commercial bank branches *per capita*, the percentage fell from just above four to zero during the decade after 1937. It later rose, to seven in 1963, to 15 in 1978, and to 18 in 1988. Again, the contrast between results for 1937 and those for the post-1945 period exemplify the usefulness of regional-systems analysis in identifying topics for further, more intensive research.

Alongside the similarities with findings suggested above, the maps reflecting this second factor in Figures VI–IX are distinguished by a number of important differences.

First, the positions of the North and the Northeast appear roughly reversed on the two sets of maps. In the maps depicting differentiation according to this second factor, the Northeast remains peripheral even into recent decades, while reaches of the North move closer to or indeed into core status. For the North, this factor serves as a corrective to the bias toward peripheral classification on the basis of the first factor, indicating population density, population density of Chinese nationals, size of administrative districts, and concentration of commercial bank branches per square kilometer. This bias results from the region's mountainous topography. The case of the Northeast is different. That first factor suggests that the region has been less peripheral a part of Thailand's regional system than the North. But the second factor, indicating proportions of the population living in municipal areas and of Chinese nationals in the total population and concentrations of commercial bank branches *per capita*, illustrates that that conclusion is deceptive. The activities indicated by the first factor are in effect shared among the very dense populations of the Northeast. Most Northeasterners have thus

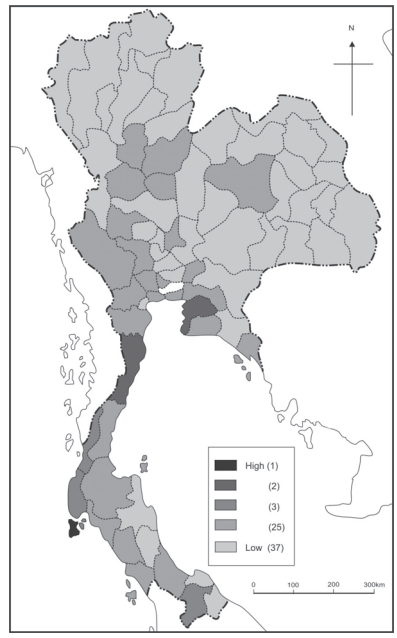

Figure VI, 1937

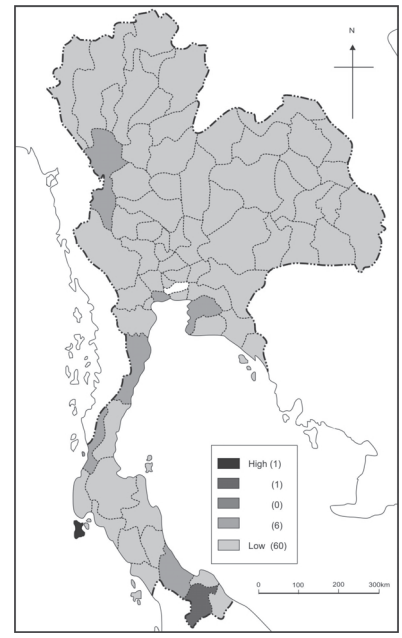

Figure VII, 1947

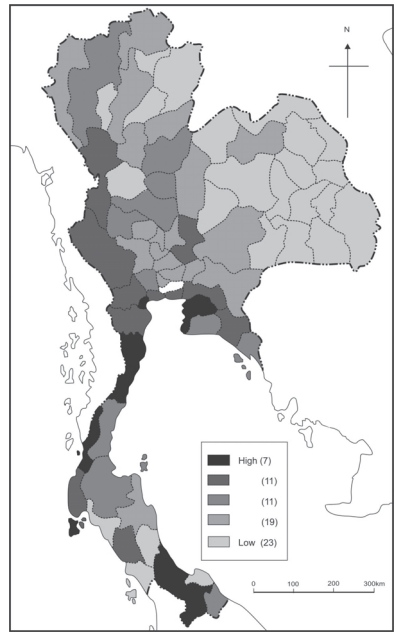

Figure VIII, 1978

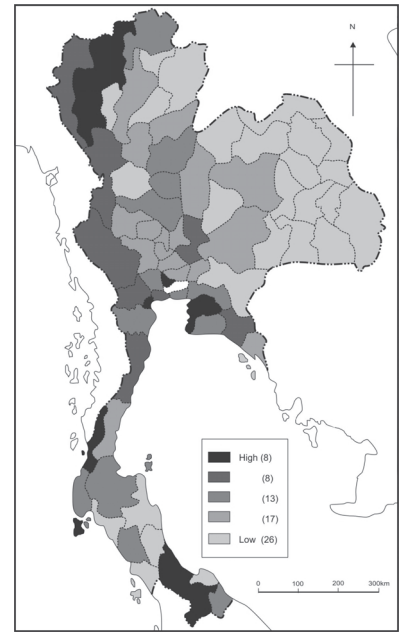

Figure IX, 1988

Factor scores for factor indicating proportions of the population living in municipal areas and of Chinese nationals in the total population and concentrations of commercial bank branches *per capita*, by province (numbers of provinces in each cluster in parentheses)

continued to live in a peripheral zone of the Thai regional system, as is clear when those activities are considered on a *per capita* basis.

Second, in Figures VI–IX neither the notional core nor near-core class of provinces displays the numerical or geographical stability characteristic of the maps showing scores on the first factor. The provinces in the historic delta of the Chao Phraya illustrate most sharply this contrast between mappings of scores on the two factors. But many provinces of the North and South display the same effect. On the one hand, this instability reflects the underlying relatively weak statistical results on which the figures for the second factor are based. At the same time, from a regional-systems perspective, the second factor thus serves to identify a number of fruitful lines of future research. The causes and implications of the unstable core status in mappings for the factor indicating proportions of the population living in municipal areas and of Chinese nationals in the total population and concentrations of commercial bank branches *per capita* may well differ in the case of each province concerned. Alternatively, a number of shared patterns may obtain. Only additional research, focused on local developments, will tell.

As in the case of the effect of the North's mountains on that region's scores for the first factor, the basis of the second factor produces certain anomalies. The notional near-core status of some of the demographically peripheral provinces along Thailand's western frontier, evident in Figures VIII and IX, serves as a clear example.

At the same time, that basis (along with the statistical properties of factor analysis; cf. Methodological Appendix) also means that the second factor indicates effects different from those suggested by the factor indicating population density, population density of Chinese nationals, size of administrative districts, and concentration of commercial bank branches. The intuitive value of this second, *per capita* measure is especially clear in its high statistical correlation with variables reflecting levels of commercial activity. Along with urbanization and high *per capita* incidence of commercial bank branches, concentration of Chinese nationals in the total population points unmistakably to intensive engagement with the market-place.

In general, the factor indicating proportions of the population living in municipal areas, of Chinese nationals in the total population and concentrations of commercial bank branches *per capita* thus deepens one's understanding of Thailand's changing regional system. More specifically, it directs attention to the existence and emergence of the sorts of sub-national commercial, social, and perhaps even political hubs and regional economies likely to prove ever more important in Thai affairs. In this way, it serves to complement as well as confirm the results for the factor indicating population density, population density of Chinese nationals, size of administrative districts, and concentration of commercial bank branches *per* square kilometer.

Five brief examples among the many possible suffice to illustrate this important feature of the Skinner-inspired regional-systems model for Thailand developed here.

First, in keeping with the postwar trend of decreasing numbers of provinces falling into the two notionally peripheral classes, the historically *Malaya-oriented* provinces of Phuket, Trang, and Yala had fallen into the core class of the *Bangkok-centered* system by 1963, as indicated by the second factor. This example recalls, again, the historical and continuing importance of extra-systemic influences on the Thai regional system. Second, the contrasting positions, as mapped according to the second factor, of Phuket and Pattani may suggest that, despite their shared high population densities, the former has retained much of its historical commercial vitality while the latter has stagnated. Each of these first two examples points, too, to the way that local developments in historic Chinese population centers reflected patterns of change at the national, system-wide level.

Likewise, and third, the continuously important Chinese center of Chonburi (Skinner 1957: 12, 112, 143) on the eastern coast of the Bight of Bangkok had also by 1963 moved into the Thai core, as indicated by that factor. Fourth, by the latter half of the 1970s and through the late 1980s, the growing significance of the regional economy of the Lower North became evident; a number of provinces in the region fell into the middle class. As an earlier section of the present article notes, Skinner explained patterns of Chinese migration into Thailand's Lower North in relation to the development of the national transportation system in *Chinese Society in Thailand*. The impact of this migration on the region's commercial development almost certainly helps account for its movement into the system's notional middle class here (cf. Montesano 2000: 105ff). Fifth, the same period between the late 1970s and the late 1980s, represented in Figures VIII and IX, also witnessed the movement of the northern center of Chiang Mai first into that same middle class and then into the core. Neither of these two latter developments registers on the maps tracing the story of changes in the dimension of Thailand's regional system suggested by the first factor, in Figures II–V. But each underlines the usefulness of the second factor in suggesting locally significant patterns of change.

While very basic and even crude, the regional-systems model presented graphically in Figures II–IX has substantial suggestive power. It points to two features of the interrelated patterns of commercial, social, political, and demographic change in Thailand between the late 1930s and the late 1980s. One feature of that change lies in the gradual decline in the peripheral status of much of provincial Thailand in the period after mid-century. The second feature is the apparent importance of more local episodes of change, like those noted in the preceding paragraphs. The model makes clear that episodes of this local sort proved contemporaneous with and indeed inherent in the broader developments

at the national level. In both processes, statistical analysis makes evident the participation of Chinese populations in the Thai provinces in the shaping of the national-level Thai regional system. That systemic effect represents nothing less than the sum total of the activities of countless individual Chinese like the Hainanese of Samui and their Teochew would-be rivals.

Conclusion: Samui, Skinner, Space

The beating witnessed by Kenneth Landon on Samui Island in the mid-1930s exemplifies the intersection of the long-term evolution of Thailand's regional system as a whole with episodes of more local importance. It makes vivid the roles of human agency and specifically those taken by Chinese agents both in the national-level developments illustrated by the statistical analysis in this article and in their more local manifestations.

Variables measuring Chinese populations are significant in the national-level Thai regional-systems model precisely because they aggregate the roles of figures like the perceived Teochew interlopers into Hainanese-dominated areas of the east coast of peninsular Thailand in the country's spatial reordering. The significance of such figures recalls G. William Skinner's unmistakable early interest in the crossing of space as a channel of Chinese participation in the ongoing transformation of Thailand's social, commercial, political, and cultural systems.

In the half-century since the appearance of *Chinese Society in Thailand*, both the history of provincial Thailand in the twentieth century and the study of Thailand's "up-country" Chinese have suffered from relative inattention. The functional dominance of Bangkok — reflected in so many dimensions of Thai life — has seemed to justify the neglect of provincial developments and of Skinner's insights into those developments. But Bangkok's dominance justifies greater rather than less attention to the Thai provinces. Thailand's great primate city and Chinese center must be understood as part of a larger whole, if it is to be understood at all. Its importance is *systemic*. The admittedly basic regional-systems model for twentieth-century Thailand presented here, valuable above all as an heuristic device, is meant as a prod toward further research. That research is almost certain to affirm numerous heretofore unrecognized dimensions of the continued distinct centrality of people of Chinese origin in Thai life.

For the national integration that marked the middle decades of Thailand's twentieth century has given way in recent decades to a number of very different developments. Among these are the rise of parliament and of provincial members of parliament, the growth and spread of a Thai middle class and its embrace of notions of "civil society," early moves toward administrative decentralization and the simultaneous flowering of a number of intermediate centers, intensified exposure to international finance capital and the resultant crisis of 1997, and a

resurgence of regional identities, often boosted through contacts across Thailand's formal political frontiers.

Each of these developments has deep historical roots. Their origins long predate popular and academic recognition of their apparent importance. Even now, scholarship has begun to assign to those roots new significance in the history of twentieth-century Thailand (Kamala 1997; Ockey 2002). Each of these developments also has a clear spatial dimension. Each has had variable impact across space. In each of them, Thais of Chinese descent have taken prominent roles. The movement of Chinese populations across Thailand effected and reflected national and local developments from the 1930s onward. Comprehension of the recent and ongoing political, social, demographic, administrative, and economic developments mentioned just above is, likewise, impossible without systematic study of the distribution of those populations.

Attention to the spatial dimensions of change and to patterns of variation across space must be a central feature of efforts to incorporate these developments into the study of modern Thai, Southeast Asian, and Chinese overseas history. At the same time, those efforts hold greatest promise for what we may learn from them about the cast of human actors whose record of movement and of resistance has shaped that history.

Methodological Appendix

The thematic maps presented in Figures II–IX are the product of an attempt to build a national-level regional-systems model for Thailand. As the text of the article makes clear, this effort was directly inspired by curiosity over the usefulness in the Thai case of the spatial approach to Chinese history pioneered by G. William Skinner. It reflects, too, a formalization of some of the spatial concerns evident in the masterful Skinner 1957. To the degree feasible, the methodological approach taken here recapitulates that of Skinner himself, with the important exception of the use here of a statistical procedure called factor analysis.

The thematic maps in Figures II–IX are variations on the basic map in Figure I. They depict the kingdom in four years from the late 1930s to the 1980s for which data appropriate for modeling regional systems are available. Considerations of space dictate that results for 1963, while discussed in the text, are not presented graphically. Data used in the preparation and presented in the discussion of the thematic maps are drawn from the following sources: National Statistical Office 1964, National Statistical Office 1973, National Statistical Office 1980, National Statistical Office 1983, National Statistical Office 1989, National Statistical Office 1994, Department of the Interior 1941, Department of the Interior 1948, Central Statistical Office 1961, Municipal Supervision Division 1947, Department of Local Administration 1951, Samrit 1987, Bangkok Bank

1979, Bangkok Bank 1989, Division of Banking and Savings Supervision 1972, and Alpha Research 1994.

Various volumes of the censi noted were employed. Early stages in the analysis included both demographic and agricultural data. The censi of 1937 and 1947 recorded data of both of these varieties, but the period after 1960 saw their collection according to mutually unrelated schedules. To build a useful data set the present study thus relies on interpolation, judged more valid in the case of demographic than of agricultural data. As a result, the final three years analyzed are years in which the Thai government undertook agricultural censi (1963, 1978) and an intercensal survey of agriculture (1988). Population figures for these years reflect interpolations from the population censi of 1960, 1970, 1980, and 1990.

The maps reflect changes in provincial boundaries due to the creation, and in one case the re-establishment, of four provinces: Kalasin in 1947 (fifteen years after its suspension), Yasothon in 1972, Phayao in 1977, and Mukdahan in 1982 (Royal Academy 1977–78: II, 56, and IV, 1059 and 1299; Samrit 1987: 429). The thematic maps presented exclude data from Bangkok. On all maps, the territory of Bangkok is shown as it has been since 1971, which witnessed the merger — also tried in 1944–45 — of Bangkok and the province of Thonburi on the west bank of the Chao Phraya River (Samrit 1987: 374).

Factor analysis allows the division of the members of a set, in this case of provinces, into groups according to their individual "scores" in one or more of their dimensions. These dimensions are the "factors" that lend the approach its name. Each of these factors reflects the contributions of a number of related variables. They therefore allow multivariate analysis driven by what Lyons 1995: 101 terms the "structure inherent in the data themselves" rather than by weights assigned on the basis of ad hoc assumptions.

In the present context, this approach permits the division of space, in provincial units, into ranges on the basis of scores on a pair of factors. Each of these factors is correlated with a number of variables related to the spatial variation of interest. The technique also permits comparison of groupings of provinces — of the "shape" of the distributions — across years. The statistical approach here follows that suggested in Lyons 1995. It is also guided by Afifi and Clark 1996: 354ff.

For each factor in the two-factor model employed here, provinces were grouped into five ranges of factor scores determined by an identical method for each of the five years. First, the scores for all provinces were divided into three groups according to natural breaks in the range of their values, as determined algorithmically. The range covered by the scores of the middle group was then further divided into three ranges of equal size. The five resultant ranges were then employed to assign provinces to five classes. In notional and heuristic terms, these five classes capture patterns of spatial differentiation from "core" to "far periphery" for each of the years modeled.

The results reported below are based on principal-components extraction and varimax rotation, which permits easier, clearer interpretation of factors without loss of orthogonality among them. In other words, each factor derived is more likely to have a clear intuitive meaning, and factors will be uncorrelated with one another (Afifi and Clark 1996: 365–66; Lyons 1995: 101).

Factor analysis is not an uncontroversial procedure. Above all, attacks on the procedure focus on the risk of taking a measured factor as "real" rather than as statistical artifice (most infamously in the field of psychometrics; cf. Gould 1981: 234–320). Afifi and Clark 1996: 355 attribute skepticism about factor analysis in part to the essentially "heuristic nature of the technique." The present article treats the technique as an exploratory device, informed by clearly stated theoretical expectations (Afifi and Clark 1996: 377), rather than as a means of identifying and reifying previously unrecognized phenomena. The divisions of Thai space presented are illustrative rather than "real."

The first table below shows results of factor analysis for the factor indicating population density, density of Chinese population, size of administrative districts, and concentration of commercial bank branches per square kilometer in the form of correlations between the variables and the factor. Variables represent population density in persons per square kilometer ("PT"), Chinese nationals per square kilometer ("ST"), proportion of total population residing in designated municipalities or *thetsaban* ("QP"), Chinese nationals as a proportion of total population ("SP"), average area of districts or *amphoe* in square kilometers ("TA"), number of commercial bank branches per square kilometer ("BT"), and number of commercial bank branches *per capita* ("BP").

The sources of data provide full censi of Chinese nationals for 1937, 1947, 1960, and 1970; for 1980 and 1990 they offer only 20 percent samples of the population sorted by country of birth. With only a small margin of error, Chinese nationality and birth in China have been highly correlated; as noted in the text of the article, the proportion of China-born in the population serves

Variable	**1937**	**1947**	**1963**	**1978**	**1988**
PT	0.959	0.932	0.975	0.970	0.941
ST	0.855	0.893	0.896	0.863	0.820
QP	–0.011	0.140	0.224	0.187	0.273
SP	0.365	0.522	0.338	0.334	0.128
TA	–0.748	–0.768	–0.743	–0.743	–0.764
BT	—	—	0.670	0.844	0.843
BP	—	–0.015	–0.048	0.131	0.203
Variance (%)	**46.9**	**42.5**	**41.7**	**44.5**	**42.6**

as a proxy for the size of the Chinese community as a whole in cross-provincial comparisons. Data on the populations of areas designated as municipalities for 1937 reflect estimates based on the population of the core sub-district (*tambon*) of each *thetsaban* established by that date. For 1947, 1960, 1970, 1980, and 1990, comprehensive data on municipal population appear in the sources noted above.

Note that negative sign on "TA" results from use of the inverse of "AT"; this inversion, dictated largely by considerations of scale, has no impact on the significance of the "administrative intensity" effect on this factor.

The model for 1937 includes neither of the variables related to bank branches, and the model for 1947 includes but one; the delayed development of Thai commercial banking meant that it proved possible to include both of these variables only in the models for 1963 and later. In strict statistical terms, failure to use the same variables for all years covered by the model might well be taken to compromise the results displayed. In the present article, historical reality and the fundamentally heuristic nature of the statistical exercise explain the author's decision to deviate from those terms.

Note also that percentage variance in the above table reflects only that accounted for by this factor. Comparison of these statistics for variance with those for the second factor, shown in the table below, makes clear that the factor indicating population density, density of Chinese population, size of administrative districts, and concentration of commercial bank branches per square kilometer explains somewhat more of the total variation across space than does the factor indicating proportions of the population living in municipal areas and of Chinese in the total population and concentrations of commercial bank branches *per capita* in each of the five years. Of course even together the two factors fail to capture all the variance in the data; total percentage variance accounted for by the two-factor model for any given year is the sum of the two reported percentages of variance for that year.

Variable	**1937**	**1947**	**1963**	**1978**	**1988**
PT	0.076	–0.015	–0.068	0.142	0.265
ST	–0.369	0.282	0.298	0.413	0.482
QP	–0.914	0.931	0.878	0.884	0.846
SP	–0.809	0.659	0.795	0.820	0.877
TA	0.209	–0.095	–0.207	–0.070	0.021
BT	—	—	0.590	0.457	0.476
BP	—	0.873	0.938	0.900	0.832
Variance (%)	**33.5**	**35.9**	**39.5**	**38.1**	**38.7**

The following table presents results of factor analysis for the factor indicating proportions of the population living in municipal areas and of Chinese in the total population and concentrations of commercial bank branches *per capita* as correlations between the variables and the factor.

This seven-variable, two-factor model includes no variables directly related to agriculture. When tested, those variables proved statistically inadequate measures of interprovincial variation as captured by analysis of factors. In addition, both the model developed and the results displayed in the thematic maps exclude data for the Bangkok-Thonburi primate. Iterations run with those data included in the set proved meaningless, as the numbers for the primate city were of such a magnitude as to swamp all significant patterns of variation among other provinces. The variation across the provincial space surrounding that primate city (rather than between it and the provinces) is in any case the object of interest in the present analysis.

Finally, this article follows the conventional division of Thailand into four broad geographic regions (*phak*): Center (or Central Plains), North, Northeast, and South. In the discussion, the first of these regions includes the following provinces: Kanchanaburi, Chanthaburi, Chachoengsao, Chainat, Chonburi, Trat, Nakhon Nayok, Nonthaburi, Nakhon Pathom, Pathum Thani, Prachuap Khirikhan, Prachinburi, Ayuthaya, Phetburi, Rayong, Ratburi, Lopburi, Samut Prakan, Samut Songkhram, Samut Sakhon, Saraburi, Singhburi, Suphanburi, and Ang Thong. For reasons given above, Bangkok/Thonburi is not included. The North here includes Kamphaeng Phet, Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, Tak, Nakhon Sawan, Nan, Phayao, Phichit, Phitsanulok, Phetchabun, Phrae, Mae Hong Son, Lampang, Lamphun, Sukhothai, Uttaradit, and Uthai Thani provinces. The South includes Krabi, Chumphon, Trang, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Narathiwat, Pattani, Phang Nga, Phatthalung, Phuket, Yala, Ranong, Songkhla, Satun, and Suratthani. Finally, the Northeast includes the provinces of Kalasin, Khon Kaen, Chaiyaphum, Nakhon Phanom, Nakhon Ratchasima, Nong Khai, Buriram, Maha Sarakham, Mukdahan, Yasothon, Roi Et, Loei, Si Saket, Sakon Nakhon, Surin, Udon Thani, and Ubon Ratchathani. Useful reference works on Thailand and its regional geography are Donner 1978 and the more recent Kermel-Torrès et al. 2004.

Notes

[1] The author wishes to acknowledge Thomas P. Lyons, Edward A. Frongillo Jr., Lee Li Kheng, Stephen J. Appold, Haydon L. Cherry, Mark R. Frost, Jamie S. Davidson, Benny Lim, Howard Dick, and two anonymous reviewers for the *Journal of Chinese Overseas*, as well as the hospitality of the Asia Research Institute of the National University of Singapore.

[2] Skinner argued, in effect, that the papers presented at the conference would benefit from attention to the spatial context in the same way that the study of Chinese history had benefited from his work on China's regional systems. Selected papers from that conference

— but not Skinner's remarks — appear in Brenner 1991. Those comments seem to represent Skinner's most direct application of regional-systems analysis to Southeast Asia. Remarkably, G. William Skinner, *Report on the Chinese in Southeast Asia, December 1950* (1951), offers no hint of the interest in spatial dimensions of the histories or activities of the Southeast Asian Chinese that characterizes *Chinese Society in Thailand*. This absence is particularly striking in that Skinner undertook the 1950 survey on which the report is based directly following the initial visit to Sichuan that clearly stimulated his long-term interest in marketing and its spatial aspect (Skinner 1954: i). Similarly, in his most recent major publication on Southeast Asia, Skinner neither considers in any detail spatial aspects of the issues treated nor introduces formal regional-systems analysis; see Skinner 1996. Only in a footnote concerning the use of the Baba Malay of Penang and Singapore in the commercial hinterlands of those two centers (Skinner 1996: 557–58, note 18) does that essay recall Skinner's attention to space in *Chinese Society in Thailand*.

[3] Skinner himself tacitly acknowledges the analytical value of a weaker formulation of his model. In tracing the expansions and contractions of the Southeast Coast macroregional economy from the eleventh to the nineteenth centuries, he assigns explicit narrative and causal importance to the sales of tea to other parts of China, to the travels of monks to Japan, to the junk trade with the Spanish Philippines, and finally to the opening of the treaty ports. In treating that macroregion's economic cycles and their independence of cycles in other Chinese macroregions, Skinner suggests no theoretical modification of his model to accommodate such extra-regional and even international contacts. But his treatment of the Southeast Coast makes clear the value of a weaker, more flexible formulation of the model in transcending absolute spatial determinism and accounting for human agency; cf. Skinner 1085: 275 ff. Cochran 2002: 2 ff. usefully observes that the problem is not the absence of long-distance trade from Skinner's narrative of Chinese history but rather its absence from his model, from his "historiographic vision" of what is important.

[4] The unstable signs across the years in the results for the second factor, while perhaps a relic of a change in the structure of the model with the introduction of observations for commercial banks starting with 1947, are also troubling; cf. Methodological Appendix. On the other hand, perhaps the competitive environment of Bangkok, Central Thailand, and other core areas pushed newly arrived Chinese into peripheral reaches of the country in the 1920s and 1930s. But then the role of these same immigrants in effecting the commercial integration in the post-1945 period accounts for the statistical correlation between their share of the population and less and less peripheral status for the provinces in which they were active; cf. Montesano 1998: 680 ff., 2000, 2001. Of course this speculation fails to address the inconsistent sign on the variable for the proportion of the population living in municipal areas.

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