

## THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND

### The Kingdom of Thailand

Thailand is situated in the central part of the Indochina Peninsula. It lies between the latitudes of 5°27'N and 20°27'N and the longitudes of 97°20'E and 105°37'E. The country shares its borders with four neighbouring countries, namely, Myanmar, Laos, Kampuchea and Malaysia. The total length of its land boundary is 5,326 km. Its coastal boundaries, along the Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea, have lengths of 1,878 km and 937 km, respectively, amounting to 2,815 km altogether.

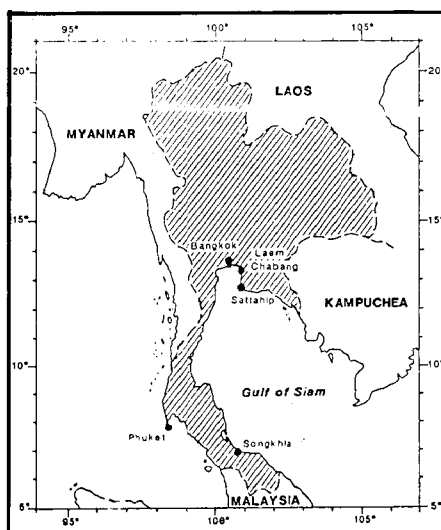


FIG. 1.- The Kingdom of Thailand.

Diversity and a wide range of contrast characterize Thailand's geography. Within a total area of 513,115 km<sup>2</sup>, the landscape includes tropical rain forests, agriculturally rich plains and the long continuous granitic mountain ranges, part of the mountain complex which extends from the Himalayan system.

Across the landscape live Thailand's population of about 57 million people. Thai is the national language and is spoken throughout the country. The State religion is Buddhism (90%) though there are also Muslims (6%) and Christians (2%). Bangkok has been established as the capital of the Kingdom since 1782. It is the country's international gateway, seat of the government, monarchy and booming metropolis. It can also seduce the unwary to think that its highly westernized appearance is an accurate reflection of the entire nation; yet Thailand is still basically a country of villages and towns, following traditional ways. Whilst a major percentage of the population is engaged in agriculture, industrialization of Thailand is increasing and consequently the number of people and career opportunities in industry are increasing.

The Thai people have fiercely defended the country's independence for more than 800 years. They can boast the distinction of being the only country in Southeast Asia never to have been a European colony. They have the proud distinction of never having been divided by civil war, thanks to King MONGKUT (King RAMA IV) and his son King CHULALONGKORN (King RAMA V), who ruled from 1851 to 1910, modernized the country and signed trade treaties with both Britain and France.

The country was once called "Siam" by foreigners, however, to its citizens, it always carried the names of its capital during that period, namely, Sukhotai, Ayutthaya, or Thonburi. "Siam" was changed to "Thailand" with the advent of democratic government in 1939.

### **The Hydrographic Service**

It may be said that the hydrographic work of Thailand (Siam at that time) started in 1856, when Master John RICHARDS and Commander A.J. LOFTUS of the British Navy, with their assistants, carried out the first marine survey in Siamese waters, on board HMS SARACEN. During the period from 1856 to 1911, a number of foreign naval officers of British, American, French and Danish nationalities had been called to form parties to survey different areas of Siamese waters and were accompanied by Siamese naval officers. Surveying sheets were then constructed and the reproduction of the charts for navigational purposes was entrusted to the British Admiralty. In 1912, it was found necessary to make a survey independently. Therefore, the Royal Siamese Ministry of Marine made the necessary arrangements with the Royal Danish Navy, resulting in obtaining the services of Danish naval officers, namely, Cmdr. F. THOMSEN and Cmdr. M. BOJESEN to instruct and train Siamese naval officers in surveying. Their first cooperative survey was at Bangkok Bay in 1912. From this date may be reckoned the introduction of an organized system in the surveying of Siamese waters. Following this first survey of 1912, the first chart was drawn and reproduced at the Royal Danish Hydrographic Office and the Royal Danish General Staff Department at Copenhagen respectively and finally published in 1913.

In March 1913, a surveying office was created, for the purpose of promoting surveying and for providing charts, instruments and nautical books for the Royal Siamese Navy. In 1914, the service adopted the Siamese name of "Kong Utoksastr", being equivalent to "Hydrographic Office". By 1915, the Siamese naval officers were wholly responsible for their surveying work. In the summer of 1919, Siam sent a

naval officer to attend the International Hydrographic Conference, in London, and during 1921, became one of the founder members of the International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB). The same year as the establishment of the IHB, the first nautical chart ever printed in Siam was published.

As a result of the rapid expansion and growing importance of the hydrographic services, His Majesty the King was graciously pleased to proclaim, in 1922, the establishment of an independent Department of the Navy to be known as "Krom Utoksastr" or "Hydrographic Department" with Cmdr. F. THOMSEN as Director General.

In recognition of his leadership and service, he was promoted to Rear Admiral the following year. He had carried on the hydrographic work of Siam for about 15 years. Following his retirement in 1926, no foreign naval officer has been assigned to work in the Hydrographic Department.

Through the years, naval officers have been sent to further their studies in hydrography, cartography and related fields in other countries. These included the USA, Japan, the Netherlands and Australia. The services of the Hydrographic Department were reorganized and modified and led to the present organization. The Hydrographic Department has now been divided into 9 divisions which can be categorized into 3 groups as follows:

- Navigation Services;
- Hydrographic and Cartographic Services;
- Oceanographic and Meteorological Services.

Its Headquarters and 6 divisions are located in Bangkok, on the bank of the Chao Phraya River and next to the picturesque Temple of Dawn; 2 divisions are located at the mouth of Chao Phraya River and 1 division at Sattahip. Three main vessels, namely, the hydrographic vessel HTMS CHANDHARA, the oceanographic vessel HTMS SUK and the buoy tender HTMS SURIYA carry out their activities in home waters. The Department maintains 66 charts covering the seas surrounding Thailand, as well as providing nautical publications and a standard time service.