CHAPTER 6
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE GOLDEN AND EMERALD TRIANGLE AREAS:
THAI PERSPECTIVES

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INTRODUCTION

Regarding international cooperation in the Greater Mekong Sub-region, two triangle areas of the three bordering countries also exist in Thailand. The first is known as the “Golden Triangle” of Myanmar, Lao PDR, and Thailand. It was known as the land of opium and the drug trade in a previous era. The second, the “Emerald Triangle,” includes areas of Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Thailand. In addition, there is also the “Quadrangle Area” of China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Thailand which is an extension of the Golden Triangle. Though there is no border between China and Thailand, there is cooperation in trading, drug and criminal control, and also the development of regional infrastructure, especially in the North-South Economic Corridor (NSEC) and the 4th Thai-Laos Friendship Bridge which is currently under construction.

Figure 1 shows the location of the two triangles. The circled area indicates the Golden Triangle, which is located in the upper-north of Thailand, whereas the Emerald Triangle is in the northeastern region of the country. However, as these two triangles are located in different regions of Thailand with different characteristics and contexts, the discussions of each region are presented separately. Details of each triangle together with border activities are discussed in the next sections.

1. GOLDEN TRIANGLE COOPERATION

1.1. From “Opium Trafficking” to “Triangle Cooperation”
The Golden Triangle is a region of Southeast Asia that covers an area of about 150,000