A Survey of Thai Materials during the Second World War: Thai Government Records and Newspapers

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1. Existing Literature

The research topic that I am interested in is the administration of four provinces during the period of the Second World War; Phibunsonkram (part of Siamreap province minus the town of Siemreap and the Ankor Wat), Battambang, Champasak (Bassac) and Lan Chang (the area opposite Luang Prabang) and all islands on the west of the Mekong river except Koh Kong.1 In order to further understand these provinces as “a disputed area” or the “Lost territories” for Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, during my preliminary survey, I examine two groups of Thai materials to figure out the area in that period. The first are the archival collections in National Archives of Thailand and the second are periodicals and newspapers.

2. Background

Looking at the study of Thailand in the Second World War period, almost all of the writings are focusing on Thailand’s foreign policy, particularly the relationships with Japan and the Franco–Thai territorial dispute. The birth of the territorial conflict discourse started the case of “Ratthanakosin Sok 112 (1893),” discussing the Franco–Siamese crisis of 1983. Thongchai Winichakul’s study examines the late nineteenth century, when the new idea introduced by European colonialism which was the sovereignty of fixed border, as Thongchai coins the terms ‘geo-body’ of ‘Siam’. For the Siamese elites, the ‘Lost of Territories’ was a sensitive issue, that was why it became a national campaign in the Second World War.2

As for the demand the return of the ‘Lost Territories’, Bruce Reynold’s study, adds more depth by using a wide range of the outstanding materials especially interviews and memoirs. Renold focuses on Phibun songkram’s cooperation with Japan, as a friendly figure, while on the other hand, examining the domestic policies; the change of name from ‘Siam’ to ‘Thailand’, the irredentist campaign and the capital moving program.3 For the domestic issues, I agree with Shane Strate’s argument in “an Uncivil

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State of Affairs: Fascism and anti-Catholicism in Thailand, 1940–1944.” Strate explains that the 1940 border conflict coincided with the beginning of a four-year campaign to weaken the Catholic Church’s position in Thailand. The state-led persecution was part of a broad effort to deal with the legacy of western imperialism in Thailand. Strate points out that Phibun’s strategy was not simply to survive the war as historians have often claimed. The anti-Catholic campaign, which complicated the country’s postwar status, was a part of an attempt to reposition the country vis-à-vis the west and provided complete independence for Thailand. In addition, Strate compares the traditional narrative on wartime conditions in Thailand and emphasized the country’s survival from both Japanese and Allied incursions. Both Strate and Renold’s studies, argues that Phibun’s domestic and foreign agendas employed the idea of the “Lost territories” in order to gain an amount support as a part of the overall process for restoring national honor.

Being another works on the “Lost territories” issues, Eiji Murashima’s study of the Shan states demonstrated how Phibun’s expansionist policies during the war were. Murashima compared the relevant Thai, Japanese, and Chinese documents and primary sources from that period in order to challenge the previous views which argued that the Japanese forced Thais to invade the Shan States. On the contrary, his contemporary evidences showed that Thai Army had perceived their actions in the Shan states as the immense contribution for saving the nation, and their struggle during the war as the restoration the nation’s independence. Finally, Murashima argued that Phibun himself allowed Japan to conduct the military operations in the Shan States, and he saw the war as an opportunity to restore all of Thailand’s ‘Lost Territories’. Therefore, for Phibun and some Thai elites, the military advance in the Shan States was specifically the territory irredentism rather than the general patriotism.

Furthermore, the studies mentioned above inspire questions how the French Indochina and Thai Government controlled the four provinces, regarding the administrative boundary, and how the people reactions since the early 1940s. In the first step of the survey of the historical sources, I have found the valuable archival sources in Thailand that provide fresh detail about the disputed territories. I divided them into two groups, the first are the documents from the National Archives of Thailand that provide fresh detail about the disputed territories. All of them are focused on the irredentism, which are relevant to the understanding of the contemporary circumstances.

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5 Ibid., 60–61 and 97. Also, see also “the Lost Territories: the Role of Trauma and Humiliation in the Formation of National Consciousness in Thailand (PhD thesis, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2009)
6 See also Thamsuk noomnon, Thailand and the Japanese presence, 1941–1945 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1977) and Chanvit Kasersiri, Tamrongsak Pechlertanan and Vigal Phongpanitanon, the Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram and Modern Thai Politics, (Bangkok: the foundation for the promotion of social science and humanities textbooks project, 1993)
8 Ibid.
9 On May 9, 1946, Luang Thamrong, Thai prime minister declared to return the territories back to France but the process of returning had taken about 3 years.
3. A record of Thai government

To begin with a survey of records of government administration, the National Archives of Thailand collects governmental, public and personal records, including newspapers, photographs and maps. Almost all of them are available, except archives related to the case of the Preah Vihear temple and the
border conflict between Thailand and Cambodia which are restricted. The documents would be divided into three groups related to the Second World War.

In the first group are source about the issues of border conflict and border cooperation such as trade, smuggling, immigration and extradition. Archives, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (KoTo) in the period of 1930s-1940s, illustrate several cases of communist crime were found in the border area, and concerned with Thai–French extradition treaties. 10

In the second group are documents of the Franco–Thai border dispute, and all of the sources come from the archives of The Prime Minister’s Office. The reports and memorandums of the incidents pro-

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10 KoTo 39/7, the case of the Chinese women, was exiled from Indochina and arrested cause of caring the explosive in the town.
vide very sufficient details.\footnote{1} These archives detail events of the returned territories; the Franco–Thai war, the fighting along the border, the negotiation in Tokyo, and the administration of four provinces that were considered for the irredentist campaign.\footnote{2} An example of the documents about administration of new territories is a report of the inspector, focused on the four provinces; Phibun Songkhram\footnote{3} Battambong,\footnote{4} Champasak\footnote{5} and Lan Chang.\footnote{6} The report of Champasak, in 1943, demonstrated a proposal of the development of Wanwaithayakorn and Moon Pamok sub-district to a model village, due to the nearby area, the Ban-Chan district, in French Indochina.\footnote{7} On the other hand, in the case of Lan Chang, the inspector suggested to remove two Laos district chief officers of Aduldetcharat district, Chao Saithong and Chao Cha, because of their clumsiness and lack of ability to get along with people.\footnote{8}

Furthermore, some of the documents show efforts of creating new territories, like a report of changing the names of roads and places in Battambong. Named were replaced based on the Irredentist sentiment, related to the national memory of the Franco–Thai war. The Timothy Road, for instance, being renamed as Chawengsaksongkram, Road for the Thai vice minister of the Ministry of Interior, as well as, the Srisawat and Narodom roads being renamed as Narai Racha, and Nak Ong Eng, for the Khmer ruler who loyal to the Thai, respectively.\footnote{19}

Moreover, the special collections of maps in the National Archives of Thailand are beneficial in illustrating the French military zones in the areas during the war. All of them were created by the Division of Operation, and some of handwritten maps were drawn from interviews with immigrants. The remarkable maps detail two zones: the first one is the local area, for example, in case of Battambong, the city seemed lively with commercial buildings along the railway, showing a large growing city in the 1940s. whereas, the map shows the military zones that were created for the Franco–Thai War, showing the petroleum depot, ordinance depot, parking apron, barbed wire and the barracks etc., near the city.

The third group deal with the foreign policy and international issues, related to the Japanese. Almost all of the documents are reports of conferences or missions such as the special goodwill mission to Japan in August, 1940,\footnote{20} as well as, the assembly of Greater East-Asian Nations, in 1943. On the other hand, some reports were concerning the Japanese situation such as the opinion of Direk Chainam on Japan’s creation of a new ministry, the Ministry of the Greater Asia, in 1942.\footnote{21} In addition, the reports from the Japanese archives offer valuable details, some of them consist of diaries, reports and tele-

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\begin{itemize}
\item SoRo 0201.35, (2) SoRo 0201.35, (3) SoRo 0201.35.
\item For examples; SoRo 0201.35, (2) SoRo 0201.35, and (3) SoRo 0201.35 Franco–Thai Border Dispute or SoRo 0201.33 About the Second World War such as the translation of news from news agency such as BBC, the French Embassy or the Department of Information
\item MoTo 5.10/350, 374
\item MoTo 5.10/372, 387
\item MoTo 5.10/403, 428
\item MoTo 5.10/395, 400
\item MoTo 5.10/428
\item Moto 5.10/395
\item (2) SoRo 0201.70/9
\item SoRo 0201.37/14
\item SoRo 0201.37/18
\end{itemize}
\end{flushleft}
graphs of local governors along the borderline such as of Chiang Rai, Battambong and Nong Kai.\textsuperscript{22} From my point of view, the notes or the memorandums about the Japanese are worthwhile to consider for instance, 1944, Phibun questioned in the documents about Japan’s plan to set-up the branch of the journalist association of the Greater Asia in 1944, Phibun noted that he wondered why he just learned about the news and in the last sentence, he wrote “Just follow the law”.\textsuperscript{23}

For the records of Thai government, although the documents are recorded from the point of Thai perspective, throughout this issue these documents are important to understand the “Lost territories” in Thai leaders’ view. These documents provide the invaluable debate on this issue and demonstrate proper picture of the area especially map, on which presented important of the strategic zone of the French Indochina and the lives of the local people are demonstrated. Some reports of the officers related to these areas have shown the official opinion about the local people and how the Thai government created the Thai nationalist consciousness upon them.

4. Periodical: Newspaper

Unfortunately for the survey of Thai newspapers related to the Second World War in Thailand, almost all of the newspapers were damaged. There are only a few available ones published during the war in Thailand’s National Library such as the Lakmuang (หลักเมือง), Prachachat (ประชาชาติ) and the Sri Krung Daily News (ศรีกรุง) and they are microfilm copies.

As for other newspaper sources, I found a valuable one in the Royal Thai Navy Archives, a special issue regarding “Battambong” in “Suwannaphum Daily News” (สุวรรณภูมิ). The newspaper’s theme was the

\textbf{“Suwannaphum Daily News”}

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{suwannaphum_daily_news}
\caption{Source: Royal Thai Army Archives, (1) KPS 99.03/91}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{22} SoRo 0201.16/25 Report of the Japanese railway Ishida survey team, planned to create a new one connecting Indochina with Northeastern part of Thailand, (2) SoRo 0201.98.1/9 Report of the Indochina Situation\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{23} (2) SoRo 0201.92/34, Japan plan to set the branch of journalist association of the Greater Asia in 1944,
day of the celebration of the return of Battambong to Thailand, July, 26 1941. The section of “When Battambong returns to Thailand,” reported about the Thai delegation’s journey from Bangkok to Battambong and pointed out that the people were excited about its coming and it was a great day for Battambong because “there were no more French left here.” Other interesting sections included the song for the new territory, by Luang Wichit Wathakan, the chief ideologue for the Thai nationalist regime in that period; “Kong Tup Burapha” (the Eastern Army), “Tai Rom Thong Thai (Under the Thai flag)” and “Khwan Thai” (the Thai Morale) along with a Thai poem song which was radio broadcasted by Boontham Tramot. It concluded in expressions of delight because of the returned territory, and a thank you message to France for her consideration and to Japan for being the true friend. Moreover, there are important pictures on the front and the last pages, showing the march and the ceremony for the returned territory’s day as well as people waving the Thai flag to welcome the Thai delegation.

5. Conclusion

At the present, the border dispute among Thailand, Cambodia and Laos are still controversial. To further understand this issue, the study through those materials and discussion the events taking place during the wartime from the different perspectives that oppose the official history of these three countries are needed. In conclusion, these archival materials and newspapers are very beneficial in exploration of the events of the Second World War from Thai perspective. Moreover, such materials show the transformative period of disputed territories, from the colonial state to nation state, when the nationalist consciousness had been conducted through the official affairs and the mass media as well.

Furthermore, my future plan is to survey the relevant sources during the Second World War and the several memoirs of Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos’s leaders in that period.\textsuperscript{24} I am also going to survey the material sources in Thailand, Japan, and France to understand the further details in this era, such as

\textsuperscript{24} For example; Direk Chainam (former minister of foreign affairs), Arun Vichitranda, Oun Sananikorn (Laos Issara and Free Lao member), Kuang Apaiwong (Thai prime minister between 1944–1945, 1946, 1946–1948), Luang Thamrong (Thai prime minister between 1946–1947)
as the personal archives, newspapers, and periodicals. As well, there are the valuable historical documents of the Indochina in the Royal Thai Navy Archive that in my view, these materials are valuable, especially news reports and news clippings because they are more complete than other archives in Thailand.
Bibliography
(1) Archival Records

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MoTo 5.10/387
MoTo 5.10/395
MoTo 5.10/400
MoTo 5.10/403
MoTo 5.10/428
SoRo 0201.16/25
SoRo 0201.33
SoRo 0201.35
SoRo 0201.37/14
SoRo 0201.37/18
MoTo 5.10/374
MoTo 5.10/400
MoTo 5.10/403
MoTo 5.10/428
SoRo 0201.16/25
SoRo 0201.33
SoRo 0201.35
SoRo 0201.37/14
SoRo 0201.37/18
MoTo 5.10/374
MoTo 5.10/400
MoTo 5.10/403
MoTo 5.10/428
SoRo 0201.16/25
SoRo 0201.33
SoRo 0201.35

1.2 Map

PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/12 Battambong
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/16 Koh Kon, Champasak
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/22 Siem Reap includes Krasan, Jongkun, Pak Lai
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/71 Sepon
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/72 Pakse
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/77 Champasak
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/73 Putthasaiman
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/74 Donghen
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/76 Songnakorn
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/80 Kampong Thom
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/81 Mongkolburi
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/83 Sawajik
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/84 Kengkok
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/85 Sarawan
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/86 Thakek
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/87 Pon Thong
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/88 Nong Sapang
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/89 Pak Hin Bul
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/90 Pursat (Phothisat)
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/91 Anlong Veng
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/94 Phnom Penh
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/95 Jomkrasan
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/97 Krasan District
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/98 Jik Reang
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/99 Siem Reap
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/100 Siem Reap
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/101 Pak Lai
PJ. (1) MoTo 3.1/102 Sisophon
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2.3 Murashima Eiji’s Newspaper Collection
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