ตำนานที่ไม่มีที่สิ้นสุด: ตรวจสอบความทรงจำร่วมในประเทศไทยเกี่ยวกับสงครามโลกครั้งที่สอง

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บทคัดย่อ

ในบทความนี้มุ่งพิจารณาเรื่องราวในประวัติศาสตร์สงครามโลกครั้งที่สองในไทยสามเรื่องด้วยกัน คือ 1) พ่อค้าและนายแพทย์ชาวญี่ปุ่นที่อยู่ในประเทศไทยก่อนสงครามล้วนเป็นสายลับ 2) วันที่ 8 ธันวาคม พ.ศ. 2484 กองทัพและตำรวจไทยสามารถต้านทานกองกำลังญี่ปุ่นที่กำลังยกพลขึ้นบกได้ ในแต่ละสมรภูมิสังหารทหารญี่ปุ่นไปราว 200-300 คน โดยที่ฝ่ายไทยได้รับความสูญเสียน้อยมาก 3) ในช่วงการสร้างทางรถไฟสายไทย-พม่ารัฐบาลไทยและชาวบ้านในท้องถิ่นได้ช่วยเหลือเชลยศึกชาวบริเตน ออสเตรเลีย อเมริกันและดัตช์ และต่อต้านการยึดครองของญี่ปุ่น โดยศึกษาหลักฐานต่างๆ ทั้งจากการสัมภาษณ์ บันทึกของผู้เห็นเหตุการณ์ เอกสารจดหมายเหตุ และบันทึกความทรงจำส่วนบุคคลที่เขียนโดยอดีตทหารญี่ปุ่น ผู้เขียนได้แสดงให้เห็นถึงความแตกต่างระหว่างเรื่องเล่าหรือตำนาน กับประวัติศาสตร์

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Everlasting Mythos: Re-examination of the Collective Memory in Thailand Regarding World War II

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Abstract

This paper focuses on three stories concerning the history of World War II in Thailand, on which a widespread 'mythos' is inconsistent with 'history', which can be confirmed by reliable sources: 1) Japanese 'spy stories'; 2) Casualties of Thai and Japanese sides on 8 December 1941; 3) Thai-Burma Railway ('Death Railway'): the role of Allied POWs and the attitudes of Thai government and local residents. Sources include interviews, eyewitness accounts, archived documents and personal memories written by ex-soldiers. I conclude by attempting to clarify the basis for the discrepancies between stories or mythos and history.

Key words

World War II, Thai-Japanese relation, Collective memory

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Introduction

On the dawn of Monday, 8 December 1941, shortly before the attack on Pearl Harbor, around 6,000 Japanese Imperial Army soldiers landed at Pattani. After encountering Thai soldiers, police, and 'Yuwachon Thahan' (ยุวชนทหาร), a paramilitary youth-organisation, and after brief battles in which 23 Japanese soldiers and 49 Thai soldiers and civilians were killed, the city and the airfield of Pattani came under Japanese control. On the same day, similar stories took place at several points along the eastern coast of southern Thailand, including at Thapae, Singora, Chumphon, Prachuap Khiri Khan, Surat Thani, and Nakhon sri Thammarat (Malay Campaign, 1966, pp. 217–240)

To 'the past which won't pass', *Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will* (Nolte, 1986), belongs this history too, at least in Thailand. The history of 1941–45 has been remembered in Thailand through annual ceremonies, through monuments, and in media for the last 74 years in different forms and different colours, reflecting the spirit of the age. Different versions of 'Khu Kam' as novels, films, TV series, and musicals have appeared and many other works e.g. '7 Prachan barn', 'Boon Pong' (Somporn, 2013) and so on. However, this history was concealed in Japan during the war[1] and forgotten completely after the war, as the name of a narrative of the battles, The Hidden Japanese-Thai Battles, reveals (Hidden Battles, 1977).

1. Japanese 'Spy story'

'In the district of Yaring, in the village of Bampu, people remember a Japanese man who came before the War (in the mid-1930s) and settled in the village. He converted to Islam and married a woman of the village and worked as a fisher. According to old men, "his mattress was filled with bank notes." He kept also a basket under his bed. In 1941, as the Japanese Navy came to Pattani Bay to land, he joined them to guide the way. He had been working as a spy to investigate the area. The man went away with the army of his country, abandoned his wife and children, and never again appeared in Bampu.'

(Le Roux, 1993, p. 341, n. 32)

Cited above is a typical spy story, several variations of which are widespread in Southern Thailand and incarnated also in the film The Young Soldiers (Euthana, 2000), in the TV-dramas Khu Kam (Sun, 2013) and Boon Pong (Somporn, 2013), through which the story seems to have been established in Thai national memory and further reproduced.

The above-mentioned Japanese man from Bampu may have been TANI Yutaka (1911–1942). A book, The Truth of Harimau Malayu after 60 Years, is dedicated to his life (Yamamoto, 2002). He was born in British Malay as a son of Japanese emigrants. Later, he converted to Islam, joined bandits in Malay, and was called 'Harimau'. Pursued by the British police, TANI fled to Southern Thailand to

[1] Japanese media reported that the British Army had invaded Thailand first, and Japanese forces landed 'to save Thailand' (Japan News, 1941).

settle in Bampu (Yamamoto, 2002, p. 70f). He married a Muslim woman there. Shortly before the outbreak of the war, TANI was recruited by a Japanese intelligence officer, and, after the landing of the 42 IR at Pattani, he joined the Japanese army to lead them. Shortly after the capture of Singapore, he died there of malaria. After his death, a propaganda film, A Tiger in Malay, was made by a Japanese film company (Koga, 1943). Through the film, TANI Yutaka, or 'Harimau', became, apart from his short and modest activities as an agent, a Japanese national hero during and after the World War.

One eyewitness, the fisherman Sama-ae (14 years old in 1941), from the village of Bangtawa near Pattani, remembers it:

'First, there were 4 or 5 people coming here acting like cloth merchants along the beach. They asked me, 'What is the name of the village?' I replied 'Bangtawa'. (From an interview with Mr Sama-ae, 10 July 2011 in Bangtawa village, Pattani Prefecture)

Several records from the Japanese side confirm the spying activities. At Singora, the Japanese consulate opened in 1941, whose mission was nothing but collecting information and preparing for landing operations. Intelligence officers were sent to the area as members of trading companies (Yoshikawa, 2010, pp. 32f). A list of Japanese residents in Southern Thailand was made in 1941 (Nanpô Chôsakai. 1941), and several Japanese were recruited as informants. A Japanese/ Thai man, at that time 14 years old, remembers that his Japanese father went to sea, pretending to be a hobby fisher, to check the depth of sea and other matters (Seto, 1995, p. 34). Bruce Reynolds describes in his voluminous work on Thai-Japanese relations, 'In addition to its own men in mufti and hired informants, the Japanese army utilised Japanese companies as surrogate intelligence-gathering agencies, and enlisted Japanese civilians for espionage duties' (Reynolds, 1994, p. 66).

In Pattani town, according to a Japanese ex-inhabitant, 14 or 15 Japanese had settled (Yamamoto, 2002, p. 86). They were doctors, dentists, or merchants. A dentist and a doctor were, after the beginning of the war, recruited as Malay interpreters and accompanied the army when it left Pattani (Yamamoto, 2002, p.86f).

A Japanese merchant, SHIBA Hiroshi, who came to Pattani in 1939 or 1940, had a shop in Pattani town, near to a cinema house. After the outbreak of the war, he went to Kota Bharu and organised 'the Shiba corps' to support the army logistically (Yamamoto, 2002, pp. 131f). Pramool called him a spy (Pramool, 1994).

On the night of the landing operation, Japanese soldiers were instructed that an agent, a Japanese resident, should shake a flashlight to mark the landing point. They found a light, but it was from a lighthouse, not a flashlight (42 IR, 1988, p. 443). A similar story happened at Thapae (42 IR, 1988, p. 445).

Nevertheless, it must be underlined that these spy stories are multiplied and exaggerated excessively and are mostly false. For example, in Pattani there were two or three Japanese doctors and dentists who had lived and worked there for a long time before WWII. Only after the landing of the Japanese Imperial Army on 8 December 1941, they wore military uniforms and left their resident towns because they were, as citizens of the Japanese Empire, obligated to join the army as military doctors or as interpreters.

They matched, however, the spy story very well and were called spies. However, if Japanese agents had really been sent to collect information, they must have been lazy and not worked at all. The Japanese had not been informed about the mud flat under Pattani Bay. The landing boats could not reach the shore and the fully equipped soldiers were forced to walk through the mud. They had not been prepared because of lack of information. An army officer wrote that they would not have survived if they had been attacked before they reached the shore; they managed to advance across the mud flat for 1 km to the shore, but they needed almost one hour to do it (42 IR, 1988, p.444).

This spy story is one of the most popular stories in Thailand from the Second World War. Almost every surviving document and every informant mentions it. What should have been done secretly, as spying tends to be, was exaggerated and manipulated. The spy stories are a typical case.

2. Thai and Japanese casualties on 8 December 1941

The number of dead and wounded soldiers and civilians from both sides varies greatly between sources. Colonel Andô counted 45 dead and wounded Japanese soldiers in Pattani (Andô, 1956). *The History of the 42nd Infantry Regiment* counts 23 deaths in and around Pattani (42 IR, 1988, p. 796), of whom, 22 names are enlisted (42 IR, 1988 pp. 798–865, in the list of 2,471 dead soldiers and officers between 1937 and 1945). Reynolds cites Tamura, the Japanese military attaché at Bangkok, who counted 250 Japanese casualties and 150 Thai casualties (Reynolds, 1994, p. 98, n. 70).

The Thai casualties in and around Pattani were estimated by Japanese at the time at 'around 500' (dead and wounded, by Kanayama, 1983, p. 51), while a Thai delegation reported 49 deaths with names (soldiers, policemen, civilians, and members of 'Yuwachon Thahan'). This overestimation corresponds with that of the Thai: some popular literature suggests even 300 Japanese deaths within a few hours (e.g., web page 'The Japanese Invasion of Pattani'). Among battlefield casualties, the number of enemies dead or wounded can be overestimated, and during the war, both sides attempted to exaggerate enemy losses and to minimise their own casualties. However, the Thai maintain those exaggerations even 70 years after the war. On 8 December 2013, a ceremony was held at Inkayut Air Base, near Pattani, commemorating the victims. A Thai

army officer I spoke with mentioned the 200 Japanese soldiers killed at Pattani.

The Japanese count of their casualties at the battle at Pattani seems to be exact. *The History of the 42nd Infantry Regiment* lists 2,471 dead during WWII (1937–45), including 23 in Pattani, 22 of whom are identified by name and home town.

Table 1 Japanese and Thai casualties on 8/9 December 1941

Place of battle*	Japanese casualties		Thai casualties (by Puttapon**)
	Counted by the Thai side	Counted by the Japanese side	Dead/wounded
Pattani	More than 200	23/(+22 wounded)	49/25
Chumphon	200	12	4/4
Prachuap Khiri Khan	217 (300 wounded)	86	59/31
Nakhon sri Thammarat	More than 150	7	45/42
Surat Thani	?	?	42/62
Singora/Hatyai	?	?	23/?

Remarks: * On battles at Surat Thani and Singora/Hatyai I could not find any data from the Japanese side.

** Puttapon, 2011, p. 26.

The total death count does not appear arbitrarily minimised, as one infantry regiment usually had 8,000 soldiers, and the 42nd IR lost very few after the siege of Singapore in February 1942. Each of Japan's 47 prefectural offices has a list of fallen soldiers from the prefecture. The editors of the History of the 42nd IR investigated the list at the Yamaguchi Prefectural Office 40 years after the war and found 22 of the 23 dead at Pattani. The remaining one seems to have been recruited from another prefecture (42 IR, 1988, p. 796f).

The situation appears to be the same at other battlefields. In the last scene of the film the Young Soldiers (Euthana, 2000), it is superimposed that during the battle on 8 December 1941, casualties were 'Japanese side 200, Thai side 10, Yuwachon Thahan 0'. There were 12 Japanese casualties in Chumphon, according to research by Japanese veterans (Hidden Battles, 1977, p. 17).

The same is the case at Prachuap Khiri Khan. A website 'The Japanese Invasion of Prachuap Khiri Khan' recounts:

'The Thais suffered 38 dead and 27 wounded. Japanese sources state that they suffered a total of 115 dead. 51 of the men killed, including two company commanders, belonged to the 143rd Infantry Regiment's 2nd Battalion. Estimates of Japanese losses by the Thais were put at 217 dead and over 300 wounded, although exact details are not known.'

The 'Japanese source' stating '115 dead' is unknown. According to the Japanese official history of the war, the landing force at Prachuap Khiri Khan had 1,007 soldiers, including auxiliary, non-infantry soldiers (Malay Campaign, 1966, p. 234). The more than 500 casualties at Prachuap Khiri Khan should be impossible. Japanese veterans count 86 dead in the two-day battle (Hidden Battles, 1977, p. 35).

A Japanese translation of 'Japanese Invaded Nakon' by Saad Khamasunthorn counts 39 dead from the Thai side (Saad, 1981, p. 164). The author, the commander of Juwachon Thahan, heard the locals say that the casualties from the Japanese side seemed to be four times those from the Thai side, or more than 150 (Saad, 1981, p. 166), while Japanese veterans identify 7 dead with their names from the battle of Nakon (Hidden Battles, 1977, p. 24).

How should this enormous discrepancy be interpreted? So long as the war goes on, the statistics may be hidden or manipulated for propaganda or in order to hide information. As mentioned earlier, the Thai-Japanese battles on the first day of the war were hidden in Japan. Nevertheless, as the Japanese veterans visited the places of war and edited the history of their regiments 40 to 50 years after the war, they had no reason to hide or minimise the number of fallen comrades. The soldiers who landed at Chumphon, Prachuap Khiri Khan, Surat Thani, and Nakhon sri Thammarat belonged to the 143rd Infantry Regiment, which lost most of its soldiers in Burma in 1944–45. As the veteran soldiers edited a history of the regiment, they identified the names of more than 4,280 fallen soldiers (143 IR, 1982, pp. 677–762). It is hard to imagine that they would fabricate history only for 8 December 1941 by dramatically reducing the number of casualties from 150 to 7 at Nakon, 500 to 86 at Prachuap Khiri Khan, 200 to 12 at Chumphon, and 200 to 23 in Pattani.

3. Thai-Burma Railway ('Death Railway')

3.1 The role of allied POWs, the Thai government, and the local Thai inhabitants

Different from the story of the 'Nanjing Massacre' or 'comfort women' as 'sex slaves', it seems an undeniable fact that more than 10,000 Allied POWs and many more labourers from Southeast Asian territories were lost during the construction of the Thai-Burma Railway, also called 'the Death Railway'. According to one account, 12,399 of 61,106 mobilised Allied POWs died (Introduction by Ewart Escritt to Futamatsu, 2013). Yoshikawa counts 12,339 dead from 61,806 POWs, almost the same as Escritt (Yoshikawa, 1994, p. 126).

The history of the Thai-Burma Railway has, however, been related almost exclusively from the perspective of Allied nations,

among others by POWs, in English-language literature. In that literature, the memoirs of POWs, academic research, and novels, some of which have been made into movies, such as The Bridge on the River Kwai (Lean, 1957) or The Railway Man (Teplitzky, 2013), the Allied nations claim their monopoly of 'justice' and 'truth', that is, 'civilisation'.

The Thai TV drama Boon Pong (Somporn, 2013) reflects a Thai perspective on the 'Death Railway'. Different from the British and Australian films mentioned above, Boon Pong attempts to show the 'human' face of Japanese soldiers as 'Miyoshi' or 'Saitô'. However, it recognises the Allied Forces'-or Anglo-Saxon-claim and adds Thailand to the side of 'civilisation'.

A typical scene is that of construction work: While the Allied POWs are working, Japanese soldiers are forcing them to work by shouting and threatening them with rifles and bayonets. Around 10,000 Japanese engineers were engaged in the construction works. Did they just watch and force the POWs and Asian labours?

In the recently published English translation of civil engineer Futamatsu Yoshihiko's memoir about the Thai-Burma railway, he mentions: 'The engineers depended on arranging for prisoners to do rush-construction work from March to October which averaged over 30,000 men at work on any one day, and the total labour force within this period probably reached ten million[2]. The engineers themselves on the job totalled about 10,000, which in terms of efficiency doubled the prisoners to about 20,000. When one considers this fact, one realises that it is no exaggeration to say that the railway's construction depended on the work of prisoners-of-war' (Futamatsu, 2013, p. 109).

The necessary POW manpower to successfully construct the railway was important, as Futamatsu wrote. Always they were forced to work, as they remembered and described later. Ten thousand Japanese soldiers and civilians who belonged to two railway construction regiments dedicated their skills and enthusiasm to their fatherland and emperor. According to Futamatsu, the quantitative contribution of POWs and Japanese engineers (soldiers and civilians altogether) was 3:2. The visual scenes from the American, British, and Australian films and from the Thai TV-drama are misleading.

In his essay on the bridge over Kuwai (Mae Klaung), Tsukamoto points out: *'The bridge was built by POWs'-in the background of this claim there is a pride of POWs who were forced to work for the construction of the enemy's railway* (Tsukamoto, 1981, p. 120f).

Concerning the attitudes of the Thai government and local Thai inhabitants, the story of Boon Pong might be true, as Escritt, a former POW who translated Futamatsu's memoir, mentions (Futamatsu, 2013, Introduction xlviii.). Another side is, however, completely forgotten: cooperation with the Japanese. Tsuboi Hanabusa, an officer of the 42nd

[2] The editor of the English version, P. N. Davies, comments that this paragraph is 'not clear'. If daily 30,000 POWs worked for eight months, 240 days, the total labour forces should be around 7 million. According to Yoshikawa (Yoshikawa1994, pp. 261–268), Thai officials counted differently the number of POWs in this area: 27,790 (15 Sept. 1943); 41,750 (27 Sept. 1943); 34,820 (25 Nov. 1943).

Infantry Division, remembers: *'After the cease fire (in Pattani) the (Thai) inhabitants became so friendly to us, shaking instantly-made Japanese flags, giving fruits and drinks, and cheering 'Singapora, Singapora!', much different from the attitudes of people in China'* (Tsuboi, 1987, p. 42).

3.2 Personal, collective, and national memory in Thailand

A Malayu-speaking Muslim woman living in Pattani remembers:

'Then the Japanese soldiers came to the village to ask 'give seven coconuts'. The villager misunderstood it as 'escape seven kilometres', then escaped along the flooded river upward. Seven days later, however, a Melayu man came and said to us that we misunderstood what the Japanese had told. Then we returned home.' (Interview with Mrs Wor)

The above cited 'three seven tale', related in the local Malayu language by a Muslim woman who was 14 years old when the war began, might be the 'raw' material of a collective memory. It is her 'personal' memory from her childhood and a 'collective memory' within a village that seems to be less influenced by a discourse of Thai national history. Halbwachs reminds us of the function of society as the frame for personal memory (Halbwachs, 1950, ch. 1). We have to further analyse it, also with the aid of mythology.

In the context of national history, however, a personal memory becomes 'nationalised'. Another eye-witness, Sama-ae, talks about a patriotic action as his own experience:

'[As the Japanese army landed] we evacuated official documents using a fishing boat.' (From an interview with Mr Sama-ae)

Thai national mythos seems to still be dominant: Thai forces were invincible and so strong that they killed 10 times as many Japanese aggressors as the Japanese killed of their own soldiers; Thailand's enemy, the Japanese, were so sneaky that they had sent many civilians as spies to lead the Japanese army into Thailand; Thai citizen were so brave and so right that they resisted the Japanese occupants and helped Allied POWs constructing the Death Railway. In a phrase: Thailand as holy victim and hero of war.

Hayase Shinzô, the editor of the Japanese version of the work of late Prof. Yoshikawa on Thai-Japanese relations during WWII, wrote: Prof. Yoshikawa was surprised to learn that a Thai scholar often called this period 'Thailand under Japanese occupation' (Yoshikawa, 2011, pp. 175f).

In the same book, in the Thai and Japanese versions, Charnvit Kasetsiri wrote: The history of the World War II period has often been described from the viewpoint of 'Seri Thai' (preface to Yoshikawa, 2011, p. 1; Yoshikawa, 2007, p. 6).

A Japanese soldier who landed at Pattani as an engineer of the airport construction squadron described his impression from Thai soldiers and workers at Pattani airdrome:

'They [=Thai soldiers and officers] *are absolutely, or naively, proud of their own country. For them, the greatest nation in the*

world is Thailand, Germany comes in second, and Japan is third. They believe that Thai support will enable Japan to defeat the British force' (Kanayama, 1983, p. 215).

The above-mentioned civil engineer Futamatsu, who took part in the construction of the Thai-Burma railway, remembers:

'They [=Thai people] *said that the Thai army was the most powerful in the world... and Japan, who had defeated England, seemed to rank number two'* (Futamatsu, 2013, p. 47).

The last five minutes of the film Young Soldiers (Euthana, 2000) seems to reflect an uncritical patriotism/nationalism in the Thai nation, which is still alive and strong.

3.3 A Suggestion from Japan

Maurice Halbwachs underlines in his pioneer work The Collective Memory the antagonism between 'memory' and 'history' (Halbwachs, 1950, ch.2). In the first half of the 20th century, the latter was understood almost as a synonym for 'the truth'. Recent scholars, such as A. and J. Assmann, consider history part of 'cultural memory' (cf. Yasukawa, 2008).

This article attempts to expose Thai national collective memory to the light of historical criticism. Nevertheless, this survey by a Japanese citizen would not seem to be free from Japanese national/cultural memory too.

The conference, where the draft of this article was read, has the general title 'Conflict resolution: Lesson learned from Japan.' Is it possible to present any instruction or suggestion on this matter from Japan? We can suggest to scholars and citizens in Thailand our own experience in the context of history in a country of monarchy.

A Japanese historian TSUDA Sôkichi (1873–1961), professor of Waseda University, had already published before WWII critical research on the most sensitive matter in Ancient Japanese history: the origin of the state and the imperial dynasty. He published his works during the 1920s, a relatively liberal period. In 1939, Tsuda was accused by fanatical nationalists, allegedly his thesis should be lèse-majesté, and his works were banned from being published.

After the end of the war, contrary to the expectations of the radical leftists, who wanted to abolish the monarchy in Japan after the lost war, Tsuda wrote an article to explain the history of the founding of the ancient state and the imperial monarchy in Japan and concluded that Emperor and monarchy 'should be loved by us citizens' (Tsuda, 1947).

He was criticised and attacked from both sides, by fanatic nationalists and chauvinists before 1945 and by radical republicans and communists after the war. Nevertheless, he defended his viewpoints until his death in 1961[3]. Tsuda's life and works instruct us how it is possible to be patriotic and loyal to the monarchy and at the same time to be a critical historian. It might be a suggestion from Japan to the country where it is still difficult to watch a movie made 60 years ago.

[3] Joel Joos (Joos, 2008, p. 305) emphasises, however, that such a portrait of Tsuda as a conservative liberalist is a product of social and intellectual struggles in Japan in the 1960s, after Tsuda's death.

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