Ancient Ryukyuan sailing ship model:
Photograph by the author, taking at Ginowan Okinawa City Office, 1 Oct 2015

Ryukyu-Patani: Parallel Universes in the Multiverse of Historical, Social, Political Conflict, with the Challenges of Japanese, and Thai States

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Introduction

On the occasion of Rusamilae Journal, Vol. 45, No. 2, May-August 2024, publishing under the theme "Japan-Pattani, known each other for over 600 Years," the author was honored by the editor's invitation to submit an article on relations between Japan and Pattani for publication. As a Patanian (the author's hometown is in Yala, has a farmland in Narathiwat, and studied for 6 years at Demonstration School, Prince of Songkla University) who has more than 10 years of experience living in Okinawa Prefecture, Japan, from being an undergraduate exchange student, till graduating with a doctorate and is currently working in Okinawa. The author is very honored and would like to take the opportunity to thank the editor of this issue first.

When talking about the relationship between Japan and Pattani, the author is not quite sure what issues the readership of the Rusamilae Journal is interested in. A possible interest is the history of Japanese troops landing in Pattani during the Pacific War as there remain legends and ghost stories that senior university students tell freshman students in welcoming activities of Prince of Songkla University (PSU), even at the Demonstration School. Or a story about a Pattani family with Japanese military lineage. In addition, there is a historical connection during the Patani Kingdom period where ships from Japan and Patani traveled back and forth to trade with each other. But how many readers know that besides the points mentioned above, in Japan, there is also Okinawa Prefecture which can be considered a parallel universe in the same multiverse of Patani?

In this article, the author would like to point

out how Okinawa, previously known as the Ryukyu Kingdom is in the same Multiverse as Patani.

Defining "Multiverse" and the study of "Area Studies" from the perspective of "Sociology"

The author believes that readers have probably heard "Multiverse" from various media. Originally, "Multiverse" is an astronomical term that describes the idea that there is more than one universe.[1] (We will not go into details here.) But for this article, the author uses the term "Multiverse" in the sense of parallel universes to explain the conditions of societies that are geographically separated from each other but with structural similarities. The author was inspired by the Marvel movie; "Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness," (2022).[2]

The movie talks about a young girl named America Chavez who has a special power called the "Star Portal," which allows her to open portals and travel across universes. In each universe that she has traveled across, she meets the same "Doctor Strange" characters, who have the same name, appearance, and abilities but are living in a universe with different environments.

"Area studies" is the study of a particular location in its context, and dimensions, through various perspectives and theories while "Sociology" is a science that studies the interactions between 1) individuals and individuals, 2) individuals and groups of individuals or society, and 3) groups of individuals (society) and groups of individuals (society).

When applying the plot of the movie "Doctor Strange" to explain the study of area studies from a sociological perspective, It can be seen that the "universes" in the "multiverse" are "field studies" for America Chavez, who is the "researcher", to use the special power "Star Portal" or "research methods" (Methodology) traveling to study "Doctor Strange" who is "case studies" in various universes.

Multiverse of Ryukyu-Patani/Okinawa-Thailand's Deep South

The first impression of Okinawa as a Patanian

The author first learned about Ryukyu or Okinawa because when the author was a third-year student in the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, the author had an opportunity to be a Japanese government scholarship exchange student at University of the Ryukyus, Okinawa Prefecture, between April 2009 and March 2010 (one academic year.)

The author never considered going to Japan but decided to study abroad there because Chulalongkorn University had student exchange agreements with several Japanese universities where students did not have to pay extra academic fees and could receive a scholarship for living expenses while studying in Japan. The author chose Okinawa because

the author was introduced by a senior student who had just returned from an exchange program at the University of Ryukyus.

Before coming to Okinawa, the author researched about Okinawa and learned that Okinawa is the southernmost archipelago of Japan. In the past, it was a kingdom called Ryukyu which had closely relationships with Siam and Patani.

From historical study, such as an article of Piyada Chonlaworn (2001)[3] who studied ancient documents of the Ryukyu Kingdom named Rekidaihoan (歴代宝案), "Precious Documents of Successive Generations", it is shown that during the 15th-16thcenturies, ships from the Ryukyu Kingdom went to trade with Siam 56 times, while they went to Patani 8 times. In Thailand, there is still evidence showing the relationship between the Ryukyu Kingdom and Siam such as the name "Ryukyu fish," also poems about, and statues of the Ryukyuan people.[4]

The author's first impression of Okinawa when just arrived, and after living there for nearly a year, was the author felt that Okinawa is Patani. Because besides being geographically located at the southernmost of its country, there are seas, weather conditions, and some plants that are like Patani. There were also chances to hear a helicopter and see military vehicles running around. Similar to Patani, Okinawa also has conflict issues between local people with the national government. Okinawa has conflict regarding US military bases which still exist in Okinawa since 1945 to the present.

Common features and differences between Ryukyu-Patani/Okinawa-Thailand's Deep South

Since hearing about Okinawa from the returning exchange student in 2009, continuing until 2014 when the author returned to study for a master's degree to a doctorate at the University of Ryukyu as a Japanese government scholarship student again, the author has conducted comparative research on the creation of a common space for conflict resolution in Okinawa, and also in the southern border provinces of Thailand.

The research found that although both areas have different conflicts, they have structural similarities in their conflicts. In Okinawa, the presence of US military bases raises conflict issues between the Japanese government and Okinawans (also mainland Japanese) who have used nonviolent protest. The conflict in Thailand's Deep South between the Thai government and the Patani independence movements which have used armed resistance causing violent insurgencies.

There are five structural similarities between Okinawa and Thailand's Deep South as follows:

First, both areas are geographically and socially marginalized, located at the southernmost and far from the center of state power. According to the latest data from the Japanese Cabinet Office,[5] from 2011 to 2020, the per capita income in Okinawa Prefecture was the lowest in Japan. Meanwhile, the latest survey by the National

Statistical Office of Thailand in 2009 and 2021 showed that the average monthly household income of Narathiwat Province was one of the top five lowest in the country while Yala Province was one of the top five lowest in the country in 2015.[6]

Second, the majority of the population of both areas are ethnically different from the majority of their countries. Most of the people of Okinawa consider themselves "Uchinanchu" people, while the majority of the population of the Deep South consider themselves "Melayu" people.[7]

Third, looking back on the timeline of history, both areas were independent states that were the center of maritime trade during the 16th-18th centuries and had tributary relations with larger states. Okinawa was once the Ryukyu Kingdom which had a tributary relationship with both China and Japan, while the Deep South was the Patani Kingdom which had a tributary relationship with Siam and had relations as a kin state with other kingdoms in the Malay Peninsula.

Both independent states were eventually annexed under the process of modernizing the countries, Ryukyu by Japan in the era of Emperor Meiji (1867-1912), Patani by Siam in the era of King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910).

Fourth, both areas have independence movements and state resistance movements which occurred after World War II. Okinawa has had anti-US military bases since 1955, while Thailand's Deep South has had independence movements since 1959.

Although both areas have resistance/ independence movements, there are different means of the movements. The movements in Okinawa are civil society movements that use resistance through academics and peaceful means. For example, an association called "the Association of Comprehensive Studies for Independence of the Lew Chewans,"[8] that is a non-violent movement with an academic proposition about why Okinawa should be independent from Japan. However, the movements in the Deep South are violent armed groups under political leadership that have resulted in many deaths and injuries.

Fifth, to solve problems in these two areas, both Japan, and Thailand have special government agencies to be in charge for both areas. Japan has "Agencies related to Okinawa, the Cabinet Office" (内閣府沖縄関係部局 Naikaku-fu Okinawa kankei bukyoku)[9] under the direct supervision of the Prime Minister of Japan and "Minister of State for Okinawa and Northern Territories Affairs" (沖縄及び北方対策担当大臣 Okinawa oyobi hoppo taisaku tanto daijin). Correspondingly, Thailand has the "Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre" (SBPAC), which is a special government department, that is not subordinate to the Prime Minister's office, ministries, or affiliated institutions. It has the status of a legal entity under the direct supervision of Thailand's Prime Minister.[10]

From the creation of the modern nation-states to local conflicts— If there wasn't that day, perhaps there wouldn't have been today

The structural similarities of Ryukyu and Patani as mentioned above are probably not a historical coincidence, but it is caused by some similar processes. The author argues that it is the process of creating a modern nation-state. Just imagine that historically if Ryukyu and Patani had not been annexed by Japan and Siam, these areas would not have become the southernmost prefecture/provinces of the countries. And there may be neither resistance nor independence movements that lead to the current conflict in the areas.

The process of creating modern nation-states for both Japan and Siam began during the colonization era (19th century), after pressure from the Western countries who came to sign a trade treaty that forced both Japan and Siam to open their countries to accept free trade. In the case of Japan was the arrival of the United States in 1854, led by Commodore Matthew C. Perry, to force the Tokugawa Shogunate of Edo (Tokyo today) to open up the country by making the Treaty of Kanagawa.[11] As for the case of Siam, in 1855 the British led by Sir John Bowring came to Siam to sign the "Treaty of Friendship and Commerce between the British Empire and the Kingdom of Siam" during the reign of Siam King Rama IV.[12]

After the arrival of the Western countries as mentioned above, both Japan and Siam modernized their countries in a Western way. For Japan, it is called the "Meiji Restoration,"[13] which occurred during the reign of Emperor Meiji (1867-1912). The reform of Siam is called the "Jakri Reform"[14] during the reign of King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910).

The creation of modern nation-states is a key to these national reformation process. Japan annexed the Ryukyu Kingdom into the "Ryukyu Domain" (琉球藩 Ryukyu Han) in 1872[15] before converting to Okinawa Prefecture in 1879,[16] while Siam officially annexed Patani in 1909 under the "Anglo-Siamese Treaty."[17]

Comparing the period of the Western treaties and the period of the national modernization of Japan and Siam, they were almost at the same time, but Japan annexed Ryukyu since 1872, while Siam successfully annexed Patani in 1909, just 37 years after Japan annexed Ryukyu.

The reason that Japan was able to annex the Ryukyu Kingdom only five years after the beginning of the Meiji era, might be Japan had the geopolitical advantage of being an island country. The weakened Qing Dynasty did not handle disputes or send troops to oppose Japan's territorial claims over the Ryukyu territory.

The annexation of Ryukyu

The annexation of the Ryukyu Kingdom by Japan began in 1872 when the Meiji government called King Sho Tai (尚泰 1848 -1879) to pay respects to the Emperor in Tokyo. But King Sho Tai chose not to go, citing his illness, and sent a delegation on his behalf.

A delegation of King Sho Tai met with the Japanese Foreign Minister on October 18, 1872, after that, the Meiji government issued a statement referring to the Ryukyu Kingdom as having ethnicity, way of life, and languages such as Japan, and has been loyal to the Satsuma Domain for a long time. The Japanese government also appointed King Sho Tai to be the ruler of the Ryukyu which was changed to the last domain (藩 Han) of Japan,[18] while other domains had changed to prefecture (県 Ken) since 1871.

The ruler of the Ryukyu Kingdom at Shuri Castle (首里城 Shuri jo) requested assistance from the Qing Dynasty. However, a response was not received by the Qing, which still adhered to the old tributary system. The Qing was not recognized as a step-by-step plan of Japan to use modern methods for gaining international legitimacy.[19] In May 1873, Soyeshima Taneomi, an ambassador of Japan, traveled to Beijing to clarify the claims of sovereignty over the territory of the Ryukyu.

On March 27, 1879, Matsuda Michiyuki, the Chief Secretary of Japan's Home Affairs Ministry, visited Shuri Castle to announce the status elevation of Ryukyu Domain to Okinawa Prefecture, marking the official annexation of Ryukyu as part of Japan. This phenomenon shocked the Beijing government which did not respond by militarily but disputed action, and negotiations took place one year later in 1880. The Beijing government offered that the northern island territory of Okinawa from Amami Island should belong to Japan. The southwestern territory from Miyako Island and Yaeyama Islands should belong to China. For the main island of Okinawa, neither China nor Japan should intervene. It should be left as an independent state with a ruler as before. Japan disputed the proposal. As a result, the negotiations made no progress. When China was defeated in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), China was thus excluded from influencing the territory of Okinawa by default.[20]

The annexation of Patani

The Siam's annexation of Patani in 1909, occurred just one year before the end of the reign of King Chulalongkorn. The reason why Siam was unable to annex Patani suddenly, it can be said is because of the geopolitics of Siam being situated between the British and French colonies. During the reign of King Chulalongkorn, he had to deal with border issues with both Britain and France, which was usually taught in history classes, at least when the author was a high school student, that Siam lost territory to England and France.

Thongchai Winichakul (1994) argues in his work; "Siam Mapped: a history of the geo-body"[22] that Siam never lost its territory. Because Siam never had territory as a modern state until it was mapped to demarcate its borders with Britain and France, it was not Siam who lost territory, but former tributary states of Siam, including Patani who lost their territories to Britain, France, and Siam.

According to the work of Piyada Chalaworn (2001), Patani was a sultanate state that flourished as an important port in Southeast Asia during the maritime trade in the 16th-18th centuries. At the time, Patani was not part of Siam, but had a relationship as a tributary state by sending silver and golden flowers to Siam every three years. After Ayutthaya was destroyed by the Burmese in 1767, Patani did not send troops to help Siam and stopped sending silver and golden flowers.

In 1785, during the reign of King Rama I, Siam sent troops forcing Patani to be under the control of Songkla. After that, Siam used a strategy of divide and rule by subdividing Patani into seven provinces, namely Pattani, Sai Buri, Yaring, Nong Chik, Yala, Raman, and Ra-Ngae. In 1906, Siam integrated the seven provinces into the "Monthon Pattani" (Pattani Circle) before officially annexing Patani as part of Siam in 1909, with recognition from the British Empire under the Anglo-Siamese Treaty.

Assimilation Policy

After Japan and Siam annexed Ryukyu and Patani, respectively, into their modern nation-state territory, their next steps included the adoption of an assimilation policy.

In the case of Ryukyu, or Okinawa, the Japanese government implemented a policy of assimilation, known as "Ryukyu Disposition" (琉球処分 Ryukyu shobun), towards Okinawa immediately after the establishment of Okinawa Prefecture in 1879. First, the ruler of Okinawa was changed from the Ryukyu King to a governor sent from Tokyo. Then Japanese government changed the land ownership system from shared land use by communities to private, and instilled a sense of citizenship through working for the prefecture rather than for the community.[23]

The Japanese government also assimilated Okinawans through the Japanese school education system and forced Okinawans to use Japanese names instead of Ryukyuan names.

Japan's assimilation policy towards Okinawans from 1879 until the end of World War II in 1945 seem to have succeeded in instilling loyalty among Okinawans. As can be seen, Okinawans played a part in serving the Japanese army in fighting against the US army during the Pacific War. Okinawa was the only ground battle in the sovereign territory of Japan where 62,489 civilians died and more than 47,000 people were forced to flee, hiding in caves, jungles, and mausoleums.[24]

In the case of Patani or "Monthon Pattani," administrative reform between 1895-1906 during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, compromised policies were used to govern the people in Patani.

Somchot Ongskul (1978)[25] mentioned that after Siam established the new administrative unit called "Monthon Pattani" in 1906, Siam allowed the Sultans of the seven provinces (Pattani, Sai Buri, Yaring, Nong Chik, Yala, Raman, and Ra-Ngae) to still have the power of taxation and for the court of justice to remain

under the control of the commissioner from Nakornsrithammarat until officially annexed "Monthon Pattani" in 1909.

Somchot divided the administrative reform of the "Monthon Pattani" into the following three periods.

First, before 1915, Siam gradually established a centralized governmental power system. In those days, Siam sent a commissioner from Bangkok to the "Monthon Pattani". Siam used a flexible government administration by continuing the traditions of the local Melayu Muslims. This was because the local people had ties to the Malays under British rule, if Siam adopted a tough policy and the locals were not satisfied and resisted or caused chaos, this could be a reason for British intervention.

The second period took place after 1915, during the reign of King Rama VI, Siam changed the administrative policy of Pattani, notably abolishing the Islamic judicial system. Moreover, the local people were dissatisfied with the taxation, comparing that Siam collected more taxes in Pattani than the British collected from the Malay colonial states. This resulted in clashes between locals and Siamese officials in 1922.

The third period was from 1923 to 1931, after Chao Phraya Yommaraj (Pan Sukhum), commissioner from Bangkok on inspection to the "Monthon Pattani" and reported mistaken administration to King Rama VI. After that, His Majesty the King changed the administration over the "Monthon Pattani" to be more flexible.

Thanate Apornsuwan (2008)[26] describes the period between 1923 and 1938 as a period when "the policies and practices that suppressed and oppressed the Melayu Muslims culturally and politically were few or very few. The last violent clash between the Locals in the Patani Kingdom and the Siamese state forces took place in 1922," Thanate quoted Wan Kadir Che Man, (the former president of Bersatu)'s comments about the subsequent change in Patani's administrative policy "indicating that the Bangkok government must have realized and felt the emergence of Malay nationalism among the Malay people in the northern Malayan states and their willingness to reach out across the border to help their brethren."

Thanate mentioned that from 1932 to 1948, Siam changed its political regime from absolute monarchy to constitutional democracy. It made the image of the Thai government change in the Melayu views. And "for the first time, there was a sense of belonging to the nation among Melayu" through political participation in the House of Representatives.

1939 to 1944 was the era of "nation-building and cultural assimilation." Thanate suggested that during World War II, the strengthening of the Japanese Empire inspired the Prime Minister of Siam, Marshal P. Phibunsongkhram, who had close ties to Japan, to believe that Siam could be strengthened by following in the footsteps of Japanese nation-building.

Marshal P. Phibunsongkram promulgated

12 cultural mandates from January 1939 to January 1942, changing the country's name from "Siam" to "Thailand," forcing all ethnic groups to become Thai for example, calling Melayu "Thai Islam" and regulating the use of language, dress, etc. Regulations on etiquette and conduct were set by the state. The policy imposes legal penalties on those who fail to comply. Many Melayu Muslims were assaulted by police officers and arrested for wearing religious attire. In addition, the government has banned the Islamic holiday on Friday. Abolished the application of Islamic law. Melayu people were forbidden to learn the Quran. Learning of Melayu and Arabic was prohibited and Melayu names needed to be changed to Thai.[27]

The rise of resistance/independence movements: reactions of the attempt to escape from the "imagined community"

It is clear from studying the historical period that Okinawa and Patani resistance resistance/independence movements all originated following the end of World War II.

Resistance/independence movements in Okinawa

1) Anti-US military bases movements (米軍基地反対運動Beigunkichi hantai undo)

In general, anti-US military bases movements with most Okinawan and mainland Japanese residents are not affiliated with a particular group or party. Resistance movements through protests, including prefectural civic rallies, are held when US military base-related incidents occur. They are forms in which individuals participate on their own, but there are also organizations such as the "Peace Citizens Coordination Committee" (平和市民連絡会Heiwa Shimin renko kai), "Peace Movement Center" (平和運動センター Heiwa undo senta), "Women Act Against Military Violence" (基地・軍隊を許さない行動する女たちの会 Kichi guntai o yurusanai ko do sur u on na tachi no kai), "Peace Committee" (平和委員会 Heiwa i inkai), and "Grassroots Movement to Eliminate U.S Military Bases" (沖縄・日本から米軍基地をなくす草の根運動 Okinawa Nihon kara beigunkichi o nakusu kusanone undo), etc.[28]

2) The Ryukyu Independence Movement (琉球独立運動 Ryukyu dokuritsu undo)

The Ryukyu Independence Movement is a political movement that seek to establish Okinawa as the independent state of Ryukyu, led by "Kariyushi club" (かりゆしクラブ Kari yushi kurabu) that was established in 1970, formerly known as the "Ryukyu Independence Party" (琉球独立党 Ryukyu dokuritsu to). It is a pro-independence Ryukyu political organization that supports having one nation with two systems (Okinawa autonomy) and promotes their ideas via protests and advertisements. It also submits candidates to run for elections but has been unsuccessful in winning seats.[29]

3) The Association of Comprehensive Studies for Independence of the Lew Chewan (ACSILs) (琉球民族独立総合研究学会 Ryukyu minzoku dokuritsu sogo kenku gakkai)

It is noted that the name of the association

in English uses the word "Lew Chewans", which is a Chinese sound pronounced "Liu Qiu" used to refer to "Ryukyu" since the Ming Dynasty. Ryukyu is written the same (琉球) in both Chinese and Japanese.

The ACSILs is an academic association, founded in May 2013 by university professors and researchers, members must be of Ryukyuan descent. The association aims to conduct research, also seek to achieve independence from Japan, and withdraw all military bases, insisting on "the right of self-determination" and "the rights of Indigenous people" under international conventions. The Association promotes its idea at the United Nations and international conferences to connect it to global movements.[30]

Matsushima Yasukatsu (2012), a representative of the association, wrote in the introduction of his book "Ryukyu Independence Road: Ryukyu Nationalism Against Colonialism" (琉球独立への道－植民地主義に抗う琉球ナショナリズム Ryukyu dokuritsu e no michi—shokuminchi shugi ni aragau Ryukyu nashonarizumu) as following.

"I am a Ryukyuan patriot, but not a nationalist. Currently, Ryukyu is a nation without a country…. Ryukyu was once an independent country, but the Japanese government used the army to take over and kidnap the king to Tokyo. It discriminated against the Ryukyuan people and petrified them as discarded stones in the Pacific War. There was no formal referendum process after post-war U.S. military rule and the reversion to Japan in 1972. Even now, there is imposition of military bases, state-led development, exploitation by Japanese companies, etc., Ryukyu is a colony of Japan." [31]

Resistance/independence movements in Patani

1) Barisan Nasional Pembebasan Patani (BNPP) -National Liberation Front of Patani[32]

BNPP was founded in 1959 and was renamed Islamic Liberation Front of Patani (Malay: Barisan Islam Pembebasan Patani, abbreviated BIPP) in 1990 following the global Islamic separatist movement, and its activities in Thailand ended in early 2002.

2) Barisan Revolusi Nasional Melayu Patani (BRN) - The National Revolution Front Melayu Patani[33]

BRN It was founded in March 1963 by Ustadz Haji Abdul Karim Hassan, it has close ties to the Malayan Communist Party.

3) Pertubuhan Pembebasan Bersatu Patani-Patani United Liberation Organization (PULO)[34]

PULO was founded in 1968 in India by Kabir Abdul Rahman, an aristocrat and Patani Islamic scholar from the Middle East. The goal was to create an independent Islamic state through armed struggle. However, the movement diminished role in the 1990s as key senior members fled to Europe. Efforts are underway to revitalize the organization again. A reunification council meeting of 40 major PULO leaders from Thailand was held in

Damascus in 2005.

4) Gerakan Mujahideen Islam Patani (GMIP) -Patani Islamic Mujahidin Movement[35]

GMIP was founded in 1986 by Wae-Hama and Wae-Yuso. However, the movement ceased its role in 1993 due to its internal conflicts. It was revived in 1995 by Nasori Saesaeng (Awae Kaelae), Jehku Mae Kuteh (Doromae Kuteh), Nasae Saning, and several former Afghan war veterans in the 1990s.

5) Bersatu-The United Front for the Independence of Pattani[36]

Bersatu was founded on August 31, 1989, to unite all Patani liberation groups. Participating groups include BRN, BNPP, Mujahideen Patani, and the new PULO.

6) Komiti Bertindak Kemerdekaan Patani (KBKP)-Patani Independence Acting Committee[37]

KBKP was founded in July 1995 in Kuala Lumpur. Several pro-independence groups gathered to negotiate with the Thai government.

7) Majlis Permesyuaratan Rakyat Melayu Patan (MPRMP) -Melayu Patani Meeting Council[38]

MPRMP was founded on June 15, 1997, by Bersatu, inviting other groups to join in order to effectively consolidate the struggles of various movements to increase bargaining power with the Thai government. It emphasized religious struggle and sought to elevate the organization to the government-in-exile of Patani State. It had Islamic religious leaders serving as council advisers. The movement designated June 15 as the National Day for the Malay people, on the occasion of King Patani's conversion from Buddhism to Islam on June 15, 1457.

8) Penya Merdeka Patani (PMP) -Patani Youth Independence[39]

Penya Merdeka Patani was founded in 2001 with the support of BRN to train young people to use weapons, guerrilla warfare, and disguise against the Thai state.

9) Majlis Syura Patani (MARA Patani) - Patani Consultative Council[40]

The foundation of MARA Patani was initiated by BRN members on October 25, 2014, in the form of the "Majlis Syura Patani" in English, called the "Patani Consultative Council" (PCC), the objective is to engage in peaceful negotiations with the Thai government and to gain international recognition of the "right to self-determination of the Patani people." The following groups participated:

1. Barisan Revolusi Nasional - BRN Action Group

2. Barisan Islam Pembebasan Patani (BIPP)

3. Pertubuhan Persatuan Pembebasan Patani (PULO-P4)

4. Pertubuhan Pembebasan Patani Bersatu (PULO-dspp)

5. Pertubuhan Pembebasan Patani Bersatu (PULO-mkp)

6. Gerakan Mujahidin Islam Patani (GMIP)

Reactions of the attempt to escape from the "imagined community"

The author argues that the emergence of resistance/independence movements in both Okinawa and Patani is a reaction to attempts to escape from the "imaginary community" or "nation," inspired and illustrated based on the work of Benedict Anderson and James C. Scott.

Definition of "imagined community"

Benedict Anderson (1991), in "Imagined Communities: The Origins and Popularity of Nationalism" mentioned the following:

"Nation: it is an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.

It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.

…The nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind.

... It is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm.

…Finally, it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual [41]

inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship."

The author notes that if a "nation" is indeed a "political imaginary community," as Anderson mentioned, it can be inferred that a "nation" needs to have certain elements or factors for the imagination to be one community. Finding out how the same kind of imagination was created answers the question of how that "nation" was created.

The author has questions from reading Anderson's work: 1) What would happen if there were different imaginations in the same nation-state? 2) Will different imaginations lead to conflict? 3) Can some conflicts that occur in nation-states identify different imaginations?

Definition of "escape from the imagined community"

The reason why the author uses the term "escape" from the imagined community is because it was inspired by James C. Scott's (2009) work "The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland."[42]

Scott describes premodern states in Southeast Asia as "centripetal population machines"– they were located on river plains, near wet-rice cores, also known as "paddy states." The states' power that control of manpower was equivalent to control over land. The more manpower in the state the more grain production. States that were capable of warfare increased their population through slavery by

capturing people into the core of their kingdoms. As Scott mentioned, *"The concentration of manpower was the key to political power in premodern Southeast Asia"*[43]

"The rise of powerful valley padi states with demographic and military superiority over smaller societies led to a double process of absorption and assimilation on the one hand and extrusion and flight on the other. Those absorbed disappeared as distinctive societies, though they lent their cultural color to the amalgam that came to represent valley culture. Those extruded, or fleeing, tended to head for more remote sanctuaries in the hinterlands, often at higher altitudes"[44]

"As manpower machines capturing and absorbing population, they also, in the same fashion, disgorged state-fleeing populations to the hills and created their own "barbarian" frontier" [45]

Scott suggested that the highland ethnic groups, who were seen as "barbarians," had smart strategies to survive. It can be said that they have "the art of not being governed," as the title of his book.

Comparing modern nation-states to pre-modern states in Southeast Asia, following Scott's proposal, the author argues that modern nation-states are "centripetal territory machines." Nation-states value territorial domination over manual manpower. With the concept of sovereignty over territory, they create territories by drawing boundary lines on the earth. Then,

force people within that territory to become their citizens. State power controls people physically, and is strict about crossing borderlines, but cannot control the feelings, thoughts, and imagination that reside in people's minds. Therefore, those who are extruded, those who cannot be assimilated into the main culture of the nation-states cannot physically escape from nation-states, instead, they psychologically escape from the "imagined community." The emergence of resistance/independence movements in Okinawa and Patani which have "imagined communities" different from those of the mainstream, is a reaction of their attempt to escape from the "imagined communities" of Japan and Thailand.

While the Japanese state imagines "the existence of US military bases in Okinawa" as "the guarantee of Japan's national security in East Asia,"[46] many people of Okinawa recognize "the existence of American bases in Okinawa" as "a symbol of oppression, injustice, and colonial persecution."

Meanwhile, the Thai state imagination "unrest in the southern border provinces" as "separatism" that harms the mainstream Thai national image which is written in every constitution that "Thailand is one, indivisible," while independence activists view the unrest as "the legitimate right of the Melayu nation to fight and liberate Pattani (Patani) from Siam or Thailand."[47]

Communication in a "public sphere"—Solutions and Challenges of the Japanese and Thai States for Conflict Resolutions in Okinawa and Patani

Definition of "Conflict" and Limitations of "Conflict Resolution"

The author uses Kenneth E. Boulding's (1962) definition of "conflict." Boulding proposed:

"Conflict may be defined as a situation of competition in which the parties are aware of the incompatibility of potential future positions, and in which each party wishes to occupy a position that is incompatible with the wishes of the other." [48]

"Conflict resolution" and "conflict management" focus on reducing or eliminating hostility between conflict parties.

Conflict Resolution focuses on the role of third-party support. In pushing the conflict parties out of a zero-sum game, which is a situation or competition in which the advantage outcome of one party is equal to the equivalent loss consequences of the other party. The Conflict Management approach focuses on "settlement and resolution as well as the examination of processes and strategies to transform conflict."[49]

The author considers that both approaches have the following limitations: first, who can be a third party accepted by both conflict parties? Second, the party with stronger power (e.g., the government), is often more likely to try to win the zero-sum game rather than negotiate with a weaker party (e.g., municipalities, private individuals, social movements, etc.) or accept mediation from the third party.

If the emergence of resistance/independence movements in Okinawa and Patani are the result of reactions of attempts to escape from the "imagined communities," the author believes that public communication in a "public sphere" is a sustainable path to solution/compromise and challenge of the Japanese and Thai states for conflict resolution in Okinawa and Patani.

The various voices in a "public sphere" will become a third party to balance between the opposing parties, the state, and the resistance/independence movements. Rational communication in a safe "public sphere" will lead to the understanding of different "imaginations" that may result in the possession or creation of a "collective imagination," which is a matter of mental consciousness that arises through the consent and mutual agreement of individuals, which cannot be monopolized or controlled by the state by forcing people to have the same "imagination."

The author found that the "reaction of escape from an imagined community" caused conflict in both areas. Conversely, the existence of conflict also contributes to the creation of their "imaginary communities." In the consciousness of people in both areas, "conflict" is one of the factors that they can have "collective imagination" as they experience and face it together within the same community. Moreover, "conflict" sets them to feel that their area is

different from other areas within the country.

"Public Sphere"

The term "public sphere" here is from the term of Jurgen Habermas in his book "The Structural Transformation of Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society."[50]

He mentioned that the "public sphere" was a space between "political society" and "civil society," such as cafes or salons that emerged in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries, which were "private spaces" and part of "civil society" where people met to discuss "public" topics such as politics and government, but was not influenced by political institutions such as the royal family and the Church.

These spaces later became hubs for middle-class political struggle in addition to being forums for discussion and debate on political matters. For the middle class, it served as a conduit for political participation as well as a means of observing and seizing state authority. A significant contributing reason to the growth of publishing and media was the establishment of a new "public sphere." In addition to serving as a hub for individuals to obtain information (input) and a forum for interest groups to voice their thoughts (output), newspapers gained popularity in the 18th century.

Habermas explained that such "public sphere" has since declined for three reasons. First, the "public sphere" has shifted from being a political forum for middle-class discourse to a non-political setting like a theme park or movie theater, or an area that is social, cultural, or economic in nature. Second, the media, formerly known as the "political press," which encouraged social change through political engagement, has changed to become the "commercial press," which promotes business. Third, while voting is possible in the modern "public sphere," the opinions of those who voice them are summed up in their entirety. It is not the same as the "public sphere" of the past, where direct conversations took place.

"Public Sphere" and Conflict Resolution in Okinawa and Patani

Habermas' concept of the "public sphere," may be argued to be an idealistic concept, but scholars have put it into practice to the point of having some impact on society.

In Patani's case, the author's data collected from 2017 to 2023 through in-depth interviews with civil society and academics in the area revealed that efforts were made by involving academics in creating a "common space" for conflict resolution based on the concept of "public sphere," It is open to the public and interested parties to exchange ideas and discuss issues. Moreover, academics and civil society organizations used the media space to communicate publicly to civil society until they were involved in pushing the Thai government and independence movement groups to open a peace negotiating table facilitated by the Malaysian government. On the other hand,

Okinawa does not yet have such a "public sphere" for all stakeholders to exchange and discuss the conflict about the US military bases.

The author was surprised that under the context of security and martial law, to restrict people's rights, which undermines democracy in Patani, why were initiatives and possibilities to establish the "public sphere" to resolve conflicts? Conversely, in the context of Japan, where democracy and decentralization are more advanced than in Thailand, why does Okinawa still not have the "public sphere" where all conflict-related parties can join like in Patani, and is it possible to use Patani's model as an initiative to create a "public sphere" for conflict resolution in Okinawan? The author is continuing research in current postdoctoral study.

Conclusion

Ryukyu and Patani are parallel universes in the Multiverse of historical, social, and political conflict, as both areas are structurally similar due to the creation of modern nation-states by Japan, and Thailand, which were subjected to external pressures from Western countries during the colonial era at similar times. The process of implementing assimilation policies pushed groups of people to form resistance/ independence movements, which is a reaction to escape from the "imagined community", leading to conflict in both areas. (See figure 1 below.)

At the same time, the existence of conflict is one of the factors that give them a "collective imagination" as they experience and face issues together within the same community.

Patani has a "public sphere" known as the "common space," where academics and civil society play an initiative role in creating to gather people to discuss and find solutions for local conflict resulted negotiations set up for peace talks. However, there is not now a "public sphere" in Okinawa where all parties involved may communicate and talk about the conflict related to US military bases. ●
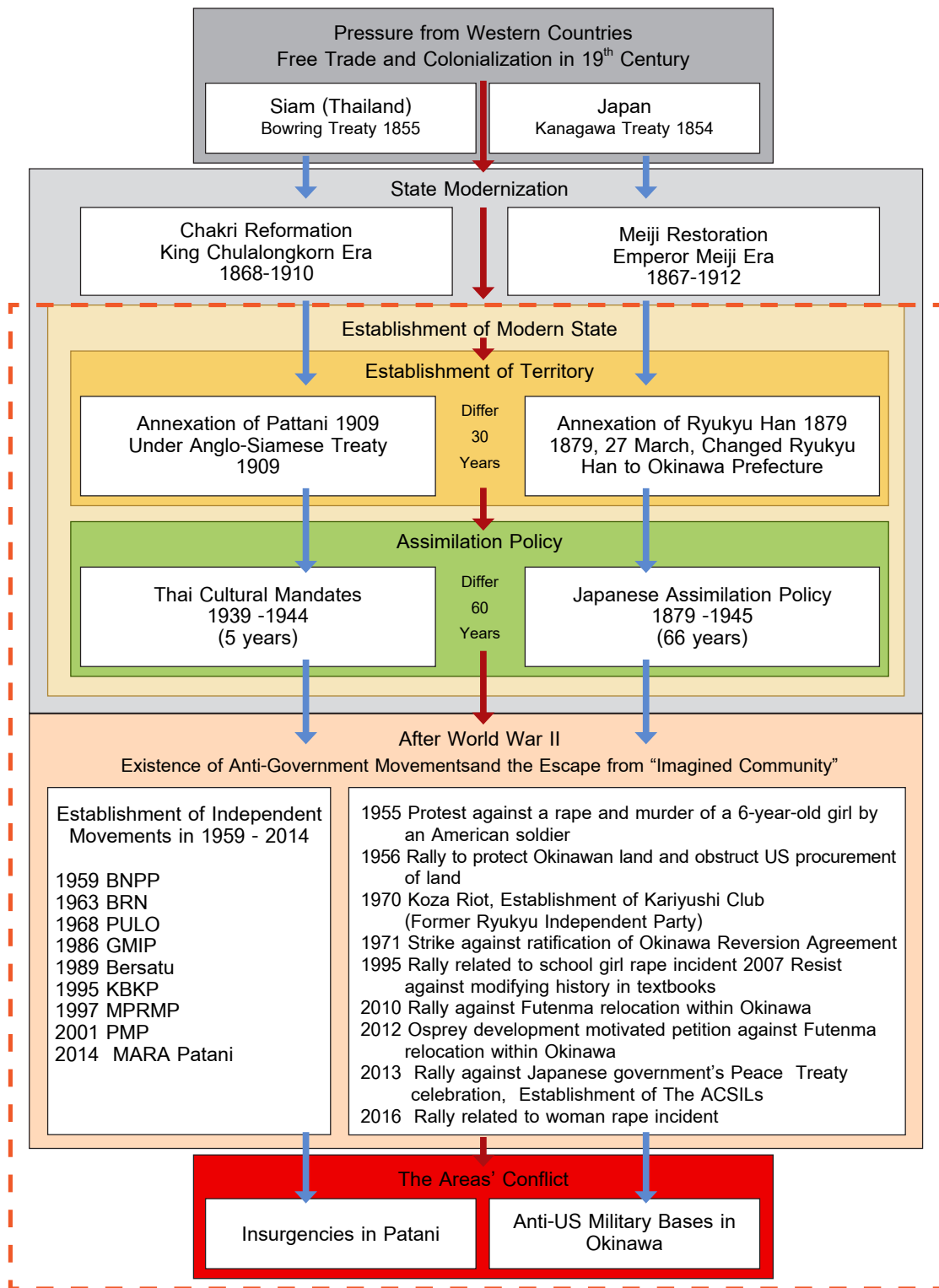
Figure 1: Structural Similarity of Patani and Okinawa
(Original by the author)

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