

## JAPAN'S "BURMA ROAD;" Reflections on Japanese Military Activities in Northern Thailand.

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I remember vividly events when I was a young girl. We were living at a house overlooking the Klong Toey railroad tracks. The Japanese military regularly parked tanker goods wagons there on the railroad sidings full of gasoline. Thais would come at night and try to syphon off the gasoline, sucking it out of the tankers with long plastic tubes. They had to; nobody had any money then. If they were caught by the Japanese soldiers, they would be forced to drink gasoline through the same plastic tubes until they died. I saw many such "executions". Imagine what an impression that left on a young, innocent girl. You tell that to your Japanese students.

-remarks by elderly Sino-Thai  
owner of the SR Mini-Mart,  
Saranjay Mansions, Bangkok.  
January, 1999.

KHUNYUAM, Thailand. (Kyodo). A museum displaying some 500 Japanese items from World War II has opened in this North-west Thailand town....Pakdee Chompooming, governor of Mae Hong Son Province who presided over the ceremony, explained that many Thais in Khunyuam District were forced under brutal circumstances by the Japanese army to construct a road into Myanmar. "Tens of thousands were forced to construct the road aiming to link Thailand and Myanmar from the northern capital of Chiangmai," the Governor said. "They couldn't complete the construction before the surrender of the Japanese Imperial Army, but thousands of people died of malaria."

- Japan Times; 12th. November 1996



(1)



(2)



Khun Yuam Museum  
Photo exhibits of Japan's  
"Burma Road".

- (1) Poster warns, "Mosquitoes are More Dangerous than Tigers."
- (2) Mrs. Kaew Chantasima. Abandoned after the war.



(3)

(3) Khun Yuam "Airport", built by the Japanese army, now disused.



(4)

(4) Pha Bong Hot Spring, near Mae Hong Son town, was built and used by the Japanese army.

(5) The Chiangmai-Mae Hong Son "Loop", showing National Routes 108 and 1095.

(6) Kilometer marker on Route 1095 near Pai. The 1095 follows the route of Japan's old "Burma Road."



(5)



(6)



(7) Bridge over the River Pai.



(8) Steel plate in the middle of the River Pai Bridge.



(9) Bridge-building on Japan's "Burma Road."



(10) Monument to bones of deceased Japanese soldiers, Ban Kat Technical School, near Chiangmai.

Thai attitudes to the brief Japanese invasion and occupation of Southeast Asia in World War II are perhaps more ambivalent and reactions rather more muted than other peoples of the area. Not surprisingly, for the Thai government of Prime Minister Luang Phibunsongkhram had eventually concluded a military alliance and treaty of friendship with Japan on December 12th. 1941. Phibun's government was evidently convinced Japan could win the war and was perhaps appreciative of Japan's apparent support for his efforts to foster a new "Thai nationalism". (1) Subsequently, on January 25th, 1942, Thailand declared war against the USA and Great Britain. (2) That strong feelings and complex emotions exist underneath the subdued exterior is suggested by the unsolicited remarks quoted in the first extract. When in Bangkok, I regularly shop at the small SR Mini-Mart and the owner's remarks were offered quite casually on hearing that I was about to accompany our 1998 Thai Field Work Programme students to the site of the Thai-Burma Railroad in Kanchanaburi. Such remarks are not uncommon and suggest that the activities of the Japanese military in "friendly" Thailand were accompanied by the same needless cruelty and unwarranted barbarity which we are accustomed to hear from Koreans, Chinese and others when narrating the Japanese occupation of their respective countries.

It is not the purpose of this article, however, to attempt to ascertain the degree of brutality exercised by the Japanese military in Thailand, nor to attempt any analysis of Thai attitudes to that event. Rather, it is to introduce some aspects of Japanese activity in Thailand that have been long forgotten or overlooked (except, of course, by the Japanese military and Thai civilian participants themselves); the Japanese attempt to build their own supply road linking occupied (and later allegedly "independent") Burma with Chiangmai, the capital of North Thailand. (3) My journey following the path of Japan's "Burma Road" and related military activities took me to remote areas on the Thai-Burma borderlands of Mae Hong Son province and was prompted, in part, by curious feelings reported to me by Seika's 1998 Thai Field Work students following their visit to some hill-tribe villages, also in Mae Hong Son province. In one of the hilltribe villages where they stayed, the students were apparently struck by the distinct unfriendliness of one particular elderly woman and seemed to have related this to experiences during the war (perhaps through the remarks of some Thai interpreter?). Although this was related or hinted at by more than one student when I was later with them in Bangkok, I was rather curious to find that by the time the group had returned to Japan, all such recollections had been totally expunged from memory! (perhaps Japan's war activities were not exactly on the top of student priorities that year!). I had been aware of Japan's attempts to construct a "Burma Road" and had been carrying around in my files for a couple of years the Japan Times article of 12th. November 1996 quoted at the beginning of this article. The chance comments of the Seika students about their Mae Hong Son hilltribe village stay

determined my resolve to visit the area myself and see what I could discover about Japanese activity there during World War II.

The town of Mae Hong Son is a remote mountain resort for Bangkok's elite (and, of course, not-so-elite foreign tourists, both Western and Japanese) being connected by air with daily flights to both Bangkok and Chiangmai. Apart from the air links, however, the province is remote and considered somewhat "exotic" by most Thais. Only about 2% of the province's population is "central Thai" (mostly concentrated in Mae Hong Son town), whereas around 50% are Tai Yai (or ethnic "Burmese" Shan), the remainder of the figure (somewhat over 40%) being made up of numerous hilltribe groupings. (4). The local Tai Yai "dialect" appears fairly unintelligible to Northern (Tai Yuan) speakers. To the West and North the province borders on Burma, the lower western border being marked by the Salween River. Mae Hong Son was relatively inaccessible by road until the opening of the Mae Sariang "loop" road in the late 1960s. This Mae Sariang "loop", Highway 108, proceeds due west from Chiangmai to Mae Sariang, near the Salween River border with Burma, and thereafter turns due North to Mae Hong Son. It takes about 10 hours' constant driving and passes through some of the most spectacular mountain scenery in Thailand (resembling northern or central European scenery, and occasionally that of Japan). Morning mists cloud the valleys for part of the year. In the early 1990s, however, a shorter Highway 1095 was constructed from Chiang Dao (north of Chiangmai) to Mae Hong Son through the town of Pai. Highway 1095 follows precisely the original route of the old Japanese military supply road. The Thai section of Japan's "Burma Road" was thus finally completed some fifty years after the end of World War II.

"The 1095 was originally laid out by the Japanese in World War II as a way of supporting their war effort in Burma. It was to take another fifty years before this tortuous dirt track through the mountains and jungle was to become properly serviceable." (5)

A little before the town of Pai (now a favourite haunt of foreign back-pack travellers), Highway 1095 crosses "the bridge over the River Pai". Like its more famous counterpart on the Kwaie River (somewhat inappropriately misnamed in David Lean's famous movie, "The Bridge Over the River Kwai"), the Pai river bridge seems to have been a pivotal part of Japan's road-building efforts (at least on the Thai section of the road). The old iron bridge is now disused, its wooden planking deteriorated to such an extent that walking by foot is perilous, the bridge having been superceded by a modern road bridge to its side. As with the well-known Kwaie Bridge in Kanchanaburi (whose central steel spans were physically transferred from Japanese-occupied Java), the resource-hungry Imperial Army appears to have relocated the central steel portion of the bridge from elsewhere in Southeast Asia; a plaque in

the middle of the bridge reads, "United States Steel Products Company. USA. 1930."

Pai itself boasts few visible remains of the Japanese period, although the (now disused) aeroplane landing-strip appears to have been created by the Japanese army to support its road-building efforts and the Amphoe (District) Office building also dates from that time. Highway 1095 meanders on to Mae Hong Son town and then turns South (following the course of today's Highway 108) as far as Khunyuam. A few kilometers beyond Mae Hong Son, in Pha Bong village, is an extensive hot spring, advertised as having curative powers over a wide-range of diseases. The official explanatory notice board (in Thai language only) states that the hot springs were found and developed "by the Japanese soldiers during the era of World War II". As we were visiting, three young Japanese students turned up on hired motor-cycles to partake of the spring's blessings, presumably blissfully unaware - and perhaps uncaring - of the history of the spring's development.

Khunyuam was an important center for the road-building project. From here the road turned due west and crossed over the Burmese border. The museum of exhibits connected with Japan's "Burma Road" was the personal creation of Police Lt. Col. Cherdchai Chomtavat, a local police officer who spent some three years trekking along the old road to the Burmese border, gathering artefacts and remains of the construction work. Old rusted Japanese military vehicles and carts lie around the museum grounds. The exhibits include around 1,000 items of tools, military equipment, guns and personal belongings of Japanese soldiers involved in the road's construction. An impressive array of contemporary photographs record the road's progression, including the construction of the Pai River bridge, Japanese soldiers drilling in the nearby Shan (Tai Yai) temple grounds of Wat To Phae (6), and Japanese soldiers tending elephants (allegedly treated better than human labourers, in that they were permitted alternate days of rest!). More ominously, a contemporary notice (in Thai) reads, "Mosquitoes are more dangerous than tigers", continuing in small print to depict the dangers posed by malaria (bearing witness to the remarks quoted by Mae Hong Son's Governor at the beginning of the article). A further leaflet, evidently dropped from allied aircraft bears the US flag and exhorts the local populace to assist any parachuters in distress in order to aid the Seri Thai (Free Thai) Movement. (7) Owing to the absence of Pol. Lt. Col. Cherdchai, the museum's founder, on the day of our visit, I had to collect the keys from the local Khunyuam police station myself. Other police officers mentioned that very few young people were interested in the museum but that most of the visitors were elderly Japanese who had probably been involved themselves or had relatives involved in the area at the time. They expressed regret that more young Japanese did not come to the museum. Over lunch at a local "khaw soi" shop (8), I was surprised to hear from the shop's proprietor that an elderly local woman, formerly married to a

Japanese soldier, still lived near the Japanese-built (and now disused) air strip (rather grandly referred to by the locals as "Khunyuum Airport") at the top end of town. The lady in question, Mrs. Kaew Chantasima is now aged 75. Although there had been many casual liaisons with the Japanese troops, Mrs. Kaew believed that hers was the only official marriage to a Japanese soldier. Her husband, a certain Fukuda (given name forgotten) from Tottori Prefecture, had been well-thought of in the town. This Fukuda had not himself worked on road construction, but had evidently been attached to a technical division which had set up the first electricity-generating station in Khunyuum. Their son, Bunat is today - she explained - a teacher in the local school. At the end of the war, the husband, Fukuda, being married to a Thai, had chosen to try to remain in Khunyuum, but had been arrested while working in the rice-fields and taken to Thonburi (the twin city of Bangkok and then, evidently, an assembly point for defeated Japanese personnel). Fukuda had been interned there awaiting repatriation to Japan. Mrs. Kaew had been unsuccessful in her attempts to contact her husband during his confinement and was subsequently verbally informed by the Thai police that her husband had died during captivity. Mrs. Kaew was indignant that, as the legal wife of a Japanese citizen, her attempts to find information about her (late) husband had led nowhere and that she had received no aid whatsoever from the postwar Japanese authorities to support their son (who was one year old at the time of the war's end). Insult had been added to injury she hastened to explain - when a Japanese television crew came to interview her at the time of Khun Yuam Museum's opening. The Japanese - she claimed - had shown no interest whatsoever in trying to determine the fate of her husband and had given her an honorarium of a mere 2,000 Baht (at that time worth about 10,000 yen or less) for her televised interview.

"That's all I ever got from Japan," she retorted "2,000 Baht to bring up my child of a Japanese father!"

One cannot help but wonder, however, whether the truth might have been even less palatable for, as no written evidence confirming Fukuda's death was ever presented, the possibility remains that the said Fukuda might - after all - have returned alive and well to Japan. (9)

The Chiangmai-Burma road apparently became a serious issue of contention between the Japanese and Thai governments in 1943,

"In September the Japanese had to return (to the Thai Government) with a request for an additional 20.4 million baht. This money was to be used mainly for the construction of a military road connecting Thailand and Burma through the Thai border town of Mae Hong Son, a route considered vital to the support of a planned Japanese offensive. Although (Japanese ambassador) Tsubokami appealed for prompt action when he met Phibun on 23rd. September, in early October the two sides remained at

loggerheads."(10)

Japan's "Burma Road" was still incomplete at the war's end. But it did serve one totally unintended function . As with the better-known and completed Thai-Burma Railroad (on which Western prisoners-of-war as well as Asian conscripted labour had been used), the Chiangmai-Burma road had been intended not only to back up Japan's wartime occupation of Burma, but also to supply the Japanese army in its disastrous Imphal Campaign, an attack into North-East British-occupied India overland from Burma. The fiasco and defeat of the Imperial Army at Imphal and the hardships and loss of life in the disorderly retreat from first India and then later Burma are well-documented. (They form the background to Takeyama Michio's famous - but totally fictitious - novel, "Harp of Burma"). Paradoxically, the Thai-Burma Railroad and the Chiangmai-Burma Road, rather than supplying victorious Japanese campaigns, became the chief routes of retreat or escape for the badly-battered Japanese soldiery. (11)

"In the north, small groups of soldiers in tattered rags stumbled eastward via the Thai border town of Mae Hong Son, along the supply road that the Japanese had improved from the latter half of 1943. The retreating troops sometimes were forced to trade their equipment or personal belongings for food, or simply to beg for it." (12)

Many of the Japanese military returnees struggled through Mae Hong Son to Chiangmai, where they were eventually impounded by the Allies at the end of the war. The plight of the hapless Japanese soldiers occasioned some sympathy from the locals: several informants in Chiangmai have related how they were sent by their families to take scraps of food to Japanese soldiers impounded in one of Chiangmai's temples.

In Mae Hong Son, there is a temple monument written in both Thai and Japanese to the defeated returnees. Wat Phra Nong (Temple of the Sleeping Buddha) is now a modern structure lying at the bottom of the Mae Hong Son hill, topped with the town's better-known and landmark temple, Wat Prathat Doi Kong Mu. Wat Phra Nong, itself the site of an early Shan (Tai Yai) temple is sandwiched between two other Shan temples with earlier structures still intact, Wat Muay Kho and Wat Kam Ko, all nestling together at the bottom of the hill. The temple has opened a small museum on Mae Hong Son's history in which can be found several Japanese military and other luxury items related to the war .

Despite providing a means of escape for the Imperial Army's disillusioned soldiery, at the end of hostilities Japan's "Burma Road" was still unfinished; it would remain an abandoned dirt-track until the construction of Highway 1095 nearly fifty years later. So much for the road; but the fate of those involved in its construction or those who had used it as an escape route from Burma was somewhat less

fortuitous. Between the townships of Pai and Wiang Haeng - today still connected only by a dirt track - lies the small village of Sala Muang Noi, nestling on a bend in the River Pai. (13).

"When the (Sala Muang Noi) health center had been built a year or two earlier workers had unearthed the mass grave of Japanese soldiers who had been massacred in World War II. They were probably killed by Karens as the Japanese withdrew from Burma back into Thailand at the end of the war. In 1945 Karen and Karenni underground forces, organised and armed by the British, killed an estimated 12,500 troops of the Japanese 15th. Army, as it retreated in disarray through Burma's eastern hills and back across the Thai-Burmese border." (14).

This information was recorded in Christian Goodden's guidebook to the area (mentioned in the notes) . Goodden's informant was a young Karen from Mae Haat hamlet of Wiang Haeng, Witit Terkae. He had been an employee of Wiang Haeng's small hospital, usually working in the Mae Haat village clinic, but frequently travelling around the area when involved in various hill tribe development schemes.

"Witit recounted details his mother had told him about the Japanese in Wiang Haeng during World War II. They had pressganged local people to act as porters in their invasion of Burma from Thailand. But they could not have had things all their own way in this isolated area. Recently a mass grave of Japanese soldiers had been unearthed at nearby Sala Muang Noi....It was a Karen village halfway between Wiang Haeng and Pai" (15).

The brief account serves to focus attention on a poorly researched area of Japanese activities in this part of Southeast Asia - namely, the relations of the hilltribes and other minority groups to Japanese control, both in Thailand and in Burma. Documentation is scarce, but (as with relations between other imperial powers and the minorities under their control) could have important implications modifying our understanding of not only wartime Southeast Asia but also affecting subsequent postwar independence struggles.

These larger issues must await further research, but on a smaller and more localised level, it might be no exaggeration to suggest that the vague unfriendliness and uncooperative attitude of the elderly lady in the Mae Hong Son hilltribe village, reported by the Seika 1998 Thai Field Work students in Bangkok in January, could be directly related to the experiences of hilltribe and minority groups under the Japanese in the last war. The extent and complexity of the problems involved can only be barely outlined in an article of this scope but the issues can be glimpsed through the confusing details of Burma's many minority peoples' attitudes to the war and Japanese-promoted "independent" Burma. The minorities' postwar struggles against majority Burmese rule and substantial armed "rebellions" (a term used from a Burmese perspective!) continue today and, needless to say, have serious repercussions on

Northern Thailand, with its long land borders with Burma and where most minority peoples dwell on both sides of the dividing lines. It is not clear at the present time to what extent the Burmese military government has been able to batter the minority peoples into submission. But, returning to World War II and Japanese activity, some comments recorded in the diaries of the Burmese prime-minister of Japanese-promoted "independent Burma", Ba Maw, may help to indicate the difficulties surrounding the minority peoples' situation. Regarding the Karen people, Ba Maw records,

"In fact, a large number of (Karens) believe that a Burmese-dominated nation to which they are indissolubly tied will mean their gradual extinction as a community....(The British) consequently decided to give such protection to the Karens as they did to the minority races in India...They also gave the Karens military training in the British army in Burma, whereas the Burmese...were kept out altogether....When the war came, the Karens as a community remained loyal to the British, and Karen troops in the British army remained loyal to the end." (16)

In the Irrawaddy delta areas full-scale racial wars broke out, accompanied by the now customary horrific massacres and continued unabated until Japanese troops finally took control of the area from the Burmese Independence Army after May 1942. One elderly Karen leader reported to Ba Maw,

"(The Japanese officer) questioned me about Karen loyalty to the British. He wanted to know the reason for it. I told him quite simply. The British had always protected the Karens against the Burmese as well as the other communities who were pushing them out of everything, and treated them fairly. The Japanese could win Karen loyalty in the same way. There was nothing more to it than that, I told him." (17)

These comments perhaps serve to shed some light on the background against which the alleged Karen attack on the retreating Japanese army occurred in Ban Sala Mae Noi. Ba Maw's remarks on other minority peoples are somewhat less lucid, but two other groups, the Shans (the same people as the Tai Yai of Mae Hong Son province) and the Kachins, deserve some mention, if only due to the curious allegations with which they came to be associated at the end of the war. Ba Maw correctly identifies as a major concern of the northern minorities, the activities of other Allied troops, namely the Chinese Kuomintang (KMT) troops loyal to the Chiang Kai Shek government in China. Following the British defeat in Burma, these Allied Chinese troops tried to return through the Shan (Tai Yai) states to Yunnan in Southwest China. Cut off by the British defeat and the Japanese army's activities in North Burma, Chinese troops captured Lashio, a town straddling the road to China where "the panic-stricken Chinese forces became an undisciplined rabble." (18) . A British government intelligence report states,

"The Chinese troops seem to have made themselves thoroughly unpopular with Burmans wherever

they went. From the Kachin Hills and the Shan States also come tales of looting, murder, forced labour, and failure to give payment or compensation, all of which will take the Chinese some time to live down." (19).

This Chinese "factor" complicated the situation in the Shan States;

"As soon as the Japanese army moved into the Shan States, the sawbwas or chiefs formally submitted to it and requested that all other armies, the Chinese and the Burmese in particular, should be kept out of their territories. By then the friction between the Japanese and the Burma Independence Army (BIA) had increased, and so had the rumours of the BIA terror. The Chinese forces were in full flight to Yunnan. In consequence, the Japanese readily complied with the Shan request, which suited their plans perfectly. A small platoon of the Burmese army that had just entered the Shan States was ordered to leave at once. That unit had lost no time in looting the Shans, and upon its return to Burmese territory Bo Let Ya had its commanding officer summarily shot for the crimes he had committed. Another Burmese unit that had attempted to follow the Japanese into those states was also turned back." (20)

With regard to the Kachin people, Ba Maw sums up their situation;

"It was in many essential ways the same in the Kachin Hills further north and west. The Kachins shared with the other tribes living around them the same memories of the Chinese and now the havoc spread by the Chinese troops passing through the region brought these memories back most grimly. According to a British intelligence report, large numbers of the Kachins acted as the Shans did: they sought the protection of the Japanese against these Chinese bandits who, after their defeat in the Mandalay area, were making their way to Myitkyina and the Kachin Hills in order to escape into China. For instance, a British report mentions that the Japanese were invited by the Kachins into the heart of their country near Bhamo 'to protect them against the looting of Chinese troops.' These experiences left the Kachin leadership split and confused for the rest of the war; while some continued to be loyal to the British, many of their tribal chiefs worked with the Japanese and Burmese....In these circumstances the Japanese succeeded in getting all the collaboration they needed from these people. They also kept the Burmese army out of the Kachin country; the few Burmese troops who reached Myitkyina were soon made to go back to Burma proper. Even after Burmese independence was recognised in 1943 that part of Burma remained under Japanese military administration as an emergency measure against the British threat from India. *The Kachins willingly agreed to remain under the Japanese.*" (Emphasis added) (21)

This curious picture of Kachin cooperation with Japan is distinctly at odds with the postwar (Japanese)

image of the Kachins written by the late Takeyama Michio in "Harp of Burma". Here the Kachins are described (incorrectly) as eaters of human flesh and are fictionally claimed to have fattened-up a wandering Japanese army soldier in order to sport their gastronomic delights! (22). "Harp of Burma" does, however, present a vivid picture of the chaos, desperation and despondency of the Japanese Imperial Army's retreat from Burma;

"However, the tide of war had begun to turn against us and at last it was obvious to everyone that our situation was hopeless. We were reduced to fleeing from mountain to mountain through unknown territory, trying somehow to get over the eastern border range into Siam (Thailand)...One by one our trucks had broken down, so that we finally had to pull our equipment in oxcarts, or carry it on our backs. We lived by foraging everywhere we went. It was a wretched time for us, and one of great danger....We tramped on and on, over mountains, through valleys and forests. We were like the fugitives in the tales of old, frightened even by the sound of the wind. British forces would parachute down into the villages along our route to block our advance. One village would send word to another about us, and hide their food. Sometimes when we put up in a village for a much-needed rest we would find that the natives had informed the enemy and that we were under attack." (23)

Merely fiction? Perhaps. Takeyama Michio's novel makes no claims to historical accuracy; the novel's main story is a complete fiction. But more historical records paint the same gloomy picture.

One account mentions the fate of retreating Japanese civilians;

"In the wake of the Japanese defeats in Burma, a stream of bedraggled refugees began pouring across the border into Thailand. Japanese civilians in Rangoon had been left to their own devices in the face of the British advance. After ordering reservists to carry out a suicidal defense, regular army officers had left the city, some of them by plane. Nonreservist male civilians were mobilised, too, and given responsibility for evacuation of the Japanese community. One Mitsubishi employee recalled that 40 of his group of 140 had died in the retreat, and survivors reached Bangkok half-alive'." (24)

At the risk of repetition, the point here is that much of this retreat occurred over the (unfinished) "Burma Road" to Thailand, and that villages such as Ban Sala Mae Noi lie close to the road's original track. The road ended in Chiangmai, and it can be assumed that the bones of the Japanese dead were left where they died throughout Burma and Northern Thailand, just as Takeyama Michio's novel describes. Dramatic corroboration of this was provided just outside Chiangmai City some four years ago. At that time, staff and students of the Ban Kat Technical School, some 20 kilometres outside Chiangmai in the

direction of Lamphun, were horrified to hear that human bones had been discovered in their school well. Further investigation revealed that the bones were those of Japanese soldiers who had died there at the end of the war (the circumstances of the deaths remain unknown). After confirmation of the findings, the Japanese Ministry of Health & Welfare arranged for a memorial to be erected on the well-site. The memorial was formally opened in June 1995 with a number of Japanese priests and an elderly army veteran from Saga Prefecture in attendance. (25). The monument can still be seen today behind the classrooms of the Technical School in Ban Kat, a grim reminder of Japan's wartime activities in Northern Thailand.

#### FOOTNOTES

- (1) In late 1940 Japanese diplomatic efforts succeeded in forcing a settlement following a local war between Thailand and France whereby Lao Sayaboury, Western-bank Champassak and the Cambodian provinces of Battambang and Siem Reap were annexed by Thailand. Thailand's 1942 conquest of the Shan (Tai Yai) areas of Kengtung (Chiangtung) in Northeastern Burma was confirmed by a treaty with Japan in August 1943. The Japanese also turned over to Thailand at the same time the administration of the four Malay states (taken by Japan from Britain) of Kelantan, Trengganu, Perlis and Kedah. (David Wyatt; "Thailand: A Short History" 1982. Silkworm Books).  
  
The Japanese landing in South Thailand in the early hours of the morning of December 8th. 1941 had initially been opposed by the Thai military and several military casualties were reported from Peninsular Thailand around Chumphon and Nakhorn Sri Thammarat. The Japanese attack had been intended to secure Songkhla airport to provide air support for the conquest of British Malaya and Singapore. Phibun ordered a cease-fire at 7:30a.m. (Charvit Kasetsiri; "The First Phibun Government & Its Involvement in World War II" , Journal of the Siam Society, Vol.62, part 2, July 1974).
- (2) Fuller details on Japan and Thailand during World War II can be found in E. Bruce Reynolds; "Thailand and Japan's Southern Advance, 1940-45". MacMillan, 1994.
- (3) "Burma" is the old name for today's "Myanmar". It was used until Aung San Suu Kyi won the landslide 1990 election over the ruling military junta. Despite the (new) military government's claims that the word "Burma" was coined by the British Imperial authorities to denote their colony, political considerations lead me to continue to use the name "Burma". The Thai name for Burma, "Pamaa" is presumably of much longer vintage than British imperialism!
- (4) These population percentages were approximations valid as of 1994. There may have been subsequent shifts,

especially in the number of central Thais resident in the province, which could have increased.

- (5) Christian Goodden; "Three Pagodas: A Journey Down the Thai-Burmese Border". Jungle Books. Halsworth. 1996. p.63.
- (6) Wat To Phae, an elegant Shan (Tai Yai) style temple is chiefly noted today for its possession of a rare nineteenth century Shan Buddhist tapestry from Burma and two excellently-preserved carved teak toilets.
- (7) Although the Phibun government was officially allied with Japan, a Seri Thai (Free Thai) anti-Japanese guerilla movement had grown up under the support of the then Regent Pridi Phanomyong, and with the knowledge of both the USA and Britain. (See David Wyatt; op. cit. and Wimon Wiriyawit, "Free Thai: Personal Recollections and Official Documents", White Lotus Press. Also John B. Haseman; "The Thai Resistance Movement During the Second World War", Northern Illinois University, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Special Report No.17, 1978).
- (8) "Khaw soi" - often referred to as "curried noodles" - is a noodle dish originally from the Islamic Chinese Haw traders who migrated from Southwest China with the various hilltribe groups. They still usually act as intermediaries between the hill tribes and lowland Thai communities. (See Andrew Forbes, "The Haw Chinese: Traders of the Golden Triangle" , Teakwood Press, 1997).
- (9) Mrs. Kaew Chantasima's memory was not too good, presumably due to her 75 years' age. She had never had any photo of her husband, Fukuda, and she clearly did not use his given name, though she remembered that he was from Tottori Prefecture. It is also unclear how many children she had with him. She subsequently had married again but her second husband (by whom she also had children) was something of a "playboy" (her words) and again left her after a year or so. (She thinks this may not have been unrelated to her having a child by her previous marriage). Although it is clear - and widely known in the town - that her first child, Bunat, was with her first (Japanese) husband, she occasionally talked as if she had other offspring by the same husband. The possibility that Fukuda, if not indeed dead, may have abandoned his wife and child is a purely subjective hypothesis, offered in the absence of any written corroboration of Fukuda's death to his (legal) wife. The case of Mr. Seto Masao (now a Thai citizen, Mr. Viwat Sritrakul) suggests that such a practice may not have been uncommon, and convenient. Mr. Viwat (who guided the Seika 1998 Thai Fieldwork students on their tour of the Thai-Burma railroad remains around Kanchanaburi) was abandoned by his Japanese father in Bangkok as a youth. Although his father had continued with his regular life in Japan after the war's end, he never acknowledged his son before his death. Unlike Mrs. Kaew Chantasima's son, Mr. Viwat had attended Japanese school and ultimately became bilingually fluent in both Thai and Japanese. Mr. Viwat eventually received Thai nationality and subsequently gained recognition as a photographer in the Japan Asahi Shimbun (newspaper) Bangkok office. See Seto Masao; "Chichi to Nihon ni Suterarete" (Abandoned by Father & Japan): Kano

- Shobo, 1995.
- (10) E. Bruce Reynolds; op.cit. p.212.
- (11) Takeyama Michio; "Harp of Burma". Translated by Howard Hibbert. Tuttle. 1966. (Japanese original, "Biruma no Tattegoto", Kaiseisha Tokyo).
- (12) E. Bruce Reynolds; op.cit. p.212.
- (13) Sala Muang Noi is approachable, even in the dry season, only by four-wheel drive vehicles. As my own transport is a saloon car, I was unable to visit the village personally. Information on Sala Muang Noi is taken from Christian Goodden; "Three Pagodas; A Journey Down the Thai-Burmese Border", Jungle Books, Halsworth, 1996.
- (14) Christian Goodden; op.cit. p.60.
- (15) Christian Goodden; op.cit. p.54.
- (16) Ba Maw; "Breakthrough in Burma; Memoirs of a Revolution, 1939-46," Yale University Press, 1968. p.187. A slightly different emphasis is provided by many British accounts of the time . For example,  
"The (British) army disappeared over the Assam border (to India) but the Hill peoples fought on - not only the Kachins but also the Chins, the Karens and the Nagas. Those Hill peoples were the rocks against which the tide of invasion by the 'Invincible Japanese Army' broke. Without them, their bravery and devotion to killing Japs and making life terribly difficult for them, they, the Japanese, might well have been able, as their radio never ceased to tell us, to 'march on to Delhi'."By the Rt. Hon. Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith G.B.E., Governor of Burma, 1941-46 in the Foreword to "The Battle for Naw Seng's Kingdom" by Ian Fellowes-Gordon: Leo Cooper, London, 1971.
- (17) Ba Maw; op.cit.p.194.
- (18) John F. Cady; "History of Modern Burma", Cornell University Press, 1958.
- (19) Quoted in Ba Maw; op.cit. p.202.
- (20) Ba Maw; op.cit. p.200. The Shan (Tai Yai) reaction to the Japanese was probably far less clear than Ba Maw chose to indicate. Not only had the Shan (Tai Yai) territory of Mae Hong Son traditionally been regarded as Thai territory, the two easternmost Shan territories of Kengtung (Chiangtung) and Mongpan were ceded to Thailand. (See Note I above). Ba Maw was summoned to meet Japanese leaders in Singapore in July, 1943 where he was informed by Japanese premier Tojo Hideki that Japan was confirming the cessation of Kengtung and Mongpan to Thailand. He was also told,  
"As for the Kachin States, the Japanese army would continue to administer them meanwhile because a British assault was expected there soon." Ba Maw claims, "I received the information with mixed feelings, but my happiness certainly exceeded my disappointment, for, apart from everything else, the Japanese action solved for

us a problem with the Shans which, if left to us alone, could even have led to communal conflict and violence.

I thanked Tojo deeply, but at the same time told him that neither the Burmese nor the Shans would be completely happy about the dismemberment of the Shan territory and its people." (op.cit. p.324).

The suspicion remains that the Shans and the Burmese might have had somewhat different views of the matter! At any rate, the Shan (Tai Yai) appear - whatever the reasons - to have been less violently opposed to the Japanese than were the Karens.

(21) Ba Maw; op.cit. p.202.

(22) Takeyama Michio; "Harp of Burma" English translation by H.Hibbert, Tuttle, 1966 (Japanese original, "Biruma no Tategoto", Kaiseisha Tokyo). Considering the endless debates about the existence of "tribes" who are or were human-flesh eaters, it is possible that Takeyama Michio merely hit on the wrong "tribe" (there is evidence of the existence of such hilltribes who have had such habits at certain points in their history in Northern Burma, but such debate is beyond the scope of this article). The allegations about the Kachins, coming from a Japanese author writing in the context of war, is rather disturbing in view of contrary assertions that Japanese military stragglers indulged in such acts within living memory. (See Ooka Shohei's novel, "Fire on the Plains" (Nobi), english translation by Ivan Morris, Tuttle, 1957 and, for the most recent report, an article entitled, "Ex-Soldier Atones for postwar Cannibalism; Philippine Tribe Stages Ritual to Forgive Hold-out Unit for Preying on Kin", datelined Kisolon, Philippines, in the Japan Times edition of 8th. April, 1999).

(23) Takeyama Michio; op.cit. Chapters 2 & 3.

(24) E. Bruce Reynolds; op.cit. p.211

(25) Photographs of the event are still kept in the Ban Kat Technical School, together with lists of participants and relevant newspaper articles.