



Politics of Three-Year Development Planning Process of Provincial Administrative Organization: A Case Study of Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization

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ABSTRACT

This research studied the politics of the three-year development planning process of Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization from 2007 to 2009. The research argues that Kanchanaburi Province was a pluralist society which was nevertheless dominated by minority groups of local elites who competed and interacted with one another in the effort to influence and control the local government's decisions and decision-making process. The relationship between the political actors in the province was based on the exchange of benefit – the so-called patron-client politics. Meanwhile, the community participation function in the planning process was viewed as merely a political apparatus to meet the legal requirements or a formality required by law.

INTRODUCTION

Local politics in Thailand is shifting from being a neglected issue to one that is attracting more popular interest, particularly among politicians at both national and local levels. This shift was triggered by the amendments of several laws relating to the local administrative organizations in 2003. These amendments focused on the direct election of chief executive officers of the local administrative organizations -- comprising of the provincial administrative organization, the municipality and tambon administrative organization -- and their authorities in public service delivery and local development. Particularly the power of elected officers of the provincial administrative organization was shifted from possessing only consultative and monitoring functions with limited authority to have more roles in local administration and development. For example, according to the Provincial Administrative Organization Act (1955), the provincial council had two main obligations: the provincial legislative duties like the proposing, considering and issuing provincial regulations; and the duty to monitor executive branch – comprising of provincial governor as the chief executive officer of

the provincial administrative organization. However, the authority to monitor executive branch was limited. They were only able to make an inquiry on the provincial administration, but the provincial governor had the right to remain silent (Kowit Puang-ngam 2009:150-151). With their new and more empowered status as chief executive officers of the provincial administrative organizations, they are no longer insignificant cogs in the wheel. The revised Provincial Administrative Organization Act of 2003 has restructured the balance of power in the provincial administrative organization. They are more empowered to contribute to national development. They are freer to manage their administrative powers, make decisions to solve local problems and, particularly, make their own plans for local development (Kowit Puang-ngam 2009:168).

However, unlike other local administrative organizations that are taking care certain territory in the province, the provincial administrative organization has the obligation to develop the whole province, including the creation of development project in other local administrative organizations' areas. This local governments' relationship structure is operated under two-tier system: the upper level is administered by the provincial administrative organization; and the lower level is taken care by municipalities and tambon administrative organizations. Provincial administrative organization is obligated to support other local administrative organizations to coordinate between the provincial administrative organization and other local administrative organizations in the province (Udom Thumkosit nd:535). Hence, in order to clarify the function of the provincial administrative organization, the Ministry of Interior has issued a regulation on the special functions of the provincial administrative organization (Local Development Plan Coordination Committee at the Provincial Level of Kanchanaburi 2009:29-30). First, the provincial administrative organization shall be engaged only in big projects that are beyond the other local administrative organizations' strength. Second, the projects must not overlap the development projects of other local administrative organizations. Third, the activities of the project must be designed for the benefit of at least two local administrative organizations. Finally, joint projects between the provincial administrative organization and other bureaucratic agency are not prohibited.

These local development projects, which are generally stated in the provincial administrative organization's annual budget bill, nevertheless must be selected only from the provincial administrative organization's three-year development plan. The process of the three-year development planning of provincial administrative organization generally comprises of these activities: (1) the meeting between the provincial administrative organization and all local administrative organizations' executives and councilors in the province to evaluate the previous plans and to make the strategic framework for development of the local administrative organizations in the province; (2) the organizing of local administrative organizations' community participatory functions for proposing local development projects; (3) the selecting of the local development projects to be included into the three-year development plan which is



done by the local development committee of the provincial administrative organization – comprising of the provincial administrative organization's executives, legislators and relevant bureaucrats, and representatives of local communities; (4) final approving of the plan by the chief executive officer of the provincial administrative organization (Local Administration Department 2005).

According to *the Ministry of Interior Regulation on the Development Planning of Local Administrative Organization* (2005), local administrative organization's three-year development plan must become the framework for the its annual budget allocation (Local Administration Department 2005). Executives of local administrative organization, in this case the chief executive officer of provincial administrative organization and his/her deputies, will select development projects from the three-year development plan to become parts of the activities covered by the annual budget bill. That might mean that the final decision to select projects for implementation in each fiscal year belongs to the chief executive officer and his/her deputies.

To prevent the abuse of power by the executive branch of the provincial administrative organization, *the 3rd version of Provincial Administrative Organization Act* (1997), amended in 2004, states that these selective projects are implemented only after the annual budget bill has been approved by the provincial administrative organization council (Somchai Bamrungsap and Natthawipha Kosittatibut, 2005). The law also states that if a particular annual budget bill is rejected by the council for two consecutive times, the chief executive officer of a particular provincial administrative organization shall submit a petition for the dissolution of the council through the provincial governor, who must pass on the petition to the Minister of Interior, who has the authority to dissolve the council and call for re-election (Somchai Bamrungsap and Natthawipha Kosittatibut, 2005). Despite the council dissolution, the chief executive officer is able to maintain his/her post because the law does not specify the effect of council dissolution on the executive branch. This is likely to serve as the check and balance mechanism – in this case between the local legislative and executive branches of the PAO – as required in a democratic society. There have been several cases of local administrative organizations where this happened. But the first case of conflict between the direct elected chief executive officer of provincial administrative organization and councilors since the amendment of *Provincial Administrative Organization Act* in 2003, which ultimately led to the dissolution of the provincial administrative organization council, took place in Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization in 2007. That occurrence made Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization an interesting subject and a critical case to study.

Therefore, the Kanchanaburi case leads to five research questions regarding the three-year development plan and local politics. (1) Who were the actors contributing to the dynamic process of the three-year development planning in the Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization? (2) What were the characteristics of the three-year development planning process of the Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative

Organization? (3) Did people truly and effectively participate in the three-year development planning? (4) Did local politics affect the Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization's three-year development planning process? (5) Was there a balance of power between the executive and the legislative branches?

This research employs interviewing -- the so-called in-depth interviewing -- as a qualitative research method. By in-depth qualitative interviewing, the researcher means the repeated face-to-face encounters between the researcher and the informants, with the aim of gaining some understanding of the informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words (Taylor and Bogdan 1984:77).

The first phase in this research used a variety of methodologies including documentary research, non-participant observation of the meetings of Kanchanaburi's local administrative organizations set by the Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization, participant observation of a community meeting for the local development planning, and informal interviews with some key informants like local politicians, journalists and bureaucrats. This enabled the researcher to gain a clear, general picture of the process of the three-year development planning in Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization and to identify key players in the plan-making process. The research then adopted a qualitative method by conducting in-depth interviews with the 14 key informants or key players -- including the chief executive officer of the Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization, the local politicians, the local journalists and bureaucrats of the Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization -- in the process of the three-year development planning in Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization. Cross checking during the interview and triangulation methods -- such as comparing the information gathered from the interviews against that from documentary researches as well as from other informants -- were utilized in this research.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework for analyzing "Politics of Three-Year Development Planning Process of Provincial Administrative Organization: A Case Study of Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization" are pluralism, the public choice theory, elite critiques of local politics, patron-client politics, and the relationship between planning and politics. In pluralism, this article is to argue that the three-year development planning process of Kanchanaburi Province is pluralistic because there is a diffusion of power among the interest groups. The provincial administrative organization councilors and other local administrative organizations' executives and councilors represent a plurality of organized interest groups in a competitive process. However, the three-year development plan of Kanchanaburi Province is also viewed as the preferences and values of local administrative organization's elites -- the executives and councilors of both the provincial administrative organization and local



administrative organizations. The observation of a community participatory function and interviews with relevant stakeholders has become evidence that the people are likely to follow the elites' attitudes, ideas and behaviors. People usually agreed with whatever local administrative organizations' executives and councilors proposed.

In the meantime, the politics of three-year development planning process of Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization is able to explain through the patron-client politics because those involved in the planning process are local politicians whose survivals depend on their interdependent relationships. For example, the chief executive officer of the provincial administrative organization has to forge alliances in the council for his stability, while provincial administrative organization's councilors have to rely on supported budget from the chief executive officer for their own constituencies' development. Part of this patron-client politics derives from the serious competition between political candidates for the posts of local authorities. Self-interested politicians seek to maximize their votes by making excessive promises. Consequently, the public sector's expenditure is expanded. These phenomena could be explained by the public choice approach of local government. Finally, this article is to explain that politics and planning are not able to be separated because both planning and politics is about decision-making and power.

Pluralism

Pluralism is a view of the political structure of liberal-democracy which emphasizes the diffusion of power in such a system (Schwarzmantel 1994:48). H.S. Kariel suggests that pluralism refers to specific institutional arrangements for distributing and sharing government power (Schwarzmantel 1994:48). A plurality of organized interests, particularly in the competitive process, strives to control the government through participation in electoral contests and/or strives to influence the government's policies. H.S. Kariel also notes that in either case, each of the competing interests has some reasonable opportunities for success in the contest for office or influence (Schwarzmantel 1994:49).

Pluralism depends on organized groups having a certain autonomy and independence. However, these independent organizations can also distort democracy. Dahl (1982:40-47) suggests four problems of democratic pluralism: the political inequalities; the impeding of expression of general will; a tendency of a focus on visible short-term benefits to a relatively small number of organized citizens; and the alienating of final control by the public.

The public choice theory

Public bureaucracies and representative democracy are both seen as seriously flawed in comparison (Stoker 1988:225-226). The public sector, in particular, is prone to expand its expenditure, which leads to an excessive growth of the organization and the over-supply of the public goods. The party competition builds up public expectations about what the state can provide as self-interested politicians seek to maximize their vote...consequently, the failings of representative democracy and public

bureaucracies create in-built tendencies for local government to be wasteful and inefficient and to overspend (Stoker 1988:226-227).

Elite critiques of local politics

Dunleavy notes about elitist critiques of local politics that local authorities function in an enclosed organization that is unresponsive, oligarchic, inward-looking, and affected by influences from the mass of citizens...who are wholly or partially screened out of local policy-making (Stoker 1988:111). A local authority – councilors and/or officers -- will respond to demands from groups only if these groups make acceptable demands in a proper manner and help the authority achieve its own objectives. Unhelpful groups that make unacceptable demands would be excluded from the decision-making (Stoker 1988:111).

Patron-client politics

Patron-client relationship refers to an exchange relationship between roles. This term might be defined as a special case of dyadic (two-person) ties involving a large instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socioeconomic status (patron) uses his/her own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (client) who, for his/her part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron (Scott 1977:125).

The traditional patron-client relationship reflects a personal and affective nature, with the patron relying on his/her own prestige, while the client demonstrating devotion and gratitude. The new patron-client relationship, however, involves only the exchange of tangible benefits. Patrons who control political organizations will use public resources, while clients reciprocate with the vote (Bogdanor 1991:108).

Planning and politics

Planning and politics are not only related, they are also intertwined. Catanese (1984:16) argues that politics takes place within a process of allocating and using power to make decisions and implement action programs...planning, which is an analysis of problems and proposals for solutions, occurs within that political process and is an essential component of success.

Catanese (1984:121) argues that in the planning and political process, both planners and politicians always face three problems: (1) the public participation problem that people obviously tend to participate in the planning process only if there are some specific and tangible interests for them and their groups; (2) the problem of public goals and values identifying; (3) the problem of how to balance between groups, particularly the special interest groups, and the general public interests. It is a political reality that the special interest groups, not the general public, are able to define what the public objectives should be (Catanese 1984:25).

Kanchanaburi Province and Three-Year Development Planning Process

General context of Kanchanaburi Province and its administration



Located in the western part of Thailand at about 129 kilometres from Bangkok - Kanchanaburi Province is the country's third largest province, in terms of territory, after Nakhon Ratchasima and Chiang Mai provinces. Kanchanaburi can be reached by going through Nakhon Pathom and Ratchaburi provinces. With its western frontier bordering Burma, Kanchanaburi covers a total area of approximately 19,483 square kilometres or 12,176,968 rai, about 7.4 million of which are covered in timber and evergreen forests. The population of Kanchanaburi Province is 835,282 and its Gross Provincial Product (GPP) is 61,853 million baht, which is ranked 23rd of the country. The average annual income per person is 73,231 baht, which is generated mostly by industry, trade (including the bordering trade), tourism and agriculture – particularly sugarcane (Kanchanaburi Province 2009).

The administration of Kanchanaburi is subdivided into 13 districts or amphoe: Mueang Kanchanaburi Municipal Town (or colloquially, Mueang District), Sai Yok, Bo Phoi, Si Sawat, Tha Maka, Tha Muang, Thong Pha Phum, Sangkhla Buri, Phanom Thuan, Lao Khwan, Dan Makham Tia, Nong Prue, and Huai Krachao districts. The Kanchanaburi's regional administration is headed by a provincial governor, who is appointed by the central government – the Ministry of Interior. Each district has a district chief who represents the central government and whose duty is to help administering the district.

Like local government system in other provinces, the local government system in Kanchanaburi Province is based on the principle of decentralization. People have power to make decision about local activities and development. Local administrative organizations – with executive branch directly elected by the people -- have their own areas for administration and development. According to the local government in Thailand, there are two systems: general local government system comprising of provincial administrative organization, municipality and tambon administrative organization; and special local government system like the Bangkok Metropolitan and the Pattaya City (Kowit Puang-ngam 2009:133; Udom Thumkosit nd:509). The local government system in Kanchanaburi Province is categorized in the general local government system which comprises a provincial administrative organization, 35 municipalities, and 86 sub-district organizations or tambon administrative organizations.

Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization consists of a legislative or regulatory body and an executive body. The legislative branch is made up of 30 councilors, who are elected by the people in 30 constituencies of the province. In short, the election for the provincial administrative organization's councilors is based on the one man one vote system (Kowit Puang-ngam 2009:174). The president and two vice presidents of the council are selected by the council members. The executive branch consists of the political and the bureaucratic functions. The chief executive officer of the Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization is directly elected by the people. His position is a political one and he has the power to appoint his/her two

deputies, one secretary and one advisor. The incumbent chief executive officer of the Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization is Rangsan Ratsamiroekset, who was elected in 2008. He defeated the former chief executive officer, Uraiwan Phongsak, a sister of a House representative for Kanchanaburi from the Phum Chai Thai Party. Another function of the executive body of the Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization comprises 134 bureaucrats and 208 employees headed by the permanent secretary of the Provincial Administrative Organization (Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization 2009:15).

Three-year development planning process of Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization

Three-year development planning process in Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization is determined by the interdependent relationship between the provincial administrative organization and other local administrative organizations which occurs both during the election and the post-election periods. Generally, during the election period, political candidates for the post of chief executive officer of the provincial administrative organization have to try to win the support of the executives and councilors of the various local administrative organizations, including the provincial administrative organization councilors, whom they must persuade to become their political canvassers. These executives and councilors hold political clout and popularity that could not be ignored -- the more support from them, the better chance for the candidates to win the provincial administrative organization's top position in the election. After the election, the newly-elected chief executive officer of the provincial administrative organization has to ask for cooperation from local administrative organizations' executives and councilors, including the provincial administrative organization councilors. There are three main reasons for the plea. The first reason is a political one. The new chief executive officer has to repay his/her political supporters, who helped him/her in his/her election campaign. Therefore the budget of provincial administrative organization must be allocated to the development projects in his/her political supporters' constituencies; otherwise, he/she might face two political disasters: losing in the next election and failing to get budget bill approved by the provincial administrative organization councilors (interview with Panya Manggalothai, September 2, 2009).

The second reason concerns the jurisdiction of the provincial administrative organization. The provincial administrative organization in fact does not administer any particular geographical area because all geographical areas in the province are taken care of and administered by tambon administrative organizations and municipalities. If the provincial administrative organization wants to initiate a development project in a particular local administrative organization's jurisdiction, the provincial administrative organization should notify that local administrative organization and ask for cooperation.



The third reason concerns the set characteristics of the provincial administrative organization's development projects that must not duplicate those of the local administrative organizations. They must be beyond other local administrative organizations' strength and must be beneficial to at least two local administrative organizations (Local Development Plan Coordination Committee at the Provincial Level of Kanchanaburi 2009:29-30). To implement its local development projects, the provincial administrative organization needs cooperation from local administrative organizations.

However, what seems to be an advantage for the local administrative organizations is balanced off by their need to rely on the provincial administrative organization. With their smaller annual budget for development as compared with that of the provincial administrative organization, the local administrative organizations' executives and councilors are forced to seek a larger budget for local development in order to satisfy the voters in their constituencies. In the meantime, the provincial administrative organization councilors also need local development budget for their own constituencies. Certainly, the easiest channel to get the budget is from the provincial administrative organization, particularly from the chief executive officer.

The patron-client relationship between the chief executive officer of the provincial administrative organization and local administrative organizations' executives and councilors, including the provincial administrative organization councilors has led to another point to ponder about the local development project proposals to be included in the three-year development plan, and to select these projects for implementation: who really make the decision in the local development – the local community or the local politicians?

Most informants – particularly bureaucrats and local journalists -- have the similar view about three-year development plan of the provincial administrative organization that the failure of the three-year development planning is that the development projects favored by the politicians, not the people, will be selected. The politicians usually claim that the local people demand these projects. In fact, the politicians select these projects to repay their political canvassers (interviews with Sonthaya Bunpadit, September 3, 2009; Vichan Kunchanarat, September 2, 2009; Panya Manggalothai, September 2, 2009; and Nopphon Thawonbodin, Septemver 3, 2009). Most of the projects in the three-year development plan satisfy the demands of the politicians only. The community participatory function is just a political apparatus to fulfill the legal requirements.

Nevertheless, are there any disparity between the politicians' choices and the people's? No, there is not much difference between the two. From the observation of a community participatory function at a village in Mueang District, the infrastructures like roads, bridges and public utilities were the favorite choices of the community members. Only a few members proposed value-added projects such as job creation, community business, educational, and vocational training projects.

Road construction project, for example, is something tangible and, therefore, a run-of-the-mill request. Politicians also prefer the infrastructural projects because these projects serve as concrete proofs of their achievement and can be used as a political tool in their next election campaign. Only a few politicians are interested in adding values to the development projects.

Another problem found in the three-year development planning in Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization is about local administrative organizations' demand for budgets on development projects that are too high for the provincial administrative organization budget to accommodate. An empirical data on the three-year development plan between 2010 – 2012 shows that the total amount of the requested budget for the local administrative organizations' development projects was high at 5.703 billion baht for 609 project proposals (Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization 2009). But the Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization's budget for three year was only about 1,200 million baht, which has to be divided into two types: the budget for routine management (about 540 million baht), and the budget for local development projects (about 660 million baht).

Although the planning process requires that development project proposals of local administrative organizations were screened by the Plan Coordination Committees at both district and provincial levels, no one in both committees in fact dared to slash the allocation for any project. This might reflect the non-confrontational and face-saving characteristics of the Thai culture, which are particularly prevalent among colleagues or between senior and junior persons. Moreover, because all of the executives of the local administrative organizations were members of both committees and because they were afraid of causing a political conflict, they felt reluctant to criticize or reject other executives' development project proposals. Consequently, all demands for budget were included in the provincial administrative organization's three-year development plan. This explains why the provincial administrative organization budget and the demands of local administrative organizations were not well-matched (interview with Daruni Chanthakon, August 3, 2009).

Another reason to explain about high demands for development projects is that the executives and councilors of local administrative organizations were likely to focus on their constituencies' interests and the political impacts. They probably believed that they should propose as many projects as they could to be on the safe side that one or some of their projects might be included in the three-year development plan and their constituencies will have better opportunities to receive supports from the provincial administrative organization.

The three-year development plan serves as the framework for the provincial administrative organization's budget allocation. Local administrative organizations' executive or councilors with high political clout and popularity, which came from the size of the population in their constituencies, are likely to be successful in pushing their projects into the three-year development plan so that they will be selected and endorsed



as the provincial administrative organization's activities in the annual budget bill. Certainly, the most effective method to achieve this is by lobbying the provincial administrative organization's executives.

Politics in Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization

No true friend or permanent foe in politics

The dynamic process of politics in Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization to be explained in this research has begun since the law on the provincial administrative organization was amended in 2003. The amended law changed the method to elect the chief executive officer of the organization and his/her relationship with the provincial administrative organization councilors. The amended law prescribes that the chief executive officer shall be directly elected by the citizens of the province. The dissolution of the council will not affect the executive branch, but will affect the legislative branch. The chief executive officer will remain in the post until the end of his/her political term, while the provincial administrative organization councilors, the legislative body, will have to run in the election again.

After the amended law on the provincial administrative organization has been enforced, Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization councilors began to sound out who should become the first directly elected chief executive officer of the Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization. A group of councilors supported the former Chief Executive Officer Somyot Horthong. Another group of 13 councilors from the total of 30 members of the council turned their sight to others. During that period, a former banker and one-time councilor, Uraiwan Phongsak, asked to be nominated to run for the post of the chief executive officer of Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization. She is a sister of the five-time House Representative from Kanchanaburi Province, Santhat Chinaphak (interview with Pasan Sa-nguanohan, August 14, 2009).

Uraiwan's qualifications and potentials attracted the attention of the group of 13 councilors. They finally decided to support her to run on condition that a member of the group of 13 councilors, Chusak Mantim, would be supported to become the president of Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization Council. In the meantime, the mayor of the Sangkha Municipality, Rangsan Ratsamiroekset, also wanted to run for the chief executive officer post. Rangsan is a former provincial administrative organization councilor, a position that he held for several terms. His father is a well-known forest harvesting business owner, 'Sia-Hook'. Had Rangsan run for the chief executive officer post in 2004, the political contest in Kanchanaburi Province would have been sizzling hot. However, as long as the compromise is still a part of the political activities, the peaceful political solution is possible.

Uraiwan asked Rangsan not to run at that time. She would like him to wait for another term. Rangsan ultimately decided to comply with Uraiwan request because

during that period he was happy with his position as the mayor of Sangkha Municipality. He also decided to support Uraiwan. When Uariwon won the election in 2004, Rangsan sent his wife Srisamon-- or 'Councilor Jane' – to assume the post of chief executive officer's secretary, with an agreement that in the near future his wife would be promoted to the post of deputy chief executive officer (interview with Rangsan Ratsamiroekset, September 2, 2009).

After her election victory, Uraiwan started repaying her political supporters. Srisamon was appointed to the post of the chief executive officer's secretary. Later on, Srisamon was appointed as deputy chief executive officer. However, since there were not enough administrative posts to accommodate everyone who jostled for them, Uraiwan could not return the favor to every one of her benefactors and supporters. Uraiwan declined to support Chusak for the presidency of the council. Instead, she supported a long-time Councilor Atsawin Bunthong, for the post. Certainly, Councilor Chusak and his group of 13 councilors were unhappy with such a political move. Resentment spread among the councilors.

Uraiwan then made another promise in order to placate the group of 13 councilors. She said that after two years, she would ask Atsawin Bunthong to step down from office for Councilor Chusak. The promise effectively took the heat off Uraiwan and the political situation in the Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization was back to normalcy, at least temporarily.

The first year of the Uraiwan administration was a honeymoon period. Councilors and other local politicians' negative reactions against the Uraiwan administration remained submerged. Politicians were relatively satisfied with the power and resources sharing. Certainly, there were some undertows. Chusak and his group of 13 councilors were mollified, but they continued to smolder with resentment.

Meanwhile, the appointment of Srisamon to the position of the deputy chief executive officer was delayed for months. Srisamon and her supporters in the council were very unhappy with the postponement. The politicians who used to support Uraiwan during the election period began to view her administration and political movements with distrust. The situation reached a breaking point when Uraiwan eventually sacked Srisamon from the post of deputy chief executive officer. Friends can become foes in politics.

What was the reason for sacking Srisamon? There was a rumor that Srisamon's husband, Rangsan, was preparing to compete with Uraiwan in the following election. Another rumor said that Srisamon was trying to pave way for her husband by being uncooperative in her work with Uraiwan (interview with Panya Manggalothai, September 2, 2009).

The sack of Srisamon turned out to be a boon for the opposition group, because in the end the supporters of Srisamon and Rangsan in the council switched camp and joined the opposition group. The political game to overturn the Uraiwan administration had begun since the dismissal of Srisamon from her post. A plan to use the three-year



development plan and the annual budget bill as political apparatuses to oust Uraiwan from her chair was made by a group of councilors.

Politics of power and resources sharing

A major factor for the councilors' discontent with Uraiwan was the budget allocation for development projects. Generally, provincial administrative organization councilors will try to push for their constituencies' development project proposals to be included in the three-year development plan. They will then lobby the executive branch, particularly the chief executive officer to include their development projects in the annual budget bill. Councilors wanted high budget for their constituencies to please their voters.

In the first year of her administration (2004), Uraiwan performed in line with the political tradition by sharing resources with councilors – a fair distribution of the budget for local development. In her second year, however, many things changed. Many councilors complained that the budgets for development projects in their constituencies were not high enough. The Uraiwan administration faced criticism for failing to spread the annual budget equally among the councilors. Many councilors claimed that this discontent was the main reason for their rejection of the annual budget proposal in 2006 (interview with Panya Manggalothai, September 2, 2009).

Power sharing was another problem during the Uraiwan administration. After Uraiwan had decided to support Atsawin instead of Chusak to the presidency of the council, the group of 13 councilors asked Uraiwan to promise that Atsawin would step down from the post after two years in office and pave way for Chusak. At the end of the day, Atsawin did not step down from the post because his supporter – Uraiwan – did not allow him to do so (interview with Chusak Mantim, August 13, 2009).

The political game to pressure the president of provincial administrative organization council did not end there. Opposition councilors were trying to use another method to oust the president. In May 2007, a group of councilors called for a no-confidence vote on the council president. They claimed that Atsawin was likely to work in line with the executive branch's preference, not the legislative branch. Such a performance violated the image of the Council (interview with Chusak Mantim, August 13, 2009). A five-hour debate was held by 28 councilors from the total of 30 councilors. Finally, about 16 councilors voted for no confidence, while 9 councilors continued to support Atsawin. The law requires two-third of the total votes (about 23 votes) to oust the president, Atsawin therefore survived the attempt to oust him (Chatchada Sa-nguanchit 2007:65).

Annual budget bill and the political turmoil

On 14 September 2006, the executive branch proposed the 2007 annual budget bill to the provincial administrative organization council for consideration. The councilors debated hotly for three hours. Opposition councilors mostly commented on the activities in the budget bill, which appeared to be in the chief executive officer's interest rather than in the interests of the Kanchanburi citizens in general. After the

debate, the council president called for a vote on the annual budget bill. The bill was not supported by the majority of councilors. Fifteen councilors rejected the bill, while only 14 councilors voted in favor. That meant the bill was not approved by the council (Manager Online 2006).

A few days after the budget bill was rejected, two vice presidents of the council resigned from their posts. They cited that they had to be accountable for the rejection of the budget bill. In fact, they probably resign in order to pressure the Council President Atsawin to follow suite and resign from his post, but Atsawin refused to resign.

In case that the annual budget bill is not approved by the provincial administrative organization council, the council president must set up a Reconciliation Committee comprising 15 persons, with seven members to be appointed by the executive branch, while another seven were to be selected from among the council members. The fifteenth person, who would chair the committee, would be appointed by the provincial governor. In this case, Kanchanaburi Province Deputy Governor Chana Nopsuwan was appointed to chair the Committee.

In the process to select seven councilors to represent the council in the committee, the Council President Atsawin asked the councilors to nominate seven councilors before sending the nomination list to the provincial governor for approval. On the following day, a group of councilors petitioned the governor that the selection process violated the law because the one-by-one selection system was not adopted. When there was no way out of the legal argument, the council president decided to submit the case to the Office of the Council of State for the final decision. It took seven months for the Council of State to consider the case (Chatchada Sa-nguanchit 2007:70-71). Finally, the Council of State ruled that the method that the Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization Council used in selecting their representatives for the committee was in breach of the law. Therefore, the nomination process had to begin again by adopting the one-by-one selection system.

The move by the council president was actually a delaying tactic, because he might have realized that the opposition camp's hidden agenda was to dissolve the provincial administrative organization council. To delay this move, the council president relied on the bureaucratic red-tape of the central government – the agency in charge of this case was the Office of the Council of State.

During the reconciliation process, the committee agreed to drop many projects from the annual budget bill. Serious attempts to redress the balance of budget allocation between the two sides were made. Uraiwan also wanted to see a positive result of the negotiation. She therefore agreed with most of the proposals from the opposition side (interview with Police Colonel Charun Srisombat, August 16, 2009).

Politics is the tug of war for power. Regardless of the result of the negotiation, the annual budget bill was rejected again in the council.



Why did the councilors decide to reject the budget bill again? That was because the councilors no longer trusted Uraiwan. Actually regardless of the reconciliation result, the opposition councilors would no longer allow Uraiwan to remain as the chief executive officer. When they made that kind of decision, they needed to act quickly, otherwise Uraiwan could turn the table on them and they would be in a difficult position again (interview with Natthanan Borbuathong, August 13, 2009).

The stalemate put Uraiwan at an advantage. According to *the 3rd version of the Provincial Administration Act*, amended in 2004, if the councilors insist on their decision to reject the bill, the chief executive officer of the provincial administrative organization should submit a petition to the provincial governor for the dissolution of the council. The governor must pass on the petition to the Minister of Interior, who would exercise his/her authority to dissolve the council and call for a re-election (Somchai Bamrungsap and Natthipha Kosittatibut 2005). The chief executive officer, however, will remain in his/her post.

Most former opposition councilors admitted that their decisions were very risky because they had to go back to the election battle and risked being defeated in the election. However, they said that none of them were afraid of the re-election. They wanted to show that they would win again and become a majority group in the council (interview with Panya Manggalothai, September 2, 2009).

After the Ministry of Interior ordered the dissolution of the Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization Council, the mayor of Sangkha Municipality immediately announced that he would run for the post of chief executive officer of Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization. The re-election would be held about 50 days after the re-election for the council members on February 3, 2008. In order to test their popularity, both Uraiwan and Rangsan decided to form their own teams of councilor candidates. The victory in the election of councilors would likely be a tell-tale sign as to who would win in the race for the chief executive officer chair.

Rangsan appeared to be in an advantageous position during that campaign period because he was joined by many former councilors, including those who defected from the Uraiwan camp. Furthermore, Rangsan team was supported by Kanchanaburi's House representatives from both the Democrat Party and the Phuea Thai Party, while Uraiwan received support only from her brother, the Kanchanaburi House representative from Phum Chai Thai Party. As it was, Rangsan's team seemed more likely to win the election, and it did. His team won 22 seats in the provincial administrative organization council, while Uraiwan's team received only 8 seats (Manager Online 2008).

For Rangsan, the landslide victory of provincial administrative organization councilor candidates from his team was a promising sign that he would win the post of chief executive officer of the provincial administrative organization. In addition, with the support from the two political giants in the province -- Democrat Party and its major political rival Phue Thai Party -- Rangsan had a smooth ride to victory over Uraiwan.

Rangsan won a landslide in the 2008 election for the post of chief executive officer with 124,281 votes, compared with 79,346 votes for Uraiwan (Pu-nam Thongthin Online 2008).

In a patron-client political model, Rangsan formed his administrative team by distributing administrative posts to various factions which supported him during the election period. The group of 13 councilors was rewarded with the post of the council president, the chief executive officer's secretary and the deputy chief executive officer. In the meantime, councilors are allowed to select projects they would like to include in the annual budget bill. More or less the same size of budget for development – about 6 million baht a year – was allocated to each councilor's constituency, regardless of the councilor's political faction.

But will the Rangsan administration be running smoothly? That largely depends on how he shares the power and resources with other local politicians, particularly the councilors. Whenever Rangsan could not act in line with the councilors' demands, his administration will face many obstacles. History of the Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization might repeat itself again and the old problems might come back home to roost and undermine the chief executive officer position.

An Analysis of the Characteristics of the Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization's Three-Year Development Planning Process

Public choice approach of local politics

The planning process began with the serious competition between political candidates for the posts of local authorities, which could be explained by the public choice approach of local government. Stoke (1988) suggests that the political competition leads to the public expectation about what the local authorities could provide as self-interested politicians seek to maximize their votes. Consequently, the public sector's expenditure is expanded. The organization will face the excessive growth and the over-supply of the public goods. In the case of the Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization, the candidates for the posts of councilor and the chief executive officer probably campaigned on a platform of many high-budgeted local development projects. When they were elected, they were forced to struggle to get the budget for the local development projects that they had promised to their voters. This resulted in the over-supply of non-value-added projects, such as the infrastructure projects, and the duplicated projects with other local administrative organizations. Whether it is the local community members or the politicians who had the final say in the planning and implementation of the local development projects, the infrastructure projects are always preferred because they are tangible and can become political apparatus for local politicians in the next election campaign.

Pluralistic aspect of the planning process



The three-year development planning process of Kanchanaburi Province is pluralistic because there is a diffusion of power among the interest groups. The provincial administrative organization councilors and other local administrative organizations' executives and councilors represent a plurality of organized interest groups in a competitive process. They equally jostle for control of the PAO executive branch through participation in the electoral contests and/or by striving to influence the decisions on the provincial administrative organization's development projects. However, the degree of power that these political groups are holding certainly depends on their political resources, skills and experiences in utilizing them for self-interests. These political groups resort to political lobbying, negotiating, compromising, debating, pressuring, exchanging and threatening to obtain what they wanted.

However, this pluralistic aspect also led to a distortion of democracy, which is similar to what Robert A. Dahl identified in his analysis (1982:40-44). First, it led to the political inequalities among political groups in the society, which held unequal power and resources to control the decision-making of provincial administrative organization executive branch. Second, as the local administrative organizations focused on strengthening and protecting their interests -- particularly the interests of their constituencies -- the expression of the general will of the Kanchanaburi people, who wanted to see the provincial administrative organization's projects benefited not only some local administrative organizations but the whole province, would be smothered. Third, the three-year development plan is likely to focus on the visible short-term benefits to a relatively small number of organized community members rather than the substantial long-term benefits to a larger number of unorganized groups of people. Finally, the pluralistic aspect of the three-year development plan in Kanchanaburi is likely to elude the final control by the public because the public at large would no longer have any role to play in both the planning and the implementation of the projects after the community participatory function. The final decisions to include the project proposals in the three-year development plan and to select some of them as activities in the fiscal budget bill belong to the local politicians, not to the people.

Local planning as the elite preference

The three-year development plan of Kanchanaburi Province is viewed as the preferences and values of local administrative organization's elites -- the executives and councilors of both the provincial administrative organization and local administrative organizations. The people are likely to follow the elites' attitudes, ideas and behaviors. This was observed in the community participatory function. People usually agreed with whatever local administrative organizations' executives and councilors proposed. The local authorities from both executive and legislative branches of provincial administrative organization would respond to any group's demands only if the group made, in a proper manner, acceptable demands that agreed with the authorities' objectives. The informal networks of influence within localities also play important

roles in installing some groups of local administrative organizations' executives and councilors in the inner circle -- a good position to advance their interests and instill the concern for their interests in the heart of the provincial administrative organization's executives and councilors. This practice results in the creation of privileged groups in the province.

Planning as a part of the local political process and patron-client politics

Politics is a process of allocating, sharing and using power to make decision. The three-year development planning, a local planning, takes place in a political process. A local planning is a decision-making process to evaluate sets of interrelated decisions, and to share and allocate public resources. Those involved in the planning process are local politicians who might not only worry about how to devise a good plan – as professional planners do – but also about how to balance the interests of various groups in the society and particularly how the public resources should be shared among these groups. For example, in the three-year development plan, the provincial administrative organization's executives and councilors have to ensure fair distributions of public resources among various groups in the province, particularly the local administrative organizations' executives and councilors. If the provincial administrative organization's executives and councilors fail to observe this, they might face many forms of anti-provincial administrative organization movements such as protests, non-cooperation, and even political campaigns against them during the election.

In order to forge alliances in the council, the chief executive officer has to resort to at least two techniques. First, he/she needs to form his/her own team of provincial administrative organization councilor candidates and supported them – in kind or in cash – during the election campaign period. Second, and probably the most significant factor, the chief executive officer has to allocate a fair share of the budget for development and important positions to the provincial administrative organization councilors. This is in line with Phichai Ratanadilok Na Phuket (2009) said about Thai local politics that the stability of the alliance will depend on the leader's capacity to access resources and share them with the members.

Conclusion

Who were the actors contributing to the dynamic process of the three-year development planning in the Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization?

The research found that the major actors who contributed to the dynamic process of three-year development planning in Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization are the local politicians in the executive and the legislative branches of the provincial administrative organization, the senior bureaucrats, particularly those who



were involved in the planning and budgeting process, and the local politicians in other local administrative organizations.

Regulation requires that the chief executive officer makes the final decision on the three-year development planning and implementation. However, the chief executive officer was supported by the councilors and other local politicians in the local administrative organizations during the election period, and therefore was obliged to return the favor. In order to run the provincial administrative organization smoothly, the resources and power of the provincial administrative organization must be shared in a fair manner. This includes the distributions of public budget for development projects to councilors, and the share of significant posts in both executive and legislative branches of the provincial administrative organization – for examples the posts of deputy chief executive officer, the secretary to the chief executive officer, the president and vice presidents of the council.

What were the characteristics of the three-year development planning process of the Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization?

The three-year development planning process of Kanchanaburi Province is pluralistic in its characteristic, but dominated by local political elites who compete with one another for their own interests.

The power to plan the three-year development is diffused among political groups in the provincial administrative organization, including the chief executive officer and councilors who try to control the executive branch through the electoral contests and/or by striving to influence the development projects that the provincial administrative organization adopts. The planning process -- the decision-making to evaluate the set of interrelated decisions and to share and allocate public resources -- is a political process that involves local politicians, particularly the provincial administrative organization's executives. These executives might not focus only on how to devise a good plan, but they might also have to negotiate with the various political groups to find a balance for the public resources to be shared among these groups in a way that satisfies them.

Did people truly and effectively participate in the three-year development planning?

According to the observation and interviews, the people did participate in the three-year development planning, but the participation process -- the community participatory function -- was viewed as just a political apparatus to fulfill the legal requirements. Whether or not the people's proposed projects will be included in the three-year development plan and selected as activities in the annual budget bill depends on the local politicians' preferences. For example, as members of the Plan Coordination Committees at both district and provincial levels, the local politicians of local administrative organizations, including the provincial administrative organization councilors, are authorized to add or reject project proposals. On top of that, the chief executive officer of the provincial administrative organization has the final say whether

to put any project proposal into the three-year development plan and to select any as an activity for implementation. However, regardless of who has the final say in the local development project proposals and their implementation, demands for the development projects are similar: infrastructure such as roads, bridges and public utilities.

Did local politics affect the Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization's three-year development planning process?

Local politics affect Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization's three-year development planning and implementation in every step of the way. The three-year development plan is the major focus of the provincial administrative organization councilors because it must become a framework for the annual budget bill. The provincial administrative organization councilors will use political resources and skills to lobby the executive branch of the provincial administrative organization to include their projects in the annual budget bill. They will strike a bargain to achieve their goals. For example, a councilor might negotiate with the chief executive officer that the selection of his/her project for implementation will be repaid by his/her vote in support of a bill, such as the annual budget bill, in the council. If the negotiation fails, the councilors could retaliate by voting down the budget bill – meaning no money for the executive branch to implement the development projects. The interdependent relationship between the executive and legislative branches is similar to a patron-client linkage. Political alliance will be maintained only if the mutual benefit is satisfied by both sides.

Was there a balance of power between the executive and the legislative branches?

There appears to be an imbalance of power in the relationship between the PAO executives and councilors. The law on provincial administrative organization tends to give more power to the executive branch because the law-makers were probably more concerned for the stabilization and continuation of the provincial administrative organization's policy implementation than for the check and balance system. For example, the dissolution of the council will not affect the executive branch. Arguably there is a balance of power because the executive branch cannot smoothly administer the provincial administrative organization and implement the development projects without the council's approval of the annual budget bill.

Implication for decentralization in Thailand

Research on politics of three-year development planning process of Kanchanaburi Provincial Administrative Organization involves at least two meaningful issues about the decentralization in Thailand. First issue is about the political decentralization. The amendment of laws concerning about the local administrative organizations during the early 2000s was a part of political decentralization that ultimately made local politics an attractive and popular issue in the public view. This political decentralization has paved way for local people not only to freely choose local administrators they want, but also to participate in political race for obtaining



administrative or legislative positions in the local administrative organizations. These activities have resulted in the political education among the local people. They have learned not only about local political activities but also about how to utilize democratic instruments for the peaceful solution. Second issue is about the decentralization of administrative power – the self-administration of local activities to meet the local demands. Although the research is found that local politician has the final say in the local development project, local people are also contribute to their local development. As a part in the three-year development planning process, the community participatory function helps empowering the local people to make their own plans for local development. However, in order to make the people's participation in the planning process more effectively and efficiently, the public hearing to prioritize the local development projects should be organized before the projects implementation. That is a way to make the people, not the politician, having a final say in their local development.

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