

Siam and the Vietnamese Anti-Colonialists

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It is notable that the adversarial relationship between Thailand and Vietnam is particularly remembered among Thais. In the early period, for example, the emphasis was mainly on the traditional Thai-Vietnamese rivalry over Cambodia and Laos. In the later period when the Cold War prevailed over the region, considerable attention was paid to the history of two ideological “enemies” who fought against each other. Throughout the last decade, Thai-Vietnamese relations were particularly centred on the serious conflict between the two countries over Vietnam’s occupation of Cambodia. In this respect, it can be said that Thai-Vietnamese history charts the course of an unfriendly relationship between the two peoples.

In reality, the Thai-Vietnamese history is characterised not by an adversarial relationship alone. This article will show a period when the Thais provided assistance to the Vietnamese nationalists during the course of their independence struggle with the French. Notably, the greatest support that the Vietnamese independence movement received was from Pridi Phanomyong.

From the early eighteenth century until French imperialism prevailed over Vietnam, relations between the Siamese and the Vietnamese were largely centred on rivalry over the land area comprising present-day Cambodia and Laos. However, as the French established what decame known as their ‘Indochina’ empire during the period 1858-1907, the relationship between the two

states changed. For during this period, the Siamese gradually yielded their claims over a large part of Laotian and Cambodian territories, which hitherto had been claimed by both the Siamese and the Vietnamese, to France.¹ The losses of vassal states by successive Siamese rulers was a bitter experience which played a crucial part in Thai policy towards the Vietnamese anti-colonialists. During the period of French rule in Indochina, Thai leaders not only provided support to the Vietnamese resistance, but Siam became a stronghold for various Vietnamese resistance movements fighting against the French. This article looks particularly at the factors which brought about the unprecedented relationship between the two traditional rivals.

For Vietnamese anti-colonialists, there were two factors which made Siam an attractive place during the period of French rule. First, there was Siam’s strategic importance for the Vietnamese anti-colonialists. As a country close to Vietnam which maintained its independence from Western imperialist powers, Siam was a source of weapon procurement and resistance activities. Its proximity to Vietnam also made it a sanctuary for those who escaped French suppression. As a result, by the end of the nineteenth century, Siam was already a sanctuary for a number of Vietnamese groups. Second, the ethnic Vietnamese residing in Siam were a crucial force for the Vietnamese resistance. In the early part of this century, ethnic Vietnamese living in Siam numbered

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¹ Thai territorial losses to France were first, Cambodian territory placed under French protection by the 1867 Franco-Siamese Treaty; second, Black Tai muang taken by France in 1888; third, east bank of Mekong ceded to France by the 1893 Franco-Siamese Treaty; fourth, west bank territories ceded to France by the 1904 France-Siamese Treaty; fifth, western Cambodian provinces ceded to France by the 1907 Franco-Siamese Treaty. See David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p.207.

between twenty and thirty thousand. Their migration to Siam occurred on several occasions since the seventeenth century. During the period of French rule in Indochina, there were two major influxes of Vietnamese refugees into Siam. They comprised several thousand families and mainly established themselves in the northeastern provinces of Siam.²

The policies of the Siamese court were the critical factor enabling Vietnamese anti-colonial activities to continue in Siam. However, these policies were not consistent. They depended on internal and external developments as will be seen below. Notwithstanding changes in court policy, the Vietnamese were still able to carry out their resistance activities in Siam without great disruption.

From the earliest days of the Vietnamese struggle against French colonialism, Siam had been recognised as a place to obtain weapons and assistance. Numbers of Vietnamese nationalists had journeyed to Siam. Among them, the famous scholar-patriot, Phan Boi Chau (1867-1940) was provided with an opportunity to meet King Rama V (r.1868-1910) and other high-ranking officials. With the assistance of members of the royal family and the Siamese military, the Vietnamese resistance leaders managed to make several purchases of weapons from

Siam. They were also able to travel to northeast Siam to expand their activities among the overseas Vietnamese residing in those provinces. In the late 1910s and early 1920s, the Thai government provided refuge to a number of Vietnamese activists by allowing them to live in self-sufficient farming camps outside Bangkok. These camps also served as centres for the Vietnamese anti-colonial work.³

Vietnamese resistance activities in Siam prior to WWI were small and not without obstacles. Siamese policy towards the Vietnamese was ambiguous during this period. There appeared to be two main motives underpinning Thai policy on the Vietnam question. One was a hatred of the French. For successive Thai leaders, the forced concessions of territory which the Thais made to France were bitterly resented. Thus, any activity which caused trouble for French rule would have pleased the Siamese.⁴ Moreover, Siamese rulers may also have felt a certain degree of sympathy towards peoples fighting for their freedom.⁵ But Siam also needed to maintain a cordial relationship with France. The French were still perceived as posing a threat to Siam after the Kingdom had already been forced to make five territorial concessions.⁶ Prior to WWI, the French occasionally demanded the extradition of Vietnamese anti-colonialists

²Wichan Champesi and Suthawit Supan, "Yuan opphayop kap khwammankhong phainai [Vietnamese refugees and internal security]," (Bangkok: Odiastor, 1976), pp.18-20 (in Thai); Peter A. Poole, *The Vietnamese in Thailand: A Historical Perspective*, (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1970), pp.23-27; Khachatphai Burutphat, Yuan opphayop, [Vietnamese refugees], (Bangkok: Duangkamon, 1978), p.6 (in Thai); and Christopher E. Goscha, *Thailand and the Vietnamese Resistance against the French*, M.A. Thesis, Faculty of Asian Studies, The Australian National University, 1991, pp.10-12.

³Goscha, *Thailand and the Vietnamese Resistance against the French*, pp.13-20.

⁴It is useful to consider other incidents to support this argument. For example, there were instances when Thai officials secretly helped Vietnamese anti-colonialists escape from French power. (Ibid., pp.20-21.) According to Vella, "the Thai kept close watch on the Northeast, and reports that Northeasterners resented the French and love the Thai, that the French were having continual trouble with deceits and were barely able to govern their Lao territories, undoubtedly heartened the Thai." See Walter F. Vella, *Chaiyo! : King Vajiravudh and the Development of Thai Nationalism*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1978), p.82.

⁵This may have derived, as Wyatt has suggested, "not least from the pride they took in having avoided colonialism themselves." (Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, p.238.) The Vietnamese were not the only group using Siam as a base for their anti-colonial activities. During the 1920s, with all other countries in Southeast Asia under colonial rule, Siam became a safe haven for anti-colonialists in the region.

⁶As Vella has noted: "The vituperative comments by French colonialists about Siam [during Rama V] are too numerous to quote," and thus, "fear of French acquisitiveness was particularly strong." The *Bangkok Times* of 24 February, 1904 quoted a French columnist as saying that: "...for the honour, for the prestige, for the peace of France and of French Indochina, Siam must be destroyed, it being impossible for her to play an imperial role at the same time as ourselves. Inevitably the day will come when this people-brigands, robbers of men and holders of slaves-will tire the patience of the English as well as our own." See Vella, *Chaiyo! : King Vajiravudh and the Development of Thai Nationalism*, p.81.

from Siam. It was evident that the Thai authorities yielded to French demands in some cases and secretly helped the Vietnamese activities against the French power in some others.⁷ During WWI, because Siam was on the side of the Allies, it prohibited anti-colonialists from Indochina from entering the kingdom. The WWI years saw a reduction in Vietnamese resistance activities in Siam.⁸

The post-WWI period saw the reestablishment of the Vietnamese anti-French movement in Siam. Vietnamese activists travelled into Siam seeking to redevelop resistance activities in the Kingdom. The resistance gradually expanded among overseas Vietnamese in Siam, and thus paved the way for Ho Chi Minh's political movement in Siam. By the early 1920s, a number of overseas Vietnamese hamlets were built in the northeastern area and the Vietnamese obtained permission to farm the land legally. In 1925, after the formation of the Vietnam Young Revolutionary Comrades Society in China's southern province, Canton, Ho Chi Ming sent his activists to establish branches in Siam. A number of Vietnamese organisations were subsequently set up in the northeastern provinces of Siam. The aim was to expand anti-colonial activities and resistance training for the Vietnamese residing in Siam and those sent from Vietnam. By the late 1930s, these organisations were flourishing. The operation of one of these associations was, as one study points out, "an example of how Siam served as a safe sanctuary in

which the Vietnamese resistance could administer 'revolutionary laboratories'.⁹

The increased importance of Siam for Vietnamese resistance activities became more evident with the arrival of Ho Chi Minh in mid-1928. Ho, who stayed for a year, spent his time training Vietnamese cadres for the coming revolution and generating revolutionary consciousness in the overseas Vietnamese living in the northeast provinces. Ho emphasised the importance of Siam in the Vietnamese struggle for independence to Vietnamese in the northeast provinces, and encouraged Vietnamese activists to learn local languages and customs.¹⁰

It may legitimately be asked why these Vietnamese activities in Siam were tolerated. Studies have shown that Thai leaders' concern about socialism and communism had been evident since the reign of Rama V. During the early years of the reign of King Rama VII (r.1925-1932), a number of laws and measures were taken to control the expansion of communism and other activities which were perceived to be dangerous to the nation.¹¹ There are reports that both Chinese and Vietnamese were arrested for disseminating left-wing ideology during this period. In this context, Vietnamese activities would seem to be possible only because the government of Rama VII distinguished between anti-French 'nationalists' who were regarded with a degree of sympathy, and 'communists' who were not. This can be seen from the government's response

⁷Goscha, *Thailand and the Vietnamese Resistance against the French*, p.21.

⁸A royal order, issued in 1915, stipulated that Siam would not to allow anti-colonialists from Indochina to enter the Kingdom. Anyone managing to cross the border would be extradited. See Vella, *Chaiyo! : King Vajiravudh and the Development of Thai Nationalism*, Chapter 5, footnote 16, p.290 and Goscha, *Thailand and the Vietnamese Resistance against the French*, p.23.

⁹Goscha, *Thailand and the Vietnamese Resistance against the French*, pp.23-29, 36. The Vietnam Young Revolutionary Comrades Society (the *Hoi Vietnam Thanh Nien Cach Mang Dong Chi*) was the first international anti-imperialist struggle group created by Ho. The group provided a basis for the Indochinese Communist Party and the present-day Vietnam's Lao Dong (Worker) Party. See E. Thadeus Flood, "The Vietnamese Refugees in Thailand: Minority Manipulation in Counterinsurgency", *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol. 9, No. 2, July-September, 1977, p.32.

¹⁰Charles F. Keyes, *Isan: Regionalism in Northeastern Thailand*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Data Paper No.65, 1967), p.23. It is worth mentioning that in Siam, during this period, Ho seemed to work out, for the first time, "the classic rural organising techniques that would later carry his movement to power on a wave of revolutionary nationalism..." See Flood, "The Vietnamese Refugees in Thailand...", p.33.

¹¹The 1917-18 Russian revolution, in particular, generated concern among the royal elite. See further discussion on this issue in Nakharin Mektrairat, *Kanpatiwat Sayam* 2475 [The Siamese Revolution of 1932], (Bangkok: Munithi krongkantamra sangkhomsat lae manuthayasat, 1992), pp.41-42 (in Thai).

to the French demands for the extradition of Vietnamese activists. The government separated 'nationalists' from 'communists' and handed the latter over to the French. Moreover, from available evidence, the arrests of Chinese and Vietnamese on charges of communism usually occurred in Bangkok, while the Vietnamese stronghold and most anti-French activity was largely restricted to the northeast.¹²

However, in the aftermath of the 1932 overthrow of the absolute monarchy, the Thai government adopted tough measures against communism. Following the promulgation of strict anti-communist legislation in April 1933, a large number of Vietnamese were arrested under this law, many of whom were key SCP figures. The Thai government's tough line on communism thus caused a considerable slowdown of the anti-French Vietnamese resistance in Siam.

Another shift in Thai policy towards the Vietnamese anti-colonialists occurred during the first Phibun Songkram government (1938-44), which called for the independence of Indochina and assisted Indochinese anti-colonial movements. This policy shift needs to be understood in the context of Prime Minister Field Marshall Phibun's irredentist movement.

Under Phibun's leadership, the irredentist movement was a crucial part of Phibun's nationalist campaign.¹³ From the outset, one of this campaign's key

objectives was to heighten "Thai" consciousness among the people. The campaign emphasised the great and glorious "land of the Thais" which existed before the arrival of the European powers which had resulted in the dispersion of ethnic Thais to various neighbouring countries, including French Indochina. The campaign was an overture to the government's attempt to recover "lost Thai" territories in Indochina.¹⁴

In 1939, when war in Europe appeared increasingly likely, France proposed a non-aggression pact with Thailand. The Thai government took an opportunity to ask the French to make the Mekong River thalweg as a borderline. France agreed and the pact was signed in June 1940. A few days later, however, France fell to Germany and the new Vichy government reneged on the promise. As the French power declined, Japanese troops were making a formidable advance in Indochina. The Thai government, fearing that Japan would take over all of French Indochina, repeatedly asked the French to return its lost territories before Indochina succumbed to the Japanese. When France refused again in October, the stage was set for confrontation. In November, an armed conflict occurred along Thailand's northeastern border, marking the beginning of the 'Indochina War' between Thailand and France. In the end, Japan mediated the negotiation between the two countries in early 1941. Under the agreement, Thailand regained the territories

¹²A report by Vietnamese cadres to Ho Chi Minh sometime before 1927 shows Vietnamese activities in the northeastern provinces were possible because the local authorities did not pay particular attention to their activities so they could carry on their work, more or less, without disruption. In any case, Siam was still an attractive place for the Vietnamese resistance, despite its anti-communist measures, for the punishment was usually limited to deportation, while it was execution in China, another stronghold of the Vietnamese anti-colonialists. See Benjamin A. Batson, *The End of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam*, (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp.167, 175-177 and Goscha, *Thailand and the Vietnamese Resistance against the French*, p.36.

¹³Nationalism was used by Phibun as a means of mobilising popular support and maintaining political power. His assertiveness on the nationalist movement was seen in all aspects of the society and was imposed on all walks of life. See Charivat Santaputra, *Thai Foreign Policy 1932-1946*, (Bangkok: Thai Khadi Research Institute, 1985), Chapters 4-5.

¹⁴The loss of territories to Western powers decades earlier was, to a certain extent, still remembered with bitterness among Thais. The aspiration to recover the territory remained in Thai society. After 1932, this idea had been taken up by the military, particularly the young officers. Until the Phibun government, however, there was no attempt by any government to recover the territory. See Sorasak Nagnkajonkulakit, *Khabuankan seri thai kap khwamkatyang tangkanmuangthai rawang po so 2481-2492*, [Seri Thai movement and political conflict in Thailand: 1938-1949], (Bangkok: Sataban asiasuksa, 1989), p. 55 (in Thai); Scott Barme, *Luang Wichit Wathakan: Official Nationalism and Political Legitimacy Prior to World War II*, M.A. Thesis, Faculty of Asian Studies, The Australian National University, 1989, p.112; Kobkua Suwannathat-Pean, *Nayobuy tangprathet khong rathaban phibunsongkram po so 2481-2487* [Foreign Policy of the Phibunsongkram government 1938-1944], (Bangkok: Sataban thaikhadisuksa, 1989), p.39 (in Thai).

it had lost to France under the 1904 treaty, as well as some provinces in Cambodia.¹⁵

Phibun's sympathetic policy towards the Vietnamese was thus a result of his long desire to recover the territories from France.¹⁶ He was the first Thai leader to call for Indochina's independence. In October 1940, When Phibun was obviously preparing for an armed resolution of the conflict with France, the national radio broadcast a speech by him, calling for Indochinese independence.¹⁷

During the conflict with France, the Thai government devoted great efforts to gain support from the Indochinese. In November 1940, the Department of Indochina Affairs was set up in the Ministry of Interior, with the aim of studying the situation in Indochina. Immigration laws regarding Indochinese refugees were also relaxed. Vietnamese refugees were given a special concession with regard to the alien registration fee. In pursuing this policy, the government hoped that the refugees would refrain from "any action that may benefit the French and be detrimental or dangerous to Thailand."¹⁸ Another interesting move came in January 1941, when the Thai High Command declared the formation of the Free Indochina Army (FIA) which would work in collaboration with the Thai Armed Forces to regain Indochina's independence. It is estimated that a

few hundred Vietnamese in Thailand and soldiers who had defected from the French colonial army joined the FIA and even went into battle with the Thai Army in early 1941. However, the Indochina Communist Party (ICP) leadership was clearly concerned by Thai irredentist sentiment and displeased that Thailand regained Indochinese territory from France after the "Indochina war".¹⁹

Pridi Phanomyong, a liberal and socialist oriented politician, emerged as a dominant figure in the immediate post-war politics (1944-47). It was at this time that the Vietnamese independence movement received its greatest, and also last, support from Thailand. Pridi and his political allies—a few military officers and a group of northeastern politicians were instrumental in supporting the Vietnamese and other Indochinese independence movements working in Thailand at the time. In a recent interview, a Viet Minh cadre who worked in Thailand during this time indicated that the Thai government "closed its eyes" to the Viet Minh military in the country and the Thai army "gave full permission" for them to work in Thailand. Ties between Thai leaders and the Vietnamese resistance might have long existed. A Viet Minh member who claimed to be a friend of Pridi in France since the late 1920s mentioned a number of meetings he had with Pridi in Bangkok in 1946 which

¹⁵Direk Chaiyanam, *Thai kap songkhromlok khrangthisong*, [Thailand and the Second World War], (Bangkok: Thai wattana phanit, 1970), pp.23-48, 57-68 (in Thai).

¹⁶In 1937, Phibun, then Defence Minister, repeatedly suggested the government should encourage Vietnamese, Laotians and Cambodians who wanted to escape French suppression and take refuge in Thailand so that the Thai population on the border opposite French Indochina increased. See Goscha, *Thailand and the Vietnamese Resistance against the French*, p.61.

¹⁷Phibun broadcasted on the radio that: "With regard to our brethren in Yuan [Vietnam], they are under the French suppression... We would like to ask [France] that our brethren in Laos, Cambodia and Yuan be given freedom, independence and equality." (Direk, *Thai kap songkhromlok khrangthisong*, p.54.) In December 1940, an official communique was read on the Thai Broadcasting Station: "We would like to see the entire Annamite [Vietnamese] people regained their independence soon. Now in Thailand we regard the Annamite as independent people in every way..." See Goscha, *Thailand and the Vietnamese Resistance against the French*, p.68.

¹⁸Statement of Ministry of Interior, see *Ibid.*, pp.67-68.

¹⁹The "Declaration of the Viet Minh" noted that: "The French have given 70,000 square kilometres of Indochinese territory to the Siamese. They see us as a gift to be sold. Thus, our people have become the beasts of burden for the French... and the slaves of the Siamese." See *Ibid.*, p. 70, see also pp. 68-69.

were mostly on the issues of Thai military support and cooperation with the Viet Minh. He also stated that the Vietnamese received the ‘strong support’ of Pridi.²⁰

During the Pacific War, there was cooperation between Pridi’s *Khabuankan Seri Thai* or the Free Thai Movement and the Viet Minh. A Viet Minh source indicates that overseas Vietnamese joined with the Seri Thai in several guerilla battles and some Viet Minh members were also employed by the Seri Thai in the northeastern provinces for guerilla operations.²¹ When the war ended, Pridi gave a portion of Seri Thai weapons to the Viet Minh and Ho Chi Minh later set up two battalions named “The Battalions of Siam”.²²

For Pridi, support for the Viet Minh was the result of his desire to see an end to colonialism in the region. He recalled that when Western colonial powers returned to rule their former colonies, after the war,

a certain number of these nationalists came to Thailand to ask for assistance from us. From the discussion I had with these nationalists, we came to the view that every country in Southeast Asia would soon have its independence.²³

Bangkok thus undertook to accommodate representatives of independence movements from all Indochinese states in 1946. For the Viet Minh, Thailand again emerged as a strategically important location, especially following the outbreak of war between the Viet Minh and the French in December 1946. When the Viet Minh declared the formation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) on 2 September 1945, the

new government faced a formidable threat from the French—who sought to reclaim their former colonies in Indochina immediately after WW II. When war finally broke out, the Viet Minh occupied the northern part of the country. The presence of the French troops in southern Vietnam and Cambodia forced the Viet Minh to look for a location outside Indochina to support their struggle—Thailand was the obvious choice.

During this time, Thailand was again a source of arms supplies for the Vietnamese resistance. A Vietnamese source indicates that some Thai officials facilitated the acquisition and shipment of weapons back to Vietnam. Moreover, with assistance from the Thai government, the Viet Minh set up a number of organisations in Bangkok. The organisation allowed the Viet Minh to expand their resistance works and more importantly, provided the Viet Minh with a contact point with the international community at the time when the DRV was struggling for recognition. Among the organisations set up in this period were an overseas Vietnamese “army” and the Vietnam News Service (VNS), formed in late 1945. A Vietnamese source claims that this “army” was comprised of some thousand Vietnamese in Thailand. It was armed by the Thai government and funded with money seized from Vietnamese defectors by the French colonial army during the Thai-Franco border war. While the activities of this force are unclear, its importance can be seen from a Vietnamese report which noted that the Vietnamese in Thailand “linked together closely” in order to “support the Viet Minh front and the provisional government of the DRV.”²⁴ In late 1946, Thailand gave its “unofficial recognition”

²⁰See *Ibid.*, pp.92, 103-4.

²¹On 25 December, 1940, the Phibun government allied with Japan and declared war against the Allies. The *Khabuankan seri thai* was subsequently formed by a group of Thais, led by Pridi, then Regent, to counteract the government’s decision. The underground movement was recognised by the Allies.

²² During the Pacific War, the Seri Thai was provided a substantial amount of equipment and weapons from the Allied powers. After the war, a large amount of the weapons were kept by a few northeastern politicians who worked with the Viet Minh during the war years. See Sorasak, *Khabuankan seri thai...*, pp.232, 260.

²³Goscha, *Thailand and the Vietnamese Resistance against the French*, p.90.

²⁴See *Ibid.*, Chapter 4.

to the Ho Chi Minh government by allowing it to set up the Representational Office of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.²⁵

The Pridi government's goodwill towards the Vietnamese was manifest in its treatment of some 50,000 Vietnamese inhabitants in Laos who fled the French offensive into the northeast of Thailand. Instead of yielding to the French demand to return the refugees, the government allowed them to remain in the country. They were free to live where they pleased and were permitted to work, albeit with some restrictions. These new refugees helped to strengthen the Viet Minh's resistance movement in Thailand, particularly in the northeast which already contained some 30,000 overseas Vietnamese. They were a source of financial support and more importantly, were recruited to return to Vietnam for the resistance struggle against the French.²⁶

The Thai also cooperated with the Vietnamese in the formation of a "Southeast Asia League" in Bangkok in September 1947. According to Pridi, the League was meant to serve as a regional organisation which would provide mutual assistance and oppose European colonialism. Its inception indicates close

contact and cooperation between the Thais and the Vietnamese—the most active forces in organising this regional grouping. It also reveals Pridi's ambition for Thailand to be a leading actor in regional affairs. Following the League's formation, the Thai government publicly voiced its support for the Vietnamese independence movement and also for other Southeast Asian independence struggles.²⁷ Nevertheless, its aims were never accomplished, for two months after it was created, the Pridi government was overthrown in a violent coup.

The November 1947 coup ended Thailand's sympathetic policy towards the Vietnamese independence movement. The coup group consisted of military officers under Field Marshal Phibun and right-wing politicians. The coup diminished the power of the Viet Minh's supporters in Thailand and paved the way for Phibun's resurgence in politics. The second Phibun Administration abandoned its previous policy of supporting Vietnamese independence and became an active partner in the western policy of "containment" in the region, or to be more precise, a policy of opposing the DRV.

²⁵According to a Vietnamese source, the Ho Chi Minh government initially hoped to establish a diplomatic mission in Thailand. At that time, however, Thailand was involved in negotiations with France over the issue of Cambodian and Laotian territory, which the Thai gained in 1941. Thailand was trying to gain membership in the United Nations so Thai leaders did not want to jeopardise Thailand's position. It therefore allowed the DRV to set up the Representational Office of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. See *Ibid.*, p.123.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p.92 and Wichan and Suthawit, *Yuan opphayop kap khwammankhong phainai*, pp.42-43.

²⁷The top positions in the League were the President (Tiang Sirikhan, MP from Sakon Nakhon), the Public Relations Officer (Senator Tawin Udon, a former MP from Roi-Et), the Vice-President (Tran Van Giao) and Treasurer (Le Hi) were top Viet Minh leaders, and the General-Secretary (Prince Suphanuwong) who later became leader of the Pathet Lao. Other members included, Prince Norodom of Cambodia, and Prince Suvannaphouma of Laos. See Goscha, *Thailand and the Vietnamese Resistance against the French*, pp.155-160.