

Comparative Study of Local Administration: Thailand and Indochina (CLMV)

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Abstract: The research purposes are to compare the structure and power of local administration, to compare the level of local participation in development, to compare the character of local participation in local development between Thailand and CLMV group. This study is qualitative research, accomplished by studying documents both inside and outside of country. For the in depth interview, the key informant were the local administrator, community leader and the people in each country. The qualitative data was analyzed using analytic induction, logical analysis and then described. Thai bureaucratic administration is divided into three parts, central, regional and local. On the other hand, the administration of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam is divided into two parts, central and regional or local. On openness to participation in local development, the findings of comparison between Thai, Vietnam, Myanmar and Laos are as follows. Election of local administrative organization: Thailand and Vietnam allows people to participate in the voting of local administration directly in all types. However, in Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia, local administration election is absent. Only in Cambodia that power is distributed to local district council where the member is elected from the people but this is not to be confused as local administrative organization. Giving opinion the theme in this topic is similar among counties in the way that the people have access and opportunity to share opinion via. public meeting. Decision making: the countries are similar in this aspect in the way that the administration does not allow people to make decision on the development of their community even though the community exists. The decision making remains with the local or regional administrative organization. Operation: there is not much differences in the people participation in taking action, this is not to account the political aspect in Thailand and Cambodia. In other word, they are more involved with the administration in which they support. On the comparison of the character of people participation in community development between Thailand and Indochina country, the findings revealed that the character varied with the distribution of power. Thailand is the country with most openness in terms of people accessibility to participation in their community development as the power is most localized among the countries. Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos, however are similar in term of people participation which depends on the model of administration and localization of power and people's ability and political geography.

Key words: Comparative local government, Indochina Region group, administration, community, political geography, development

INTRODUCTION

Participation is very important in development both in organization, community, local and country levels. Especially, local administration is the organization which people can participate most easily because it is an administrative organization decentralized from the central government for the people to own the power of self-administration. The local administration is like local government which has power to independently administer the local area and is able to respond to the needs of people in the area most appropriately. Therefore, people participation ideally consists of participation in expressing opinion, suggestions or needs, participation in making decision by applying the right to vote for consensus,

participation in operating and evaluating the performance of local administration to achieve the targets of the option selected together by the people.

Local administration reflects decentralization from the center to local area which is a strategy of country administration existing not only in democracy. The decentralization is aimed to reduce the role of central government to only necessary main mission while allow people to take part in administering local community tasks following people's intention. The centralization is rearranging of power relationship and duty between central and local parts to be in accordance with the situation which is changing in the condition that different groups in the society have higher expectation towards the government in different and conflicting ways. On the

other hand, the government has limited ability and resources to deal with problems and needs arising in each local area. In order to meet with local needs, it is necessary to decentralize power for people to manage themselves.

The principle of decentralization is people's participation which is very important in development both in organization, community, local and country levels. Especially, local administration is the organization which people can participate most easily because it is an administrative organization decentralized from the central government for the people to own the power of self-administration. The local administration is like local government which has power to independently administer the local area and is able to respond to the needs of people in the area most appropriately. Therefore, people participation ideally consists of participation in expressing opinion, suggestions or needs, participation in making decision by applying the right to vote for consensus, participation in operating and evaluating the performance of local administration to achieve the targets of the option selected together by the people.

Comparative research of local administration found in documents, textbooks or books almost all are the comparison among developed countries or developing countries whose economy are quite well. On the other hand, the research of developing countries or un-developed countries has not gained much attention. Especially, in ASEAN countries, no comparative research has been done, although, these countries require our understanding in aspects of politics, society and economy. This is because ASEAN countries have united for a long time and are developing towards specific cooperation in 2015 when South East Asia Region would enter into ASEAN Economic Community and cooperation in other areas. Knowledge and understanding about local administration of ASEAN member countries is still low due to lacking of knowledge gained from systematic study and research. The comparative research of local administration in ASEAN countries will help to gain correct knowledge. ASEAN countries have different government regime, administrative structure, constitution, government policy, level of decentralization, political culture and participation, promotion of people's participation, social capital, people's abilities, form of local administration and related law. These factors may affect people's participation in local development to be similar or different which have never been researched in depth before. Therefore, comparative research of local administration between Thai and CLMV countries is very interesting not only because the findings will become useful for study but also the form and process of people's

participation in local administration of Thailand and CLMV countries can be applied with Thai society to have them creatively participate, so that, the government or administrative organization can respond to their actual needs.

Purposes of research:

- To compare the structure and power of local administration between Thailand and CLMV group
- To compare the level of local participation in development between Thailand and CLMV group
- To compare the character of local participation in local development between Thailand and CLMV group

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is qualitative research, based on field research and documentary study of legal issues related to decentralization and openness of people's participation in Thailand and CLMV group, i.e., Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam. Social activities and local politics were observed. In depth interview was done to key informants who are Thai local administrative organization, local administrative organization in different forms of CLMV group, community leaders and people under the government of local administration in Thailand and CLMV group. The qualitative data from research or secondary data was collected from related document and elementary data from in depth interview and observation was analyzed using analytic induction, logical analysis and then described. The analysis and research results are as follows:

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Comparison of local administration structure between Thailand-Vietnam

Big city local administration: Big city local administration in Thailand and Vietnam can be compared as described below.

Bangkok and Vietnam's Municipality (city under the jurisdiction of the central government): Bangkok and Vietnam's municipality are similar in a way that it is local administration in a big size of metropolis level covering the entire province area with high level of development as a city. The administrative organization and council members are both from direct voting by people. The difference is that the power to make major decision in Bangkok is higher than that in Vietnam's municipality where permission from central administration must be obtained before proceeding.

Thailand's district and Vietnam's district: Thailand's district and Vietnam's District are similar in a way that they are sub administration unit of Bangkok and District Quan is an urbanized area as same as Thailand's Phra Nakhon district while Huyen is not so, urbanized and similar to Nongchok District. The difference is that the chief of administration and council members of district are from direct election by people but in Bangkok, the administration chief called district director is a government officer and district council members are from election to perform duty of advisor for the district director.

Sub-district and ward: The similarity between sub-district and ward is that both of them are sub administration unit of district. The distinctive difference is that the sub-district is not part of the main structure of Bangkok administration, so, it cannot issue an official letter. There are no administrative organization and council members. On the contrary, ward is an organization within the structure, able to issue official letters and consists of administrative organization and council members.

Community and civil group: Community or village in the city is well developed as a sub administration unit of sub-district and ward. The similarity is that the both Community Civil Group are not part of the main structure, so, they cannot issue official letters. The most distinctive difference is that the chief or the president of community in Bangkok is not from election while the chief and chief deputy of Civil Group are directly from election by people.

General local administration: General local administration of Thailand and Vietnam can be compared in the following aspects.

Provincial Administrative Organization and province: Provincial Administrative Organization and province have a similar point of being a big local administration covering the whole province which is not metropolis. Most of them are not as developed as big cities. There are governor and council members directly from election. The difference is that Provincial Administrative Organization has more power to make decision than province which needs to obtain permission from central government before proceeding. Another difference is that province is the head of other local administrative organizations within the area while Provincial Administrative Organization is not.

City municipality/Pattaya and provincial city: City municipality/Pattaya and provincial city are similar in a

way that they are local administration in the city level with limited administrative area of the district or specific area, not covering the whole province. In other words, provincial city covers the city district of province whereas city municipality/Pattaya are established based on the development and urbanization. In the same way, there are governor and council members directly from election. The difference is that city municipality/Pattaya has more power to make important decision than municipality which needs to obtain permission from central government before proceeding.

District municipality and town: The similarity between district municipality and town is that they are medium administration covering only one district or specific area not the whole province. Town covers developed districts which are not city district while district municipality is established based on the development and urbanization. Both district municipality and town have governor and council members directly from election. The difference is that district municipality has more power to make important decision than town which needs to obtain permission from central government before proceeding.

Sub-district municipality and district: They are medium and small administration covering only one district or specific area not the whole province. District covers developed districts which is rural while sub-district municipality covers an area developing towards a city. Both sub-district municipality and district have governor and council members directly from election. The difference is that sub-district municipality has more power to make important decision than district which needs to obtain permission from central government before proceeding.

Sub-district Administrative Organization and Commune: They are small administration covering only one sub-district or specific area not the whole province but highly rural. Both Sub-District Administrative Organization and commune have governor and council members directly from election. The difference is that Sub-District Administrative Organization has more power to make important decision than commune which needs to obtain permission from central government before proceeding.

Community and Civil Group: The community or village in the city is sub administration unit of municipality and Provincial city. The similarity between the community and Civil Group is that they are not part of the main structure, so, they cannot issue official letters. The most distinctive difference is that the chief or community president is not from election while the chief and chief deputy of Civil Group are directly from election.

Thailand's village and Vietnam's village: They are rural community or village which is sub administration unit of municipality or Sub-district Administrative Organization and Commune. The similarity between Thailand's village and Vietnam's village is that they are not part of the main organization, so, they cannot issue official letters. The head of the village is directly from election. The most outstanding difference is the term of the village head which is until the age of 60 while the term of the head of village is 2 years 6 months. The chief deputy of village comes from election while the chief deputy or village head assistant is appointed by the village head.

In general, another difference between Thailand and Vietnam is that local administration in Thailand is more independent and divided into 2 parts of administration and legislation to verify the administration. However, Vietnam local administration consists of administrative organization and members only and is checked by an organization in a higher level instead.

Comparison of Local administration between Thailand and Myanmar: By comparing the administration structure between Thailand and Myanmar, it was found that both countries are single state. Myanmar is divided into 14 counties/states, similar to state federal. However, all 14 counties/states do not own power as same as in state federal. Instead, legislative power is used for governing the area under the condition that it must not conflict to the constitution and must be approved by the central government.

Political system of Thailand and Myanmar is democracy under parliament system. The political structure is similarly divided into 3 parts including administration, legislation and judiciary. The difference of political system is that Thailand has the king as the president of the country and the prime minister as the chief of administration. On the other hand, Myanmar has president who is the chief of the administration.

In comparing the components of legislation in Thailand and Myanmar, it was found that both countries have 2 groups of the highest council including members of house of the representatives and the senates. The differences are the number of the members, origin and term of duty. Also, there is local council in Myanmar but not in Thailand.

In the house of representatives in Thailand, there are 500 members who are from election with the term of 4 years on duty. In Myanmar house of representatives, there are 440 members who are from election with the term of 5 years on duty.

The senates of Thailand are divided into 2 periods. The first one consists of 250 members who are from selection with the term of 5 years on duty. The second

one consists of 200 members coming from election by applicants from all occupation with term of 5 years on duty. In the senates of Myanmar, there are 224 members of which 168 are from election for 12 members from each of the 14 counties or states and the other 56 are soldiers appointed by the supreme commander with the 5 year's term on duty.

The difference between the senates of Thailand and Myanmar is that there is local council in Myanmar but not in Thailand. The local council in Myanmar performs legislation duty in district or state level with the members of 885 people from the 14 counties or states. In that number, 665 members are from election in each district while 220 members are appointed by the supreme commander.

The power distribution between Thailand and Myanmar is different. In Thailand, the power is divided into 3 parts of central, regional and local parts. In Myanmar, it is divided into 2 parts of central and Regional only. The regional administration structure is similar but different in the highest level of the region. In Thailand and Myanmar administration structure, the village is the smallest unit of local administration with sub-district, district and province as the bigger units. However, in Myanmar there are counties or states which combine many provinces together as the largest unit of local administration but not in Thailand.

The similarity of the government regime between Thailand and Myanmar is that there is dictatorship hidden in the content of the constitution. Although, the regime in both countries is democracy under parliament system, the level of dictatorship clearly manifests in the constitution. To explain, the legislation part of both countries is highly authoritarian. In the Constitution of Thailand in 2017, during the first 5 years, the senates are all from selection. In Myanmar Constitution in 2008, 168 senates are from election and 56 senates are soldiers appointed by supreme commander. It can be seen that the constitution of these 2 countries contains similar content that the center of power belongs to a certain group of people only. However, most people are still lacking of knowledge about constitution from constitutionalism and believe that constitution is part of liberal democracy. Actually, according to constitutionalism, constitution is a tool for establishing political institution structure and defining the source of power, accessing to power and applying power by governor in all types of government regime not limited to democracy only. Currently, all states around the world, regardless of applying liberal democracy or not, stick to constitutionalism. In other words, every state has constitution as the highest law in arranging power and political structure in the country. This means that having constitution does not mean that the country is liberal democratic.

The difference in terms of administration structure is that in Myanmar, there is no power distribution towards local administration causing low modernization in rural area. Another main cause of no decentralization in Myanmar is that there are various ethnicities there. Two third of the people are Myanmar while one third are numerous minor tribes. There are 7 states in Myanmar namely Karen, Kaya, Chan, Kachin, Rakhine and Mon. Most of them live in a far rural area. Some tribes do not accept Myanmar government but have their own armed troops. By this reason, if allowing each state to govern themselves following local administration principle, those states may be separated as an independent country. The main idea of local administration is to gain independent power without being controlled by the central or regional administration. However, local administration here is still under supreme power of the country, not yet becoming a democratic state. Also, a weak point of decentralization is that by distributing power too much, it will be dangerous towards the unity in the country's government and security.

Comparison of local administration between Thailand and

Laos: The government regime in Thailand and Laos is single state with 3 parts in the government structure consisting of administration, legislation and judiciary. The difference is that Thailand government regime is democracy with the King as Head of State and Prime Minister as the Head of Administration. On the other hand, Laos government regime is democratic socialism or so-called, communism with President as the Head of the State and Prime Minister as the Head of Administration. Regarding the comparison of legislation between Thailand and Laos, it was found that there are 2 highest councils in Thailand which are House of Representatives and Senates while there is only one group in Laos which is National Council. Thai Legislation Council is divided into 2 following groups.

Members of house of representatives: Consisting of 500 members who are from election by the people and remain on duty for 4 years in one term.

The senates: Divided into 2 phases. The first one consists of 250 members from selection with 5 years on duty. The second one consists of 200 members coming from election among the candidates with 5 years on duty.

Laos Legislation Council: Laos Legislation Council is called National Council and consisting of 132 members from election by the people with 5 year's term on duty. Decentralization between Thailand and Laos is different.

Thai administration is divided into 3 parts of central, regional and local administration. Laos is divided into 2 parts of central and regional administration only.

The difference in administration structure between Laos and Thailand is that there is no local administration or decentralization in Laos. Instead, the power in Laos is distributed to the province or capital for governing municipality, sub-district and village with budgeting power to collect tax and spend money (mostly on regular expense such as salary and fees except investment which is done by central government). The budget is passed on to the town or municipality, sub-district and village.

Municipality in Laos is different to that in Thailand. The municipality in Laos is a regional organization compared to district in Thailand. In Laos municipality, there is the head appointed by prime minister following the propose of the head of province not from election. There is no municipality council in Laos like in Thailand.

Comparison of local administration between Thailand and Cambodia:

The comparison between Thailand and Cambodia is to study political structure such as government regime, political system, political structure, power distribution to central, regional and local parts as described below.

Regarding government regime compared between Thailand and Cambodia, it was found that both countries are single state. The government regime is democracy with the king as the head of state and prime minister indirectly elected by the members of house of representatives from variety of political parties as the head of administration. The administration structure is similarly divided into 3 parts of administration, legislation, and judiciary.

About the components of judiciary in Thailand and Cambodia, there are 2 groups of highest council members house of representatives and the senates. Thai Legislation Council is divided into 2 following groups.

Members of house of representatives: Consisting of 500 members who are from election by the people and remain on duty for 4 years in one term.

The senates: Divided into 2 phases. The first one consists of 250 members from selection with 5 years on duty. The second one consists of 200 members coming from election among the candidates with 5 years on duty.

Cambodia Legislation Council

House of Representatives or National Legislation Council: Consisting of 123 members who are from election by the people and remain on duty for 4 years per term.

The senates: Consisting of 61 members with 6 year's term as detailed below:

- 2 members appointed by the king
- 2 members elected by National Assembly
- 57 members indirectly elected by local council

Decentralization between Thailand and Laos is different. Thai administration is divided into 3 parts of central, regional and local administration. Laos is divided into 2 parts of central and regional administration only.

The difference in terms of administration structure is that in Cambodia, there is no local administration, no decentralization to local organization as in Thailand, resulting to low modernization in the rural area. The main reason why Cambodia does not distribute power to local area is the state security and local readiness which is lacking potential and ability in administration. In Cambodia, the power is distributed to sub-district council whose members are from election by the people. However, the status is not a local administrative organization nor juristic person. It only gathers issues and needs of the community and proposes to district or government.

The importance of sub-district council members in Cambodia is not only gathering issues and needs of the community to propose to district or government but also selecting 57 senators from 61 members.

In conclusion, the government regime in Thailand and Cambodia is similar in a nation level. In other words, both countries are single state in democratic system with the king as the head of state and prime minister who is indirectly elected by members of house of representatives from variety of political parties. The administration structure in both countries is divided into 3 parts. The main difference is that in Cambodia, there is no local administrative organization as same as in Thailand but there is sub-district council which acts like Thailand's sub-district council or sanitation district in the past .

Comparison of participation and openness for people's participation in local development: The comparison of participation and openness for people's participation in local development between Thailand and CLMV group is as written below.

Regarding election of administrative organization, Thailand and Vietnam allows people to take part in direct voting for all types of local administrative organization while there is no local administrative election in Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia. In Cambodia only, the power is distributed to sub-district council whose members are from election by the people. However, the sub-district council in Cambodia is not local administrative

organization nor juristic person. It only gathers issues and needs of the community and proposes to district or government.

About giving suggestions or expressing opinion, it is similar among Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia that people are welcomed to take part in giving suggestions or expressing opinion through community process or village/community meeting to share ideas or requests.

As for decision making, it shares the same characteristic in Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia of not allowing people to choose the direction to develop the local area. Although, the community exists, the decision is mainly up to local administrative organization or regional organization.

In regards to operation, there is not much difference in Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia. People participate in operation except that in Thailand and Cambodia, politic is involved. In other words, they are more inclined towards the administration in which they support.

Comparison of characteristics of local participation in local development: Characteristics of local participation in local development among Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia are similar in the following aspects .

Implementation of government policy: The characteristic of people participation in implementing government policy is similar in Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia. In other words, when the government or local administrative organization issues policy which leads to operation, people will be invited to attend clarification meeting and requested for cooperation to implement except for Thailand whose local administrative organization has their own policy.

Expressing demands: Another characteristic of people's participation is to hold a meeting or local community to find consensus or demand for government or local administrative organization to take action.

Operation check: People's participation in checking operation of government or local administrative organization can be done in various ways such as complaining to the committee of local administrative organization or directly complaining to government organization.

By comparing structure and power of local administrative organization in Thailand and CLMV group, it was found that the level of decentralization towards local administrative organization in Thailand is

highest, next is Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos. This is in regards to power, duty, structure and election, especially, decentralization in 4 main points of 13 political decentralization, administrative decentralization, fiscal decentralization and market decentralization (Gregersen *et al.*, 2004).

Regarding political decentralization in Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia, there is election of administrative organization in sub-district level directly by the people. This is in accordance with Larson (2005) Sayer *et al.* (2005) and Morell (2004) which state that decentralization means allowing people to participate in voting for local government.

About administrative decentralization, it was found that there is decentralization to types of organization in Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia in accordance with Ribot (2002) who believed that decentralization means officially transferring power which can be done in 2 ways of: administrative power decentralization which refers to transferring administrative power to government organization in the middle or low level and decentralization of administrative power towards other local organization, By Rahman (1996) decentralization means transferring power and duty from central government to local administration or sub-organization of the government following people's demand. It is to transfer power and duty from a higher level to lower level and to assign decision-making to the person with title or in responsibility to take action as much as possible. By Islam (1997) decentralization means transferring the responsibility in planning, managing and arranging resources from central government to government organization both in central or regional level or non-government organization such as private organization or volunteer organization.

Regarding fiscal decentralization, it was found that fiscal decentralization is applied only in Thailand where local administrative organization is allowed to collect and spend money. In Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia, it is not possible to do so. This is in accordance with Cheema and Rondinelli (2007) who viewed that decentralization means the process that central government provides power and resources to government organization in local level such as region, province in 3 aspects of political, fiscal and administrative areas.

As for market decentralization such as transforming government organization or state enterprise into private sector, it is found only in Thailand where there is market decentralization. This is in accordance with Islam (1997) who believes that decentralization means

transferring responsibility in planning, managing and arranging resources from central government to government organization both in central or regional level or non-government organization such as private organization or volunteer organization.

By comparing the openness for and characteristics of people's participation in local development in Thailand and CLMV group it was found that these items fluctuate with decentralization. In Thailand, people are allowed to take part in local development in the most because there is decentralization in the highest level. In Vietnam, Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos, people's participation is similar. This is in accordance with Intaprom (2014) who finds that there are many factors which affect people's participation such as government regime, decentralization level, local administrative organization, social capital, people's ability and political culture.

CONCLUSION

Thailand and Myanmar Government regime is democracy under parliament system with dictatorship hidden in the content of the constitution. The structural difference of administration is that there is no decentralization in Myanmar like Thailand. This is because there are various ethnicities in Myanmar and some of them do not accept Myanmar Government. If these states are granted local administration with high liberality, it may lead to state separation of the minor tribes.

SUGGESTIONS

Suggestions to utilize this research: Thailand should consider strengths and weak points of decentralization more than other countries in the region, focusing on people's response, corruption and too much conflicts arising from election.

Thailand should consider strengths and weak points of local administrative structure which varies too much, mainly based on local area context and take account of ability limit of local administrative organization.

Thailand should consider strengths and weak points of government administrative structure which consists of 3 parts: the central, regional and local, against other countries which consist of only 2 parts: the central and regional/local in terms of duplication and power relation.

Thailand should consider strengths and weak points of Thai people's participation in national and local levels which is too much and inappropriate such as assembly, protest, offending other people's rights and legal offence.

Suggestions for further research: The area to research should be expanded to cover other countries beyond ASEAN. A research should be done on local administrative form which is suitable to Thailand and in line with Thai context. A search should be done on strengths and weak points of decentralization in Thailand and other countries.

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