

Historical changes and variants of community level place names in the northeast of Thailand: A spatiotemporal-oriented study based on maps of early 20th century

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ABSTRACT

Place name is the important identification of a community. In many social studies, interviews to key informants are regular entrances to obtain general information of a community, and many old place names are to be mentioned. Such names in dialog can be hardly identified their corresponding locations because of historical changes in name. These missing locations are barriers to extend a study on social historical connections of a community.

From some old set maps covering Thailand issued in late 19th century and after, community level place names have been collected, and a spatiotemporal-oriented database of community level place names has been worked to be organized to record changes and variants of place names in the northeast of Thailand. Some place names can be linked to their corresponding present day communities, but still not a few notable names in old maps need more information on historical state of communities.

1. BACKGROUND

Place name is the important identification of a community, and it reflects many kinds of aspect such as natural environment, origin of early settlers, conceptual hope, and so on. In many social studies, interviews to key informants of a community are regular entrances to obtain its general information, and in such conversations many place names are to be mentioned. Place name is not always stable for long, so some old place names in dialog can be hardly identified their corresponding locations or place names which are currently in use. These missing locations are barriers to extend a study on social historical connections of a community.

2. OBJECTIVES

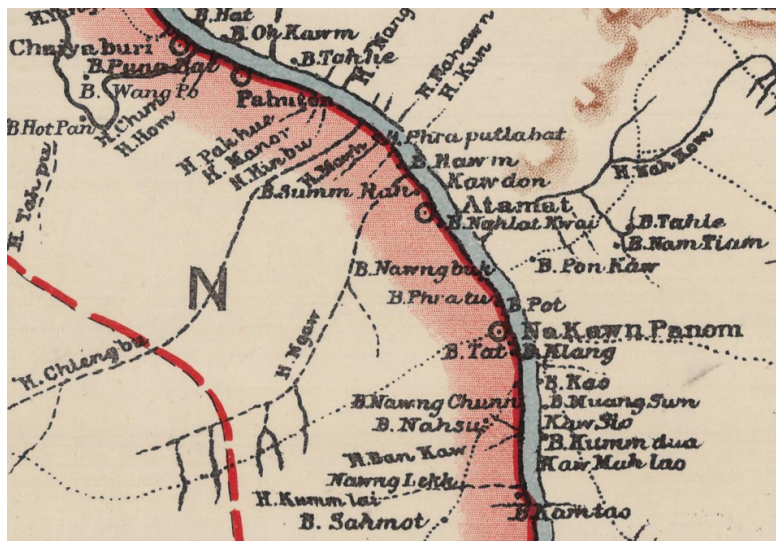
A spatiotemporal-oriented database of community level place names has been worked to be organized to record changes and variants of place names in the northeast of Thailand. In a previous article (Nagata 2019a), overview of similarity between old and present place name, and some typical cases of community level name were discussed. In another article (Nagata 2019b), regional tendency of locational difference of places shown on old maps was discussed. After these previous works, information of place names from other old maps has been added especially in Nakhon Phanom province and its adjacent areas. For enrichment of spatiotemporal-oriented database, some cases of changes and variants in place name are introduced. In this study, “community” means village or so-called “muban” in Thai.

3. MATERIALS

Information of place names has been collected from published materials, mainly maps and gazetteers. Modern topographic maps are used to collect place names of rural communities and their geographical locations. Some sets of old maps prepared in early 20th century or before can provide names of those days.

Some main sets of old maps described in below and topographic maps of L708 series scaled 1 to 50,000 are referred in this study.

(a) Maps comprised of 12 sheets with title “MAP OF SIAM” by the Survey of India Offices, Calcutta on a scale of 1 to 760,320 in 1896. These maps are noted as reproduction from an original supplied by the Royal Survey Department, Siam. (Figure 1)



Source) Sheet 4, MAP OF SIAM, published in 1896:
Collection of the Library of Congress

Figure 1. Around Nakhon Phanom on a part of “MAP OF SIAM”.

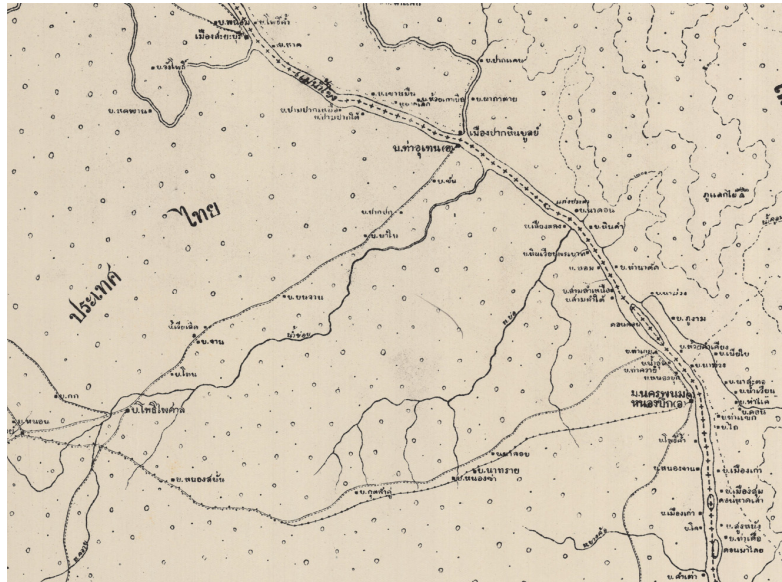
(b) Flight maps on a scale of 1 to 200,000 by Royal Survey Department. In the map titled Nakhon Phanom referred in this study for example, it is noted that this map was compiled from various scale maps in 1919, and printed in 1940 (Figure 2). Other sheets in this set maps were so far compiled around 1920 and printed from 1920s till 1940s. Some updated editions were continued to be printed in 1950s. Hereinafter these maps are referred as to the RSD maps.

(c) Maps by Japanese Army or so-called *Gaihozu*, the maps of areas outside the mainland Japan, on a scale of 1 to 200,000 in around 1940. *Gaihozu* covering Thailand are reproduction of the RSD maps described in above (Figure 3). Place names are transcript in Japanese from original in Thai. Some minor updates or additional information can be found in *Gaihozu*.

(d) Maps “Carte de l’Indochine” by the Service Geographique de l’Indochine on a scale of 1 to 500,000 in around 1930 (Figure 4). These maps include the north, the northeastern, and the eastern of Thailand as adjacent areas of French Indochina.

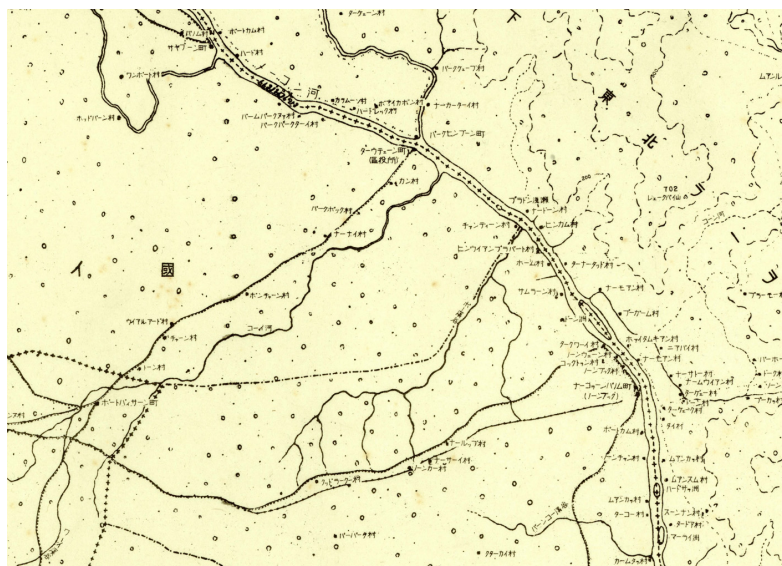
(e) Maps of Vietnam by Chinese Army on a scale of 1 to 500,000 in around 1940. Though no information of source nor surveying method is mentioned on maps, contents look

reproduction from the Carte de l'Indochine above (Figure 5). Place names are described in Chinese characters and their phonation is unknown because Chinese ideograph has many variation of phonation depending on regional dialects. As far as the author's experience, phonation of present day standard Chinese is far from Thai phonation of the corresponding place.



Source) นครพนม (๒๓) (Nakhon Phanom (23)), แผนที่การบิน
เฉพาะถิ่น (flight map), by the Royal Survey Department:
Collection of the Library of Congress

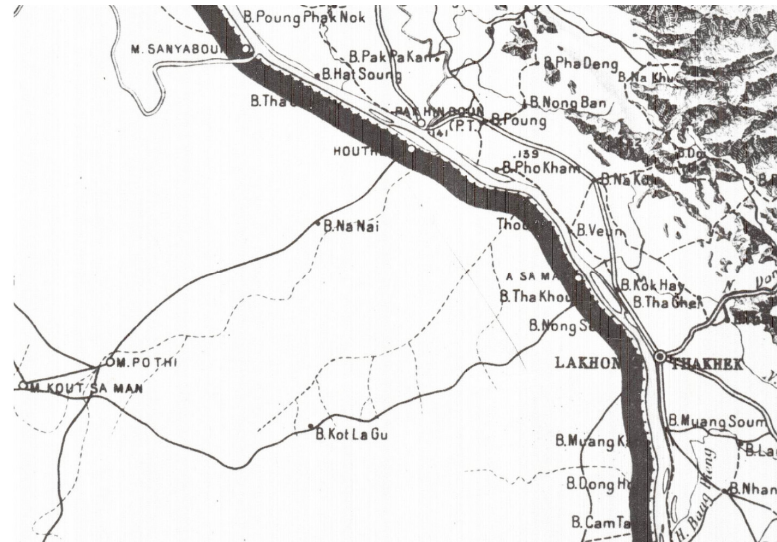
Figure 2. Around Nakhon Phanom on a part of flight map in Thai.



Source) Sheet 23, ナコーンパノム (Nakhon Phanom), タイ
國二十万分一圖 (Thailand scaled 1 to 200,000), issued
in 1941: Gaihozu Digital Archive, Tohoku University

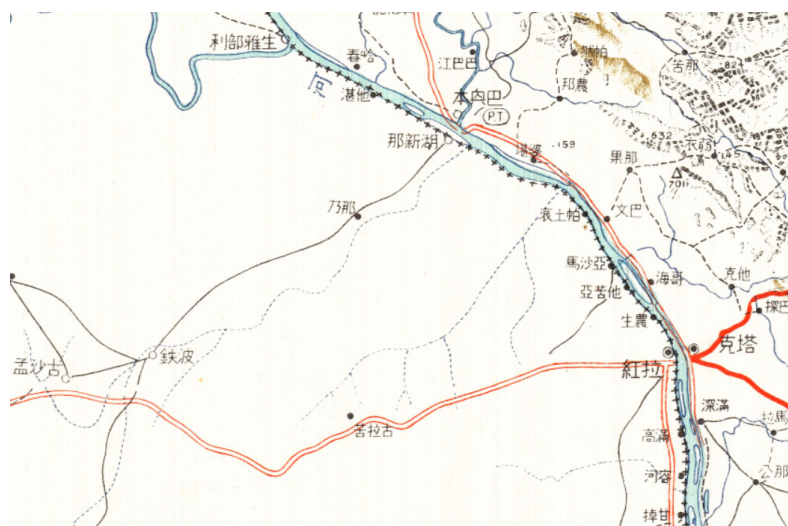
Figure 3. Around Nakhon Phanom on a part of Gaihozu.

Beside old maps, some gazetteers provide both place names and their geographical locations; however, geographical resolution varies from one minute to ten minutes, or from 2.5 km to 25 km in distance. It can be said that locations shown in such gazetteers can indicate only approximate locations, but they are not enough to distinguish a target community among nearby communities.



Source) Sheet 8, VINH, Carte de l'Indochine: Collection of the Library of Congress

Figure 4. Around Nakhon Phanom on a part of “Carte de l’Indochine”.



Source) Sheet 8, 義安 (Vinh), 越南圖 (Map of Vietnam), by the Chinese Army: Collection of the Library of Congress

Figure 5. Around Nakhon Phanom on a part of “Map of Vietnam”.

4. DISCUSSIONS

Place names described on a specific set of maps are so far snapshot names of those days, and form one layer of geographical 2D distribution. For the purpose of exploring local history of a community, linkage on temporal axis among such layers is indispensable.

Linkage of place names among different layers, or different ages, can be easy if these names are same or quite similar and their locations are so far same. But, it is not guaranteed that the place name of a community has kept same through generations. Slight change often happens by standardization so that a name in local language is adjusted to a name in national standard language. If the local language spoken in a community is far from national standard language, the name of a community is tend to be drastically changed to keep their original concept, or to be similarly pronounced in nationwide language. These changes bring difficulties in confirming linkages among different names. Cases that names on old maps are similar to those on present day maps are about 40 percent of communities shown on the RSD map for the area of Nakhon Phanom (Nagata, 2019a).

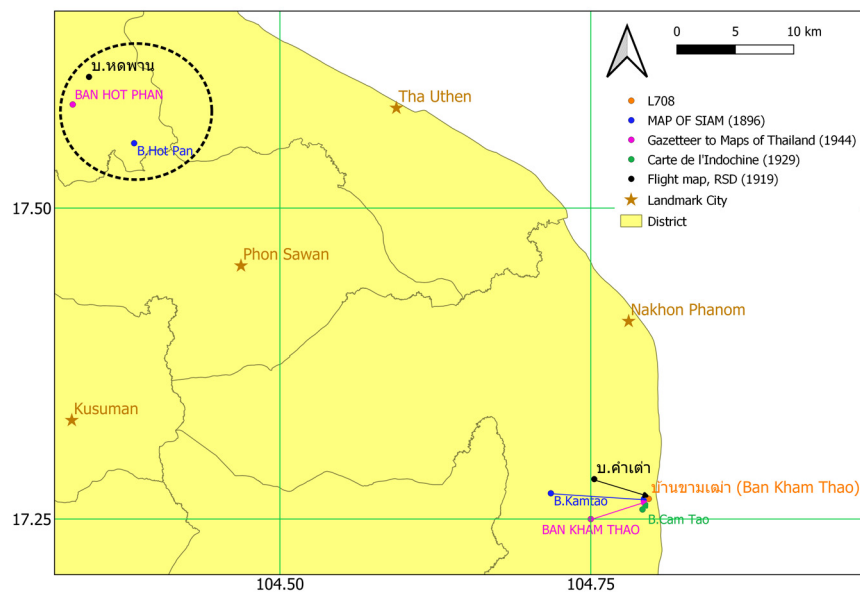


Figure 6. A linkable case and an unknown case.

At the right bottom of Figure 6, one example of linkable case, present day Ban Kham Thao, is shown. In this case, Ban Kham Thao was shown on all five old maps introduced in this study, and phonations look very similar (Table 1). “B.” is the abbreviation of “Ban” which is commonly used to represent “Village” in Thai. But at the same time, it should be keep in mind that described locations on such old maps are not always precisely corresponding to present day location. Relative position to landmarks, such as major rivers, big lakes, and notable cities, can give confirmable information to identify.

Another case in broken line circle at the left top of Figure 6 shows a missing community named Ban Hot Phan. This community is on the map “MAP OF SIAM” issued in 1896 and is listed in “Gazetteer to Maps of Thailand” published in 1944. The RSD map also describes this community (Table 2). But on the L708 series topographic maps, which are maps of 1960s, no community with similar name is shown in this area. In consideration that the MAP OF SIAM is a relatively small-scale map and was issued in late 19th century, communities shown on it must be notable in those days. Historical state of such communities may suggest an important aspect of history of the area.

Table 1. Place name descriptions of Ban Kham Thao.

Source	Description
(a) MAP OF SIAM	B. Kamtao
(b) Flight map by RSD	บ.คำเต่า (B. Kham Thao)
(c) Gaihozu	カームタオ村 (Ban Kham Thao)
(d) Carte de l'Indochine	B. Cam Tao
(e) Map of Vietnam	甘掉 (* unknown pronunciation)
(f) L708 map	บ้านขามเต่า (Ban Kham Thao)

Table 2. Ban Hot Phan, an example of unidentified current existence.

Source	Description
(a) MAP OF SIAM	B. Hot Pan
(b) Flight map by RSD	บ.หุดพาน (B. Hot Phan)
(c) Gaihozu	ホッドパーン村 (Ban Hot Phan)

For further information on such unidentified old communities, field interviews on site have been planned, but they cannot be conducted due to the still ongoing unsafe situation of the COVID-19.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Many images of Gaihozu were referred in the Gaihozu Digital Archive web page by Tohoku University. Without map collections in the Library of Congress, this study could not be extended. This study was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number JP19K12700.

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