

## Pattern and Performance of Local Governance in Thailand

### A Case study of Nakhon Si Thammarat Province

\*Phra Kraisorn Sririphop

\*\*Dr.Prashant Amrutkar

#### I. Introduction

Thailand (previously known as Siam) has been populated ever since the dawn of civilization in Asia. There are conflicting opinions of the origins of the Thais. It is presumed that about 4,500 years. Thais originated in northwestern Szechuan in China and later migrated down to Thailand along the southern part of China. They split into two main groups. One settled down in the North and became the kingdom of "Lanna" and the other one is in further south, which afterward was defeated by the Khmers and became the kingdom of "Sukhothai". The Kingdom of Thailand, located in Southeast Asia on the Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea. It is bordered by Laos to the Northeast, Myanmar to the North and West, Cambodia to the East, and Malaysia to the South. Thailand, although rich in rubber and in mineral resources, was never colonized by Europeans and has existed as a unified monarchy since 1350. The capital, Bangkok, an attractive blend of Western and Thai architecture, was established in 1782. Thailand extends about 2,500 kilometers from north to south and 1,250 kilometers from east to west, with a coastline of approximately 1,840 kilometers on the Gulf of Thailand and 865 kilometers along the Indian Ocean.

The country has a population of approximately 67.7 million (2016), of which around 10 million live in the capital city, Bangkok. The most important ethnic minority are Chinese. Other minority groups include Malays, Cambodians, Indians, non-Thai hill tribes, and some Vietnamese. Immigration is controlled by a quota system. Population of Thailand is currently increasing at the rate of 1.5 percent per annum. Out of this current population 36 percent are urban. The population includes ethnic Chinese Malays Cambodians, Vietnamese, Indians and others. It is expected that the population of the country may reach to 66 million by the end of 2060. The current population of the country is 65.5 million (2014). As estimated by the census broadly, the growth rate of current population is 1.5 percent that is mostly found among children between the age group 0-14. For this current and fast growing population, the government of Thailand is providing various education services through scholarships. The largest ethnic minority is the Chinese and other ethnic groups include Malays, Cambodians, Vietnamese, and Indians. According to estimates of United Nations Population Information Network, the population of Thailand would be about 74 million in the year 2050.

Approximately 68% of the population lives in rural areas and the majority are farmers with incomes reliant upon subsistence agriculture. Rapid change has had a disruptive effect on social structures. Urban migration to Bangkok, the capital city, has led to serious problems of congestion, land shortage, and water and air pollution. Although a period of fast economic and social transformation has improved the quality of life, there is now evidence that the income inequalities both within and between regions and between rich and poor groups are widening. The replacement of the extended family by the nuclear family has weakened the sense of community and traditional forms of co-operation and safety nets, increasing the vulnerability of disadvantaged groups. Drug addiction and crime are on the increase. Local government comprised both regular territorial administrative units and self-governing bodies. Local autonomy was limited, however, by the high degree of centralization of power. The Ministry of Interior controlled the policy, personnel, and finances of the local units at the provincial and district levels. Field officials from the ministry as well as other central ministries constituted the majority of administrators at local levels.

In 1987 there were seventy-three provinces (*changwat*), including the metropolitan area of Bangkok, which had provincial status the provinces were grouped into nine regions for administrative purposes. As of 1984 (the latest year for which information was available in 1987), the provinces were divided into 642 districts (*amphoe*), 78 subdistricts (*king amphoe*), 7,236 communes (*tambon*), 55,746 villages (*muban*), 123 municipalities (*tesaban*), and 729 sanitation districts (*sukhaphiban*).

The province was under a governor (*phuwarachakan*), who was assisted by one or more deputy governors, an assistant governor, and officials from various central ministries, which, except for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, maintained field staffs in the provinces and districts. The governor supervised

\*Research Scholar Department of Political Science, Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad

\*\*Professor and Head Department of Political Science, Dr.Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad (M.S.) India

the overall administration of the province, maintained law and order, and coordinated the work of ministerial field staffs. These field officials carried out the policies and programs of their respective ministries as line administrators and also served as technical advisers to the governor. Although these officials were responsible to the governor in theory, in practice they reported to their own ministries in Bangkok and maintained communication with other province-level and district-level field staffs. The governor also was responsible for district and municipal administration, presiding over a provincial council composed of senior officials from the central ministries. The council, which served in an advisory capacity, met once a month to transmit central government directives to the district administrators. Apart from the council, an elected provincial assembly exercised limited legislative oversight over provincial affairs.

District administration was under the charge of a district officer (*nai amphor*), who was appointed by the minister of interior and reported to the provincial governor. Larger districts could be divided into two or more subdistricts, each under an assistant district officer. The district or the subdistrict was usually the only point of contact between the central authority and the populace; the central government had no appointed civil service officials below this level. The district officer's duties as overseer of the laws and policies of the central government were extensive. He supervised the collection of taxes, kept basic registers and vital statistics, registered schoolchildren and aliens, administered local elections at the commune and village levels, and coordinated the activities of field officials from Bangkok. Additionally, the district officer convened monthly meetings of the headmen of the communes and villages to inform them of government policies and instruct them on the implementation of these policies. As the chief magistrate of the district, he also was responsible for arbitration in land disputes; many villagers referred these disputes to the district officer rather than to a regular court.

The commune was the next level below the district. An average of nine contiguous, natural villages were grouped into one commune, whose residents elected a headman (*kamnan*) from among the village headmen (*phuyaibun*) within the commune. The commune chief was not a regular government official, but because of his semiofficial status, he was confirmed in office by the provincial governor. He also was entitled to wear an official uniform and receive a monthly stipend. Assisted by a small locally recruited staff, the *kamnan* recorded vital statistics, helped the district officer collect taxes, supervised the work of village headmen, and submitted periodic reports to the district officer. Below the commune level was the village government. Each village elected a headman, who generally served as the middleman between villagers and the district administration. The headman's other duties included attending meetings at the district headquarters, keeping village records, arbitrating minor civil disputes, and serving as village peace officer. Generally the headman served five years or longer and received a monthly stipend. In the 1980s, the importance of a village headman seemed to be declining as the authority of the central government expanded steadily through the provincial and local administrations. Municipalities in Thailand included Bangkok, seventy-two cities serving as provincial capitals, and some large district towns. According to the 1980 census, municipalities had a combined population of 7.6 million, or about 17 percent of the national total. The municipalities consisted of communes, towns, and cities, depending on population. Municipal residents elected mayors and twelve to twenty-four municipal assemblymen; the assemblymen chose two to four councilors from among their number, who together with the mayors made up executive councils.

In theory, the municipal authorities were self-governing, but in practice municipal government was an administrative arm of the central and provincial authorities. The Ministry of Interior had effective control over municipal affairs through the provincial administration, which had the authority to dissolve municipal assemblies and executive councils. Moreover, such key officials as the municipal clerk and section chiefs were recruited, assigned, and retired by the ministry, which also had the power to control and supervise the fiscal affairs of the perennially deficit-ridden municipalities.

#### **History of Nakhon Si Thammarat**

Nakhon Si Thammarat was ruled by Siam during the golden Reign of King Rama the Fifth who thereafter changed its administration by appointing "Chao Muang" or Lord of the Province to be in charge of overall administration. After 1932 (B.E. 2475) Nakhon Si Thammarat become a province under the central administration but local merchants kept on having their trade relations mostly with Singapore, Malaysia and Penang.

Nakhon Si Thammarat (often in short Nakhon, is one of the southern provinces (*changwat*) of Thailand, at the eastern shore of the Gulf of Thailand. Neighboring provinces are (from south clockwise) Songkhla, Phatthalung, Trang, Krabi and Surat Thani. The name of the province derives from its Pali-Sanskrit name *Nagara Sri Dhammaraja* (City of the Sacred Dharma King), which in Thai pronunciation becomes Nakhon Si Thammarat.

### Geography of Nakhon Si Thammarat

The province is located on the shore of the Gulf of Thailand on the east side of the Malay Peninsula. The terrain is mostly rugged hilly forest area. It contains the highest elevation of southern Thailand, the Khao Luang with 1,835 m, now protected in the Khao Luang national park.

### History

The area around Nakhon Si Thammarat was part (according to some scholars even the centre) of the Srivijaya kingdom from the 3rd century. The Ramkhamhaeng stele lists it among the areas within the realm of Sukhothai.

After the fall of Sukhothai it fell to its successor, the Ayutthaya kingdom and was one of the tributary kingdoms or 1st class provinces.

With the *thesaphiban* administrative reforms the kingdom was more closely integrated into the Thai state and formed the Monthon Nakhon Si Thammarat. With the abolishment of the monthon system in 1932, the province covering only the central parts of the former kingdom became the top-level administrative subdivision of Thailand. The provincial seal shows the Phra Baromathat Chedi of the Wat Phra Mahathat Voramahavihan, one of the most important historical sites in southern Thailand. According to the city chronicle it was already built in 311, but archaeology dates it to the 13th century. The chedi is surrounded by the animals of the Chinese zodiac in the seal. The twelve animals represent the twelve Naksat cities or city-states which were tributary to the Nakhon Si Thammarat kingdom: the mouse of Saiburi; the ox of Pattani; the tiger of Kelantan; the rabbit of Pahang (actually a city in Pahang which is said to be submerged by a lake now); a large snake of Kedah; a small snake of Phatthalung; a horse of Trang; a goat of Chumphon; a monkey of Bantaysamer (might be Chaiya, or a town in Krabi Province); a cock of Sa-ulau (unidentified city, might be Songkhla, Kanchanadit or Pla Tha); a dog of Takua Pa and a pig of Kraburi. The provincial flower is the Golden Shower Tree (*Cassia fistula*), and the provincial tree is Millettia atropurpurea. The provincial slogan is which translates to a historical town, the golden Phra That, plentiful minerals, three-metal nielloware, numerous temples, abundant shellfish.

### Administrative divisions

Nakhon Si Thammarat is subdivided into 23 districts (*amphoe*). The districts are further subdivided into 165 subdistricts (*tambon*) and 1428 villages (*muban*).

1. Mueang Nakhon Si Thammarat	13. Ron Phibun
2. Phrom Khiri	14. Sichon
3. Lan Saka	15. Khanom
4. Chawang	16. Hua Sai
5. Phipun	17. Bang Khan
6. Chian Yai	18. Tham Phannara
7. Cha-uat	19. Chulabhorn
8. Tha Sala	20. Phra Phrom
9. Thung Song	21. Nopphitam
10. Na Bon	22. Chang Klang
11. Thung Yai	23. Chaloem Phra Kit
12. Pak Phanang	

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### **Political development**

It is the policy of the Government to promote the country's political development towards participatory democracy in order to give the people the opportunity for greater self-government and protection of their own rights. In addition, the Government is committed to improving efficiency, creating greater transparency and eliminating corruption in public administration and services, with a view to enhancing social justice and national development at present and in the future. Towards this end, the Government will undertake the following measures:

#### **Decentralization Policy**

1. Place an emphasis on local revenue collection and decentralization of fiscal power to local authorities in order to achieve budget management that is more independent, taking into consideration the needs and appropriateness for development of the localities.
2. Encourage clear, appropriate and step-by-step decentralization of power from the central government to the local authorities. At the same time, the potential of local civil service administrations and local governmental organizations must be strengthened and further developed in line with the activities of each locality. There must be greater independence with regard to local budget management and allocation, income acquisition and management of local properties.
3. Encourage the local people, civil society and private organizations to participate in local administration, thereby providing for inspection, monitoring, and evaluation of the local administration. Such participation ranges from the decision-making process, policy formulation, and procurement to the appointment and removal of the local authorities for the sake of transparency and efficiency as well as in response to the needs of the local people. Promote better understanding with regard to the roles and responsibilities of all the organizations concerned so that the local decentralization process can proceed in an effective manner.

#### **Gravity of Problem**

Local government reform encompasses a wide range of issues such as changes in the internal structure of local governments, the scope of their tasks, the amount and sources of their income, the size of the geographical area for which an authority is responsible (including the problems of choosing the appropriate level for territorial units and of consolidation of urban areas), the introduction of elements of direct democracy as part of efforts to increase citizen participation, the reform of electoral procedures, and changes in the way service provision is managed (the previous interest in planning seems to have been overtaken by the push to replace bureaucratic input steering with business-like output steering). More recent concerns aim at reforming local authorities' policy-making process (under the heading of "governance")

Local governance in Thailand is performed by The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand of 1997 that states to implement decentralization policy by law that stipulated the division of powers and duties of public service between state and local government as well as among local governments themselves. Therefore, there must be a committee in charge of dividing powers and responsibilities, and tax allocation. The committee must be composed of an equal number of representatives from relevant government agencies, local government organization and qualified academics or specialists, named that The National Decentralization Committee (NDC), to have responsibilities for formulating to plan, implement and monitor decentralization process. Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) is member of the Committee as relevant government agencies that have advised correlation strategies in the five-year National Economic and Social Development Plan with the Determining Plan and Process of Decentralization Act of 1999 and the Decentralization Plan. In addition to the Decentralization Plan have implemented to the Decentralization Strategic Plan in year 2002 (1st edition) and year 2008 (2nd edition) and have been on process of the 3rd edition. In each edition, representative's NESDB has been a member of the sub-committee to draft the Strategic plan to contribute strategies in the National Plan both short and long term strategies in the economic and social sector. The challenged of NESDB is how to accomplish national development strategies in the Decentralization

Strategic Plan, in which much more political power to draft the decentralization plan. With respect to Thai local governance, roles of key actors are academics or technocrats, bureaucrats, politicians; in which national and locally, and the people. The critical factor to Thai local governance is national political power try to control the NDC which is composed key actors that mention earlier, except the people. It is seem like that the power is quite to succeed. Bureaucratic forces has dominated the NDC by setting some difficulties as minimum standard in services for transferring functions to local government, also local personnel regulations. Moreover, national politicians have controlled over local government revenue distribution. Local politicians has been weak to collective their own revenue and lack of managerial system in local administrations. Lastly, a little public interest is on decentralization process, even the constitution entitled the public with the right to initiate local ordinances. As a result, local governance in Thailand has been not much progress comparing with goals of Determining Plan and Process of Decentralization Act of 1999. Decentralization has been one of the reform efforts to improve community development programs in rural areas to better serve the needs and concerns of the local people. A number of studies and pilot tests have been conducted, but none persuaded top policy makers to truly decentralize their power. Following the promulgation of the Tambon Council and Tambon Administrative Act of 1994 and the new Constitution of 1997, decentralization and the creation of self-governing authorities again received national and international attention. To decentralize and transform the rigid, traditionally strong bureaucratic system of power that ruled and controlled the country for many decades is not easy but Thailand is now going down this thorny road. This research discusses the decentralization process in Thai society, which demonstrates the lessons and experiences of the country fighting against difficulties to create good local governance - a more transparent and people oriented system. In addition, it reports an example of a practical approach to mobilize local communities to monitor and combat corruption and to pave the way to gain access to public services. Through people's participation and involvement in planning and decision-making processes, a local authority with good local governance can be produced.

#### **Development of Local Government in Thailand**

Thailand changed from an absolute monarchy to a democratic government in 1932 as the revolutionists believed and stated that the Thai administration needed to be modernized and governed by the people's representatives. Indeed, a more modern, democratic system would allow the government to recruit professional and educated people to work for the country.

The Administrative Law of 1933 primarily established three layers in the Thai administrative structure-the central or national administration, the provincial administration, and local administration. These structures of the centralized administration have become a dominant feature of Thai administrative culture that is difficult to change. Under supervision and direction of the Cabinet, the central ministries and departments played major roles in policy formulation and implementation. Implementation and administration at the provincial level were in hands of the regional offices of ministries and departments. To facilitate and coordinate public programs of various government agencies, a governor, who was a permanent civil servant under the Ministry of Interior, was appointed. Local administration consisted of local officials directly or indirectly elected by the people. The local bodies were municipalities including the Bangkok Municipality. With this administrative pattern, Thailand, with a long history as a unitary kingdom, evolved into a centralized administration with a strong national government until today. The development of local governance has been as slow as the development of the Thai democratic system. In 1952, sanitary administration was added as another form of local body for rural communities. In 1955 and 1956, the Provincial Council and the Tambon Council were created at the provincial and Tambon levels respectively. Members of these organizations were partly appointed and partly elected to oversee development activities at the local level. This set up aimed to promote and prepare local communities for a self-governing system.

#### **Objectives of the Study**

The following objectives are set at the outset so as to make this research study more precise.

1. To study the history and Progress of local governance in Thailand.
2. To study the pattern of local governance in Nakhon Si Thammarat province.
3. To study the level of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the participation of people in Nakhon Si Thammarat province.
4. To know the profile of respondents, this is confined to personal information regarding age, sex, occupation, income, family structure and background etc.
5. To find out the problems coming in the way of local government in Nakhon Si Thammarat province.

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6. To observe performance of local governance in Thai political system
  7. To understand problems which they face in their performance.

**Hypotheses Tested**

1. The local government in Nakhon Si Thammarat province has lack of knowledge.
2. The pattern of decentralization in Thailand is very poor.
3. The level of satisfaction with the participation of people to model local government in Nakhon Si Thammarat province is very less.
4. The participation and promotion of local government in Nakhon Si Thammarat province is still very low.
5. Central Government is very strong and local governance has less importance in the political system.
6. Performance of local governance is not satisfactory.

**Research****Methodology**

1. **Area of the study:** Nakhon Si Thammarat province.

2. **Study Design:** The study is of and evaluative in nature. To some extent it is fact finding also, and hence it goes to the problems on one part and by the local government on the other part. Therefore, it can be called as exploratory study also. This is individual project and the study which has been done on the basis of data collected from the respondents who are actually the members of Nakhon Si Thammarat province in the areas and the responding local administrators who were directly in a process of implementation of the Department of Local Administration.

**Data Collection**

The data will be collected through:

1. Primary Source
2. Secondary Sources for which the libraries in Bangkok will extensively use.
3. So as to meet the demands of the study an interview schedule for local membership of Nakhon Si Thammarat province will be used. For constructing the interview schedule and questionnaire first the major factors are determined and related to the major factors either the items or the statements are selected.

**Sampling Design**

It is neither possible nor necessary to cover the whole of the population from the study because it is too large in number. A study of a portion of it is conducted. Therefore, sampling procedure is adopted. So as to make it convenient to understand the role of participation of local Administrative Organizations in the arrangement of the model local government in Nakhon Si Thammarat province two sampling techniques are adopted namely:

1. An area sampling method is adopted to select 30 sub-district Administrative Organizations and other local organization.
2. A random sampling technique with some restrictions is used for selecting the effective sample of 200 members of Sub-district Administrative Organizations or municipal government and 100 administrators of local Organization sub total of 300 respondents have been studding for the purpose of the present study.

**Tools for Data Collection**

Under the above mentioned methods data Collection includes field work based on above consideration two separate tools are used for data collection namely:

1. Primary and Secondary data from the offices & Nakhon Si Thammarat province.
2. Structured interview schedule for the members of government leader in the sample.
3. Questionnaire for the model of local government in Thailand a case study Nakhon Si Thammarat province.

**Analysis of Data**

For analysis of the data frequency counts will be done on computer. The data will also be presented through charts, diagrams etc., whenever it is necessary. Analysis of data is the most important part of the research work. The processed data is to be used to arrive at the definite conclusions. The research cannot be completed without analysis of the data. Only by analyzing the data one can know the views of the respondents towards certain problems. At the first stage of analysis the sample is classified on the basis of identification data such age, occupation, education, income, family structure etc. At the second stage the data will be presented in the univariate as well as bivariate table which present cross tabulation of frequency counts, whenever necessary Chi-Square Technique is used and some of the data are presented in the forms of diagrams.

**Major****Conclusion**

Province Administrative Organization (PAO): They are provincial unit of local government. It was initially created by the Province Administration Act of 1955 to provide government service to all inhabitants who are not within the geographical jurisdiction of a municipality, a sanitary district or a TAO. According to the 1955 Act, the PAO has 2 major components: the elected Province assembly, and the provincial governor, who acts as its chief executive. The assembly has the main function of meeting annually to pass the annual provincial budget and to audit the previous year's expenditures. However, in the year 1997, the PAO Act was issued to abolish the governor's role from being the chief executive by position; henceforth the chief must be chosen among the elected members of the assembly only. The 1997 law provides new functions for the PAOs to have responsibility in coordinating and providing support for local government units within their districts. The intention is to make the PAO as the first level of local government within each province. Thus duties of the PAO are then designed to be different from other local governments. Duties of the PAO are as follows:

- 1) Prepare PAO planning, and collaborate with provincial plan;
- 2) Support Tambon council and other local administration in development;
- 3) Coordinate and jointly operate duties of Tambon council and other local affairs;
- 4) Provide grant to others local government units as laws indicated;
- 5) Protect, maintenance and preserve forest, land, natural resources, and environment;
- 6) Provide education services;
- 7) Support democracy, equity, and people rights;
- 8) Support people participatory rights in local development;
- 9) Support suitable technological development;
- 10) Provide and maintenance public water sewage;
- 11) Provide public garbage disposal and waste treatment;
- 12) Administer environment and pollution;
- 13) Administer and maintenance land, and water transport terminals;
- 14) Support tourism;
- 15) Support commerce, investments by joint venture or syndication with others;
- 16) Construct and maintenance land and water transport hub with other local governments;
- 17) Provide and maintenance central market;
- 18) Support sport, athletic, tradition and local culture;
- 19) Provision of provincial hospital, medical treatment, protection, and control contagious disease;
- 20) Provision of museum;
- 21) Provision of mass transit and traffic engineering;
- 22) Protect and provide disaster relief;
- 23) Maintenance of public orderly;
- 24) Support other government agencies and local government in local development;
- 25) Provision of social welfare services for child development, woman, elderly, and disadvantage;
- 26) Provision other services as mandated by other laws or decree.

On the revenue side, under the Plan and Procedures for Decentralization Law, the revenue sources that assigned to CAOs are;

- 1) Petroleum and Petroleum Products Tax
- 2) Tobacco Tax
- 3) Value-added Tax
- 4) Specific Business Tax
- 5) Vehicle Tax
- 6) Education Tax
- 7) Bird-nest Tax
- 8) Mineral Tax
- 9) Hotel Receipts Tax
- 10) Fees, Fines, and License Permit Fees
- 11) CAO public utilities income.

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