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| Author(s) | 峯田, 史郎 |
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Summary

Human Territoriality and Multi-scalar Struggles: Survival Strategies of Ethnic Minorities in Southern Shan, Myanmar

MINETA Shiro

In August 2016, Myanmar held the “21st century Panglong Conference” with the aim to ease tensions caused by armed conflicts which have lasted over sixty years between the Myanmar government and ethnic minority organizations. It promised a new era with no armed conflicts. A year earlier, in November 2015, the National League for Democracy, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, won an overwhelming victory in the general election. This marked an end to the military government, and the newly elected government embarked on a journey of democratization. Additionally, in October 2015, just before the election, the Myanmar government and several ethnic minority organizations entered into the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, marking a new phase in armed conflicts between them. Nevertheless, in December of the same year, some of the ethnic minority organizations, for example, Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA), resumed the struggle against the Myanmar military.

Most of the armed conflicts in Myanmar have occurred in places along the national border with neighboring countries. The parties of the conflicts in Myanmar include not only Shan but also Kachin, Karen and so on. This paper aims to discuss how ethnic minority organizations have achieved their mission to gain autonomy in Myanmar and their ways of survival. As a case study, RCSS/SSA, as mentioned above, will be picked up.

RCSS/SSA has its headquarter in a place along the national border between Myanmar and Thailand. The name of the village is Loi Tai Leng. The areas including this village controlled by RCSS/SSA hold advantageous defense positions benefiting from its geographical locations at the national border. This means that ethnic minority organizations taking control of areas near the border have been affected by neighboring countries. Especially, foreign policy, economic development, investment and tourism in China influence the strategies of the ethnic minority organizations. On the other hand, ethnic minority organizations select proactively people, goods, capital and information crossing over the border and make strategic plans for survival.

In order to verify the strategy of ethnic minority organizations such as RCSS/SSA, a rethinking of national territory as a unit of analysis is needed. The activities of ethnic minority organizations have relativized the concept of national border and have varied the meaning of the border, which seems unable to expand as an edge of territory. RCSS/SSA uses this dimension of the border against the Myanmar military who cannot deploy over national borders. Then RCSS/SSA uses flexibly the national border with Thailand for its struggle. Moreover, strained influences with the outside are required. It is observed that RCSS/SSA, as a non-state actor, make relationships with outside actors to continue the struggle against the nation-states.

For these observations, this paper uses the analysis frameworks of both “multi-scales” and “human territoriality.” It also shows that politics of scales from the territorialities exercised by the Myanmar government and RCSS/SSA have extended to armed conflicts.

The first section reviews the literatures and shows analytical perspectives. In the second section, the politics of scales between territorialities is verified through the history of the Shan state. These territorialities came from both national scale and the scale made by territoriality, which every ethnic minority organizations in Shan state claim priority. The third section focuses on the relationships with outside actors, which has enabled RCSS/SSA to continue its armed struggle. Three kinds of actors are explored in this paper: the Thai military, which guards the national border, the Tai language group, which has common traditions with RCSS/SSA, and the international society, to which RCSS/SSA make the appeal of their anti-narcotic policy. The final section discusses that the relationships with the above-mentioned three actors are found to be the survival strategy for RCSS/SSA to maintain their organization.

Geographical Boundaries and Exhibition: Presenting the Environment and Culture at the Waikīkī Aquarium

MIZUTANI Yuka

The environment and culture were divided by the Ala Wai Canal, a geographical boundary surrounding Waikīkī in the city of Honolulu on O‘ahu Island of Hawai‘i. In this article, I discuss how their reconnection can be enhanced by focusing on the activities of the Waikīkī Aquarium,