

Thailand and Sino-Japanese Relations in the Early Twentieth Century

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Abstract : This study attempts to examine Japanese views of Thailand primarily in the 1920s and 1930s through the analysis of documents published by the Office of Governor-General of Taiwan (Taiwan Sotokufu) and its affiliated organizations. Japan regarded Taiwan, under its control since 1895, as a foothold to making inroads into the South, and The governor-general office was active in investigations and intelligence gathering in Southeast Asia, as well as the southern part of the Chinese continent. Documents published by the governor-general office and its related organizations, especially those in a couple of decades following the First World War, reveal that the Japanese paid attention to the presence of the Thai-Chinese during the time period. It would not be surprising that the desiring to penetrating into the Thai market, as well as the markets of the rest of Southeast Asia, the Japanese could not ignore the presence of the Thai-Chinese because of their local economic influences. The increased Japanese concern about the Thai-Chinese toward the end of the 1920s and throughout the 1930s was, moreover, intertwined with the increased tension between China and Japan. In other words, Thailand, as well as the rest of Southeast Asia, became another arena of Sino-Japanese confrontation. The rise of nationalism against Japan in China infected the Thai-Chinese communities and threatened Japanese economic activities in the country. However, the Japanese simultaneously found out that Thai-Chinese concert with anti-Japanese in China did not necessarily match their business interests and that the Thai government's efforts to assimilate the Thai-Chinese into the Thais society and strategic approach to Japan in the late 1930s hampered their anti-Japanese actions.

Keywords : Japanese-Thai Relations, Sino-Japanese relations, Thai Chinese, Overseas Japanese

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