

Siam and the Confiscation of Enemy Property in World War I

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Abstract

Siam and the confiscation of enemy property in World War I (1914-1918) suggests that the practice of confiscation of enemy property during the First World War had a significant impact on the development of modern warfare. Initially, it involved using economic measures to weaken enemy powers during and after wartime. Despite violating the principles of previous warfare, particularly the Convention (IV) respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex: regulations concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land, established in The Hague in 1907, all types of enemy property – both state and private – were targeted. Every country participating in the war, including Siam, pursued the seizure of enemy property.

Due to its similarity with Singaporean social context, Siam's political elite followed Great Britain's model of confiscating enemy property in Singapore. However, Siam applied its own approach to this model, resulting in a more flexible practice that did not primarily aim to weaken the enemy's power after the war. For Siam, the confiscation of enemy property during World War I provided an opportunity to implement international law under the guidance of Great Britain. As a member of the winning side, the country could gain certain advantages by liquidating enemy property after the war, conducting cost-free shipping businesses, and reducing damage from potential confiscation by Germany. It was a stage to showcase Siam's civilized ideals, especially in the management of captives and their property. This was a significant aspect for the small nation of Siam during the imperialist era.

Keywords: Siam, Confiscation of Enemy Property, Liquidation of Enemy Property, World War I