

THE STATE OF THAI STUDIES:
A CRITICAL SURVEY

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The State of Thai Studies: A Critical Survey

The Editorial Committee

"The State of Thai Studies: A Critical Survey" is a research project that attempts to survey the development of Thai studies over the last three decades. It explores the body of knowledge, theories and the application of these theories in the studies of Thai society. In addition, this project discusses research problems and makes methodological proposals for further studies. Of the seven articles in this volume, six were presented at Panel 8: The State of Thai Studies at the Sixth International Conference on Thai Studies held during 14-20 October 1996 in Chiang Mai. The other study by Thongchai Winichakul offers a historical perspective significant to Thai studies.

Earlier, Thai studies were conducted from the perspectives of western scholars who had lived in Thailand. In the last century, Thailand, known then as Siam, was regarded as a small and backward country vulnerable to the threat of western colonialism. Such a threat prompted the ruling class to launch the reform necessary for national unity. Education was not an exception. The studies of Thai society had been conducted from the perspective of the upper classes. Royal academics built up the domain of Thai studies by rewriting history, giving new explanations on Buddhism and Thai literature. Those views remain influential even today.

After World War II, Thai studies, under American influence, was divided into two groups: the conservative and the progressive. The first group, led by M.R. Kukrit Pramoj, concentrated more on traditional rituals and the dissemination of court culture to

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the public.

Ever since, Thai studies conducted by members of the middle class have adopted a more liberal point of view. Under western influences, Thai studies have focused on economic progress, capitalism, the role of the middle class in the Thai society, cultural dimensions, Thai literature under the western influence as well as the modern concept of beauty. These studies tend to be critical of Thai bureaucracy and political dictatorship. It is an attempt to break away from the conservative framework by replacing it with a capitalistic paradigm.

Liberalism in Thai studies has long proved popular among academics. However, the application of western social theories to Thai society has been problematic in two respects: First, Thai scholars have had only a superficial knowledge of western social theories. Hence, their understanding of Thai society was incomplete. Second, Thai academics lacked a profound understanding of their own culture. Many studies were conducted in order to serve state and capitalistic ideologies.

Before the student uprising on Oct 14, 1973, Thai academics had already been debating on the reality and nature of Thai society. With greater freedom of expression, Thai scholars had increasingly adopted the point of view of the masses. Following the Oct 14, 1973 event, academics became more interested in local knowledge as well as oral history and literature. However, in its extreme form, the attempt by Thai studies to emancipate itself from foreign influence only led to nationalism and racism. It had also barred itself from the full import of technological advancement.

But gradually such Thai studies have developed themselves into a credible 'science'. Local knowledge has become a subject of interest among thinkers and social activists in the last two decades. The words "Thai intellectual history" and "local knowledge" have become acceptable terms in academic circles. A number of Thai thinkers who should be honored for their contributions in these areas are Puay Ungpakorn, Sulak Sivaraksa, Prawase Wasi, Sneh Chamarik, Ekkawit na Thalang, Nipoj Tianwiham, Seri Pongpit, Kanchana Kaewthep, Bamrung Boonpanya, Apichart Thongyoo and Suthipong Pongpaiboon, among others.

Hence, apart from the studies of state and capital, local knowledge has also become another major field of Thai studies. Both areas have been studied from different

perspectives that somehow reinforce one another. At the beginning, only western academics and a few Thai scholars participated in Thai studies. More recently, Thai studies have gone beyond the concerns of academic circles.

The first article in this volume, "The Changing Landscape of the Past: New Histories in Thailand since 1973" by Thongchai Winichakul, is a reading of Nithi Aewsriwong's concept which challenged the traditional historical view of Prince Damrong Rajanubhab. Nithi has expanded his historical studies by including a history of the middle class as well as local knowledge. Furthermore, his new interpretation of Thai history is based on his readings in economics, society and literature. According to Thongchai, Nithi's views mark the beginning of a new intellectual era, making it necessary to reevaluate traditional concepts in history. Thongchai then calls attention to the "Political Economy group" which is led by the Chatthip school of thought. They have studied local history systematically with a strong determination to enable communities to fight for their identities and ideologies. Thongchai also proposes the ideas of Srisak Wallipodom and Thida Saraya in regional history. Their studies are based on archeological evidence but have gradually turned to myth and local beliefs and rituals. According to Thongchai, Srisak, unlike Chatthip, does not deny the significance of the state.

Sompong Witayasakpan, unlike Thongchai, focuses his studies on Tai communities scattered across Thailand and Laos and along the borders of China, India, Burma and Vietnam. His article, "Three Decades of Tai Studies and Thai Studies: A Comparative Study of Tai Societies and Cultures", traces the history of Tai tribes before they became the modern Siamese and Thai. His studies have been concerned with three aspects: tradition, anthropology and culture.

First, the traditional aspect has been under the influence of more traditional historical approaches in which the origin of the Thai race has been emphasized. Some of their studies are ethnic in character. Second, the anthropological aspect disregards the question of the origin of the Tai race. Scholars in this field are interested in multi-cultural differences of the Tai communities in different regions. They study Srisak Wallipodom's archaeological works and Thida Saraya's multi-historical approach via folklore, myths and rituals. The works of Anant Kanchanapan emphasizes social

development by introducing ideas from various disciplines and social analyses. Shikeharu Tanabe, meanwhile, has taken up this approach with the hope of finding a universal understanding of human nature. Third, the community culture aspect regards regional community as the essence of culture because traditions of the "good old days" still remain intact upcountry. A proper combination of old traditions and modern values would make the public aware of the importance of cultural development. This is why scholars are interested in comparative studies of different culture and the study of the origin of Tai culture inside and outside the country.

The works of Sompong and Thongchai reinforce one another. Sompong's analyses have strengthened Thongchai's critique of traditional history. Thongchai's article introduces the diversity and vitality of contemporary intellectual history. Both works suggest that Thai studies are in their infancy and have a lot more work to do.

Jamaree Pitackwong Chiengthong in her article, "Studies in Social Relations and Thai Studies" explored the social relations in Thailand and divided them into three stages. First, from 1937 to the October 14, 1973 uprising is a period when Thai studies were dominated by western thinking. According to Jamaree, the "traditional" Thai society was then under the influence of "modern" western culture. Consequently, Thailand had to develop and modernize itself while at the same time trying to preserve its sense of "Thai" identity after Oct 14, 1973. Jamaree suggests that during this period, social conflicts had been widely debated among the Marxists (Jitr Pumisak and Chatthip Nartsupha). Moreover, those academics who were under the influence of Max Weber, namely, Nithi Aewsriwong, attempted to merge various theories along with Buddhist philosophy. Third is the current period of globalization in which information has greatly changed people's way of thinking. The Marxists shift their focus from a concern for relations of production to a concern for ideologies. This is also an age when consumerism and the "artificial community" are interrelated. An increasing number of academics have communicated with the public through the media, while those outside the academic circles have also contributed their comments on the social structure.

Jamaree describes the middle class as being rootless and lacking a proper understanding of contemporary society. This has made Sompong's article on the root of the Thai society more outstanding. Four decades ago, Kajorn Sukpanich, a prominent

historian, presented his profound studies on the lower classes and their involvement in the social production during the 1932 revolution which brought an end to the absolute monarchy. Before the Oct 14, 1973 uprising, certain writings had an influence over the student movement, among them "The Social Mechanism" by Pattaya Saihu and other works by the social critic Sulak Sivaraksa and the literary critic Suchart Sawadsri. As former editors of the monthly magazine *Social Science Review*, Sulak and Suchart had disseminated various political, social and philosophical perspectives from other countries. These ideas have affected the people's way of thinking in different parts of the country according to Jamaree.

Jamaree's question about the role of money in consumerism has been analyzed by Pasuk Phongpaichit in the latter's article entitled "Among Dragons, Geese, and Tigers: The Thai Economy in Global and Local Perspectives". Pasuk points out why the social relation of Thai feudalism proceeded in a confused manner. She also explores the relation of Thai capitalist society to the international investment community and the World Bank. Pasuk has questioned the World Bank's economic policies. In her article, she points out the differences of ideas between Thai and foreign economists.

The Bank of Thailand acts as a representative of the World Bank in organizing the Thai economic system. The Bank of Thailand has produced several specialists for high-ranking administrative positions in the state government as well as university lecturers. These specialists with their shared background in neoclassicism tend to regard economic growth and stability as the first priority for economic prosperity. In their opinion, income distribution and quality of life are the outcome of economic growth. These economists joined with other neoclassical economists from the Thailand Development and Research Institute (TDRI) to obtain financial aid from the World Bank. Moreover, some senior executives of the Bank of Thailand have also been members of the TDRI administrative committee. Therefore, it is not surprising that they tend to favor the Bank of Thailand's and the World Bank's policies in their economic views. However, some of them think that Thailand's economic prosperity would be in jeopardy if the national economy depends too much on the global economic system. With this fact in mind, they support the idea of income distribution by promoting agricultural research and investment. Among the prominent economists in this group are Methee Krongkaew

and Rangsan Tanapornpan. Although aware of the significance of industrial development, they have proposed the idea of a limited open economic system to prevent a bubble economy. Furthermore, they proposed that the country's financial situation is sound enough for Thailand to become a 'welfare state'. The "Political Economy Group", unlike others, bases their critical studies of the Thai society on political and economic development. The economic problems in the last decade, including the national deficit, the widening income gap, the deterioration of the ecological system and the depletion of natural resources, have been the results of the country's industrialization policies set under the World Bank's influence. The last group, the non-government organizations, has aimed at developing rural areas so that the people upcountry can become more self-reliant. The group also gives full support to the setting up of community organizations to oversee the management of local resources.

Pasuk has solved the problem raised by Jamaree by disclosing the ideas of two groups of economists. The first group is satisfied with the current national economic development which depends on the global economy, while the second group is against such a trend. Pasuk explains that both groups of economists have eventually realized that politics and the economy are inseparable. They agree that a political reform for democracy is necessary for economic prosperity.

Meanwhile, Somkiat Wanthana discusses problems connected to political and legal issues in his essay, "Thai Studies in Politics and Law". Somkiat has done numerous researches in these areas. He categorizes scholars of Thai studies on politics and legal system into three groups.

First, the "Political Culture Study Group". It is widely agreed that democracy is essential to the development of democratic culture. However political structures would not be possible unless there is a correlation between democratic development and political culture. At this point, Somkiat has suggested in his essays that there are several conclusions in correlation to different political criteria. Furthermore, there are other differences, for instance, the time frame and the socio-economic conditions of the representative sample of the population. Moreover, the studies show that many people may say they want democracy, but their actions contradict their statements.

Second, the "Political System Study Group". This is the group which has become

increasingly popular as a result of social pressure for political reform. With political reform in mind, a group of academics has launched substantial research on politics and law. Nevertheless, those researches, which are based on western standards, often conclude that Thai political and legal systems are flawed. The constitution and other political factors, for instance, the electoral and political party systems, the checks and balances, and the citizens' rights and freedoms, have been regarded as below western standards.

Third, the "Power Structure Study Group". This field of Thai study has become more popular recently, Somkiat has surveyed the works of several academics including Sneh Chammarik, Sujit Boonbongkam, Nithi Aewsriwong, Chaianand Samutvanijaya, Somkiat Wanthana, Rangsan Thanapompan, Theerayoot Boonmee, Sombat Chantomwong, Ammar Siamwala, Krit Poemtanjit, Chatthip Nartsupha, Anek Laothammathat and Pitthaya Wongkul. These academics have studied the relation of power in broad scope. Each operates from different perspectives. The majority base their analyses of power structure on historical development. Somkiat values all three fields of Thai studies and encourages Thai academics from each of these fields to incorporate their strong points and learn from their counterparts.

The social process has played a direct role in the development of Thai studies in the area of law and politics. Shortly after the political bloodshed of May 1992, social critic Dr Prawase Wasi, who had earlier written on religion and society, proposed that state power be reduced and public communities be strengthened so as to bring about changes in the social structure necessary for a peaceful society. Following the May 1992 political crisis, Prawase wrote an important essay entitled "Lessons from the May 18, 1992 Political Tragedy and the Political Revival". When political activist Chalad Worachat started his hunger strike, calling for amendments to the Constitution, Prawase published more political writings: "Democratic Development and Political Reform" and "Political Reform: An Answer to Thailand's Political Crisis". He has also taken part in pushing for the constitutional amendments.

Thai studies and the social change have been closely related as suggested by the article entitled "State of Thai Studies on State of the Environment: Property Rights Perspectives", written by Suthawan Sathirathai and colleagues, Pinkaew Luangaramsri,

Sutharin Khunphol and Chusak Wittayapak. The article points out three dimensional relations between the people's political awareness, the growth of community organizations and the depletion of the environmental and natural resources, leading to the realization of the rights to resources.

This particular article consists of three parts. Pinkaew and Sutharin acknowledge that the ideas of resource management and public rights mentioned in Thai academic researches have attempted to base their theoretical work on actual events. Hence there are two main directions in which multi-disciplinary studies have been developed. First, the concept of ecological culture, which is an effort to raise local knowledge to a science; Second, the concept of ecological politics which calls for public attention to the unfair management of natural resources by those in power. There have been proposals to reform the state's power in dealing with national forests by endorsing local communities' rights to manage their forests. Non-government organizations have been campaigning for public awareness of this issue.

Chusak Wittayapak has developed the idea of ecological politics by studying three groups: First, the political economy group, which consists of two trends, the Community Culture as mentioned earlier and the Green Economics led by Preecha Piampongsam. The latter has introduced the ecological and Buddhist aspects into economic studies. Moreover, Preecha is interested in campaigning for public awareness of environmental problems upcountry and expects to see a middle-class political party being formed around a determination to preserve the environment; Second, a group of researchers led by Chirmsak Pinthong studying the way local people have settled in national forest reserves across the country; and third, the Chiang Mai University social scientists who have earlier studied a number of local communities. Later, some of them have jointly conducted research on the problem of encroachment on the national forest reserves. This is the stepping-stone on the path to a research workshop concerning the topic of community forests in Thailand.

Finally, Suthawan Sathirathai proposed the idea of ecological economics with an emphasis in the relation of the economy and economic institutions. Furthermore, she discusses the significance of the public rights in natural resources and the management of natural resources in order to solve environmental problems.

The works of Pinkaew and Chusak show a new methodology in Thai studies by using anthropological tactics in gathering empirical data for their researches. This method is totally different from previous researches which usually rely on oral evidence and folklore. The new way of research is to study from real life as researchers are required to live in respective communities for a period of time. This method is a useful supplement to academic research and generate further disciplinary studies which would be more appealing to both the academic circle and the general public.

The works of Suthawan and her colleagues suggest that Thai studies are closely related to an understanding of the foundation of Thai society. Western influence, particularly capitalism, has had a tremendous impact on the management of the once rich natural resources in Thailand. The environmental and ecological systems have been affected as the natural resources have diminished and been transformed into capital. Even though Thailand's economic growth has rapidly transformed the country into an economic tiger in Asia, such growth is by no means a proportional economic expansion because the income gap has widened further. The change in the ecological system has resulted in the shortage of natural resources in several regions, leading to the question of how the natural resources should be managed and shared among the respective local communities.

Apart from political and social impact, the social change has also affected the spiritual and creative dimensions of Thai lives. Trisilpa Boonkhachorn, in the article "The Development and Trends of Literary Studies in Thailand", has analyzed certain aspects of Thai literature and aesthetics in the last three decades. This article indicates that the development of Thai art had been independent of western influence before the 19th century European colonial period. But this period did bring about the imposition of western artistic values on Thai art.

Trisilpa's article points out the differences between Thai literary studies before and after 1932 (2475 B.E.) – the end of absolute monarchy. Following the 1932 revolution in Thailand, Thai literature was influenced by western methodologies. Their efforts to systematize Thai literature occurred as Thai academics had become interested in literary criticism. Since 1947 (2490 B.E.), a number of Thai novelists and poets wrote under the influence of Marxism. Their writings became very influential after the October

14, 1973 student uprising. The Marxist trend eventually held sway over literary studies in several institutions of higher learning. At the same time, an interest in regional literature and folklore has gained strength to the point of being considered a "science" after 1976 (2519 B.E.). This led to the establishment of various Thai cultural centers in many provinces. Scholars were eager to study regional literature and had to conduct field work.

At this point, we can see that Thai studies in the last three decades have offered two major speculations on the future of Thai society. Many scholars have realized that certain branches of Thai studies would come to a dead end if they do not look beyond the limits of their own regional studies. As a result, several scholars have recently based their researches on interdisciplinary studies. It seems that Thai studies are now in transition. Importantly, they have to be able to develop their interdisciplinary research to the level of a science in order to internationalize Thai studies.

Despite its various approaches, this volume lacks a research on Buddhist perspectives in Thai studies such as the works of the late Buddhadasa Bhikku and Phra Dharmabhidok. Buddhism in Thailand has yet to adjust itself to western influences. Apart from religion, philosophy has yet to be taken seriously in Thai studies. Philosophy is concerned with critical thinking and is independent from religion. How would Thai studies respond to philosophical questions? Likewise, despite the importance of language to thought and culture, linguistic approaches to Thai studies have also remained undeveloped. Studies of the Thai language in different ages and regions inside and outside Thailand would lead us to a better understanding of Thai intellectual history. With critical researches in the field of linguistics, Thai studies would become more solid. With the progress of information technology, our basic communications still rely on language. New terminology in the telecommunication circles and internet users are also based on ordinary languages. A Thai study in linguistics would therefore help enrich our academic pursuits.

In conclusion, all seven articles in this volume represent various perspectives from diverse fields of scholarship. Although independent from one another, various features of the eight articles reinforce each other. Collecting them in the same volume has made them distinctive and interesting. Hopefully this collection will broaden the

scope of Thai studies and stir young scholars to be interested in the field.

**THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF THE PAST:
NEW HISTORIES IN THAILAND SINCE 1973**

BY

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THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF THE PAST: NEW HISTORIES IN THAILAND SINCE 1973^{*}

Thongchai WINICHAKUL

INTRODUCTION

Historical studies in Thailand have been closely related to the formation of the nation since the late nineteenth century, and until recently the pattern of the past in this elitist craft changed but little. It presented a royal/national chronicle, a historiography modern in character but based upon traditional perceptions of the past and traditional materials. It was a collection of stories by and for the national elite celebrating their successful mission of building and protecting the country despite great difficulties, and promising a prosperous future. The plot and meaning of this melodramatic past have become a paradigm of historical discourse,¹ making history an ideological weapon and a source of legitimization of the state.

The popular uprising led by the student movement against the military dictatorship in 1973, a political as well as an intellectual revolution, shook this historical paradigm.² Historical studies became a centre of intellectual interest from all disciplines as well as an arena of ideological struggles, with dramatic affect. The conventional knowledge of the past was challenged and negated. A new past was needed.

^{*} The research for this article was supported by the American Philosophical Society and the Graduate School, University of Wisconsin, Madison, in 1992/93.

¹ See Charnvit Kasetsiri, "Thai Historiography from Ancient Times to the Modern Period," Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia, ed. Anthony Reid and David Marr (Singapore: Heinemann Education Books, 1979), pp. 156-70, for history and nation; and Thongchai Winichakul, Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-body of a Nation (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), chap. 8 for the plot and paradigm of Thai historical discourse.

² For the 1973-1976 politics though not its cultural impact, see David Morell and Chal-anan Samudavanija, Political Conflict in Thailand: Reform, Reaction, Revolution (Cambridge, Mass.: Oelgeschlager, Gunn & Hain, 1981).

In this context, fresh currents of historical studies have emerged. The effects are so significant that we may say the landscape of the Thai past has been reshaped. This article will primarily discuss four major currents: a critical reaction to the conventional historiography, a school of Marxist economic history, a non-linear early history, and a phenomenal rise of local history throughout the country.

The historical scholarship in Thailand is not isolated, and reflects the influence of the Anglo-American historical tradition. Yet, so far the factors behind the new histories are primarily domestic, although there has been some localization of ideas and methods from without. Based upon and operating within the local political economy of Thai scholarship, various kinds of Marxism, social science theories, and Western critical theories, for example, have been adopted and adapted to serve domestic interests.

Although this article is intended to serve as an exposition of Thai scholarship for scholars outside the country, it will not attempt an exhaustive review of Thai historical scholarship, or its bibliography. The article will discuss only those intellectual currents that have been constructing the new identity of the Thai past.

THAI HISTORY AND 1973

The 1973 revolution created an impact throughout Thai intellectual community, especially among historians. In a recent study on the state of historical research in Thailand, it is obvious that there was a major surge of interest after 1973 that lasted until the late 1980s. Research and writing in history proliferated.³ The number of graduate students in history between 1973-1983 increased tenfold over the preceding decade. In fact the number remained high until 1987.⁴ The subjects of interest became significantly

³ Thamsuk Numnonda et al, "Sathanaphap ngan wichai sakha prawattisat nai prathethai rawang ph.s. 2503-2535" (The status of research in history in Thailand 1960-1992), a report to the National Research Council, (Bangkok, 1993), pp. 11-13, 18-19, 29, 31-35, 52, 59-60, 79-82. The study considers only "formal" research works undertaken for degrees, those funded by research institutions, and articles in academic journals. The study only looks at works from 1960-1992, regarded as the period in which history became a profession.

⁴ Thamsuk et al, "[Status of research]," p. 80; Chalong Suntharawani, "Sathanaphap kansuksa prawattisat: raingan kansamruat buanglon" [The state of historical studies: a preliminary report], paper presented at the conference "Thai Studies in the Next Decade" (in Thai), (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 1990), pp. 4-6.

diversified.⁵ Chamvit Kasetsiri has had to modify his Prawattisat historiography, his term for the modern histories of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as opposed to Tamnan (folk tales) and Phongsawadan (dynastic chronicles). In an article entitled "Thai Historiography from Ancient Times" published in 1979 Chamvit divided Prawattisat historiography into Damrong and Luang Wichit schools, representing a modern history based on documents and an intensely nationalist history respectively. Chamvit has since added four additional groups which developed after 1973: the nationalist revival, the Marxist, the Historicist, and the Asiatic society schools.⁶

The nation-wide mass uprising was unprecedented in Thai politics. This was a successful movement against a military regime which had been in power for sixteen years. Suddenly, it seemed at the time, the old world crumbled beneath people's feet. The change was so abrupt. The sense of excitement and joy was overwhelming. But the sense of uncertainty was also prevalent. A new age was coming, yet it was uncharted. The swift changes needed to be comprehended and controlled. There was a need to understand what had gone wrong, and why. And people did not wish to let the future be charted by the establishment. The future needed some sensible directions. The revolution seemed political, but in fact a cultural and intellectual revolution was underway and lasted longer.

It is not surprising that under these circumstances history was called into service. To know is to restore and assure some sense of certainty. But the conventional history was the spirit and soul of the *ancien regime*, and could not but be implicated in its now discredited agenda. A new history that served people was urgently needed for

⁵ .Chalong, "[State of historical studies]", pp. 7-11. Chalong only looks at students' theses between 1970-1989 as indicators. Political history remains most popular but declines. Intellectual and social history, as he defines them, developed substantially from negligible levels before 1974. Interest in economic history sharply increased between 1975 and 1984, and remains strong. The modern Bangkok period since Chulalongkorn remains most popular, but studies of every other period increase.

⁶ Chamvit Kasetsiri, "Sakun prawattisat" [Schools of Thai historical studies], *Sinlapa wathanatham*, 6.1 (Nov. 1984): 36-44. The first two are Damrong and Luang Wichit schools, which he proposed in his "Thai Historiography," pp. 164-67. They remain the most influential. Since 1973 new challenges have come from, as he puts in English, the nationalist revival, the Marxist, the Historicist, and the Asiatic society schools.

the new epoch. The 1973 revolution contributed to the emergence of new histories in various ways. First, it put the entire establishment, including historical knowledge, on trial, and raised the curtain for alternatives, some of which had begun before 1973 but whose potential was only realized in the post-1973 context. Second, the 1973 revolution shook the structure of relations of power in Thai society. The "masses", be they the middle class, students, workers or organized peasants, emerged as powerful political actors; the military was relatively weakened and the monarchy strengthened. The new histories reflected the new power relations of historical agencies. Thirdly, the 1973 revolution itself was a result of the dramatic socio-economic changes in Thailand since the late 1950s. The new histories emerged within this new Thai state and society, and had to confront it.

The urgent demand for a new history provided an opportunity for the revival of the Thai Marxist literature of the 1950s.⁷ It became the locus where the radicalism of young Thais and the attempt of the Thai communist party to reassert its influence in the urban areas converged. The historic event that was identified was unarguably the publication of Jit Phoumisak's Chomna sakdina thai [The Real Face of Thai Feudalism Today].⁸ It offered a new past, an oppressive and exploitative one, entirely opposite from the royal/national one. Though the text is not finished, reading it intertextually with the Marxist literature popular at the time provided an inspiration for the change of history, in all senses of the word. The impact was at least twofold: first, it dealt a serious blow to the authority and credibility of the conventional national history; and second, it created a demand for more Marxist history.

THE PAST BEYOND THE DAMRONG SCHOOL

⁷ The best account of the Thai Marxist literature in the 1950s is Kasian Tejapira, "Commodifying Marxism: the Formation of Modern Thai Radical Culture, 1927-1958" Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1992.

⁸ See Craig Reynolds, Thai Radical Discourse: The Real Face of Thai Feudalism Today (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1987), chap. 2 for the translation of Jit's book. Reynolds' book is a study of the adoption of Marxism by Thais and of the way Marxist thought became influential in Thai political and historical discourse.

The increasing interest in history included a reconsideration of the fundamentals of history: its crafts, methods, meanings, values, and varieties.⁹ The publication of two collections of articles in 1975-76, one on the values and meanings of history and the other on various historical schools and methodologies -- both Western and Thai -- indicated that discourse about the field was growing, and implied a critical evaluation of the old past and the old craft, and a call within the profession for new kinds of history.¹⁰

Attacks on the historical establishment began. The harsh criticism against Luang Wichitwathakan and his nationalist history was rather welcome.¹¹ Perhaps Wichit, the regime he served (the pro-fascist Phibun), and the military had never been pleasing to the intellectuals, even though they may be the products of Wichit's culture more than they realize. The more majestic target which drew fire was the so-called "Damrong school", the historiography of Prince Damrong Rajanubhap, "the Father of Thai History."¹² It started with an article in 1974, but the severest criticism was the keynote lecture by Nithi Aewsriwongse at the annual conference of the Historical Society in early 1979, just over two years after the period of radical politics ended with the massacre of students in

⁹ The annual meeting of the Historical Society has been a forum for this. See, for example, Historical Society, *Sathana khong wicha prawattisat nai patchuban* [The state of historical studies today] (Bangkok: Thammasat University Press, 1980) from the meeting in 1978. In subsequent years, the themes were the varieties of history, the state of economic history, of Southeast Asian history in Thai, of local history, and history and other sciences, for instance.

¹⁰ Chamvit Kasetsiri and Suchat Sawatsri eds. *Pratya prawattisat* [Philosophy of history] (Bangkok: the Social Science Association of Thailand, 1975); and by the same editors, *Prawattisat lae nak prawattisat thai* [History and Thai historians] (Bangkok: Social Science Association of Thailand, 1976).

¹¹ Kobkua Suwannathat-phian, "Kankhian prawattisat baep chatniyom: phicharana luang wichitwathakan" [The nationalist historiography: considering Luang Wichitwathakan], *Warasan Thammasat* 6,1 (Jun-Sep 1976): 149-180; and Aicharephon Kamutphitsamai, "Naao kankhian prawattisat khong luang wichit wathakan" [Luang Wichitwathakan's approach of history] in [History and Thai Historians], ed. Chamvit and Suchat, pp. 262-90. About this nationalist ideologue see Scott Barne, *Luang Wichit Wathakan and the Creation of Thai Identity* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993).

¹² For the works of Damrong in English see Kennon Breazeale, "A Transition in Historical Writing: the Works of Prince Damrong Rajanubhap," *Journal of the Siam Society* 59, pt.2 (Jul. 1971): 25-49.

October 1976, and a few months after the extreme right wing royalist government was toppled by the military.¹³

The Damrong school, Nithi pointed out, originated among the elite who were responsible for the creation of the modern Thai state when Siam was under the colonial threat. It combined the legacy of the royal chronicle with history as written in the West during the nineteenth century, creating a royal/national history to serve the modern Thai state under the absolute monarchy. This history had served its purpose, Nithi argued. The time had come to end it.

To write a history to serve the nation-state and the monarchy, which are new institutions and constantly change, would make the historical analysis distorted and superficial....The extreme patriots should realize that the Thai nation-state is now strong enough and needs no 'manufacture' of history to support it.

At one time, historical knowledge was in the curriculum to nurture a uniform past of the Thai people. Now we no longer see any virtue or necessity for history to serve 'the nation' any more. Thai history as seen from the national [perspective]...distorted the truth.¹⁴

The distortions Nithi specified were the linear "centrist" history of the Thai capitals, the absence of local history, and the fact that Thai history is nothing but a political chronicle of the royal/national great men (and a few women). Even the state, the organized institution and mechanism, has no development in the Damrong school's accounts. The purpose of serving the modern state had become constraints and limitations of the old history. Nithi called for a more serious investigation of evidence, more critical methods

¹³ Kobkua Suwannathat-phian, "Kankhian prawattisat khong sakun damrong rachanuphap" [The historiography of the Damrong Rajanubhap school], *Aksonsatphichan* 2,6 (Nov.1974), reprinted in Chamvit and Suchat eds. [*History and Thai historians*]. For Nithi's lecture, see "Kansuksa prawattisat thai: a-dit lae a-nakhot" [Thai historical studies: past and future], *Ruam botkhwam prawattisat* [Collected articles in history], no. 1 (Bangkok: the Historical Society, 1980): 1-22.

¹⁴ Nithi, *ibid.*, pp. 12 and 17.

and for a "total history," the extension of historical inquiries to a variety of subjects, areas and times.

The reactions were subtle rather than overt, such as simply ignoring Nithi's views.¹⁵ Nithi marched on. He published a textbook on the critical methods of history. But his major contribution was a series of research projects to exemplify how a critical and better history should be done and implicitly point to the failures of conventional history. Shortly before the Historical Society lecture Nithi had delivered a severe blow to the royal/national history in his meticulous analysis of a history of Bangkok in the royal chronicles of Ayudhya. Strange as this sounded -- since Bangkok (founded 1782) succeeded Ayudhya (1350-1767), not vice versa -- Nithi demonstrated convincingly how the royal chronicles of Ayudhya, which had been the authoritative treasure for historians since Damrong, had been thoroughly purified or cleaned (*chamra*) by the Bangkok regime to legitimize the new (and present) dynasty.¹⁶ The chronicles remain valuable primary sources, but perhaps of early Bangkok more than of Ayudhya. Nithi's history can be read in many ways: as a study of late eighteenth century Ayudhya and early Bangkok history, of the intellectual climate after the fall of Ayudhya in 1767, of the world view of the new elite -- many of whom were petty traders and provincial authorities under Ayudhya, or of the Machiavellian politics of manufactured history used to justify the new dynasty. Each reading generated further arguments. But what was really at stake was the credibility of the old school. A genuine reaction from them focused on whether the royal chronicles were really unreliable.¹⁷ Perhaps, that hit the bulls eye.

¹⁵ The overt one is from Sulak Sivaraksa, a Damrong loyalist but not less critical of Thai history. He defended Damrong at the expense of many other historians of later generations who, he accused, have tarnished the Prince's reputation. There was no "Damrong school," he contended. Those spoilers were in fact a "Wichitwathakan school". See Sulak Sivaraksa, "Somdet kromphraya damrong kap sakun damrong rachanuphap" [Prince Damrong and the Damrong School], in [Collected Articles in History] no. 1 (1980): 23- 52.

¹⁶ Nithi Aeusivongse, Prawattisat rattanakosin nai phraratcha phongsawadan Ayutthaya [A history of Bangkok in the royal chronicles of Ayudhya] (Bangkok: Bannakit, 1980). It was first presented in 1978.

¹⁷ See Wimol Phongphiphat, "Phraratchaphongsawadan - chua dai rue mai?" [Are the royal chronicles reliable?], Warasan Aksornsat (Chulalongkorn University) 14, 2 (Jul.1982): 16-33.

From 1979 through 1982 Nithi produced a series of works about the early Bangkok period (late eighteenth to the first half of the nineteenth century). He took literary works as evidence of a changing world view or mentality brought about by the changing socio-economic conditions of early Bangkok. The series culminated in the now-classic work, Watthanatham kradumphi kap wannakam samai ton rattanakosin [The bourgeois culture and literature in the early Bangkok period] first presented in 1982.¹⁸ Nithi's Bangkok was anything but the continuation of the grandeur of Ayudhya. It was a city of the pre-capitalist bourgeoisie from the bottom, the Chinese, to the top, the Chakri dynasty, where the mentality was more rational, realist, and humanist than in the old capital.¹⁹ Could this combination of social, economic and literary history be achieved within the old paradigm of royal/national history? The political implications of the study aside, Watthanatham kradumphi was revisionist simply from the point of view of historical methodology.

Nithi's revisionism also extended into the arena which was the preserve of conventional history, that is, political history. His decision to study two "Great Kings" of Thai history, Narai (1656-1688) and Taksin (1767-1782), was, I believe, not accidental. In his narrative, the ruler Thais today call "King Narai the Great" is depicted as just a political animal like everybody else. His patriotism, which features prominently in conventional history, is here debunked. The French presence at his court was not to balance the influence of the Dutch, but rather to counter increasing pressure on the king from Thai nobles. The great diplomat king is shown to be a diplomat of his own interest. In the same light, the 1688 "revolution" was neither a patriotic movement against the

¹⁸ The works in this series, on Sunthon Phu (a poet), Lady Nopphamat (a fictional character), the Phetchaburi version of the Vessantara Jataka, and the classic "bourgeois culture" are collected in the volume Pakkai lae bairua [Quill and Sail], (Bangkok: Amarin Printing, 1984).

¹⁹ The works in this series, especially the "bourgeois culture," have never received adequate criticism. The issues and evidence Nithi brought into his discussion are complex. Yet his basic concepts of the relationship between the society's economic base, the social conditions of historical actors, their views, and the manifestations of all of them in literary works are problematic. Nithi is not a true follower of any particular theory. His concept is that of not an orthodox Marxist. Some of his point sound Weberian. Many are basic economic historical concepts. The characteristics of the bourgeois mentality, that it was "more rational, realist, and humanist," is also problematic, though this criticism is not intended to lessen Nithi's contribution as explained so far.

French nor a betrayal of a great king. It was merely another court struggle for power.²⁰ The story of King Taksin is a controversial subject because of Taksin's unusual biography and his mysterious fall, which has implications for the legitimacy of the founder of the present dynasty. Nithi engaged these issues, yet avoided all the controversies. His work is an analysis of political systems and political forces at the end of the Ayudhya period and during the rise and fall of Taksin. This approach does not feed the controversy; nor does it satisfy either side. Nevertheless, the popular interest in the issue allowed Nithi to use it to exemplify how political history can be written, and he did the job superbly. His critical historical methods in the handling of highly complex evidence and his cogent arguments proceeded as if there was no theory behind the construction of the narrative.²¹ The biography of Taksin is now put in a proper socio-political context. The work is a masterpiece. Ironically, it generated little argument; the authority of the author and the work made it too definitive.

THE PAST ACCORDING TO THE ACADEMIC LEFT

While Nithi mounted a one man challenge to conventional historiography, typical of historians, a more systematic critique came from Thai economists. The Marxist history of the 1950s had inspired a group of scholars to continue work on a leftist economic history to challenge the royal/national political one. The works of this "Political Economy" group have already been discussed elsewhere.²² I will discuss only their contribution to the shaping of a new past.

²⁰ Nithi Aeusrivongse, Kanmuang thai samai j. ira narai [Thai politics in the reign of King Narai] (Bangkok: Thai Khadi Research Institute, 1980).

²¹ Nithi Aeusrivongse, Kanmuang thai samai phrachao krung thonburi (Bangkok: Sinlapa watthanatham Publishing, 1986).

²² In English see Craig Reynolds and Lysa Hong, "Marxism in Thai Historical Studies," Journal of Asian Studies 43, 1 (Nov.1983): 77-104; and Lysa Hong, "Warasan Setthasat Kanmuang: Critical Scholarship in Post-1976 Thailand," in Thai Constructions of Knowledge ed. Andrew Turton and Manas Chitakasem (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1991), pp. 99-118. In Thai see Napapom Atiwanitchayaphong, Phatthanakan khwamkhit setthasat kanmuang thai tangtae 2475-pachuban [The development of the Thai political economy ideas from 1932 to the present] (Bangkok: the Political Economy Group, 1988).

The key puzzle tackled by these scholars was why Thailand remained underdeveloped. This question led to the study of why traditional society, especially the *sakdina* or Thai feudal system had hindered development.²³ Conventional history was not helpful for this inquiry. At the heart of the effort was an analysis of Thai social formations. Was Thailand a semi-colonial/ semi-feudal society, or a dependent capitalism, or a semi-feudal/semi-capitalist society, or an Oriental society?²⁴ The issue was not a trivial conflict over terminology. It was a serious business, since the words were believed to represent the reality of Thai social formations, hence, class relations, the nature of the Thai state, and the strategies and tactics of social change, or of revolution. The failure to grasp the reality, in terms of identifying the correct analytical category that fit Thailand, was not just academic.

The Political Economy group at the time was comprised of scholars whose diverse interests spanned at least three or four related areas.²⁵ Works by Chatthip Natsupha and his students made an instant impact in 1979-1980 at a few crucial conferences on economic history. They proposed that the *sakdina* social formation of traditional Thai society changed little even after 1855 when Siam agreed to open up its market, because the monopoly of major commodities by the state and its control over key economic factors had precluded the possibility for the independent bourgeoisie. The local bourgeoisie, mostly the Chinese, either served as the functionaries of the state or as part of Western capitalism. In the view of the "Chatthip school" this anomaly of class relations was the key to the underdevelopment of Thai capitalism.²⁶

²³ Jit Phoumisak, Chatthip Natsupha, and Chai-anan Samudavanija have this question and presupposition in common. See Jit Phoumisak, [Thai feudalism]; Chatthip Natsupha, Watthanatham thai kap khabuankan plianplaeng sangkhom [Thai culture and the movements for social change], (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University press, 1991), p.33; and Chai-anan's Sakdina kap phatthanakan sangkhom thai [Thai feudalism and the development of Thai society], (Bangkok: Namakson kanphim, 1976), introduction.

²⁴ See the summary of the debate in Reynolds and Hong, "Marxism."

²⁵ Napaporn Atiwanchayaphong, [Thai political economy ideas], pp.52-54.

²⁶ Chatthip Natsupha and Suthy Prasartset (eds.), The Political Economy of Siam, 1851-1910 and The Political Economy of Siam, 1910-1932 (both Bangkok: the Social Science Association of Thailand, 1981). The best commentary

In contrast to the royal/national political history, the Chatthip school plunged into the field of history by examining new subjects, and used methods that went beyond Jit's Thai Feudalism. Moreover, while Jit's work was polemical and overtly political, the Chatthip school was systematic and seriously academic, though by no means apolitical. Suddenly the Thai past was a story of productions, economic classes, tax-farmers, bourgeoisie, capitalists, land tenure systems, and so on. The heroic monarchical state turned out to be monopolistic, rent-seeking, parasitic, and an obstacle to development. The royal chronicles gave way to otherwise neglected archival materials about business, taxes, shipments and commodities. The dynastic and royal periodization of the past was not just modified but abandoned in favour of a periodization based on modes of production and forms of socio-economic system. The repetitive episodes of glorious kings were dumped together indifferently as the stagnant pre-1855 feudal or Asiatic society. Most importantly, the past and the Thai state were no longer glorious, nothing to eulogize. They were exploitative, obstructive, and the origin of social ills in the present.

Unlike Nithi, the Chatthip school took the heat almost right away. Interestingly, the point of contention was methodology rather than historical subversion. Should the past and historical research be conceived by "theory" or revealed by evidence and "empirical reality"? To be fair, nobody stood for the extremes and the questions were academically legitimate. But the implication of the criticism was also obvious. The Chatthip school, in my view, was guilty of relying much too heavily on Marxist schemes and the Asiatic mode of production theory. But that may be a strength, not weakness. As Reynolds has pointed out,

a new generation of historians uses Marxist socio-analysis as a lever to pry the chronicles and archives away from royalist and nationalist myth-making concerns....Society is increasingly seen as an entity, a system....[Thai historians have] attacked the 'great man' theory of

on Chatthip in Thai is Somsak Jeamtheerasakul, "Sangkhomithai chak sakdina su thunniyom" [Thai society: from feudalism to capitalism], *Warasan Thammasat* 11.2 (Jun 1982) 128-64.

history...in favor of more complex historical causation rooted in the country's political economy.²⁷

Western theories adapted to the Thai milieu enabled these scholars to chart a new past, and to change the language of Thai historical discourse.²⁸ In response to criticism of his use of theory, Chatthip reaffirmed the value of this approach, and encouraged historians to use more theory.²⁹

The challenge to Chatthip's Asiatic past came from an alternative Marxist analysis and from Nithi, not from conventional history. The former successfully denied the semi-feudal/semicolonial concept which was also implied by Chatthip and others.³⁰ Nithi's "bourgeois culture" was also a debate with Chatthip. In a nutshell, the argument was that Bangkok and the central plain were highly dynamic before 1855. The pre-capitalist bourgeoisie was already in place and developed, and 1855 only altered the possible course of the Thai bourgeoisie. These two challenges cast doubts on Chatthip's Asiatic society, but the kind of history he did was there to stay.

Another issue raised by the academic left was the nature of the Thai state. As Nithi remarked in connection with the Damrong school, conventional history saw no evolution of the state until the late nineteenth century. However, according to the Marxist discourse the Thai state had by this time already gone through many stages based on changing modes of production.³¹ Sometimes, too, the political character of the state determined the social formation.³² Given the disagreement over social formations since

²⁷ Reynolds and Hong, "Marxism" p.96.

²⁸ Ibid., p.91.

²⁹ Chatthip Natsupha, "Muban kap rat nai krabuankan phatthana" [Villages and the state in the development process], *Setthasat parithat* 8,1 (Sep. 1986): 2, 6, 8.

³⁰ Songchai Na Yala (pseu.) "Panha kansuksa withikanphalit khong thai nuangmachak thritsadi kung muangkhun kung sakdina" [Problems in the study of Thailand's modes of production concerning the semi-feudal semi-colonial theory], *Warasan Setthasat Kanmuang* 1, 2 (Mar.-Apr. 1981).

³¹ San Rangserit, *Wattananakan haeng sangkhom sayam* [The evolution of Thai society] (Bangkok, 1975).

³² Songchai Na Yala (pseud.), "[Problems]."

1855, the question remained open concerning the nature of the Thai state during this period. While the Marxists concerned themselves with the terminology which could best capture reality, studies on the Thai state grew both inside and outside the Marxist discourse. Since then the interest in this issue has not died. Like the Chatthip school, scholars pursuing this issue brought into Thai historical discourse ideas from standard Western works, such as those by Ernest Laclau, Althusser, Poulantzas, Perry Anderson, and the Frankfurt school. "*Somburanayasitthiraj*", for example, was the early twentieth century term meaning absolute monarchy. But what does the term mean? The conventional historiography is ahistorical in denoting the entire traditional polity before 1932 as an absolute monarchy. Via Perry Anderson's *Absolutist State*, one historian was able to make it more specific to mean the period in which the Thai *ancien regime* was able to consolidate its control over territory and population without contest from the nobility, that is, from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries only.³³ In the past twenty years, the history of the Thai kingdoms at the three capitals had gradually given way to the class-related states, the absolutist state, the Asiatic state, and most recently the three dimensional state.³⁴

The debate over the state and social formations intensified in reverse proportion to the strength of the radical movements. Perhaps debate partly contributed to the ideological crisis since the more the debate grew, and the more complex issues became, the less certainty the radicals could feel about their ideas and strategy. The debate ended without any conclusion. Nobody asked for one. What we are witnessing today makes the debate a decade ago look even more absurd. It is patent that with the current economic growth, Thailand is a capitalist social formation. Does this mean Thai capitalism was not hindered by the feudal state and dependent bourgeoisie and the course was not altered by 1855? When were all the "semi" characteristics replaced by

³³ Somkiat Wanthana, "*Rat somburanayasit nai sayam*," monograph (Bangkok: Social Science Association of Thailand, 1982).

³⁴ Che-anan Samudavanija, *Rat kap sangkhom... tra laksane rat thai nai phahusangkhom sayam* [The state and society: the three dimensional Thai state in the pluralistic Samese society]. (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 1990).

true capitalism? How? Indeed, the kind of history the academic left have done is needed more, even though it has become academic and without political mission.

ALTERING THE PRE-HISTORICAL LANDSCAPE

The landscape of the Thai past has literally been changed the most by the work of Srisak Vallibhotama. His studies appeared steadily beginning in 1966, and gradually became influential. His methods and ideas sound unprovocative, but in fact he has been engaged in a confrontation with conventional history for years. His contribution is no less than the alteration of the entire landscape of Siam's past before it became "Thai" in conventional understanding.

In the royal/national discourse, the "Thai" past began at Sukhothai in the thirteenth century, followed by the Ayudhya, Thonburi and Bangkok kingdoms. Before Sukhothai, there were Thai in the kingdom of Nanchao, south of China, and several other kingdoms in the region had yet to realize their sovereignty. In fact conventional history used to believe that the Thai race was in the process of huge migration from southern China, and the pre-Sukhothai past accordingly fell into the domain of pre-history for Thai, or pre-Thai history. Migration was the trope. The post-Sukhothai periods were in the domain of successive Thai kingdoms. Together, the Thai past was a linear movement of a great race from the time and place of Others to the time and place of self-realization as a sovereign race.

Since 1966, Srisak has persistently argued for a history of Sukhothai before the Sukhothai kingdom, of Ayudhya before the Ayudhya kingdom, that is to say, the past of the areas which now make up the geo-body of Thailand before they became part of "proper" Thai history. Denouncing the racial history, Srisak considers people and culture in the land of Siam as much or as little Thai as the Thai today.³⁵ They were "Siamese," the non-racial term he prefers, regardless of their race. He repeatedly emphasized that his is a history of "*Sayamprathet*" [the Siamese country], as opposed to a "Thai" history, a

³⁵ Srisak Vallibhotama, *Kho khatyaeng kieokap prawattisat thai* [Arguments about Thai history] (Bangkok, Muangboran Publishing, 1981) which is a collection of his major articles since 1966.

racially connoted past.³⁶ He opposes attempts to find the origin of Thai people today in the Tai race, which is a popular subject even up to now. Like every other race, and perhaps even more than most, he argues, the Thai are people of mixed race. To speak of the Tai race is to address a mistaken concept. To try to solve the question of its origin is a waste of time.³⁷ The peoples and cultures in the present domain of Thailand were the true ancestors of the Thai.

Instead of migration and self-realization, settlement and development are the tropes of the past in Srisak's view. All over the geo-body of Thailand today there were enormous number of early settlements and hundreds of ancient towns before the thirteenth century,³⁸ and *Isan*, or northeastern Thailand today, an area regarded by most historians as having no history until the last few hundred years, was perhaps the most important site of civilization in the region.³⁹ Moreover, according to Srisak, Sukhothai, before becoming a Thai kingdom, was founded by people from Vientiane-Sakonnakhon area of Isan before Vientiane became Lan Xang or Laos.⁴⁰

The Siamese past in this view, therefore, was neither the migration of a race from the space and time of Others, nor a linear political succession from Sukhothai to Bangkok. It was an evolutionary process of interaction among human societies, and between human and their environments, from early settlements in pre-historic time, to small communities, cities, political units, and kingdoms, from hunting and gathering to

³⁶ The title of his latest book which is a comprehensive narrative of history in his view, is *Sayamprathet*. The English title as he provides is *Siam: Thailand's Historical Background From Pre-historic Times to Ayudhya* (Bangkok: Matichon Publications, 1991).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.4.

³⁸ See Srisak Vallibhotama, *Borankhadi thai nai thotsawat thi phanma* [Thai archaeology in the past decade] (Bangkok: Muangboran Publications, 1982), and *Muang boran nai e-nachak sukhothai* [Ancient cities in the kingdom of Sukhothai] (Bangkok: Thai Khadi Research Institute, Thammasat University, 1989).

³⁹ See Srisak Vallibhotama, *Aeng arayatham isan* (A Northeastern Site of Civilization: New Archaeological evidence to Change the Face of Thai History), (Bangkok: Matichon Publications, 1990). The English title is from the book.

⁴⁰ Srisak Vallibhotama, "Chao sayam thi wiangchan lae isannua pen phusang khwaen sukhothai" [The Siamese at Vientiane and upper Isan were the founders of Sukhothai], *Sinlapa watthanatham* 13, 1 (Nov.1991): 220-228.

agriculture and trade, from simple kinship to complex social relations, and this process occurred in hundreds of places simultaneously. The Thai past was pluralistic and diversified from the beginning of history. If we were to imagine the conventional Thai past in a map form, it would be a set of political maps of the Thai geo-body that I have illustrated elsewhere.⁴¹ To imagine the Siamese past in Srisak's view, it would be set of historical-topographical maps showing the coasts, mountain ranges, valleys, plateaus, original and cleared forests, and the walls or moats, rivers, and trading routes. It would be like the aerial photos Srisak always shows to begin his arguments.

As an archaeological anthropologist, Srisak uses methods that are "down to earth." His narratives always begin with geography, physical environment, and the conditions for human settlement. Srisak also was among the first to fight for recognition of *Tamnan*, a traditional genre of legends or myths, as historical evidence. After years of hard press, it appears his efforts have borne fruit. The growing influence of his ideas came about gradually without a provocative moment nor the formation of a distinctive "school."⁴²

In fact Srisak has had excellent institutional outlets for his ideas over the long period. He has more infrastructure for dissemination than anybody else. First, he was the founder and editor of one of the two popular magazines in the field of historical studies, Muang boran (founded in 1974). And it is no secret that his view is strongly present in the other, more popular one, Sinlapa watthanatham (founded 1979). Among the articles that have appeared in Muang boran are his study of *Isan*, the writings of his father -- a pioneer and strong proponent of the values of *tamnan*, and innumerable reports of excavations and findings about ancient cities and historical sites throughout the geo-body of Thailand. Among the issues that made Sinlapa watthanatham famous were the provocative assertion that "Sukhothai was

⁴¹ Thongchai Winichakul, Siam Mapped, pp. 150-56.

⁴² Many times Srisak credited Jit Phoumisak for the breakthrough from the linear history of the Thai capitals. I believe Srisak realized that Jit attracted greater public interest than his own credentials.

not the first Thai capital",⁴³ and the story of Ayudhya before it became a capital. The editor of *Sinlapa watthanatham*, Sujit Wongdes, has worked closely with Srisak since the days when they founded an "Archaeological Travel" club in college, and he is a loyal promoter of Srisak's ideas. Second, the scholars whose intellectual foundation owed very much to Srisak include Dhida Saraya, a well known historian herself whose works are no less influential than Srisak's own. Dhida is a major force behind the rise of the interest in local history, to be discussed below, but the best of her works concern the ancient states or cities in the early history of Southeast Asia.⁴⁴ Third, Srisak was one of the first to use travels and tours as a way of learning, before tourism based on historical sites became a successful business. Despite his repeated warning and criticism of the danger that business might cause to the sites and of the government's policy regarding it, Srisak never denies the value of tourism and is perhaps one of the most famous and knowledgeable scholars in the business. If many of his ideas seem unprovocative and not so interesting now, that may be a sign that his views are becoming a new conventional wisdom.

THE CONTESTED DOMAIN OF LOCAL HISTORY

Increased attention to local history is a logical consequence of Srisak's view of history, a way to construct a polycentric or non-centric, and non-linear but contemporaneous history of Siam. The surge of interest in local history was the most important phenomenon of the historical scholarship in Thailand during the 1980s. According to my incomplete survey, from 1978 to 1991 there were at least forty-six conferences on local history in thirty-two or more of the country's seventy-two provinces.

⁴⁵ Scholars from Bangkok always participated, and played prominent roles. Srisak, for

⁴³ Sujit Wongdes, *Sukhothai maichai raichathan: haengraek khong thai* [Sukhothai was not the first Thai capital]. (Bangkok: Sinlapa watthanatham Publications, 1983).

⁴⁴ Dhida Saraya, *Rai boran* [Ancient states]. (Bangkok: Muang boran, 1994), and *Si lawarawadi: prawattisat yuk lon khong sayamprathet* [Dvaravati: the early history of Siam]. (Bangkok: Muang boran, 1979).

⁴⁵ The conferences were independently organized, though a local educational institution had to be involved. The figure here is from a survey involving all teacher's colleges in the country, and from the available conference materials. The

example, spoke at more than twenty conferences, followed by Prasert Na Nagara, Sujit Wongdes, Dhida Saraya, and Nithi. But Srisak was not the sole reason behind the rise of local history. No one individual had such a great influence. As we shall see, the main current in local history fell far short of what Srisak might expect. The rise of local history was a conjuncture of several factors, and its effect went beyond historical scholarship.

The genealogy of local history in Thailand is complex. Chiangmai had a seminar on its own history as early as 1966 in connection with the foundation of a university there. A course on Chiangmai's history has been in the curriculum since then. The events of 1973, nevertheless, created repercussions that led to a rise in local history. First of all, local intellectuals throughout the country have always shown interest in local and regional identities. They continuously produce transliterations and writings on local literature. The country-wide uprising not only aroused political consciousness but also boosted the consciousness of local identities.⁴⁶ Secondly, Jit Phoumisak's alternative history inspired many scholars writing local history to examine a history of the common people, of the masses, and from below.⁴⁷

Finally, the impetus for institutionalized local history came, surprisingly, from the ministry of education as parts of education reform after 1973. The impact of the 1973 uprising hit education harder than many other areas. Not only were there calls to tear down the entire school curriculum, to "burn" the classical literature which allegedly stultified the masses, and to increase student participation, but scholars also pressed hard for a reform of the educational system. One of the key issues was decentralization of the curriculum, and encouragement of the idea that local people should know more about themselves and their history. Although the 1976 massacre and the right wing regime interrupted the reform, and the idea was never put into effect, local studies

figure does not include a few conferences before 1978, or a number of seminars in Bangkok mostly about the methodology and values of local history, or an overview of it.

⁴⁶ Interviews with Att Nanthachak, Pranut Sapphayasan, and Thirachai Bunmatham at Srinakharinwirot University (Mahasarakham), 27-28 July 1992; and interview with Anan Kanchanaphan, Chiangmai University, 16 July 1992.

⁴⁷ Dhida Saraya, *Tamnan and Tamnan History: A Study of Local History* (Bangkok: The Office of the National Culture Commission, 1982), pp. 94-97.

nevertheless became part of the national educational plan in 1978. New courses and textbooks were created at various school levels, and the ministry of education provided funds for the establishment of provincial cultural centres at the local teacher's colleges or provincial high schools.⁴⁸

Local history was both a bottom-up and top-down initiative, a local and national effort, and a radical alternative as well as a state-sponsored project. Each agenda had its own politics and interests, ideas and methods, and anticipated particular results. A decade later, the current was still high, and received added impetus from tourism, domestic and foreign funding for the nostalgia industry, and attempts by several provincial governors under the Interior Ministry to promote "their" provinces. Local history is a heavily contested domain, where Srisak, Dhida, local intellectuals, the Thai state, and others tried to establish their influence, though no one has succeeded in dominating the field.

An effort to conceptualize and define local history came from Dhida Saraya. She gave political values to local history by tracing the struggles of subordinates to create their own history from the late nineteenth century to Jit Phoumisak in the 1950s. Local history continued this struggle, she argued, since it was an effort to create a history of the masses [*muanchon*]. "Local history is a history of local society in which the masses are actors...a social history which emphasizes the masses."⁴⁹ In her words, the masses equal "countryside-local [*chonabol-thongthin*]."⁵⁰

For Dhida, local history challenges the mainstream history, the "centralist historical ideology," which, in her view, appears to epitomize the problems of historical studies: too much political history, a emphasis on great men, a non-dynamic past, a history without context or perspective or process which was narrow in methods and selection of evidence; a false periodization by capitals or regnal years; a history of king,

⁴⁸ Chalong Suntharawanit, "Sathana khong kansuksa prawattisat thongthin" [State of studies in local history], *Warasat Setthasat Kanmuang*, 5, 3-4 (Apr.-Sep. 1986), p. 150. Interviews with Renu Wichasilp and Arunrat Wichiankhleo, the Ratchaphat College (former Chiangmai Teacher's College), 14 & 17 July 1992.

⁴⁹ Dhida Saraya, *Prawattisat thongthin* [Local history], (Bangkok: Muang boran Publications, 1986), p.25.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

state and nation without the common people and their culture.⁵¹ In contrast, her local history is a history from below, using folk materials, focussing on the masses, their thoughts and culture; a history of weeds," of unknown people, rank and file foot soldiers; a "living" history since it is interested in historical perceptions, and the place of history in present-day culture, including the evolution of myths; a history "from the inside," as it is perceived by local people regardless of its truthfulness.⁵² Moreover, myths or *Tamnan* are legitimate historical evidence, not only because they give us local perceptions of the past, but in fact they are "core myths" which we could use to ascertain the true past about the settlements.⁵³ And so on.

Apparently Dhida lined up all the qualities of history that she thought desirable and conferred them upon "local" history. The approach created confusion because it conflated the geographic or spatial (countryside, inside, centre, local) with the social or hierarchical (masses, below, bottom, people). The terms she selected as her target, "centre", "centrist", "centralist" are also both geographic and hierarchical. As a result, "local" is too heavily-loaded a term.

But Dhida's is merely a case in which the definition was overdone. For others, the meaning of "local history" is taken as understood, and encompassing various perspectives, and is accordingly left ambiguous. Ironically, its strength lies in the resulting ambiguity and confusion, in its encompassing claim to a better, more legitimate past in every way. Thus people, including Dhida herself, can play with it, appropriate it in many possible ways, and create different kinds of local history. The works Dhida calls "local history" include, for instance, a history of the settlement at Chiangmai and the evolution of its state.⁵⁴ It is a history of the former centre of the Lanna kingdom which is

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 7, 12-14. For an elaboration in English of this historical ideology and the necessity of "local history" see Dhida Saraya, *Tamnan*, chaps. 2-3.

⁵² Dhida Saraya, [Local history], pp. 4-5, 29-30, 43-44, 79-82; and Wilailak Mekharat, "Interview: Dr. Dhida Saraya," *Warasan Aksonsat* (Chulalongkorn University), 17, 1 (Jan. 1985): 3-8.

⁵³ Dhida Saraya, *Tamnan*, chap. 4, esp. p.114. She demonstrates in this small book a history of the settlement of Chiangmai as constructed from *Tamnan*.

⁵⁴ See Dhida Saraya, *Tamnan*. The full version of this small booklet is her dissertation at the University of Sydney in 1982.

not quite "local" even now except from the centrist viewpoint. Local history has proliferated, though it has not produced a single study of the peasant society as Srisak had anticipated.⁵⁵ Every notion of local history is another living history from the inside. What matters to people who create it is its values.

There is one thing such notions of local history have in common: it would not cause disharmony or disintegration in the country. On the contrary, for Dhida a better understanding of local culture would promote national and social solidarity, would assist government planning, and much more. "All these will make the people realize the importance and be proud of their history, identity and ... will be willing to preserve the old traditions instead of turning to new ones. The consequence will be an improvement of national integration in general."⁵⁶ Studies and conferences on local history in Thailand have been carried out in this good spirit.

The geographical units of the conferences on local history were the present day provinces and regions. Only once was the unit a historical town which was not identical with a modern province or region.⁵⁷ The proceedings of most of them had a similar pattern. Starting with geography, surrounding environment, and ancient settlements or towns in the area, the conferences then looked at the province in the pre-historic period and historical periods as marked in the national history by capitals or by regnal years. The period may be more specific if the province played a prominent role in the national history of that period. After political history came economic history, local literature, architecture, arts, crafts, local traditions, and a few other subjects unique to the province or region.

In most cases, a province held the conference only once. Given the extensive scope of the conference and the limited number of papers, most provinces got merely a glimpse of their history. Only a few of them, such as Chiangmai, Phitsanulok,

⁵⁵ Dhida Saraya, *[Local history]*, p. 2-3, introduction by Srisak. Many studies of the peasants come from the Chatthip school.

⁵⁶ Dhida Saraya, *Tamnan*, pp. 120, 121.

⁵⁷ The second conference at Phitsanulok in 1982 partly focussed on Nakhonthai, now a district in the province.

Mahasarakham and Nakhonsithammarat, had a combination of institutional commitment, resources, and tradition to mount a fuller effort.⁵⁸

During the conferences scholarly pursuits had to compromise with tourism and business in shaping the agenda. Some occasions looked more like promotional events for the provinces concerned than academic meetings, and featured discussions of popular "landmarks" of the provinces to glorify their separate identities. The history sessions often contributed to the self-glorification exercises as well, with celebrations of past reigns and local events taking the place of scholarly explorations.

But how was gloriousness determined? The selected past was mostly one in which the province played a prominent role in the national narrative. In this way the pledge of allegiance the "locals" made to the Thai nation was reaffirmed. Earlier generations of intellectuals and "amateur" historians were not reluctant to write about their past from local perspectives. It is the professionals in our generations, both the local and central ones, who face a dilemma in choosing between the autonomous history of a locality and the history of the locality as part of the Thai nation. This dilemma generated confusion from the very first writings on local history.⁵⁹ It appeared in Dhida's concept of the decentred-but-integral local history. It can be seen in most conferences. Autonomous identities were celebrated in arts, literature and local traditions, but in history, most provinces primarily valued their contribution to, and participation in, the nation. The periodization of local history remains that of the national one. Thus, local history is a history of the relationship with the centre, a partial history of the national whole.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ All have tertiary institutions. Historically, they were once at least the second rank centres in the kingdom. (Here Mahasarakham represents Isan, not the province.) Chiangmai has had at least seven major conferences; Nakhon five, Ubon and Phitsanulok three, and Isan four.

⁵⁹ Somjai Phairothirarat, "Thatsana khong klum nakkhian prawattisat lanna thai" [The views of the Lanna's historical writers] in Chamvit and Suchat eds., [*History and Thai Historians*], pp. 166-207. Here Somjai recognized Lanna as a historical kingdom in its own right. Yet she blamed the Lanna intellectuals who honestly wrote a history as if Lanna was a nation and failed to explain its relationship with the Thai center.

⁶⁰ At the same time, we must recognize some who wrote local history focussing on the evolution of its town, state, or dynasty, with the relationship with the Thai centres mentioned occasionally. Unfortunately, the obvious case was Chiangmai-Lanna which used to be a kingdom in its own right, not a local town.

Typically, conferences included Srisak's kind of pre-history or Dhida's recognition of myth/history "from the inside", both calling for a non-centrist local history, but without any stake in local pride. On the other hand, they also included a glorified history of the province and its unity within the nation. These different kinds of local history, sometimes misleadingly seen as reflecting the views of two camps made up of Bangkok scholars and local scholars, coexist intricately and clash occasionally. Regarding one conference, a reporter from Bangkok said that the Bangkok scholars used modern historical methodology, but local scholars still made their local history part of a nationalist plot of Thai history.⁶¹ Typically, few recognized the differences and those who did let the differences subside. In less typical cases, conflicts were revealing. For example, an art historian contended that two famous Buddha images in one province were not, as commonly thought, from India, but were locally made. He was strongly criticized for causing confusion, since the fame of the images, and by extension of the province, was based on the belief that the images were authentic. When the unfortunate historian further suggested that local arts were possibly derived from the Cham tradition, local intellectuals protested again,

Just because they [Champa] had more [art works] than we have, [we think] the items we have also belonged to them....Eventually, ours has no integrity. Nothing is unique to us, to our local tradition. We have no originality; all were borrowed from others. This is a matter of national integrity.⁶²

After all, local history remains a dynastic story of the political elite, not a popular and social one. As a critic noted, it has potential to challenge the Thai state, but instead is incorporated into the national narrative. It serves the government politically for

⁶¹ See Wanunee Osathanond's report of the conference on the local history of Suphanburi in *Chunlasan Thai Khadi Suksa* [Bulletin of the Thai Khadi Research Institute], 5.2 (Feb 1988), 135.

⁶² "Samman prawetisat suratthani khrangthi 1. 2527" [The first conference on history of Suratthani, 1984], (monograph, Suratthani Teacher's College, 1990) pp. 67-68.

security, economically for tourism, and ideologically to create a cultural-rich Thailand. The misdirection had been pointed out many times, but nobody has listened. Perhaps this is due to the fact that historians, local or otherwise, are bureaucrats, whose lives are so dominated by the royal/national history.⁶³ It would be more interesting to see a history of a problematic province like Pattani, one member of the audience at a local history conference suggested, and even more so if the separatist view was included.⁶⁴

NOSTALGIC THAILAND: ANARCHISTIC VILLAGE AND COMMODIFIED PAST

Both Srisak and Chatthip expressed concern that local history was becoming more interested in cultural promotion and less in people and community.⁶⁵ Chatthip's discourse on local history is similar to Dhida's, but his ideas are different. Like Dhida, he conflates "local" and the "masses", but it is clear to him that local history must study a village community since it is the only locus where "local" and "people" are unambiguously the same. A study from the inside must offer a grass roots perspective. An account of relationships among the elite, local and central, is an "outside" history. Above all, he is steadfast that local history must examine the socio-economic evolution of the village community if it is to be a study of "living" people.⁶⁶ "In the narrowest and most specific definition, [local study] is a study of human relations in local production, of class relations at the local level."⁶⁷ The result is an economic history of villages.

Contrary to his earlier proposition, Chatthip now believes that Thai villages had similarities to the Oriental society more than he had thought. They had not changed

⁶³ Chalong Sunthrawanit, "[State of studies in local history]" pp.140-144.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.144. The challenge was from the audience.

⁶⁵ Chatthip Natsupha, [Thai culture and movements], pp. 4-6. Srisak Vallibhotama, "Phak tawanok kap kansuksa prawattisat thongthin" [The eastern region and local history] in Chonburi: prawattisat lae sinlapa watthanatham [Chonburi: history, arts and culture], (Chonburi: Srinakharinwirot University-Bangsaen, 1989), pp. 1-3. The criticism was also about the lack of focus and coherence in most conferences, and a general lack of progress in local history.

⁶⁶ Chatthip Natsupha, "Kansuksa sethakit kanmuang thongthin: khwammai lae khwam samkhan" [A study of local political economy: meanings and significance], Warasan Setthasat Kanmuang 4, 1 (Sep. 1984): 9-10.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 13.

much either before or after 1855 because of the intensity of village cohesiveness or the "community culture", the availability of natural resources, and the parasitic but non-penetrating state. The break-up of Thai villages had occurred just over the past thirty years as a consequence of the rapid industrialization, and the extensive penetration of the Thai state into village community.⁶⁸ Where Nithi pushed the dynamism of the Bangkok bourgeoisie back to the late eighteenth century, Chatthip postponed the date of late capitalism in Thai villages to the 1960s.

Like many other Thai intellectuals, Chatthip is critical of the economic boom and the course of development Thailand has been experiencing. The growing evils and human cost have enhanced his nostalgic appreciation of the pre-industrial community. He knows it vividly through his academic contemplation. His research confirms the existence of such a village not so long ago and perhaps now, and he has proposed an alternative form of development which recognizes and preserves these villages, and in fact is based on their participation. Undoubtedly, his ideal of the village touches a chord with the intelligentsia, and one scholar has provided evidence for the existence of what Chatthip sees as the "original" village:

Khiriwong is a real village which is identical with the one imagined by villagers...[i.e.] without the penetration from the state and capitalism. We might think that this kind of community existed only in the peasant millennialism in history. Or it might be just a wish of a utopian thinker. But this is real. [The research on Khiriwong] proposed an "anarchist" theory of development, a kind of socialism, focussing on folk ideology and small organizations...to counter the power of the state and capitals cities. In the past, anarchism was not popular in Thailand, even though it is the set of ideas most in line with those of the villagers. It is a folk socialism.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Chatthip Natsupha, Setthakit muban thai nai adit [The economy of Thai villages in the past], (Bangkok: Sangsan, 1985).

⁶⁹ Chatthip's introduction in Porphilal Lertwicha, Khiriwong (Bangkok: Muban Publications, 1989).

Regardless of the validity of his theory, methodology, or analysis, Chatthip's local studies have produced an outcome which is absolutely different from those undertaken by the local histories which posit themselves within the framework of the Thai nation. What is more striking than an anarchistic village versus a glorified integral province? Yet they co-exist under the rubric of local history.

Local history could have been seen as jeopardizing national security and the integrity of the state, and its popularity and its recognition and promotion by Thai authorities reflected a significant change in the Thai state. With the end of internal insurgency and of the Cold War in the 1980s, neighbouring states became dependent on Thailand in one way or another. The Thai state was secure. Besides, Thailand emerged economically stronger than before. Not only had the security paranoia which had haunted the Thai elite since the birth of the nation subsided, but Thailand could be aggressive. Within this context the diversity of Thai people and culture was tolerable. The centralized culture and memory began to open more space to the local ones, and the Thai state did not crack. Instead, the process of the state's allowing for greater pluralism initiated another transformation, which remains perhaps THE main agenda today.⁷⁰

Certainly, the proliferation of local identities has been carefully guided and contained. Fundamental to the management of this process is the discourse on the relationship between national and local identities. There is more than one way to put the relationship in its proper place. The most prominent discourse establishes hierarchical, or part/whole relations.

As we all agree, culture is a factor which unifies our nation. In Thailand now we have the main culture [*watthanatham lak*] we all adhere to. But the sub-cultures [*watthanatham yoi*], which are identities of particular

⁷⁰ The surge of local studies is not an isolated phenomenon of this trend, though it began before many other issues. In politics, the issues now include decentralized administration, budgets, and local elections.

localities, continue to exist without being harmful to the harmony of the nation.⁷¹

The national culture is sophisticated, the local cultures are popular. The national culture states the theme upon which local cultures provide variations. The national culture is genuinely Thai, the local cultures are derivative. Despite the fallacies of this belief, it allows the diversity of local identities and local histories to emerge more easily.⁷²

It is not the state alone that supports the proliferation of local history. In fact the state might just be responding to the increasing demand from the civil society for a new kind of past that fits their taste. The rapid industrialization has brought about several social transformations. And the Thai bourgeoisie, the leading force of this economic miracle, still pushes the society ahead at full speed. The impact on urban life and culture has been spectacular. The class of the new rich has expanded in a relatively short period, and suddenly has enormous buying power. After purchasing material culture, the new rich seek the more subtle spiritual culture. Unfortunately, they are not culturally rich, being first to third generation immigrants who have been uprooted from their traditions and homelands either within Thailand or in China not so long ago. The historical roots of Thais of Chinese descent are superficial and ambivalent, since their origins in China are remote and perhaps only preserved in their practice of ancestor worship "at home" in Thailand. Most importantly, immigration history is regarded as an

⁷¹ The speech by the Governor of Surin, a province in the northeast, at the opening ceremony of a conference on the local culture of the Mun valley, see Surin Cultural Centre, *Watthanatham lummaenam mun: karani khamen, lao, suai surin* [The culture of the Mun valley people: the cases of the Khmer, Lao, and Suai in Surin]. (Bangkok: Sanmuanchon, 1990).

⁷² Nithi once questioned how far the state's accommodation of local cultures can go with this discourse since it contains serious limitations. His suggestions are perhaps too radical for the state: either to drop the unifying elements of Thai identity in the past hundred years, such as Buddhism, to be able to accommodate more people into the Thai identity domain, or to abandon the national culture ideology, the unifying, main culture upheld only by the state, since Thailand is not a homogeneous country anyway. Nithi Aeusivongse, "[Two hundred years of Thai historical studies]," pp. 113-115; and "Khwaam lekai khong watthanatham thai: kan thathai mai" [The diversity of Thai culture: a new challenge], in *Su khwaam khaochai watthanatham* [For the understanding of culture]. (Bangkok: the Office of National Culture Commission, 1989).

individual rather than an imagined communal past.⁷³ The past they identify with is a Thai past, but their Thai identity is a recent acquisition. Their demand for a Thai past has grown rapidly.

On the other hand, the force of rapid change has separated people of Thai descent from rural ways of life and local cultures. Major cities have expanded enormously. Internal migration has brought people from villages or small towns into new urban environments, and they live without roots in the mega-cities. The changes have been so fast, forceful and disruptive that the contrast between the past and present can be felt in every way. One consequence is social nostalgia. Recently several groups of people, mostly urban intellectuals and business people, have been setting up museums, organizing exhibitions of memorabilia, establishing archives of films, music, printed materials and so on, and preserving old architecture. Publications on old Siam or old Bangkok flood the market. The faster Bangkok moves into the future, the greater the appeal of neo-antiquarianism. People are conscious about recollecting the past, though they would not live with it. They want to collect it for their spiritual wealth, to make the flow of life comprehensible.

Most of the participants in the local history projects, especially local intellectuals, are probably this kind of people. For them, local study is not a matter of decentering the national narrative. The revival of local identity may be important, but as part of the communal nostalgia rather than as a reassertion of a separate identity. Local history has the potential to nurture the power of local community that Chatthip and Nithi anticipate, but basically it is part of the nostalgia production currently overwhelming Thailand.

Given the different kinds of demands, the result is the commodification of nostalgia. Now the mode of acquisition of the past is consumption. The past is itemized, objectified and processed in various forms for sale: as packaged stories for media

⁷³ There is no authoritative work in Thai on the Chinese overseas in Thailand which can nurture a sense of communal history. The closest of that kind are fictions, such as Botan, *Letters from Thailand* or a recent famous *Lot lai mangkon* [Through the dragon motif] by Praphatson Sewikul. Another recent genre is biographies of successful Chinese businessmen (no women yet) in Thailand. The inquiry into the culture of the Chinese society in Thailand has been long overdue. One of the recent critical comments is Kasian Tejapira, *Lee lot lai mangkon* [Looking through the dragon motif], (Bangkok: Khopfai Publication, 1993).

consumption, as festivals or historical parks for tourist consumption,⁷⁴ and as museums or conferences on local history for intellectual consumption. The trends in local studies have lately become more concerned with selected rituals, art works, buildings or cultural artifacts such as textiles. These studies would never be a threat to the state; on the contrary, they only fulfill the nostalgic longing for roots, and make profits.

To consider that the commodification of history brings with it a deterioration of the discipline and the profession may be a noble pretension. Definitely, the authority of professional historians has been reduced, and the field has become more open. Whether or not this means better history, and what is meant by better history, remains to be seen. Among the positive contributions the nostalgia industry has brought about in Thailand is the successful popularization of history, particularly by the magazine *Sinlapa wathanatham* [Arts and culture]. The strategies it uses are no secret. On the one hand, it sensationalizes history by making it provocative or controversial. On the other hand, it makes history an open domain in which people without special expertise can join the debate on topics that interest them. The magazine has placed before the public several scholarly controversies previously only of concern among historians. Issues raised by the new histories since 1973 have been popularized by the magazine. In return, we may say that the magazine, and the commodification of nostalgia, have contributed to the success of Nithi, Srisak, Dhida, Chatthip, and many others in challenging conventional history. In the past fifteen years, the magazine has created unprecedented public curiosity and popular participation in the production of historical knowledge.

One of the consequences of the nostalgia industry is the fact that the production and dissemination of historical knowledge has moved away from academic journals and perhaps classrooms, and become centred in popular magazines, tourism, and the mass media. Even among intellectuals in Thailand, seminars, conferences, and public meetings are the most significant arenas. For better or worse, with excitement and frustration, the interesting new ideas frequently appear in popular magazines and public forums, rather than in the form of serious research. Given the low salary and poor return

⁷⁴ One of the most controversial cases is the preservation of old Sukhothai, which was made into a historical site for tourism.

for research and academic publications, most academic journals in history have been pronounced dead.

This new economy of historical knowledge has selective effects on the field of historical studies. In terms of product, some subjects of study are saleable, some are not. Thus, some issues are more visible than others and more likely to be reproduced while others might be dropped from the inventory. In terms of production process, some subjects need time and methodology that make them difficult for popular consumption, but a number of subjects have been produced without academic baggage. In terms of circulation, historical knowledge is brought down to open market, to public production, participation, and consumption. It is no longer an elitist property.

Unlike the immediate period after 1973, however, the rising consumer demand for nostalgia does not originate from the search for answers to the disruptive moment in the society. The increased flow of commodities does not necessarily lead to a strong infrastructure of research and institutional development. What is demanded is ready-made history for public consumption, not a serious inquiry into the past. Consequently, while commoditized history has increased and history has been popularized, the infrastructure (students, courses, professionals, funding) has shrunk. Is this economy of historical knowledge and the nostalgia industry a kind of "bubble", like the present economy of the country?

CONCLUSION

There have been several other attempts to write revisionist and new kinds of history, such as struggles to interpret the 1932 revolution and the subsequent regimes, the introduction of post-modernism into Thai historical discourse, and studies on nationalism, although there has been little serious work on the events of 1973 and 1976 themselves. The doubt over the authenticity of the Ramkhamhaeng inscription, the inscription number one of Thai history, was crucial for the survival of Sukhothai as the Golden Age of the Thai past. So far, however, both the inscription and the Golden Age have survived the scrutiny, although the doubt is not completely put out.⁷⁵ As we have

⁷⁵ See James Chamberlain ed. *The Ramkhamhaeng Controversy* (Bangkok: the Siam Society, 1991).

seen, new ideas from the West have been localized selectively, depending on several factors: compatibility -- whether or not they fit local interests; adaptability -- how to make them Thai and understandable in Thai discourse; and authority -- who imports them and how. Nevertheless, they have generated new historical discourses in the Thai context. Orthodox Marxist concepts, for example, have been imported and transformed for local consumption and have generated particular knowledge on Thai social formations. But the interest in the neo-Marxist ideas came late when the arguments were winding down. They generated a number of works on peasants, millennialism and history of workers -- perhaps the Thai "history from the bottom up," but have had only limited impact on Thai historical discourse.

Nevertheless, the landscape of the Thai past has been fundamentally changed by the new histories we have discussed in this article. From a modern political chronicle of great men, the Thai past has acquired a socio-economic domain alongside the narrative of state development and social relations. Its temporal span is more extensive than that of conventional history, and it is no longer the history of centres.⁷⁶ The Thai state and Thai society have proved to be more heterogenous than we had realized. The myth of homogeneity is not sustainable and no longer necessary for the Thai state. The contestation for local history, and between radical and non-radical history, take place within this new discursive landscape. The rise of the nostalgia industry along with a popular, and popularized, history is simultaneously a threat and contribution to the historical enterprise, and to historians. Above all, there are many pasts, and they are not all reconcilable. The master plot of Thai history, a recurring story of struggles for independence, no longer monopolizes the Thai memory. Nor, too, do professional historians.

Perhaps, as elsewhere in Southeast Asia, the changes in the Thai historical studies originated in, responded to, and made an impact on domestic scholarship and politics. Chatthip and the "Political Economy" group, and many other Thai intellectuals as

⁷⁶ As a matter of fact, the expansive space and time of Srisak's history is similar to the vision of the Siamese historical domain proposed by King Chulalongkorn since 1907 which apparently had been abandoned by later generations of historians in favour of the Thai-centric history. See King Chulalongkorn, "Samakhom supsuwan khong boran nai prathetsayam" [The Antiquarian Society in Siam], *Sinlapakorn* 12, 2 (Jul 1968): 42-46.

well, are engaged in political or social activism. Their works have never been merely academic. This is not to discredit their quality. Rather, there is more in those works than we normally expect of historians. These scholars write to create an impact on politics, development, national integration, or to nurture the new nationalism, or for the future of village, community, province, and the nation. The common concern of Nithi, Chatthip and Srisak is to reclaim history for the people, whether by taking away authority from the establishment, by shaking up the domination of the royal/national history, by proposing the alternative history of class struggles, or history of village, or by making the past of Siam a story of the evolution of people in their land and environments. This is the 1973 spirit. Historians are speaking to the present while they are speaking about the past. Their populist nationalism, and their romanticism of the authentic village, community culture, Thai intellect, whether we like them or not, will be part of Thai historical discourse for decades to come.

Finally, the contribution of these scholars to Thai and Southeast Asian studies outside the country could be enormous, but their work is available only in Thai and has been largely overlooked. Srisak's pre-history of Isan and Dhida's early history of the mainland could provide significant input for historians of early Southeast Asia. Nithi's works, especially on "bourgeois culture," could make a significant contribution to the recent debate on the "Age of Commerce" of Southeast Asia and its impact on the patterns of development or decline of Southeast Asian states in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.⁷⁷ Chatthip's village is substantial evidence of the spatially uneven development of the Thai state and capitalism. The new interpretations of Thai politics and society surrounding the 1932 revolution, which we do not discuss here, may change the ways we know modern Thai politics. More dialogue is perhaps needed.

⁷⁷ Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994) and Victor Lieberman, "Local Integration and Eurasian Analogies: Structuring Southeast Asian History, c.1350-c.1830," *Modern Asian Studies* 27, 3 (1993): 475-572.

ABSTRACT**THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF THE PAST****New Histories in Thailand since 1973****Thongchai Winichakul**

Modern Thai historical discourse had changed little since its inception in the late nineteenth century until the mid 1970s. Despite a growing body of knowledge of the past, its paradigm --stories, plots, meanings and ideological values-- has been persistently serving as a prime discourse for the elitist nationalism. The political and intellectual revolution in 1973 shook such historiographic hegemony, however. History, as knowledge, has become a center of academic interest and an arena of intellectual confrontations more than a decade. In that context, the conventional treatment of the Thai past has been fundamentally challenged by the new histories which, though not formally organized, can be categorized into four major currents: a critical reaction to the conventional historiography, a school of Marxist economic history, a non-linear early history, and a phenomenal rise of local history throughout the country. Even though such a dramatic interest in history has been winding down, a new landscape of the past has been reshaped.

**THREE DECADES OF TAI STUDIES AND THAI STUDIES:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
TAI SOCIETIES AND CULTURES**

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THREE DECADES OF TAI STUDIES AND THAI STUDIES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TAI SOCIETIES AND CULTURES¹

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BACKGROUND

Tai ethnic groups live in a very vast area from the south of China, north of Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, and in Assam of northeastern India. Except Thailand and Laos, the Tai live in the periphery, and are regarded as minorities of China, Myanmar, India, and Vietnam. In the colonial period this area was the target of western power's exploitation of natural resources, and was a gateway to Chinese natural resources and trade routes to south of China.

The expansion of western power to this area for the strategic, economic, and religious benefit in the 19th century has brought about journals, field reports, and books by officials, missionaries on physical landscape, natural resources, indigenous ways of life, languages, cultures and societies of these periphery peoples. This can be regarded as the beginning of Tai studies. All these written materials were later used as historical evidence for the Thai history.

The British invasion on western and northern parts of Thailand, via India and Burma, and the French invasion from Cambodia to Vietnam and to Laos and then to northeastern Thailand had caused an alarm to the Siam government to adjust and reform

¹ This paper is funded by the Research Fund of Thailand. I wish to thank Associate Professor Dr. Chatthip Nartsupha for his kind support, advice, and comments. Also, I wish to thank Associate Professor Surichai Wan'geao, Assistant Professor Dr. Chaiyan Ratchagool, Assistant Professor Dr. Phasuk Phongpaichit, and Assistant Professor Dr. Somkiat Wantana for their comments on the first draft of this paper. I should also like to thank Dr. Anan Ganjapan who, as a reader of the paper, gave critical and useful comments, and to Professor Dr. Chetana Nagavachra, Professor Dr. Matani Ratnin, Dr. Cholthira Satyawatadhna, and Mr. Apichart Thongyoo for their comments, criticisms, and advice at the conference on the State of Thai Studies: A Critical Reassessment held at Supha Sirimanonda Bookroom, Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University, during July 19-20, 1996. All mistakes are my sole responsibility.

its vassal state administration. Once enjoyed their privilege and sovereignty, now all vassal states became part of Siam, as northern or northeastern provinces, under the supervision of the Siamese nobles directly sent from Bangkok. Indigenous names were to be changed to be called Thai or Siamese signalling that they were Siamese subjects, not independent, thus prevented them from the western takeover as done in Burma and Laos.

Western invasion gave rise to one positive consequence. That is, the writings, field reports, etc., on indigenous peoples was for the first time the evidence for Thai historiographer to write the history of Thailand. The southward migration, and China as the homeland of the Tai were the result of the study of the Tai in this period. This type of history later has been written and taught in educational institutions, especially during the "nation-building" and nationalist era².

Tai studies had come to almost a complete stop after WWI and WWII when western power was driven out of this region. New nation-states were fighting for their own independence, which led to the direct confrontation between the Free world and the Communist one. All trade routes and regular contact were closed down. The region was divided into two parts, one belonged to the Free world and the other to the Communists. So were the Tai.

Nowadays, Tai studies has been revived. The study of Tai cultures and societies has been widely done both inside and outside Thailand, in particular, the study of the Tai in China, Vietnam, Burma, Assam, and in Laos. All the information has been disseminated in the form of articles in journals, newspapers, books, and televisions³.

The land which had then been politically closed is now open by the tidal wave of world economy. Roads and airports have been built to shrink the vast area into a small world. Countries that were enemies, fighting and killing each other in any form of war

² See, for instance, Sir James George Scott and John Percy Hardiman (1900), and Dodd (1922), and Luangwichit Watakarn. (2513), etc.

³ Most journals, newspapers, and magazines have feature articles on Tai peoples, such as Tai Lue, Tai Dam, etc. On television, there are documentary series on Tai peoples by the Pacific Communication Co., and Panorama Documentary Co. Ltd., among others.

now turn to be economic allies. Battle fields has turned to investment sites, tourist attractions, and markets where capitalists aim to make profit as much as possible⁴.

All these changes inevitably have an impact on the Tai ways of life in this peripheral area and on Tai studies. Tai studies is no longer limited to certain academics of one country, but has become a cooperation between institutions of higher education, and between countries in order to develop good foreign and economic relations. This has rendered better body of knowledge in Tai studies than before.

The objectives of this article are to look at the development of Tai studies in the past three decades in order to make a critical assessment on the study of Tai peoples, its theoretical frameworks, different ideological or social contexts which might have an impact on Tai studies, the comparative Tai societies and cultures, impacts of Tai studies on Thai studies, and the future directions or trends of Tai studies.

TAI STUDIES IN THE PAST THREE DECADES

In order to have a clear picture of the movement of Tai studies in the past 30 years, it will be divided into 4 periods using political or economic criteria as follows.

1) Under the Nationalism and Dictatorship Rule Period (1957-1973)

The nationalist policy of this period was that all peoples who lived in Thailand would be called Northern Thai, Southern Thai, Central Thai, and Northeastern Thai. All had to learn the standard Thai as their national language, Tai and Thai dialects were prohibited to be taught in schools. The Thai history on the Thai migration due to Chinese invasion was written and promoted as textbooks and songs. Following American foreign policy in fighting against all communist governments in Asia, Thailand had all but enemies along its borders. Tai studies and academic atmosphere were quite gloomy.

Two interesting books of this period are Saranarth's *Visiting Tai Ahom Our Siblings*, which was published around 1957 and *Kaa Le Man Tai* (Visiting the Home of Tai Ahom) by Banchob Bandhumedha. Even though both are about Tai Ahom in Assam where both writers visited, the contents of the two books differ greatly from each other. Saranarth emphasized on the close relationship between Thai and Tai Ahom, the history

⁴ Roads are constructed from Thailand through Burma and Laos to Sipsongpanna, and airports have also been built to facilitate the Quadrangle Economy.

of the rise and fall of the Tai Ahom kingdom mainly translated from books, and his own personal feelings after meeting with Tai Ahom in Assam, while Banchob's work is focused on language and literature and various aspects of Tai Ahom ways of life⁵.

Seminal works on Tai ethnic groups in other ethnic peoples inside and outside Thailand were those of Boonchaay Srisawasdi who traveled extensively into Burma, and Sipsongpanna of China. The 4 books are *Thirty Ethnic Groups in Chiangrai*, *Tai in Sipsongpanna*, *Lue: the Tai in China*, and *the Tai in Burma*. The books contain interesting information on indigenous cultures, lores, traditions, ways of life, languages, etc., of various ethnic people, Tai and non-Tai.

Also, this period was the starting point of American anthropologists doing their field work in central, northern and northeastern Thailand. Michael Moerman did his research at a Tai Lue village in Chiangkham. His wellknown article was "*Ethnic Identification in a Complex Civilization: Who are the Lue?*" which questioned for the first time the ethnic identity.

2) Searching for Answers at the Village Period (1974-1982)

After the students's uprising on October 14, 1973, some students went to villages to study and learn village life, and to disseminate democratic ideology. Villagers began to be aware of their own rights, thus led to protest and demonstration against injustice. The Farmers' Association was founded to help protect the rights of farmers and to have dialogue with the government and capitalists, among other activities.

At the same time, M.R. Kukrit Pramoj the prime minister had revived diplomatic relations with China. He with his entourage was invited to visit Sipsongpanna, the land of the Lue minorities. That was the first time that the Lue have been formally widely known by the Thai public. Later many groups of academics and tourists also had chances to visit Sipsongpanna and came back with articles, reports about the trip, and of course about the Tai Lue language and culture⁶. Under the democratic government during this period, there began to be more articles, M.A theses, on minorities in

⁵ For different view on the Tai Ahom language and culture, see Chatthip and Renou (2538: 38).

⁶ See, for example, Sumitr (2525), Kumut (2521-2522), Decho (3834), among others who had chance to visit Sipsongpanna in this period.

Thailand⁷. This showed that the state could be able to tolerate differences in languages and cultures in this Thai society.

The village has been the center of interest since 1979, the year students came back from the jungle. Some of them went on working with villagers together with the non-governmental agencies which began to play an important role in rural development. The main theme of development at the time was that people and their villages were the most important factor in development. Development workers had to understand the village community, its history, culture, villagers' way of life, and moreover, villagers had to understand themselves, their culture, and to be able to see the good side of their own culture, their own strength and power, and together they could negotiate with merchants and government. That was the birth of the "community culture" approach to development. In addition, this was the first time that the history of village community came to be written with all information from the village. In the past, the history was owned by, and written about royal families, nobles, and high government officials. Villagers had no place in that kind of history. Or if there was, it would be only small, or supporting part of the history⁸.

This period can be counted as the beginning of Tai studies under democracy. Thai public learned more about the Tai outside Thailand and more about indigenous cultures in various places inside Thailand⁹. It was the beginning of the change of focus from the aristocratic history and culture to the community history and culture.

All these happened in the mid of the changing face of Thailand from the country that had in the past imported a lot of merchandise, technology, and others, to the country that became the centre of industry, factories, mainly for export. The country and the government had been more stable than ever. Tourist industry began to boom, which resulting in more local or regional studies.

3) The Quadrangle Economy: Globalization Period (1983-1987)

⁷ See Charuwan (2522), Plenge (2519), Thawat (2522), Visrut (2524), etc.

⁸ For more details, the reader is referred to Chatthip (2537:171-216).

⁹ See Dhida Saraya (1983), who used indigenous chronicles for historical evidence.

The following four years turned out to be a productive and crucial to the development of Tai studies. It was partly an impact from the proclamation of the United Nations as the Decade of Minorities. In Thailand there was a series of local and regional culture campaigns as part of the promotion of Thai tourist industry. There were more articles in journals, daily newspapers, and M.A. theses on indigenous cultures of Thailand, and on Tai cultures and literatures outside Thailand¹⁰.

The Art and Culture journal had become the academic and non-academic forum for debate on Thai/Tai history. The central issue was, "where are the Tai from?", and changed to "who are the Tai?" Mr. Sujit Wongdes, the editor, had himself played the central role in the debate. He not only wrote articles on the issue himself, but also published books on the Tai, for example, *the Homeland of the Tai*, by Kamchanee Laongsri.

Meanwhile, Chinese information on the Thai/Tai history began to play an integral part in the new direction of the Thai history. The Thai History Research from Chinese Documents Committee, the Office of the Prime Minister Secretary published two books on the *History of the Tai*, translated from Chinese, and another from Chalermit Publishing Co., the *Tai Race in China*, also a Chinese translation.

The Sino-Thai relations was improving very well and fast before and after the opening of the Quadrangle Economy, which in part due to the impact of the world economy, or better known as globalization. China was very receptive to Thai investors, academics and tourists. The "Dai" lands were now open for foreigners, tourists and academics to visit and also to do research. For example, There were research projects on Tai language, culture and art between Chulalongkorn University, Silpakom University and Payap University and the Nationalities University of Kwangsi, the academic exchange program between Chiangmai University and the Yunnan Institute of the Nationalities, and the Yunnan University. All these had opened a new horizon of Tai studies. From then on Chinese scholars were always invited to the international or national conference on Tai studies. In 1986, the first international conference on *the*

¹⁰ For examples, see Kingkaew (2528), Charoen (2529), etc.

Lanna and Sipsongpanna Cultures: the Continuation and the Change was held at Chiangmai University.

The Chinese government not only opened its country to the Thai public, but also had invited the sister of His Majesty the King, Her Royal Highness Princess Galayaniwatana, to visit China. Her Royal Highness with a group of academics visited two Tai communities, one in Sipsongpanna, the Tai Lue community, and the other in Dehong, the Tai Mao community. The consequence of the trip was a book on Tai history, languages and cultures, titled *Yunnan*.

In India, Assam where a lot of Tai Ahom, Phake, Aiton, etc., live, was also another centre of interest in Tai studies. Indigenous scholars have been writing and publishing articles and books on their own history, society and culture. There was also an attempt to revive the Tai Ahom language and culture by a group of Tai Ahom scholars. The Ahom land was now open for foreigners to visit but in limited time and place. Vietnam and Laos both open their countries for tourists, academic, and researchers to visit Tai communities, and even Burma also allowed visitors to go to Chiangtung, the city of Tai Khuen and Muang Yong, the Tai Lue city.

Tai studies was enhanced by the opening of graduate study program in Lanna Language and Literature, and the set-up of the Promotion of Art and Culture Project, at Chiangmai University. Transliteration of indigenous literatures and chronicles, etc. had been going on, for example, the Chronicle of Chiangtung, the Chronicle of Sipsongpanna, the Chronicle of Yong City, etc., and also the indigenous language textbooks like the Dehong Tai textbook, the Tai Yai (Shan) textbook, the Tai Khuen textbook, etc.¹¹.

The increase of interest in Tai studies could also be seen in international conferences where more papers on Tai studies were presented. Scholars and students of Tai studies have more chances to meet each other to exchange ideas and information. All these did not occur by themselves but from consequences of globalization, and in

¹¹ Trips led by Pra Maha Khuenkham, the abbot of Wat Phrabat Takpha in Lampoon have been made to the Yong town in Burma, accompanied by academics and students from Chiangmai University. For details, see Sawaeng (2538) and Sompong (2537). Thawi Sawangpanyankul and Roger Peltier can be regarded as the main contribution to this transliteration and Tai textbooks.

particular, the Quadrangle Economy, where language and culture play a connecting role, representing good will of each country.

4) The Adjusting of Paradigm of Tai Studies Period (1988-present)

Tai studies covers all aspects of Tai culture, namely, ways of live, history, folklore, folktales, beliefs, language, literature, art, architecture, including dress, and ornaments. At present, Tai studies has become very popular, and a "commodity" which sells well either in the forms of books, articles, or documentary television series.

Conferences and seminars on Tai studies were always welcome by academic circles and the general public through out the country. Chinese historical documents are being used or referred to more and more. For example, seminar on *the Tai People Outside Thailand: The Knowledge Frontiers* was held in 1989 by Kasetsart University, and the academic conference on the *Tai Race: A Question Everybody Must Help Answer* was held by Chulalongkorn University in 1990. The International Conference on Thai Studies VI at Kunming, Yunnan Province, China was a very important occasion which allowed a lot of Chinese scholars who have been working on Tai studies presented their own works. Many Thai studies scholars and students from Assam, India, Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar also joined the conference.

A governmental organization which plays a big part in promoting and supporting the study of the Tai peoples is the Office of National Culture Committee, Ministry of Education. Associate Professor Dr. Chatthip Nartsupha who was appointed as the head of the Tai Culture Studies Project has held an international conference on *the State of Tai Culture Studies and Its Theoretical Approaches* in 1993. Tai scholars around the world were invited to present their ideas and information on the state of Tai studies and to propose or to suggest the appropriate theoretical approaches¹².

As the head of the project, Chatthip supported a series of conference on Tai studies in the following universities:

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2. At Silpakom University, an academic conference on *Tai Ahom* was held. Scholars from Assam and China were invited to present papers.
3. At Thammasart University, a conference on *Sip Song Chu Tai*.
4. At Chulalongkorn University, a seminar on *the Dehong Tai* was held. Tai scholars from Dehong, China were invited.
5. Chiangmai University again hosted a conference on *Tai Lue and Their Adaptation in the Changing Current*. Prof. Chao Mom Kham Lue, Prof. Huang Hui Kun, and Prof. Charles F. Keyes were invited.
6. At Mahasarakham University, a seminar on *Tai Studies: Laotians and Zhuang* was held.

There are two interesting articles in this period that have an important impact on the future trends of Tai studies. One is *"Problems and Methodology of the Tai History"* by Dr. Anan Ganjanapan (1989). The other is *"Theoretical Approach to a Study of Tai Culture Project"* by Associate Professor Chatthip Nartsupha (1995). These two papers has induced the new paradigm to Tai studies. This period can then be regarded as the transition period of Tai studies.

THE CHANGING THEORIES OR PERSPECTIVES OF TAI STUDIES

In this section, we divide the perspectives or theories used in Tai studies into 3 theoretical points of view, namely, the conventional Tai studies, the anthropological Tai studies, and the community cultural Tai studies.

1) The Conventional Tai Studies

Tai studies from the beginning in the 19th century can be classified as the conventional one. The approach differs from others in several respects. First, it aims to describe ways of life, cultures, beliefs, etc., of the Tai peoples from personal experience point of view. The writers act like observers, write what they see, how they feel, or what their impression is. This type of writing is widely used even nowadays, and it is called the descriptive ethnography.

In the past, Thai scholars who entered the field of Tai studies aimed to compare differences and similarities of Thai/Tai cultures and societies to fulfil their curiosity, and to trace for answer or explanation from this Tai knowledge or information. For instance, in

the work of Banchob, and Professor Dr. Prasert Na Nagra (2538)¹³, both would use the Tai languages and literature to explain old words, phrases in Thai inscriptions of Sukhothai, or old literature of early Ayuthaya. Besides, the Ahom Buranji, or various chronicles of the Tai states could shed light on the study of ancient Thai society.

Since the travelling across the nation-state boundaries to visit Tai communities was almost quite impossible and no one was encouraged to do so, to get the information of Tai studies was then done through western documents, books, and articles. By depending on western materials and point of view, the Tai cultures written seemed to be powerless, non-dynamic, and very distant from the Thai culture in Thailand.

Language was always the main criterion for classification of ethnic groups because language was viewed as the unique characteristic of each ethnic group, without language would result in the loss of the ethnic identity.

One of the most important issue of conventional Tai studies was the question of the homeland and the origin of the Tai. It was assumed that those Tai in the periphery had older culture and still kept the original identity of Tai culture.

2) Anthropological Tai Studies

The spread of anthropological research in Thailand in the past three decades affected Tai studies from the very start. This type of research aimed to study the social structure of Thai rural community, minorities, the lowland and the highland, in the north of Thailand. Reseachers went to the target village community to closely observe and participate in village activities. The aim was to try to understand the meaning, structure or system behind those activities and behaviors, to see what the ideology of the village is, and how it influenced on ways of life, thinking and community. The study was mainly focussed on indigenous beliefs, rituals, social behaviors, social organization, and relationships between the state and the village community.

This approach differed almost totally from the previous one. Strating from the basic assumption that there was no such thing as "pure" culture, or in other words, the "pure Tai", since ways of life, culture, beliefs, etc., were always either borrowed or changed, or mixed with other ethnic groups. The study of the Tai ethnic group had to be

¹³ See, also, Boonyong (2532).

done with the concept that the Tai live among many ethnic groups other than Tai, and had borrowed their neighboring cultures, beliefs, ways of life, art, etc. To understand the Tai society and culture, the geographical, political, social and cultural contexts were to be taken into account. Such perspective could be seen in the works of Anan Ganjanapan, Suthep Sunthomphesat, Michael Moerman, Charles F. Keyes, Gehan Wijeyewardene, Shigeharu Tanabe, and George Condominas, among others.

Srisak Vallibhodom, a Thai archeologist once bluntly stated that he never believed that the Thai people in Thailand were from the same ancestors who were generally assumed that they were from the south of China. He further stated that the ancestors of the present day Thai were from many ethnic groups, a consequence of the mix among races, and their homeland could not be pinpointed¹⁴.

In fact, Edmund Leach had done some research on the adaptation of The Shans and the Kachins in the 50's in Burma confirming that the change of ethnicity was possible and had happened in the case of the Shans and the Kachins. This also led to the questions of "who are the Lue?," "who are the Tai," by Moerman, Keyes (2538), and others, and other questions alike.

With no interest in the origin or homeland of the Tai, this approach focussed on the development of the society in order to see and understand the assimilation, borrowing, adaptation processes of the target society and to see how power was exercised and changed hands, or the strength or power that pushed the community forward. The study was done through the study of rituals, lores, traditions, conventions, and ways of life in order to understand the process, the thinking and the existence and changes of all those cultures in the past and now. To understand this, the study was then to be done from the point of view of villagers, the owners of the culture and society. This was also able to be done through the analytical study of oral history, chronicles, legends and myths.

Two articles which suggested the anthropological framework to Tai studies belonged to Anan Ganjanapan (1988) and (1995) *"Problems and Methodology in the Study of Tai History,"* and the *"State of Research on the Shans: Their Social and*

¹⁴ Srisak (2534), and Nidhi (2533).

Cultural Development" respectively. Anan proposed theoretical approaches to Tai studies as follows:

The first approach was that it had to study the history of cultural assimilation, amalgamation of cultures. The Tai live among various different ethnic groups, borrowing, amalgamating, adapting, of neighboring were not uncommon. Anan said that the idea of race had to be thrown away, and focussed more on the study of culture. This, he inserted, would allowed more academics from different fields to take part, and would open the new dimension in Tai studies.

The second one was that we could study history from rituals, and beliefs by looking at indigenous beliefs, legends, chronicles in order to understand their thinking, changing process of the society because beliefs and rituals were the basic ideology of the society to bond people together to set up political organization of some sort. This was regarded as the driving force of the community that made the village exist and develop from then to now.

The third way to Tai studies was the study of the history of the development of the society. Anan asserted that this was a very important point because it was the "heart" of the study that helped understand the social driving forces which had complex and varying development.

Anan concluded that to study the Tai history, cooperation among academics from different fields were needed, and the approach had to be multidisciplinary so that the complex issues of Tai society which had been developing for thousand of years could be tackled efficiently. The study must not be only for the body of knowledge, but it should also be able to see the trend of the society in the future.

3) The Community Cultural Tai Studies

The community culture approach was normally used in the community development program. It aimed to understand the community, and allowed the community to take part in developing its own community. The idea of this approach was to emphasize the importance of community participation, community independence, self-sufficient economy, generosity, mutual help, etc. This could be regarded as consequences of state invasion, wrong development plan and action, and the capitalist exploitation which is now widely spread.

Having seen from his own study on the economic history of villages that this type of cultural study has not been done systematically, and impressed with villagers' ways of life, culture, Chatthip Nartsupha began his work on the cultural history of village community. He arrived at a conclusion that the history of the study of Thai culture was mainly written about court, or state culture, but not commoners' one, if the commoner's culture was seriously studied, it would lead to the understanding of the driving force and power of culture which could be brought to guide the country development.

Chatthip viewed that the city society had been influenced by western culture, causing changes of Thai culture. The upper class and middle class culture had much changed, retaining less Thai, and became a hybrid culture. The real Thai culture, however, still existed but in villages, or village community in the form of indigeous culture, or community culture. The study of village or community, in other words, was the study of the root of Thai culture. When looking back to the Thai social history, it could be seen that Thai villages still maintained a lot of original Thai culture. Chatthip was further assured having met Tai Ahom scholars from Assam at the 1st International Conference on Thai Studies in Delhi, India, and from the trip to Assam¹⁵.

A futher study on the Tai Ahom kingdom from its rise to its fall led Chatthip to the idea that in order to implement the community culture concept to develop Thailand, the study of the origin of the Tai culture had to be carried out, and this could be done by going to study Tai communities outside Thailand, where they still preserved indigenous culture, traditions and conventions. The more we understood Tai cultures in various areas, the more we would understand our culture, the more we would also appreciated Tai rituals, and ceremonies. Some of Tai cultures had been frozen in the forms of local history, legend, chronicles, etc., we were to conduct analytical study of these written materials and manuscripts in order to understand those "frozen" cultures, and some of them could be revived for the benefit of developing the country.

From the study of Tai Ahom, Chatthip pointed out 3 important aspects as follows:

First, The Tai Ahom did not make much contact with other Tai groups for quite some time, written materials were pretty much old, probably older than other Tai's. The

¹⁵ See Anan (2539) for details.

study of Tai Ahom's society and culture would enable us to trace back to the root and the formation of Tai society and culture.

Second, The Tai Ahom kingdom could be one of the biggest Tai kingdom besides Ayuthaya. The kingdom lasted for 600 years, therefore, there were a lot of written materials, ancient sites, rituals, religious places when the kingdom flourished. All these written materials were invaluable, and the treasure of knowledge of ancient Tai society and culture.

And the third one was that the Tai Ahom and other Tai ethnic groups in Assam were now seriously strating to learn about their own history and language. Linguistic and historical research was not only academically meaningful, but also was the foundation of new Tai society and culture for all the Tai living there.

When worked with the Office of National Culture Committee as the head of the Tai Culture Studies Project, Chatthip explained the value of the project as follows:

Fisrt, this project was of theoretical value in conducting a comparative study if Tai cultures in various areas in order to understand the original general Tai identities and the particular identity of each Tai ethnic group.

Second, the study would enable us to have a better understanding of rural Thai culture, which was similar to Tai cultures outside Thailand.

Third, the Tai culture studies was meaningful to rural development and the development of the country with the community culture approach since the study of Tai history of each Tai group could lead us to find the origin and identity of ancient Tai culture, and if revived, this would help improve the consciousness, and ethnic identity, and would be the driving force which would move Thai villagers to a better quality of life.

Fourth, the project was meaningful for the existence, revival, and development of Tai culture in the future, especially for the Tai who are minorities, where the existence of Tai culture is the heart of cooperation, solidarity, to fight against exploitation, and to maintain their cultural and political independence for a certain extent. Upon knowing that there are flourishing Tai cultures in some place would spiritually help them to maintain their own cultural identity.

Experience in socio-economic history research had led Chatthip to a view that Thai studies in the past was done from the point of view of the ruling class, of aristocrats,

and of bureaucracy. The study from the commoners' point of view started after the October, 14, 1973 Students' Uprising. This period can be regarded as the study of the real Thai society since the study focusses on villages, communities of the majorities in order to create the so-called "community culture".

Chatthip sees that the future of Thai studies would be in the line of what he calls "*the Cultural History School*," which assumes that Thailand has to incorporate the progressive part of world cultures to the roots of Tai culture. Two ways for the future development following the Cultural History School of Thought should be (Chatthip 1994:126-127):

- "1) In order to strengthen the community culture and add to its dynamism, Western culture should be added and instilled deeply in Thai culture, especially parts concerning technology and liberty. Thai scholars should study a history of the process of industrialization and democratic transformation of Western Europe, the United States, and Japan in order to understand these key processes. Then we will be able to adapt and internalize those progressive parts of Western technology, social institutions and culture for the purpose of Thai development.
- 2) We have to search the realm of the mind, feeling and morality of Tai communities. At this stage, we should consider Tai communities outside Thailand--Tai Ahom, Shan, Lu, Lao, Black Tai, White Tai, and Zhuang--which have preserved much ancient Tai culture in manuscripts, rituals and everyday life. The aim is to search for the basic elements of the formation of the Tai societies and cultures such as love for freedom, kind-heartedness, and a willingness to help other people, the importance of the institution of the family and of the village community, etc. These archetypes of Tai culture, once rediscovered, can be revived and utilized to support the strength of the spirit of the community."

This community culture approach differs in various respects from the previous two approaches. The aims and ideology are quite different, and even the methodology.

This approach uses historical, and hisotical-comparative method, holistic study of culture, and transformational process. Besides written materials, this approach encourages the participation of indigenous scholars in conducting research and in writing their own history so that they understand their own culture and their own ethnic ideology. Since it is a historical and comparative method, cooperation from various indigenous scholars--Lue, Shan, Black Tai, Ahom, etc., are needed. All have to be helping hands in developing the Tai culture and can thus maintain their own cultures even though they are minorities.

One of the main differences which is quite crucial is that the community culture approach believes that the root of Tai culture could be found having studied and compared various Tai cultures.

A COMPARATIVE TAI SOCIETIES AND CULTURES: A CHALLENGING FUTURE

The fall of Soviet Union, the end of the cold war, and the spread of the world economy resulting the globalizaton process recently have made it possible for scholars of Tai studies to carry on their projects in regions where the Tai live. All countries in mainland Southeast Asia are opening doors for their neighbors to visit and invest. Indigenous cultures are used to attract tourists, investors, etc. Academic cooperation among institutions of higher education are supported by government of each country. This never happens before in the past.

Infrastructures have been contructed recently. Airports, highways, electricity generators, piers, etc. are built to facilitate industry, factories, and tourist industry. Within an hour by airplane, the destination could be reached in the near future. Chiangtung, Chiangrung, Muang Mao, Muang Thaeng, Luang Prabang, for instance, all these Tai cities are close and connected to each other by modern technology.

This, in turn, will help the comparative study of Tai societies and cultures. Tai scholars still conduct their research on Tai studies in their country, and have their own Tai studies centre. And at the same time, they have chances to exchange their information with other Tai scholars in other countries via modern technology. The modern comparative study will focus on the reseach and study done by indigenous scholars. Indigenous manuscripts will be read and studied in order to understand Tai societies

and cultures. It will be the study from the awareness of the owners of the culture for the sake of their own culture and community development. The community will be proud of its own history and culture, and can be able to maintain its ethnic identity, and to be culturally independent.

The study does not promote the Pan-Tai/Thai ideology. In contrast, the study encourage the Tai cultural networks among various Tai groups in the areas, strengthening their community and culture and mutual help. Each community should understand themselves, their history. They would not be forced to accept other cultures.

This age can be considered as the age of comparative study of Tai societies and cultures. The study will not focus only on Tai history, societies, and cultures in Tai manuscripts, legends, folktales, etc., but indigenous scholars who know Burmese, Assamese, Chinese, Vietnamese, etc., can be a lot of help in conducting research by using other languages' manuscripts, i.e., state's official language. This would render more insight of the Tai history, society and culture from information or sources written by non-Tai scholars in different periods.

A big obstacles to Tai studies has been the language, spoken and written, of each Tai group, and the languages of the nation-states to which these Tai groups belong. The cooperation and participation of Tai scholars of various Tai groups will automatically solve the problem. Theoretical framework can be shared, exchanged, and learned from each other. The comparative study then could be done efficiently.

It seems that the real comparative Tai studies is now starting, and spreading into various academic fields. Indigenous manuscripts, oral history, traditions, and all other aspects of Tai cultures and societies are being collected and studies. The true age of Tai studies, a comparative Tai studies in particular, just now begins.

IMPACTS OF TAI STUDIES ON THAI STUDIES

Modern technology has shrunk the vast areas of Tai settlements into a small world. Thai studies has not been the same as before. The world economy, the regional economic cooperation in Asia and Southeast Asia has turned Thai studies into a new phase. Tai studies has become the connecting point, good will each country would like to express. Tai cultures are part of tourist attractions that draws investors and tourists to

these countries. Thai studies has included the study of all Tai ethnic groups in the region.

Tai studies helps strengthen indigenous cultures in various regions upon learning the existence of other Tai cultures. This, in turn, will help the Tai communities to develop their own cultures and communities with self-understanding and self-awareness of their long history.

To understand Thailand and Thai society and culture, Tai studies will be crucial in providing answers about ethnic identity, root of Tai cultures, development and transformation of Tai cultures and societies. An insight of Tai history, society and culture will help understand our own rural culture, which would lead to have a better development plan.

Development of the future form of society, state would play less role, but the community, and local government would become more important, play more important role in determining the future of their own community, society and culture. All Tai communities in the region would increasingly play more active and aggressive roles in politics and economy.

As a consequence, Thai studies will have to broaden its scope to cover all regions outside Thailand and Tai societies and cultures, inside and outside Thailand. This will be a vast cultural areas of the Tai and other ethnic groups that will have more interactions among each others. Thai studies is not then limited within political or nation-state borders, but will be expand to the cultural borders.

TAI STUDIES IN THE FUTURE

Movements of local culture studies, changes in politics and economy of nation-states in mainland Southeast Asia and China, the spread of world economy, and new technology, all make Tai studies more interesting than ever. This will result in the increasing roles of local communities, and cultures. Tai studies will be one of the central, crucial issues of the region that links these nation-states together beside economic cooperation.

Indigenous scholars will play more role in the study and research of Tai societies and cultures. Indigenous information on history, society, culture of the Tai will be shared

among Tai communities, including Thailand. Analytical study may still be in the hands of academics in institutions of higher education, but later will be transferred to those indigenous scholars. Cooperation amongs Tai scholars in the region will sharply increase. This may lead to the foundation of the Tai Studies center in Thailand and in other countries. Joint research projects will also increase.

Two theoretical approaches will be widely practiced, that is, the anthropological and community culture approaches since these approaches allow scholars and researchers to go to Tai communities to study all cultural events, behaviors, beliefs, etc. And more importantly, these appraoches focus on the insight, and from the community's point of view. Results of the study and research will be more meaningful in that they will be used in community development.

CONCLUSION

Tai studies in the last three decades has changed from western scholars to the hand of Thai scholars, from "outsiders" who are interested in Tai studies to "insiders" who are indigenous scholars themselves. These "insiders" will be encouraged to play more aggressive role in the study of their own society and culture with self-awareness, consciousness with difinite goals, that is, to preserve, to support, and to revive their own culture, and to develop their own community and culture.

Tai studies which started from one's own interest and curiosity, with monodisciplinary approach, from observer's point of view, has later transformed to the interest and benefit of Tai community, from the community's or villagers' point of view, and with multidisciplinary approach or holistic view. Ultimately, it is the study of the community in order to understand the community and to benefit the community themselves.

Social, economic, and political changes in the last three decades give rise to the change of perspectives, theoretical frameworks, methodology, and objectives of Tai studies. Modern technology help support and very much facilitate the study.

It is a good sign that all recent political, economic and social changes have very positive impacts on Tai studies. The vast area becomes small by modern technology. The study and research can be done across national boundaries. Aristocrats' point of

view have been changed to commoners' one, and then the study has been done from observers or outsiders scholars, but now insiders or indigenous scholars are encouraged and supported to do the study of their own community.

All these changes will not only help promote good relations and understanding among various Tai communities, but also help develop their own societies, cultures and communities. Knowing, understanding and being proud one's own history, culture and society will be the best protection from the fall of one's own community.

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STUDIES IN SOCIAL RELATIONS AND THAI STUDIES

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INTRODUCTION

The birth of capitalism from the last two centuries had produced great impact upon all social relations. As has been remarked, capitalism seems much more "revolutionary" than socialism (cf.Scott 1985:346) and it destroyed a large number of previous normative social relations and their determinants (both abstract and material); and opened up a way for a transformation towards a new establishment of new normative (oftentime contestable) types of social relations. The determinants of new types of social relations are not only derived exogenously but occurred through inventive, selective, and oftentime both conflicting and accommodating 'choice' from among various groups or individuals who constitute that society.

For a developing country like Thailand, since after the second world war (or perhaps as early as after the signing of the Bowring Treaty in 1855) there is an urge to 'develop' or 'modernize'. The construction of the nation' and 'nationalism is also read 'modernization' and 'progress'. The body of knowledge produced after the second world war when 'Thai studies' of 'social relations' first began is preoccupied with tracing the backward traits in 'thai' style relations- trying to identify backward traditional patterns so that solutions or remedies can be provided. The discourse of modernization and development has provided the elites, those who controlled state power to justify their legitimacy in determining and directing the social relations towards the more modernized and westernized capitalistic relations.

However, this dominant discourse was not operating without contest. There emerged in Thai Studies, especially after the 1970s alternative perspective in Thai Studies

trying to represent the voice of the hitherto unrepresented. Shifts in the direction of the production of knowledge also reflected changing social context. When Thailand was still largely 'undeveloped', the production of knowledge seemed to have been geared in the direction of attempts to find solutions to solve 'backwardness' and oftentime providing, intentionally or not, justification for the ruling elites. At times of great transitions and uprisings like in the 1970s, the body of knowledge then produced reflected doubts and challenges towards dominant discourse. Lately when it seems the country is heading deeply towards globalized capitalistic relations, scholars produced works that questioned and criticized social relations that seemed to be mediated and sometimes determined via money relations. There are some laments over the loss of past moralbound ideology replaced by heartless unconcerned material relations.

The aim of this paper is to try to examine the production of knowledge as well as the changing social context or relations that gave rise to changes in perspectives in the production of knowledge.

THE DISCOURSE ON TRADITIONALITY AND MODERNITY

THE FIRST TURNING POINT: CONSTRUCTION OF MODERNITY

In Thai studies it seemed for a long period of time we have been haunted by the image that Thai social relations are loosely-structured. Relationships are not fixed but seem to be flexible according to circumstances rather than frozen or determined by the social position one holds. This is especially true (only?) of relationship within the family. It is now well known that the construction of Embree's paradigm was not based on evidence from intensive fieldwork but it is equally well known that even the Bang Chan school with its intensive fieldwork could not escape from the seduction of the loosely-structured paradigm explanatory power . It has been argued that as Embree was an American Anthropologist , he has been influenced by American anthropological tradition of cultural particularism that refuses universal explanation of cultural development in linear fashion. It is also believed that the work of Benedict, a student of Boas, on Thai Culture and Behaviour which depicts the peculiarity of Thainess must have had some impact on the formation of Embree's

paradigm. Another factor is perhaps Embree's previous experience of field work in rural Japan before the second world war which must have helped him form a contrasting picture between well disciplined, tightly structured social relations among the Japanese in comparison to the Thai relatively undisciplined flexible ways of forming social relations.

The effectiveness of the discourse lies not on the essence of Embree's proposal, but on how it has been accepted into the Thai public. Partly, quite a number of Thai scholars have been trained in American Anthropological tradition and therefore must have come across, if not under the influence, of Embree's model. Even among the Thai administrator class not trained abroad but trained in Thai universities, Embree's ideas must have crossed through into their studies via their instructors. Newspapers also echoed the loosely structured paradigm in popular version, blaming the undisciplined Thai for not knowing how to work in groups because of their over-individualistic character, which explained why Thailand was still undeveloped.

Why do Thai public chose to believe that they are over-individualistic and undiscipline. One answer may be that they (the elites, the emergent middle class) wanted to 'eradicate' all traits of backwardness, among them undisciplinarity, and unrationality. By first identifying what were the problems against development can later solutions be found to solve the problems. (see Sanit 2519BE:234)

Most pioneering sociological and anthropological studies after the war and well into the 60s and 70s reflected very well the concern with the problem of 'change and persistence' of Thai social structure. As modernization theorists have pointed out, modernization and industrialization require modernizing traits in quite a number of area in the social structure, for example, there must be a change in the economic institution where private property and transferrability of property must be recognized; there must be a market economy where goods and services can be exchanged on a relatively large scale; labour must also be able to move freely. In political institution, a modernizing trends involved political stability and modern legal system. Social attitudes which are susceptible to modernity must accept that social mobility is possible through achievement. Social organization and administration must be based on efficiency rather than personal

preference, and hence 'rationality' in social organization must be recognized. (Moore 1963).

THE CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONALISM AND MODERNITY

In 1989 a conference was held in Monash University in Australia where a number of scholars on Thai studies came to discuss and reflect on the impact of the fiftieth year anniversary of the name change of what is now Thailand from the previous name of Siam (Reynolds 1991:1). The construction of nationalism in the period when Phibun controlled state power was already well known, but the impact of his schema upon the present generation of the Thai public may not have been as widely recognized. The construction of a nation is not just only the construction of a definite geobody, the construction of symbols (eg., national anthem, flags) to arouse shared sentimentality, but it also involves the construction of an identity' of a Thainess which is different from the otherness. This Thainess is constructed around selection from 'good' past traits in combination of 'good' traits from the west. Hence Phibun invented a national decree on 'culture' which was defined as characteristics that reflected civilization and orderliness, a unity and progress of the nation, as well as good morality in the public..." (cf. Dictionary by the Thai Academy).

As Phibun must have realized, a culture, and social relations within it, cannot hang in the air but must involve around a particular way of life, constructed around abstract ideas and mediated by things or 'artifacts'. Whereas nationalism in the West emerged with social slogans of liberty, equality and fraternity, Thai nationalism was constructed around unity. And this unity was in their turn constructed around common heritage and shared struggle since past time when 'we', despite our love of peace, together fought against our enemy to maintain our territory and Thainess.

Phibun's campaign on the construction of a new culture, despite the fact that it was largely ridiculed in its time (cf. Kukrit 2523 B.E.) had produced a much lasting impact than we may have imagined. Though his campaign that the Thai public should wear a hat when going out may have been discarded, Thai women since then had followed a new culture of wearing a skirt. These are only but a few minor concrete examples that show that the display of material visibility as a sign of modernity has been encouraged in government

policy. The significance of this new cultural campaign is perhaps the fact that it tried to define what is modernity and what is not, and it authorized the state the legitimacy to determine for the public the direction of progress for the country.

THE WRITING OF THAI STYLE SOCIAL RELATIONS AND THE ROLE OF THE PAST IN THAI STUDIES.

Three major pieces of work which are significant in the contribution (construction?) in the attempts among scholars to identify the peculiar Thainess as manifested in Thai social relations (structure) must include Akin Raphipattana's *Thai Social Structure in the Early Ratanakosin Period (2512 B.E.)*, an article by Hanks, "Merit and Power in the Thai Social Order" (1962) (which I read second-handedly through Suwanna 2530B.E.), and Tambiah's *World Renouncer and World Conquerors* (1976).

Despite the fact that the authors had depicted the peculiarity of Thainess in their studies, (Akin's patron-clients relations, Hanks' Buddhist concept of merit in the legitimization of power, or Tambiah's galactic and radial polity,) certain traits of their conceptual formation are influenced by existing prominent traditional scholarly writing. Anderson noticed the similarity of Weber's Ideal Type of Patrimonialism in Akin's analysis (Anderson 1978) while Weber's interests in the associations between social spirits formed around specific religious ideology may have influenced works like Hank's and Tambiah's. At this stage we may note that Weber's preoccupation, not dissimilar to Marx, was in identifying how capitalism had or had not emerge. Hanks's analysis of 'instability in stability' where flexible relations are embedded in Buddhist conceptual framework of past merit attempted to generate an understanding of the lack of fundamental changes in Thai social system while the Patrimonialism model seemed to provide explanation on the lack of the rational legal system.

Of all the three pieces, Tambiah's attempts seemed to have been most successful in depicting changes in the Thai social relations. He did not view the political system as static, noticing the change as the system adapts from 'galactic' to 'radial' polity. At the same time he noticed the change in the underlying teaching of Buddhism as practiced in

Thailand, of how it has tried to adapt itself to explaining rationality. Furthermore Tambiah noticed how changes could be mediated through the flow of 'selected' continuity. In his last chapter he noticed two roles of the past, first, the 'Western notion of purposeful past leading to purposeful future', and second, the use of the past as a sanction against undesired change. Inferring to Tambiah's analysis we may come to a conclusion that the drive to modernity and progress in Thailand has perhaps evolved around the selection of past traits to drive and at the same time, check, its motion.

THE SECOND TURNING POINT

REINTERPRETING PAST SOCIAL RELATIONS; A MARXIST ANALYSIS.

With the growth of Marxism in a certain sphere in academic interests in the West from around the end of the Second World War to the Vietnam War, a certain number of Thai people interested in Thai studies had also examined Marxism for application in Thai analysis. Jit Phumisak wrote many analytical work in Thai social relations through Marxist concept of relations of production, including a short piece of poetry which depicted how a labour of a farmer was hardly spent and then appropriated in the form of rice that was consumed by the non-direct producers. The past social relations were constructed around inequality, and the political implication in this school of writing is that this inequality should and must be eradicated. (in contrast to the eradication of undisciplinarity, irrationality, over-individuality, as proposed by the modernization school).

Jit's writing which appeared in the late 50s/early 60s when it was quickly suppressed, reappeared among Thai intellectuals in the 70s, at the time of political unrests, perhaps because it provided the analysis that a change in social relations are needed. Apart from the political unrests which manifested itself in the late 1970s, the early 1970s already witnessed many changes and inequality which disturbed many young intellectuals at the time. Wittayakorn's widely read four short lines of verses, "I am young, I am ignorant, I am puzzled, I come in search of a meaning, I want to harvest many things, but look, what I

get is only a piece of paper", despite it being an attack on the university education system it reflected very well the emerging new needs of the young generation. Many writing in the 70s, short stories that appeared in popular magazines, many of which written by young people of Wittayakorn's generation and many of whom came from the countryside of petty official parents or farmers or petty traders, depict many conflicting desires, from Wanit Jarungkitanan's story on wanting to go to America (and the difficulty arose from trying to pass a language test and obtaining a visa) to a story discussing bad influences of town upon the countryside (see Anderson and Ruchira 1985). It seemed modernization was appearing, in the forms of material objects such as tall buildings and large roads, among many things; but inequality, especially as seen through the eyes of many young people from the countryside was also manifested. On top of that, many noted the changes in social relations on community base of 'love and support' where everybody knows everybody else to the 'heartless' relations where no one pays attention to anyone except someone with money. Past social relations whether real or imaginary became a desirable alternative to the intolerable and unfair present. This is in contrast to the point of view of the Thais of the previous generation who viewed the past as partly backward and which therefore must be selectively eradicated and selectively modernized. But, despite a nostalgia for the past peaceful existence among the young people, there is also a desire at the same time for a 'true' democratic emancipation, a look ahead for a more promising future.

More serious academic writing in the Marxist tradition originated in the work of Chatthip and Suthy, *The Political Economy of Siam 1850-1910, and 1910-32*, and followed by Chatthip's edited work of the *Evolution of Capitalism in Thailand* which includes many pieces of writing of his students. Thai social relations are read through Marxist relations of production and Chatthip captured attention of a relatively large number of young intellectuals though their number was still too small to compete to replace the 'main stream' discourse. The *Journal of political Economy* was founded in 1978 as a venue for exchange and introduction of new ideas among a small number of young scholars. Within this loose circle, by the early 1980s there have appeared emerging interests away from the analysis of relations of production, or the political economy aspect of it, towards ideological reproduction

and domination (with analytical tools borrowed from Althusser) as well as the analysis of false consciousness and construction of consciousness. The interpretation of past social relations as exploitative has led to the identification of what they call the Sakdina bond, the power relations wherein the old Sakdina ruling class still held control of state power and hence preventing the emergence of the bourgeois class to lead a development towards capitalism.

REINTERPRETING PAST SOCIAL RELATIONS ; THE SECOND (NON-MARXIST) ALTERNATIVE

The past as an unchanging social structure with unchanging social relations, awaiting the force of external Westernization to modernize its institutions was contested from a different perspective, roughly in the same period as the emergence of the Chatthip school in the early 1980s. A one-man attempt of a presentation of an analytical alternative, Nithi's *The Bourgeois Literature of The Early Ratanakosin, Period* produced great impact on the analysis of social relations. The work tried to demonstrate Bourgeois thinking or bourgeois rationality which is different of course from Sakdina mentality as represented in the literary work of the Early Ratanakosin. Nithi is perhaps the first among Thai scholars to mention the significance of money in Bourgeois' contest for equality on par with the Sakdina class, citing Khun Chang talking to his servants that he was considered a noble (phu dii) because of his wealth. Nithi of course further noticed that despite the claim for equality with the Sakdina, this claim by the Bourgeois who were principally 'jek' was not extended to the countryside. People with money may be more equal, but people of the countryside with their rough unpolished manner was still made fun of. However, Nithi noted that though emerging, this bourgeois rationality did not become dominant but seemed to have been defeated by the revival of the Sakdina value of the recent absolutist state of Reign Five.

Though reading of either Chatthip or Nithi in the early 1980s one may form an idea that Thailand seemed to have reached the impasse of becoming a capitalist society, however, later works from many scholarly tradition and also changing social context (with the growth of export economy) have proved that Thailand is accelerating towards

capitalism. Following Perry Anderson's analysis of Lineages of The Absolutist state, far from being an obstacle to capitalist development, the absolutist state may prepare the ground for the take off of capitalism by readjusting certain social relations as well as in accumulation of capital (cf. Chaiyan 1993, Somkiat 2525 B.E.).

THE THIRD TURNING POINT

GLOBALIZATION, INDUSTRIALIZATION AND THAI STUDIES

Quoting Marx and Engles in The Manifesto, on the revolutionary force of capitalism being at the same time constructive and deconstructive, Lash and Urry (1993) took as their starting point to discuss modernity as as a continuously transformed social life of temporal and spatial restructuring. Many Western scholars writing on western modernity or postmodernity also made reference to this revolutionary force of capitalism. Berman's All that is solid melts into air (1990) which derives its name also from Marx's writing, also discusses how modernity has destroyed past social relations through its reordering of space. Large avenues in big city in developed country like Paris or developing country like St Petersburg of Russia in the nineteenth century, is a reordering of space where free people from all walk of life could come to walk shoulder to shoulder, gazing at others and be gazed at.

Concerning modernity, Anderson's widely read Imagined Communities discusses nationalism as a peculiar cultural construction. It has to be imagined because however small a nation is it is impossible for members to know each other and Anderson cited the role of print capitalism as one factor that have helped to connect people from different space and time to each other and facilitate the imagination of each in a unity of a nation.

More recently in 1993 Anderson produced a small article on The New World Disorder where he discusses the globalizing process that connects the world into one. Labour mobility and transnational investment, a common feature of the present era brought different culture ever closer to each other, which involves a restructuring of identity and social relations .

In Thailand, Thongchai describes 'globalization' as a fever, especially among the

new rich who tried to create a legitimation of their power by claiming to be a part of the global process. In Thongchai's opinion this seems to even distance the new rich from the majority of the population, especially the poor rural dwellers who are not incorporated into the so called 'global village'.

But undeniably, the achievement of the economic growth, an average of 9.9% from 1985-1990 (Nipon 1996: 137), has meant an emergence of a new (extremely) rich and a not so extremely rich but perhaps better than average income earners in a large number who call themselves a middle class.

In 1995, the Matichon publication issued four volumes of collected essays by Nithi into the public. These articles were written mainly in the eighties mostly in the Silapa-Watanatham magazine. Each volume has its own introductory piece written by young well known scholars in the Thai academic circle. The selection of Nithi's old articles in these new collections must have proved that Nithi's name can sell, in other words people (young intellectuals?) do read or perhaps more appropriately, listen to, Nithi.

There are several articles which are very interesting and which tells us how Nithi view the changing direction of social relations in Thailand. First, Nithi noticed the expanding middle class who according to him, is in charge of the development of new Thai culture because they constitute the market which buys cultural products, but these are people who have relatively less control in formal politics. According to Nithi, a nation, to this strata of people, is a political unit which exists dependently on other nations especially through exchanges via trades. Though these people do fight for their right to participate in the country's political system, their fight only concerns their rights, and not necessarily those of the poor rural villagers who also fight, but in isolation and mostly unheard of; and if heard of, not given due attention from the other sector of the society. Second, however, Nithi is rather optimistic with the rising of (middle class?) democracy. In one article Nithi quoted Foucault who suggested that the destruction of absolute state has allowed a light to be shone into every part of every country allowing citizens to gaze at each other and thus controlling each other. Nithi concludes that this process meant the opening up of a broader public space, the area which was before a private territory of the absolute Monarch (Nithi 2538 B.E. : 209).

Third, Nithi seemed very concern with the destruction or disappearance of past peasant culture, reflecting in many rituals which have become devoid of their original meaning as they are now being (supported by the Tourist Organization Agency) performed on a changing social context. Nithi's main worry is that this destruction of the old meaning has not been replaced with an equally meaningful and powerful enough cultural constructs to build up the loss strength of the poor's security nest of old community. Nithi's third point seems to bear a certain similarity to Scott's concern of past morality of the peasant which have been lost (Scott 1978).

Though Nithi is often seen as a lone scholar (cf. Thongchai 1995, or Jiraporn 2539 B.E.) he definitely is not without friends and followers. Though Nithi's writing may be distinctive and his criticism all round may make it difficult to categorize him into any school of thoughts, he is writing in a shared social context with many scholars interersted in Thai studies. For example, Nithi's concern with the loss of past morality without replacement is a sentiment shared by many writers writing in the community culture school. So let us now turn to a brief survey of the community culture school.

Among many leading and respectable scholars, Seri's work represented an essence of the concern and analysis of this school. Seri discussed "community" as a past essence or "life" of rural people and a village as a foundation of rural living. But Seri lamented that a village has now become more like a town. In the (old) community members are connected with each other through a direct relationship and they (together) constitute their self reliance. They did not need to depend on society as they do today (Seri 1986: cited in Yukti 2538 B.E.: 79).

Seri's discussion sounded familiar to those who are familiar with Tonnies' notions of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (ci. Parsons 1949) which contrasted two types of Ideal types of social relationships of informal and face to face, in comparison with a more formal role based relations in which actors do not have to personally know each other. And this *Gemeinschaft*-like quality of pure Thai village was recognized by Kemp (1991: cited in Anan 2539 B.E.) which rendered Kemp to question what he accused of as being the romanticism aspect of the studies of the community culture school.

More sympathy with the community culture school is perhaps Hirsch's discussion of the conceptualization of a village as a 'discourse' where each contenders of the discourse (state vs. the community culture school) utilize the concepts in their own ways to pursue their respective goals. (cf. Anan 2538B.E.) Writing about Thai natives writing on their own history, Thongchai (1995) remarked that the work of Thai scholars on their own society is perhaps partly a discourse produced not only as a scholar but also as a Thai who is a part of the Thai society, each has their desire to propose change and interpret 'facts' from their places and perspectives within Thai society. A recent seminar on Thai senior thinkers in 1996 where many senior Thai scholars' hopes and inspiration are discussed revealed how each seemed to feel responsible for their society. (Apart from a few papers, their academic achievement was only trivially discussed). (cf.Jintanapap suu pii 2000).

In another criticism of the community culture school, it has been suggested that writers in this school tried to depict a picture of an ambiguous but peaceful past as a technique of representation (Yukti 2538 B.E.). We may recall that this is perhaps not a new venture in Thai intellectual tradition. Many short story writers in the 1970s had also discussed past peaceful ways of life which seemed lost forever once they have set foot into town. The same scenario was presented in many modern Thai folk songs (pleng luk tung). So in a certain way the Thai community culture school does not seem to be standing alone but seemed to be operating and speaking from a shared social context and sentiments that long for past peaceful social relations whether 'real' or imaginary.

Apart from concerns with the destruction of past morality and past peaceful social relations or the concern over the destruction of the *Gemeinschaft* side of the social relations, the emergence of a modern society (the *Gesellschaft* side) is also a preoccupation among many scholars writing in Thai studies. Many pieces of writing on these issues may be found in the newspaper, discussing consumerism among the teenagers or despising 'false community' mediated through monetary relations where everything is being bought and sold (cf.Attajak 2539B.E.).

As Nithi remarked, the expanding middle class in the Thai society held control over the determination of new Thai culture because they constituted the market which buys

cultural products, and as Kasien tried to analyze in his recent article on "consuming Thainess", what these people are buying are not just products but the symbols associated with the products. Thongchai once remarked that as Thais are pre-occupied with "modernity" and of establishing a modern identity, we chose to construct (and perhaps buy) what would represent us as modern. But this modernity is slightly complicated and has become much more sophisticated than it was for Thais in the past. Whereas in the past to be modern (and therefore superior) is to buy and display Western products, the superiority of the modern time among Thai must be to buy and display what is modern as well as Thai. This is superior not only because it is modern but because it is exclusive and authentic. Nobody else but Thais can display modern Thainess.

To bring us back from consumerism to social relations, at this stage we may say that the concerns over consumerism is closely related to concerns over changing social relations. As once remarked by Lukacs, in the mature stage of development of capitalism, it is not only labour that has been commodified, but commodification is generalized to all social relations (cf. Ulin 1991:76). And perhaps this is why all that is solid melts into air. Even love can be bought. People do not even know how to naturally love but have to be taught the 'art of loving' (cf. Eric Fromm's best seller in the U.S. and translated into Thai). (see also a brief discussion on this in Atthajak 2539 B.E.) While Lukacs was preoccupied with raising the consciousness of workers so that they realized the objective condition of their exploitation (and Thai writers concerned with the problem of consciousness are for example Kanjana 2526 B.E.), there is a shift, for example as in the recent writing of Kasien, to use a different approach to view commodification of all social relations as a representation of a new type of social relations, and how meanings are constructed or perceived by each individual whom we may now call a consumer.

THE FOURTH TURNING POINT : A NEW TREND IN THAI STUDIES

POWER RELATIONS AND SUBJECT AND SUBJECTIVITY IN THAI STUDIES

Vandergeest makes a remark that the study of modernity seems to be preoccupied with two aspects of social forces which may seem oppositional, that is on the one hand, social scientists paid attention to the limitation of capitalism such as the Weberian iron cage

or foucauldian discipline and regulation; but on the other hand, social scientists are also interested in the more emancipatory movement within capitalism such as de Tocquville's revolutionary democracy or democratic participation as discussed by LaClau and Mouffe. Despite it being seemingly oppositional, however, Vandergeest remarks that they are dual processes that occur simultaneously. In the same paper he also remarks that changes taking place in the wider sphere like the National or global spheres also produce impact upon changes at the local level. In his opinion, Anderson's analysis of the imagined communities paid emphasis on the role of print capitalism and the middle class in the emergence of nationalism without touching upon such impact on the rural sector. On the other hand Scott's emphasis of changes, and ideological struggles taking place in the local arena does not give due weight to the impact of nationalism and the claim of citizenship on the part of the rural inhabitants. According to Vandergeest, the emergence of a nation state with the change of social status of the majority of people from 'royal subjects' to that of 'citizenary' does produce an impact on the rural inhabitants who demand more rights as citizens. While there is an attempt by the state to regularize these citizens, as he shows in the case study from Satinpra in the south of Thailand, as through the use of legal forces, the villagers, who now conceive of themselves as a citizen can demand citizenship right, making their demands on the same law codes. The regulatory force can at the same time be reinterpreted as an emancipatory force. In this respect we may say that Vandergeest's work is one of the pioneering efforts in Thai studies to discuss power relations through the concepts of subject and subjectivity.

As a matter of fact, in 1984 Turton wrote about the "limits of ideological domination" where he attempted to demonstrate that the so called 'dominant ideology' can never forever be dominant. He discussed the process of 'interpellation' a process wherein domination (by dominating forces) is attempted through repetitive doctrination, combined sometimes with appeals, though occasionally with threat and physical force to form a subject out of an individual. However, as people are imaginative, they have ways to reinterpret and use the same ideology to fight back against the dominating force. For example, while 'nationalism' may be used as a controlling ideology against any act that the

dominating forces may define as a threat to national security, the subjects thus under control may make a list of their own invention that certain acts, for example, corruption, is more a threat to national security; and hence those in control of state power if failing in the accusation from below as being corrupted may not be immuned to hold on their monopoly of the love of the nation, and hence, their state power. In this sense, Turton's work has also touched upon the analysis of power relation and formation of subject and subjectivity.

In 1991 Manas and Turton edited a book on Thai constructions of knowledge which includes collection of articles that discuss power relations through formation of subject and subjectivity. Tanabe's paper on the 'Spirits, power and the discourse of female gender' attempts a discussion on the formation of female subjects while Turton's own work on "invulnerability and local knowledge" may be seen as an attempt on the discussion of the formation of male subjects.

At roughly the same time, *National Identity and Its Defenders*, edited by Reynolds (1991) shows an attempt to discuss how Thai nationality as an identity or subject is constructed through a distinctive process of the construction of Thainess as against Otherness.

CONCLUSION

The change in the social relations in Thailand, roughly speaking is changes from the traditional relations - ascribed status base, to that of a more modern one, -which is achievement base. Though it may be too reductionist a statement to say that the development follows the modernization handbook, a certain direction that Thailand is heading seems to suggest that the statement may not be without truth, though of course much more complex processes have been occurring all along. Within this development process, there is a reluctance on the one hand to cling to the past, peaceful way of life, while at the same time there is a desire to be more westernized and hence 'modern'.

Since after the second world war Thailand has been pushing rapidly into the globalized economy. During the time of Luang Phibun it has been observed that the nationalism project of Luang Phibun could not be separated from the discourse of

modernity and progress (Vandergeest 1993: 142). Though some scholars may have viewed Buddhism as an obstacle to modern development, many scholars were convinced that Buddhism has been reinterpreted as supportive of modern development, and that the role of Buddhist monks as developers of modernity should not be underestimated (cf. Reynolds 1972, Tambiah 1976). 'Modern' Buddhist teaching emphasized 'hard work' as an ethic which is complementary to capitalist development (Vandergeest 1993). It was even remarked that Buddhist monks were incorporated harmoniously within the capitalist development process as quite often monks do have a role to perform in the opening ceremonies of modern business enterprises and given an offering in cash (Sulak 1981, cited in Turton 1988).

A reading of "The Bourgeois Literature" writing by Nithi some times in the early 1980s traced the development of Bourgeois thinking as manifested in the literature in the early Ratanakosin period, which gave rise to Bourgeois type of social relations. Bourgeois thinking emphasized hard work, a virtue of having wealth or 'money', and including more mundane (scientific) thinking of this worldliness and this worldly possible achievement, in contrast to the loathing of physical work, the condemnation of working for money (though not at money per se), and the thinking of the other-worldliness and accumulation of past merit as justification for present being of the Sakdina class. However, Nithi observed that where the Bourgeois may assert the right to be treated more equally, this demand was not extended to all kinds of social relations (town and country, men and women) but restricted only to the contest to be treated on par with the Sakdina class.

In modern time, with the acceleration of capitalist development, it has been observed that there is a change in the fundamental concept of time from a more relaxed pre-capitalist 'natural time' recognition to a more precise measurement of clock time and sometimes even of money time (cf. Turton 1984, 1988) - and this took place even in the rural area. Villagers who returned from factory work from town brought with them the 'modern' concept of time. In the changing rural areas it was observed that festivals are sometimes not held on ground of 'lack of time'. The general atmosphere is the quickening tempo of work of two or even three cycles of crops a year, which makes it necessary for

replacement of human labour who can no longer perform fast enough task, to machinery.

Rapid industrialization resulted inevitably to the influx of migration from rural areas into town - both in the form of unskilled or skilled labour seeking either temporary or permanent employment in town, as well as the young people seeking education who later form themselves into a category of white collar workers. These two categories of workers, the rootless free labour from the countryside formed a substantial composition of residence of Bangkok which was estimated as no less than 8 millions in the 1990s. They entered into a new form of social relations of the impersonal, anonymous, faceless type of the 'Gesellschaft', of a large city- a different kind of setting of space from the smaller unit of the countryside that they were accustomed of.

Apart from the category of the new urban dwellers there are still a relatively large number of people at the fringe of development, the marginals, the poor people in the rural area and poor unskilled workers in the urban area. Discussing the 'New Poverty Line' Medhi (2536 B.E.) stated that, though the number of poor people below the old poverty line may have been reduced, but as the standard and cost of living in the past twenty years had risen new indices are needed to construct a new poverty line. And when these new indices are taken into consideration, the number of people below the poverty line are still fairly large. The problem of poverty and inequality is still a critical issue facing Thailand.

Within this social context where 'the static world of the peasants of old has crumbled', 'the world beyond the reach of scientific reasoning' has to give way to the new capitalist force. 'Performance in the broad Thai essence (not only stage performance) degenerated and would only be kept in museum, because this performance cannot take place out of its (familiar) social context (which has already been changed)' (Nithi 2538B.E. (b) : 91).

On the one hand, there is a nostalgia to go back in search of our 'root' - to revive good 'traditional' way of Thai life. This urge to reconstruct traditional Thai community is not a unique Thai experience. Scott's writing of the claim to return to old Islamic virtue of the socialized produce in the form of Zakat by the poor peasant in a Malaysian village, and their complaints of the heartless stingy capitalist landowners is but one example of the utilization

of the 'weapons of the weak'.

Quite in contrast to the community culture school there are people who argue that conflicting forces between 'old and new' may not be a 'problem' since they together form a driving force of an always dynamic social relations (cf. Thongchai 2538 B.E.). These conflicting forces may even help to provide a release from the old oppressive force also called 'tradition'. However, one should be aware of the claim of the new domination, the new globalization discourse as proposed by the new middle class who try to assert their ascension into power by controlling and guiding social relations to their advantage through the image of 'modernity'.

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**AMONG DRAGONS, GEESE AND TIGERS:
THE THAI ECONOMY
IN GLOBAL AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVES**

BY

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AMONG DRAGONS, GEESE AND TIGERS: THE THAI ECONOMY IN GLOBAL AND LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

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From 1980 until the Asian economic crisis in 1997 the Thai economy ranked among the fastest growing in the world. As a result, study of the Thai economy is no longer a local preserve. Thailand is now part of the global debate on the nature of economic change, and particularly on the dynamics of Asian economic growth. This debate has been populated with animals, both mythical and real. Japan has been pictured as the leader of a flight of geese. South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong were dubbed as the Four Dragons or Asian Tigers. In the early 1990s Thailand along with Indonesia and Malaysia were sometimes called the little dragons or tigercubs.

This paper discusses approaches to the Thai economy during the economic boom years of the 1980s to 1995. These approaches cover a broad spectrum, with both local and international perspectives. The first part of the paper outlines the on-going global debate on the dynamics of Asian economic growth, especially the exchange between the World Bank and a group of economists at the UNCTAD. The second part focuses on local approaches: the management approach of the Bank of Thailand; the liberal neo-classicism of the Thai Development Research Institute (TDRI); the institutional approach among economists in Thai universities; the political economy view at Chulalongkorn University; and new approaches among Thai non-government organisations (NGOs).

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PART I: GLOBAL DEBATE ON THE DYNAMICS OF ASIAN ECONOMIC GROWTH**The World Bank's Miracle Study**

In 1993 the World Bank (WB) published *East Asian Miracle: Economic Growth and Public Policy*. This special, high-profile WB report set out to draw conclusions from the experiences of high performing Asian economies, for application as policy lessons for other developing countries. The eight Asian economies covered in the WB study were Japan; the four first-tier NICs of South Korea (Republic of Korea), Taiwan (the Republic of China), Singapore and Hong Kong; and the three second-tier NICs of Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. These were identified as the eight East Asian miracle economies because they had all achieved rapid economic growth and structural change, especially since the 1960s. The WB also cited other indicators of high achievement, such as high rates of GNP per capita, declining poverty levels, a rise in life expectancy, and an improvement in the human resource development index.

According to the WB, the success of the three second-tier NICs was based on promotion of export-oriented industrialisation, trade liberalisation and foreign direct investment. Their major strategies had been: support for private enterprise operating freely in a market economic system; investment in education to improve the quality of human resources; and an open policy towards capital movement. The government's role was confined to macroeconomic management and human resource development. The governments had not taken any direct role in the economy, with the exception of some investments in state enterprises which the WB advised should be phased out by privatisation. The WB recognised the need for governments to intervene to safeguard the environment in the interests of long-term 'sustainable growth'. But the WB advised governments to use the price mechanism (the idea of 'polluter pays') rather than direct controls.

The WB argued that economic stability is necessary for economic growth because it promotes foreign capital inflow and increases the competitiveness of exports, the heart of export-oriented industrialisation. The WB especially praised Thai policy-

makers for adhering to strict macroeconomic management based on a balanced budget, conservative fiscal and monetary policies, and a stable baht, and for maintaining a relatively open economy which welcomed foreign direct investment.

The WB emphasised that governments should reduce their intervention in the economy and let the market mechanism have full play. The WB argued that government intervention distorted the market, prevented optimal resource allocation, and generated wasteful 'economic rent'. The WB particularly objected to direct intervention in setting industrial policies (such as providing low interest rates for small and medium firms in specific industries, subsidies to enterprises for export production). The *Miracle* report argued that the second-tier NICs were able to achieve rapid economic growth through industrialisation without an industrial policy.

The WB extended its non-interventionist stance to social policy. It opposed active interventions to solve problems of income distribution, and argued that better equity could be achieved by a mixture of expanded education and long-run 'trickle-down'. For those living below poverty lines, the WB granted the need for government to provide safety nets, but cautioned that these policies should not cause an undue burden on the government budget. On political development, the World Bank argued that the market mechanism operates best in a democratic environment. But it declined to suggest ways to promote democracy.

At the close of the *Miracle* study, the WB advocated minimum government intervention in the economy, absence of industrial policy, integration with the world economy, and limited social policy intervention as a model for emulation by other less industrialised countries wishing to develop.

The UNCTAD View

A group of economists at UNCTAD¹ took particular objection to the WB conclusions about government roles in the industrialisation of Asian countries.² The

¹ Included in the group are such as Professors Alit Singh, Robert Rowthorn, H.J. Chang and Gabriel Palma at the University of Cambridge; K.S. Jomo at the University of Malaya, Pasuk Phongpaichit at Chulalongkorn University.

² On first-tier NICs alone there is a vast literature based on the two competing paradigms of 1) neo-classical market-oriented explanations, and b) the statist explanations which belong to the genre of new political economy. See a neat

UNCTAD group challenged each of the main points of the WB argument: the role of industrial policy, the relationship with the world economy, the role of economic 'rents', and the content of social policy.

The UNCTAD group argued against the view that Asian experience proved that countries could industrialise without any industrial policy. The group viewed industrial policy in broad terms as state intervention to promote specific industries. The group analysed the experience of first-tier NICs in promoting intermediate and capital good industries, particularly the case of South Korea in the 1960s. The Korean government used preferential subsidised loans directed to priority sectors; subsidised inputs for specific firms; and promotion of large monopolies so that firms could achieve scale economies where necessary. Other industrial policies used by the first-tier NICs included measures to promote national saving; controls on imports and foreign capital flow in order to promote local rather than foreign firms; and management of domestic investment for greater efficiency in the use of scarce resources of capital (Chang, 1994: 108-118). Summing up the UNCTAD case, one writer concluded:

There is now widespread acknowledgement of the role of the state in East Asian late industrialisation and of considerable variation in the role, nature and extent of government intervention, and how all this has changed over time (Deyo, 1987; White, 1988; Amsden, 1989; Wade, 1991; Chang, 1994).³

Further, the UNCTAD group challenged the WB view that foreign investment was critical to growth and that the best way to attract foreign investment was to keep the economy open and well-integrated with the world economy. The UNCTAD group argued that the first-tier NICs regulated the degree of integration with the world economy, welcomed foreign investment only into strategic sectors, and where necessary defended local capital from the full brunt of international competition. As one of the group concluded:

summary of this debate in Chowdhury & Islam, 1993: ch.3.

³ Jomo K. Sundaram, 'Industrial Policy in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia: Lessons from Growth and Structural Change in the Second-Tier Asian Newly Industrialising Countries', mimeo of report prepared for UNCTAD (Faculty of Economics, University of Malaysia, 1996), p. 137.

... these countries achieved strategic integration with the world economy by integrating up only to the degree and in those spheres where it was desirable for them to do so in order to promote long-term economic growth.⁴

However, the UNCTAD group conceded that foreign direct investment had played a more important role in the experience of second-tier NICs than in the case of first-tier NICs. Nevertheless statistics show that only Malaysia has had a high share of foreign direct investment in total investment. In Thailand foreign direct investment contributed only 10 percent of total investment in the 1990s. The UNCTAD group also conceded that industrial policy had been less significant in the case of second-tier NICs, but denied that there had been no industrial policy at all. Moreover the group argued that the weakness of industrial policy had resulted in a relatively shallow industrial structure and limited technological capabilities.

Next the UNCTAD group challenged the WB view that government interventions inevitably created economic 'rents' which were more likely to retard than accelerate growth:

... some of the motives for state intervention may be described as 'rent-seeking behaviour' and are 'wasteful' in the sense that rent is necessarily dissipated entirely... as suggested by neo-classical economic analysis (e.g. Krueger 1974). But uncorruptible government and forward-looking policy makers would... strengthen state capacity and the quality of industrial policy (or government intervention) in such a way as to structure rents more effectively to achieve desired economic policy objectives and minimise unnecessary and undesirable rentier activity as well as rent dissipation due to rent-seeking activities.⁵

An UNCTAD-group economist working on South Korea argued that rent transfers may well enhance rather than undermine growth. If capital flight is discouraged, the

⁴ Ajit Singh, *How Did East Asia Grow so Fast? Slow Progress Towards an Analytical Consensus*, Discussion Paper No 97 (UNCTAD, Geneva, 1995), p. 46.

⁵ Jomo, 'Industrial Policy', p. 138

greater concentration of wealth associated with such rentier activity may actually raise corporate savings, thus accelerating capital accumulation, growth and structural change. Rents may also work as incentives for investment. Conversely, deregulation and other aspects of economic liberalisation may weaken the incentives for domestic investment without guaranteeing to enhance foreign investment.⁶ In sum, economic rent may not be harmful to the economic growth process if it is channelled into productive investment. The neo-classical economists' argument against economic rent rests wholly on the assumption that rentiers will not invest in productive activity.⁷

Next the UNCTAD group challenged the WB perspective on social policy. The UNCTAD economists argued that history showed growth failed to 'trickle down' through society, and that government intervention was necessary to steer the economy and society towards more desirable goals. They pointed out that the first-tier NICs did not concentrate on growth alone, but also on improving social securities and welfare of the rural and poor people. Japan invested heavily behind policies which reduce the gap between urban and rural (through rice subsidies scheme and other policies). Singapore developed the most elaborate social security system in the world. In South Korea, after the first spurt of industrial growth, planners made it a priority to reverse the widening gap between urban and rural incomes. South Korea went from being one of the most unequal to one of the most equal societies in a matter of years.

The UNCTAD group argued that the second-tier NICs had lagged behind the first-tier NICs on social policies. Their governments had not paid sufficient attention to the issue of poverty and income distribution. Thus industrialisation in the second-tier NICs had led to a worsening in income distribution. In Thailand for instance the Gini coefficient deteriorated from 0.479 in 1981 to 0.543 in 1992.⁸

⁶ H.J. Chang, *The Political Economy of Industrial Policy* (London : Macmillan, 1994)

⁷ On this point about economic rent Khan has argued that most works on economic rent neglected the possibility that the gain from economic rent may be higher than the loss from its wastefulness if it was invested productively. See Mustaq Husain Khan, 'Clientelism Corruption and Capitalist Development: An Analysis of State Intervention With Special Reference to Bangladesh', Ph.D thesis, University of Cambridge, 1989.

⁸ Medhi Krongkaew, *Khwan plianplaeng nai saphawa khwan yakjon lae kan krajal raidal nai prathet thai pi 2505/6 tung pi 2533* [The Change in the Poverty Conditions in Thailand 1902/3 - 1992], (Faculty of Economics, Thammasat

At one end of the global debate among economists on economic development strategy, the WB supports the market mechanism, and minimum roles for government except in human resource development, infrastructure, promotion of foreign investment and macroeconomic management (along conservative lines). The WB argues that industrialisation can occur without government designing industrial policies. It is best to leave entrepreneurs to operate under a market framework. Problems of poverty and income distribution will be overcome through trickle down effects without the need for subsidies and similar policy interventions.

At the other end of the global debate, the UNCTAD group is more sympathetic to the statist approach to economic development. Industrial policy is an effective means for government to intervene in the market to promote industrial expansion. The government also has important roles to play in maintaining a 'strategic' level of integration with the world economy, in promoting productivity, and in designing social security and social welfare scheme to combat problems of poverty and inequality.

The UNCTAD group conceded that second-tier NICs development relied more on foreign direct investment, and less on industrial policy, but suggested this may have resulted in a growth pattern which is not sustainable for the long term. The resulting industrial structure is not very deep and technological capability is inferior to what was achieved in South Korea in comparable periods. Further the fact that government of ASIA NICs were less interested in social policies has resulted in a worsening in income distribution despite the rapid economic growth experience. In these respects the 'quality' of growth of the first-tier NICs where government was more active, is superior to that of the second-tier NICs where governments have not been as active and where more reliance was placed on foreign direct investment.

PART II: LOCAL VIEWS IN THAILAND

In the late 1980s, it became clear that Thailand's economy had entered a phase of rapid change. Since then, there has been a large volume of writing on the changing structure of the Thai economy, the social impact of economic change, and future prospects. This paper considers five major groups of writings on the Thai economy

during its recent phase of accelerated growth between 1960 and 1995:

1. The 'management' view represented by economists at the Bank of Thailand;
2. The liberal neo-classicism view represented by leading economists at TDRI;
3. The institutional approach among economists in Thai universities;
4. The political economy School at Chulalongkorn University; and
5. The NGO's view.

This categorisation is an invention for the purposes of this paper. It is a device for showing the spectrum of views. It does not claim to be exhaustive or authoritative. Clearly, the five different categories are rather different. Only the Chulalongkorn group can be considered a 'school', and even this group is internally divided. TDRI is an institution which depends on a changing roster of consultants. The NGOs are a loosely connected group of people with widely diverging views. Furthermore, there is a high degree of overlap between these categories. Several in the institutional group have worked for TDRI. Some of the Chulalongkorn group are associated with the NGOs. The categorisation is designed to illustrate the range of approaches, rather than to fix individual writers under specific categories. Finally, the treatment of each approach cannot attempt to be comprehensive. The aim of the paper is to offer a sampler of differing views from the various approaches. For this purpose, the paper concentrates particularly on some major works which have appeared since the major change in the Thai economy in the mid-1980s until the mid-1990's .

The first point to make is about the relationship between these local approaches and the international debate on the Asian economies. The Bank of Thailand and TDRI approaches belong at the WB end of the spectrum. The institutional economists and to some extent the political economy group may be roughly aligned with the UNCTAD view. But the relationship between the international debate and the local debate is very tenuous. While Thailand has been included as one of the second-tier NICs covered by the international debate, Thai economists have scarcely participated in the debate at all, and have not reflected the debate in their own writings to any significant extent.

This rift stems from fundamental differences in focus. The international debate is about *economic growth*, and particularly about strategies and policies for engineering growth. Most Thai economists have tended to take economic growth for granted. Indeed,

all of the approaches more or less agree that the acceleration of the Thai economy has been the result of *imported growth*. The focus of the Thai economists has been on managing the consequences of this imported growth. In this respect, they have focused on two major areas: *stability* and *equity*. The spectrum of Thai approaches is defined by the different weight that each approach gives to each of these two elements.

The Thai approaches share a similar view on what has happened to the Thai economy. Before 1984-5, Thailand already had a strong momentum of growth based on exploitation of natural resources and import-substitution in a relatively stable environment marked by conservative macroeconomic management. The acceleration of the past decade has been the result of closer integration with the international economy, resulting in a rapid process of 'catch-up' spurred by foreign investment. Economists in all schools point out that the recent boom indicates Thai economic great potential to grow. This potential has been shaped by three major factors: the power of private enterprises; the quality of the labour force; the readiness of government to promote competition within the context of the free market mechanism in order to realise the potential of the economic system.

The speed and scale of this process has created two types of problems. First, the rapid change in the structure of the economy, and the closer integration with the outside world, have made the economy more difficult to manage. This is shown by the growing difficulties of macroeconomic management, the pressures on the stability of the baht, the rising current account deficit (and investment-savings gap), and the difficulties in managing international capital flows.

Second, the impact of growth has been very uneven, resulting in a severe maldistribution of income and welfare. The post-1985 acceleration has been confined to the urban economy, while agriculture has stagnated.

While the different approaches concur on this outline picture, they differ considerably on how it should be interpreted, and on what strategies are needed for the future.

The management approach

The 'management approach' is this paper's shorthand title for the views of the

Bank of Thailand (BoT). These views are important not only because of the Bank's regulatory function, but also because of its role as a centre of education and analysis on the economy. In the absence of strong economic ministries, the BoT has taken a prominent role in defining economic policy. The BoT has also acted as a training ground for many economists whose subsequent careers have been in business, academia or other parts of the technocracy. The BoT has also sponsored research, run journals, and acted as an open advocate of certain economic strategies.

Much of the theoretical underpinning of the BoT view derives from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. These bodies have cultivated their relationship with the BoT through training and advice. Their influence over the BoT has waxed and waned over time, but was especially powerful in the early 1980s when Thailand was heavily dependent on the these institutions' financial support. Both because of the BoT's role, and because of these strong institutional links, the BoT aligns very closely with the WB view of economic growth strategies.

In its analysis of the roots of Thailand's growth, the BoT view puts special stress on the contribution of conservative macromanagement. Careful management of the fiscal position and of the balance of payments have resulted in a stable baht and low inflation. These in turn have been the preconditions for growth over the long term.

Historically the Thai economy has always been powered by external demand. From around the 1950s to the 1970s foreign grant aid and other capital inflow played a crucial role in helping the government balance the budget. In the 1980s and 1990s direct foreign investment and portfolio investment provided the impetus of the economic boom. The Bank of Thailand believes that Thailand must promote foreign direct investment and foster the link with the global economy in every way because these are the major sources of economic growth.

The management approach recognises that the recent spurt of growth has brought with it problems of poverty, resource competition and deterioration of natural resources and environment. However, it follows the WB view that the income gap will eventually be overcome by trickle down, helped by some limited fiscal policies and investments in education. The much larger problem, according to this approach, is the management of economic stability under changed conditions. This has both internal and

external dimensions. Internally, Thailand suffers from a low savings rate which results in a tendency towards deficits on the current account and high dependence on foreign capital inflows. Externally, the international financial market has become virtually unregulated and highly unstable. Long-term capital (e.g. direct investment) is rapidly being displaced by short-term capital (portfolio, bank loans). As a result of the interaction of these internal and external factors, Thailand has a growing dependence on short-term capital flows to finance long-term investment.

The ultimate solution to this problem, according to the management view, is for Thailand to increase its savings rate. But this is a long-term policy. For the short-term, managed exchange rates, some control over the flow of short-term capital and occasional credit squeezes are seen as the major policy measures. Economists in this approach still believe that strict conservative fiscal and monetary policies is crucial to maintain the overall macroeconomic stability.

They believe in policies which keep the value of the baht stable to give confidence to exporters and foreign investors. One of the strategies emphasised is to aim for a high turn over of exports in order to cope with the increased imports and rising current account deficit. Flotation of the exchange rate to regulate the capital flow is to be avoided as it may harm exporters. But in recent years there has been a greater pressure from the private sector for the BoT to move towards more exchange rate flexibility as a means to manage short-term capital movement and inflation.

Since the mid 1990s, the liberalisation and expansion of the financial sector is seen as the best way to increase the availability and reduce the cost of capital for export expansion and infrastructure projects. It also has the effect of countering the monopolistic power of local commercial banks.

The approach of the management economists is strictly neo-classical and functional. Their main concern is to maintain high growth with economic stability. Distribution and the issue of quality of life are secondary to their concerns.

The liberal neo-classical view of TDRI.

The Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) was formed in 1984, on the cusp of the economic boom, 'to conduct policy research and disseminate results to the

public and private sectors'. As a research and consultancy institute for government departments, TDRI has played an active role in policy-making. Through its series of Year-End Conferences and a large publishing drive, TDRI has played a major role in defining the debate on the Thai economy and its future prospects. While the Institute's papers and publications cover a wide variety of topics and views, there is a core agenda which emerges particularly from the work of the Institute's two directors, Ammar Siamwalla and Chalongphop Sussangkarn, and some of their long-run associates such as Mingsam Santikarn.⁹

The WB has been a donor to TDRI, and many of its core members have spent time as staffers or consultants to the WB. In addition, some senior BoT figures have served on TDRI's Board. In terms of the international debate, TDRI falls well to the WB end of the spectrum. It strongly supports the view that conservative macromanagement has contributed to Thailand's growth. It attributes the spurt of growth largely to liberalisation and foreign investment. On the key issue of industrial policy the TDRI has explicitly taken the WB line opposing the need for industrial policy in Thailand.

However, as a consultancy body rather than a regulatory institution, TDRI has been free to take a broader view of Thailand's economy. This has resulted in some significant differences of emphasis from both the BoT and the WB. It is these differences that merit the title 'liberal neo-classicism' for the TDRI approach.

TDRI and sustainability

TDRI departs from the BoT view, and from the other Thai approaches, in having a

⁹ Almost every year since 1986 TDRI has organised a Year-End Seminar focusing on current economic issues. A list of the seminar topics show a trend moving away from strict economic and technical issues to a mix between economic, social and political ones:

1986	Resource and Management
1988	Income Distribution and Long-term Development
1989	Thailand in the International Economic Community
1990	Industrialising Thailand and Its Impact on Environment
1991	Educational Options for the Future of Thailand
1992	Thailand's Economic Structure Towards Balanced Development
1993	Who Gets What and How
1995	Challenging for the Future Participation.

specific concern with economic growth. Moreover in this respect, the TDRI parts company with the WB and in some ways adheres to the UNCTAD line that growth which is highly dependent on foreign investment runs the risk of being unsustainable.

One of TDRI's first major projects was to develop a macro model for simulating Thailand's growth. Further, one of TDRI's long-running concerns has been the need for technology transfer. Mingsam Santikarn demonstrated that foreign firms investing in Thailand were often positively reluctant to transfer technology. TDRI advocated policies which would make technology transfer a condition of investment promotion, and which would encourage firms to invest more heavily in R&D.

Subsequently, TDRI has adopted a broader concern for 'sustainable growth' and has concentrated on the problem of changing comparative advantage. Thailand is definitely losing its comparative advantage in labour-intensive export industries. Between 1991 and 1995 the rate of growth of labour-intensive export products has declined while those of medium and high-tech industries increased (at 20-40 percent a year). By 1995 the total value of medium and high tech-industrial export products was higher than that of the labour-intensive industries. The future high growth industries will be computer parts, electronic products, transport vehicles and machinery parts. Thailand took twenty years to lose its comparative advantage in labour-intensive industries. For how many years it can continue to be a base for production of medium and high-tech export products?

The highest risk lies in the fact that all the medium and high tech-products mentioned are invested and designed by foreigners. The high rate of export growth merely results from increased foreign investment in those products on Thailand soil in the last 7-8 years. The decision to produce, what and by how much, is entirely in the hands of foreigners. It is neither controlled by the Thai government nor by Thai entrepreneurs. Thailand's part in all this has been to create a favourable environment to attract these foreign investors. Thailand is merely a production base for export of these products. This is not a satisfactory state of affairs. The future strategy must be to make sure that Thai entrepreneurs and government have more definite roles in the decision making process of these industries. Yet the TDRI shies away from suggesting that Thailand should have an industrial policy (see also TDRI Master Plan of Industrial

development for Thailand). On this it has taken the World Bank line. The major strategy proposed is merely the emphasis on the transfer of technology. That means develop the technological capability of human labour in Thailand.

TDRI and equity

TDRI also departs from the BoT management approach over equity. TDRI made 'Income Distribution and Long-term Development' the theme of its second Year-End conference in 1988, and returned to the same theme in 1992 with 'Thailand's Economic Structure: Towards Balanced Development'. TDRI does not deny the importance of trickle down effects, but argues that the very rapid shifts in Thailand's economy have created structural problems which result in a severe degree of inequity. Such inequity is a threat to social stability and a potential threat to the sustainability of growth. Hence TDRI advocates more positive policy-making to overcome these structural problems and improve equity.

TDRI has advocated two main approaches to the equity problem: investment in agricultural growth, and investment in education.

Before becoming TDRI's first director, Ammar Siamwalla had a long-term career interest in agricultural policies. Thailand's prior pattern of agricultural growth with virtually unlimited supplies of land, created a rural sector with high population and low productivity. Thailand's industrialisation based on foreign investment and relatively capital-intensive technology has created a relatively small industrial sector with high productivity but limited use of labour. While the city prospers, many are stranded in the low-productivity and low-income rural sector. Large numbers of these participate in the urban economy part time through short-term migration. But in 1995, 60 percent of the total population had their base in the rural sector, and by 2020 TDRI predicted that this would still be 40 percent.

TDRI has advocated investment in agriculture as a means to alleviate the income gap without prejudicing overall growth. TDRI advocates dissemination of higher-value crops through research and extension activities.

Ammar's deputy and successor, Chalongphob Sussangkarn, has been prominent as an advocate of educational policies which will simultaneously promote

growth and equity. He calculated rates of return to different levels of education to prove that investment in education would have a positive pay-back for both the economy and the individual. As the industrial economy began to take off, TDRI specialised in manpower projections which encouraged government to accelerate its investments in education in order to forestall shortages of skilled and educated labour.

TDRI and politics

TDRI's role as an advocate for policies to create sustainable growth has gradually drawn the Institute to take a view on politics. It appears TDRI has become increasingly pessimistic about the possibility that the sort of policy reforms it advocates will be adopted within the current political structure.

In the early 1990s, TDRI published analyses which showed policy-making was constrained by the dominance of sectional interests over the parliament and cabinet. In 1993, these views were summarised at the Year-End Conference on 'Who Gets What and How'. Two years later, the conference examined ways to broaden the range of public participation in policy-making. In May 1996, TDRI presented 'Thailand Vision 2020', a generally positive and optimistic view of the nation's past development and future prospects with a strong emphasis on the political framework required for future success.

TDRI's model for Thai politics is a form of democratic pluralism which creates the environment for technocrats to manage the economy and society in a rational and fair manner. Vision's review of past success attributed a high degree of importance to the quality of the bureaucracy. Thai elites sent their offspring to study in good educational institutions both at home and abroad. As a career in the bureaucracy was prestigious, it attracted many of the leading lights of the well-educated people. The Thai bureaucracy was thus able to become a core body to determine appropriate and effective development policies on a continuing basis. For the future:

Thai politics must develop to become a full democracy with transparency in its administration, efficiency and maintenance of social justice. Politicians and bureaucrats must be good men, capable, having moral

integrity and ethical, so that people can think of them as dependable.¹⁰

In order to ensure the development of politics and administration to achieve the above vision the TDRI report outlines three major non-economic factors which must be enhanced.

First, different groups in society must be promoted to become the core forces to push for a reform in politics and public administration. But it is hoped that these forces will push for change in a peaceful way. The democratic trend in all parts of the world could contribute to this smooth transition. What might happen in the year 2020 is a search for measures to punish politicians and government officials who have tainted behaviour, as what has been happening in South Korea in 1995/6.

Second, there has to be a development within the political system so that it reaches the international standard of practice. Politicians should receive reasonably high and regular income and good welfare, comparable to those working in the private sector. There will have to be a reform in the electoral system in order to reduce the cost of election and eradicate vote buying. The reformed system should attract good men to enter politics more than now. The bureaucracy must also be reformed in order to keep up with the globalising trends. Privatisation, decentralisation and transparency are some of the key words used in discussing the reform of the bureaucracy.

Third, a system of checks and balances is needed to ensure accountability within the bureaucracy and political system. The system must be within government, and between citizens and government. The public has the right of access to information in politics and in bureaucracy so that they can monitor what is going on directly. The media must have full freedom. They must operate under a condition of competition. They play an important role in pushing government and bureaucracy to be accountable to society. They must also develop themselves and work with moral integrity. It is hoped that the alertness among the people in all these things will lead to different types of neutral organisation (*ongkorn thi pen klang*) in order to monitor and hold politicians and government accountable to the public.

¹⁰ TDRI, *Thailand Vision 2020*, presented at the Sirikit Hall on May 15, 1996 (TDRI, 1996), p. 47.

Economists with an institutional approach.

While the TDRI approach places a high degree of emphasis on social policies, it still displays a WB-style emphasis on market-oriented and 'market-friendly' policies, and its political analysis imagines a democratic pluralism as idealised as a perfectly competitive market. Among many other Thai economists who still work within a basically neo-classical framework, there is another approach which allocates a more positive role for policy-making and which takes a more instrumental view of politics. For convenience, we have grouped these as the 'institutional approach' on grounds that these economists are interested not only in the design of policies but also in the institutional structure required to carry them out.

The economists in this approach are scattered widely across the Thai university network.¹¹ However, it can be argued that their densest concentration and their spiritual home is at Thammasat University. The two leading figures which we will consider here, Medhi Krongkaew and Rangsan Thanapompan, are both Thammasat economists. Thammasat was founded in 1934 as the 'University of Moral and Political Sciences'. It considers itself as the premier university for social sciences including economics. Dr Puey Ungpakorn, who was rector of Thammasat in the 1970s, helped to mould the intellectual traditions in which the current generation of Thammasat economists worked. Dr Puey was a prominent Governor of the Bank of Thailand who helped to develop some of the BoT's traditions of macromanagement. He was also one of the founders of the NGO movement and an advocate of more equitable growth through local participation. Finally he became a central political figure during the upheavals of the 1970s, and was

¹¹ An important volume from this group is Medhi Krongkaew (ed), *Thailand's Industrialisation and Its Consequences* (London: St Martin's Press, 1995). Also the works of Rangsan Thanapompan, especially his recent collected volume: *Anitja laksana khong sangkhom thai*. Works of other writers in this approach will be discussed where relevant, such as *The Direction for Economic Reforms in the 1990s*, edited by Tirana Phongmekhaphat of Chulalongkorn University (1991). Also the papers from the annual Symposium of the Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University; the topics of these seminars since 1989 illustrate the group's focus: *If Thailand Turned NICS, What Would Thai People Get?* (1989); *Does the Existing Law Promote or Retard Thai Economy* (1990); *Human Market: Men Are Not Pure Labour Power* (1991); *International Trade of Thailand in the 1990s* (1992); *Revolution in Public Finance for Economic Reform* (1993); *Thai Economy in the Year 2000* (1994); *The Distribution of Growth in Thailand 1995*; *Thailand and Asia in the 21st Century* (1996).

ultimately forced into exile for his liberal sympathies. His legacy combines a commitment to rigorous policy-making, with a concern over equity, and a realisation of the interconnection between politics and economics.

The case for interventionism

In their analysis of the processes leading to Thailand's spurt of rapid growth, the institutional approach differs from the BoT and TDRI in three important respects: some doubt on the strategy of outward-oriented growth; more emphasis on the role of policy in bringing about change, and more emphasis on the interaction between policy-making and private entrepreneurship.

Rangsan Thanaponphan at Thammasat University argues that the results of the adoption of export-oriented growth strategy are not always desirable:

The adjustment of the economic strategy from import substitution to an adoption of export-oriented industrialisation did not reduce Thailand's dependence on imports. Indeed Thailand's dependence on imports has increased. This is especially so during the height of the economic boom....The balance of trade deteriorates during periods of economic boom. During periods of economic slow-down, this external dependence declines and the balance of trade deficit improves markedly.Therefore the problem of balance of trade deficit can only be solved with attempts to reduce Thailand's dependence on imports."¹²

Rangsan believes that the increased dependence of the Thai economy on trading and investment relations with a few economic powers such as the US and Japan, and the growth of big businesses, have contributed to the worsening of the current account deficit, the persistence of poverty and the deterioration of natural resources and the environment.

In the long phase which preceded export-oriented industrialisation, according to the institutional approach, government helped to build the bases for future growth

¹² Rangsan Thanaponphan, *Anitja laksana sangkhom setthakit thai* [The Uncertainties of Thai Society and Economy] (Bangkok: Kobfai Publishing, 1993), p. 43.

through the import-substitution strategy. In addition, government paved the way for export-oriented growth by shifts in trade and promotion policies in the mid-1980s.¹³ Moreover, in this policy-making process, the private sector played an important role. In the early 1980s, corporate interests pushed for better institutional access to policy-making, and used this access to accelerate the trend towards export-oriented growth.¹⁴

Similarly, the institutionalists advocate a more positive role for government in the changed conditions after 1985. They argue that industrialisation has had deep and extensive impact on society and economy which demand an increased role for government.

Economic changes led to a need for a reform in the taxation system. This might in the future mean a greater role for the legislative branch in fiscal-policy formulation, greater fiscal autonomy for local government, and reform in property taxes.¹⁵ On the development of monetary policy, Naris anticipated various reforms which could have extensive repercussions on future financial development, such as the liberalisation of commercial and other financial institutions, the lifting of interest-rate ceiling, the relaxation on the holding of commercial bank deposits, and policy implications of the growing importance of external finance.

Because of rapid industrialisation, urban areas and population grew rapidly in the 1980s. Bangkok became the centre of production, wealth and power.¹⁶ For the whole economy, the proportion of population living below the poverty line declined between the 1970s and the late 1980s. In 1988 the poverty incidence was 22.6 percent with more than 11 million being considered poor. More recent studies show the poverty incidence declined to 18.6 percent in 1990 and to 13.7 percent in 1992. By 1992 there were still 7.85 million Thai people living below the official poverty line. Income inequality has also

¹³ Suphat Suphachalasai in Medhi Krongkaew (ed.), *Thailand's Industrialisation and Its Consequences* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1995).

¹⁴ Kraiyudht in Medhi (ed), 1955.

¹⁵ Direk in Medhi ed. 1995.

¹⁶ Rimmer in Medhi ed. 1995.

increased. The Gini co-efficient increased from 0.479 in 1988 to 0.543 in 1992.¹⁷ These two phenomena are direct results of policies that favoured large-scale capital-intensive firms over small-scale labour-intensive firms, and manufactured products over agricultural products, resulting in reduced welfare for workers in the agricultural sector.¹⁸ Medhi further argues that structural changes mean the poverty line should be revised upwards to the point where 20.9 million people, or 36.5 percent of the population, would fall below it.¹⁹ Medhi argued that the poverty issue will continue to be Thailand's major problems for sometime to come, and that this fact demands more positive policy interventions.

Furthermore, in projecting growth to the year 2000, Medhi & Direk predicted large-scale changes which will increase the need for government intervention.²⁰ These changes include shortage of water and labour in agriculture, the changes in technology in industry, increased competition from developed and developing countries in the case of service industry, an increased demand for energy due to urbanisation, the increased demand on government's budget, and possible increased interference from politicians on the work of the authorities dealing with the management of economic stability. The management of the economy will become more difficult as the engine of economic growth slows down, and the consumerist society sets in. The gap in income distribution will widen, and the government will face new social demands.

The economic analysis of the factors behind the rapid economic change among

¹⁷ Medhi Krongkaew, *Khwam plianpleang nai saphawa khwam yakjon lae kan krajai raidai nai prathet thai pi 2505/6 tung pi 2533* [The Change in the Poverty Conditions in Thailand 1902/3 - 1992], (Bangkok: Thammasat University, Faculty of Economics, 1996).

¹⁸ Pranee in Medhi ed. 1995.

¹⁹ More than 3/4 of the heads of household among the poor work in agriculture. The majority of the household heads were in the older age group of over 50. Most have no education or only elementary education. Medhi Krongkaew, 'Sangkhom thai kap kan krajai ogat lae raidai' [Thai Society and Distribution of Opportunities and Income], presented at the Symposium XVIII, Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University, March 30-31, 1995, pp. 1-19.

²⁰ Medhi Krongkaew & Direk Patthamasiriwat (1994), 'Setthakit k.s.2000' [The Economy in the Year 2000], presented at Symposium XVII, Bangkok: Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University.

economists of the institutional approach is not so different from the TDRI approach. But their views on the roles of industrial policies and the roles of government in affecting changes and improving the quality of development differ from the TDRI quite markedly.

The institutionalist economists believe in government's intervention more than those at TDRI. On industrial policies, they are more positive that government intervention in designing industrial policies is instrumental in affecting industrialisation in Thailand.²¹ On agriculture, they advocate the development of higher-value crops, and solution to the problems of land tenure. On poverty eradication and reducing income inequality, Medhi and some of other institutionalist economists are quite prepared to press government for direct intervention in public provisions for basic safety nets or basic needs in the form of direct transfers, price support for farmers, subsidies on inputs, and more drastic measure like land reform as adopted in Taiwan and Japan.²² The government should also design particular policy and measures for 'target groups' of the poor, the lowly educated, the elderly who cannot help themselves. A leading economist in this school points out that the government can now afford to take on the role of a 'rat sawatdikan' [welfare state] as the government's fiscal position is sound enough to allow this.²³ Decentralisation of fiscal management in favour of the locality in provincial areas is also advocated. TDRI as represented by Dr Ammar was not prepared to go that far and took a rather strict neo-classical line on these issues.²⁴

Institutionalists and politics

As with the TDRI approach, the institutionalists recognise that the potential for effecting change through governmental interventions depends on politics. But whereas

²¹ See for instance Suphat in Medhi (ed) 1995, and Paitoon Wiboonchutikula, 'Thailand's Industrialisation: Past Performance and Future Issues' (Bangkok: Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University, 1994).

²² Articles by Tirana and Medhi in Tirana Phongmakphet (ed.) (1991), *Thitthang kan patirup nayobai setthakid thai nai thotsawat 1990* [The Direction for the Reform of the Thai Economy in the 1990s] (Bangkok: Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University, 1991).

²³ Medhi Krongkaew, 'Sangkhom thai kap kan krajai ogat lee raidai', p. 1-31.

²⁴ Ammar in Tirana, 1991: 74-81.

TDRI hopes for democratic pluralism and efficient bureaucracy, the institutionalists try to extrapolate from trends in the politics of the present. They argue that the impact of rapid industrialisation on politics has been marked. Civilian bureaucrats and the military have aligned themselves with businessmen to promote capitalistic industrial development against the interest of the agricultural population. Rapid industrialisation created all kinds of conflicts, such as between business sector and the agricultural sector. These conflicts have tended to overwhelm the old organs of government resulting in an 'institutionalised anarchy'. However, Thailand continues to 'muddle through' by a constant process of negotiation between powerful political forces.²⁵

Rangsan Thanapomphan²⁶ has set the interaction of economic and political change in a wider perspective:

Thai society is undergoing a rapid transformation, which is a direct result of the economic catching-up process. The government's economic policies along the line of 'laissez-faire' (*seriniyom*) with regards to production, commerce, and international finance, increase the degree of openness of the economy. The outward-oriented strategy has meant the Thai economy is now being dragged along with globalisation trends, with government having very little control.

The strength of capitalist economic power is causing an erosion of the patron-client relationship. It is being replaced by a relationship based on financial transactions and contractual relationships. At the same time capitalist forces are turning everything into commodities, and destroying all personal, human relationships.

Capitalist forces are promoting individualism and consumerism. People are adhering to survival of individual (*tua khrai tua man*). The idea of helping one another is replaced by selfishness. The culture of economising and thrift, as well as the work ethic, are being destroyed.

²⁵ Chai-Anan in Medhi ed. 1995.

²⁶ Rangsan Thanapomphan, *Anitja laksana khong sangkhom thai* [The Uncertainties of Thai Society] (Bangkok: Amarin Printing and Publishing, 1995) [A collection of articles printed in *Phujatkan raiwan*, between 1991-1994, under the column "*Jak tha phrajan thung sanamluang*"].

Many people can get by without having to labour because they receive income from speculating on the stock market and on land deals. In the midst of all these changes, the under-privileged and those with little opportunities have become more isolated in their fight against poverty and other problems.

The struggles in the sphere of culture and politics have become more intensified. The fight between authoritarianism and liberal democracy is not at a final stage. But the society cannot yet achieve a system of liberal democracy. The present political system can be described as "patronage democracy" (*rabop prachathippatai uppatham*). Power is shifting from the old bureaucratic group, especially from the military, to the electorate. But politicians are still appropriating the economic surplus. The difference is that previously it was only the bureaucracy who did this. Now it is also the ruling elites who come up by election.

The globalising trend not only increases economic links between Thailand and other economies. It also creates cultural links. The information technology age means that Thailand's culture, customs and world views are undergoing tremendous changes.

Rangsan is against patron-client relationships. He sees capitalist development as destroying these relationships. But he regrets that they are being replaced by relationships based on money and contracts. He sees it as destroying personal, family relationships. On culture and politics he detested the authoritarian roles of the old bureaucratic polity paradigm. While capitalism and the present democratic system bring in changes such as a decline of authoritarianism and especially the decline of the military in politics, they are merely being replaced by elected politicians, who now reap the economic surplus and usurp their power. Capitalism is bringing in individualism and destroying even personal and family relationship.²⁷

The political economy school at Chulalongkorn University.

²⁷ See also the articles by Suntaree, Pranee and Sirlaksana in Medhi ed. 1995.

The political economy school at CU is a product of the October 14 event, which led to a revival of interest in deploying Marxist approach to analyse the economic and social change in Thailand. The name *Setthasat Kanmuang* which denoted a group of economists at CU became known to the public by mid 1977 after members of the group joined together to write a regular column in a daily newspaper presenting a Marxist analysis of economic and social problems.²⁸ In 1978, Chatthip Nartsupha and Suthy Prasartset applied the Marxist methodology to Thai economic history in the two volumes of *The Political Economy of Siam*. From 1981 the group issued a journal, *Warasan Setthasat Kanmuang*.²⁹ In 1990, the group founded The Political Economy Centre within the Faculty of Economics at CU. The Centre has held seminars and published studies analysing current changes and future changes.³⁰

Whereas the TDRI and institutional approaches came through economics to an appreciation of the role of politics, the political economy approach starts from the proposition that politics and the economy are inseparable.³¹

While members of the school are varied in terms of their emphasis and

²⁸ For a detailed early history of the Political Economy Group see Preecha et al (1983).

²⁹ Naphaphom Atiwanitchayaphong, *Phatthanakan khwamkit setthasat kan muang thai tangtae po.so 2475-patjuben* (Bangkok: Sangsan publishing, 1988) has given a systematic account of the development and contribution of the political economy school of thought at CU up to 1988.

³⁰ Six annual seminars have been held with the proceedings subsequently published: *Polawat Thai* [Thai Dynamics], 1991; *Rat, Thun Jao Pho Thongthin lae Sankhom thai* [State, Capital, Local God Father and Thai Society], 1992; *Chon Chan Kiang bon Krasae Prachathippatai Thai* [The Middle Class and Democracy in Thailand], 1993; *Krajai Amnat Yang Rai Sang Prachathippatai* [Decentralisation and Democratisation in Thailand], 1994; *Lokaphiwat kap Sangkhom Setthakit Thai* [Globalisation and Thai Economy and Society], 1995; and *Jit Samnuk lae Udomkan: Khabuankan Prachathippatai Ruam Samai*, [Consciousness and Ideology: Democratic Movement in Contemporary Thailand], 1996.

³¹ At a seminar in 1980, Chatthip defined the major features of political economy approach as consisting of three main elements: (1) Giving special consideration to the structure of the whole system because the relationships between parts are more important than characteristics of each part; (2) Giving special consideration to the evolution/development of the whole system because this makes theory linked to the lives of people in society. This means theory can be used to analyse the cause of events and phenomena correctly because the analysis lies deep in historical underpinning; and (3) Giving special consideration to conflicts within the whole system in order to identify the sources of change. In other words dialectical materialism is the basis of the process of change. See Chatthip in *Warasan Setthasat Kanmuang*, 13:2, 1980.

aspirations, the group has several things in common: a concern for social justice and the rights of the poor and under-privileged; a methodology for analysing Thai society in terms of *processes of change*, class analysis, and conflict. The group now tries to go beyond the old fashioned study of class, and some members to adopt modern class analysis to understand the process of capitalist development in Thailand.

Political economists on the nature of the recent boom

The political economists agree that the root cause of the recent boom lies in the opening up of the Thai economy and its close linkage with the global economic system. But they provide elaborate explanations of the effects of this process. The Thai economy has been boosted by the inflow of foreign direct investment, which in turn induced further local investment and local consumption.³² But while industry expanded, it did not develop much in terms of technology and sophistication. Foreign investment came in to make use of cheap labour and natural resources, which Thailand has in abundance. Some labour shifted from agriculture into labour-intensive, low-wage industry and services. Growth was caused by increased trade based on comparative advantages of labour and resources.

Most neo-classical economists consider that the current account deficit is an inevitable outcome of an export-oriented open economy. Political economists, however, argue that the persistent deficit reflects the inability to shift the production structure from labour-intensive and low-tech industries into intermediate and capital goods industries which require advanced technologies and expertise on the part of workers. This pattern of industrialisation is a direct outcome of being a late-comer, relying heavily on borrowed or purchased technology and foreign direct investment. Thai entrepreneurs can easily buy technology off the shelf or go into joint partnership with foreign partners who possess technology. R&D and technological advance have not taken root in Thailand.

Political economists further point out the impact of present-day export-oriented

³² Vorawith Charoenlert, 'Setthakit Thai nai Rabob Setthakit Lok' [Thai Economy in the Global Economic System] in, Pasuk and Sungsidh (eds). (1991); Preecha Plampongsanti, Kanjana Kaewthep, Kanoksak Kaewthep, Anan Ganjanaphan, *Withi withaya suksa sangkhom thai withi mai haeng kan phatthana*, Bangkok: Adison press production, 1992, second printing 1994; Suthy Prasartset, 'The Rise of NGOs as Critical Social Movement', in *Thai NGOs: The Continuing Struggle for Democracy* (Bangkok: The NGO Support Project, 1985).

industrialisation on the employment of labour. As foreign investors originate from developed countries, their technology is capital-intensive. Consequently, the employment they generate tends to be limited. The industrialisation process does not lead to a dramatic shift in agricultural labour into the industrial sector. The process of proletarianisation is different from that which occurred in the classic capitalist transformation in the UK or even in the more recent case of South Korea. In Korea industrialisation after WWII led quickly to a transformation of the economic structure. By 1989 the share of agricultural labour in Korea was reduced to 19.5 percent of the total, while the share of manufacturing labour rose to 27.6 percent.³³ In Thailand the share of permanent manufacturing employment was only around 12 percent in 1993,³⁴ while the share of labour force calling themselves agricultural labour was still as high as 57 percent.³⁵

Political economists point out that Thailand's industrialisation took place in a context of global change in information, transportation and production technology. Multinational companies (MNCs) now divide up their production processes into many stages, and distribute these stages across subsidiaries and subcontractors across the world. The production stages which take place in developing countries like Thailand are merely a part of the whole production chain. Under this system, Thailand receives

³³ Anis Chowdhury and Iyanatul Islam, *The Newly Industrialising Economies of East Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p.15.

³⁴ Of the total manufacturing employment, probably around 10 percent still operate as migrant labour moving back and forth between factory works and agricultural work.

³⁵ The source of these figures is National Statistical Office, *Report of the Labour Force Survey*, Round 2, August 1993. Not all of these labour work in agriculture full time or all year round. This is because agricultural work is seasonal. Farming families with small plot of land could not afford to maintain their livelihood on the farm work alone. Usually around one million people migrate around in the off-farm season for work inside the rural sector. Another million travel temporary to work in city and towns, doing non-farm. Another 4-500,000 Thai workers, mostly from rural origin, work abroad in Japan, Malaysia, Taiwan, South Korea, New York and elsewhere as migrant workers. The migrant stream of young men and women to leave village to work in towns and city during the rapid pace of industrialisation in the last 10 years has increased. But there are also indications of reverse flows back to villages among some migrants who had worked in cities and towns (Apichat 1994). And the duration of staying away in the town is getting longer. We still await a more detail migration survey to assess the pattern of recent changes.

increased income from manufactured exports. But the whole system is controlled from somewhere else, particularly in the area of technology and production system.

MNCs set up uniform systems of labour control and production process under a system dubbed 'fordism'. Low-skilled cheap labour is employed on the assembly line. Workers are exploited doubly, both by being pressed to work in time with the quick pace of the assembly line, and by the low wages and long working hours as compared to developed countries. Assembly-line workers experience a process of deskilling, not accumulation of skill. Workers also face health hazards due to pollution from dangerous chemical inputs in industries such as electronic parts production and chemical industries. Casualisation of workers, work insecurity and low wages are prevalent as means to reduce labour cost.³⁶

According to this analysis, the current problems - such as the current account deficit, income disparity, environmental damage, and vulnerability to external money flows - are not side-effects of growth which can be overcome by policy tinkering. Rather these consequences are intrinsic to the pattern of growth adopted and will persist as long as this pattern is maintained. Political economists view the socio-economic impact of the economic boom as a direct result of the particular growth pattern advocated by the World Bank, namely economic growth based on borrowed technology and foreign direct investment, without due regard to the quality of life of the people involved.³⁷ Political economists object to this pattern and advocate alternatives.

The impact of the recent boom and the potential for change

In analysing the impact of the boom on society and politics, political economists are interested in the effects on social and political structure, the future trends of social change, and the prospects for progressive social movements to push for change.

The rise of the industrial economy, metropolitan and provincial businessmen has meant a decline in economic importance of agriculture and the rural populace. Political

³⁶ Vorawidh Charoenlert, 'Setthakit Thai nai Rabob Setthakit Lok; Sungsidh Piniyarangsan, *Kan Phatthana Utsahakam Phue Kan Song Ok Kap Raeng Ngan Samphan Nai Prathet Thai* [Export-Oriented Industrialisation and Labour Relations in Thailand], in Pasuk and Sungsidh (eds.) (1992).

³⁷ Preecha et al, 1992.

economists are among the first to point out that the rural sector is still powerful in Thai political development towards parliamentary democracy. The rural populace comprises nearly two thirds of the population and accounts for more than two-thirds of all the votes. Any political party or coalition of parties wishing to hold the majority in the parliament must be able to capture the rural vote. This should put the rural populace in the forefront of politics.

But the matter is complicated by three major developments. First is the tendency of metropolitan business to ally itself with the conservative bureaucracy and military to limit popular representation (Nidhi, 1993). Second is the emergence of local influential businessmen, some of whom are known as *jao pho*, who use their patronage in the locality to dominate local and national politics. They mobilise their business network for canvassing. They spread money and influence to buy votes. Third is the fact that political parties in contemporary Thailand are not real representatives of peoples of all walks of life. They are made up of business people with common interests, who join together to protect the interest of their immediate group members.³⁸

While there is a relatively high degree of consensus among the political economists about the nature of current changes, there is less agreement over the implications for political action. Two wings exist within the group. Both reject political economy's traditional goal of centralised socialism.

For one wing, the goal is social democracy with full popular participation and a more equitable distribution of the fruits of growth. This must be achieved by efforts of all disadvantaged groups to overcome the current forces of domination and demand their rightful share of economic resources. This wing supports organisations such as NGOs, labour groups, women's movements and grassroots groups, and believes that the strategies for each of these movements must take its own appropriate course.

NGOs raise the society's consciousness of problems faced by people in all walks of life. The NGOs strengthen civil society, act as a counter to the power of the state, and make for more balanced power relations between state, business and people.

³⁸ Sungsidh Piriyarangsarn and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *Jit Samnuk lee Udomkan: Khabuankan Prachathippatal Thai Ruamsamai* [Consciousness and Ideology: Democratic Movement in Contemporary Thailand] (Bangkok: The Political Economy Centre, Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University, 1996).

The strength and self reliance of the labour movement are crucial for the civil society of the future.³⁹ Teeranat and Vorawith argue that the trade union movement must be developed to counter the negative trend of the market economy. But they also discuss the limitation of the labour movement. This has been due to the nature of Thai industrialisation and the control imposed by the government. Thailand's industrialisation in the 1980s and 90s did not produce a large increase in permanent wage employment as experienced in the west. Instead it has led to a proliferation of informal or casual labour and seasonal labour. They describe this phenomenon as non-wage labour. This tendency has been a direct result of the market liberalisation and emphasis on export-led growth. Together with the intensified global competition, businessmen and government cut costs by allowing casualisation of labour and control on trade union activities. The tripartite system of labour relations imposed by the government and other controls led to factionalism inside the trade union movement. They also explain the low rate of unionisation. Like Sungsidh, both Teeranat and Vorawith think that the weakness of trade unions as a social force could be overcome if they make alliance with other social groups in society.⁴⁰

Thailand's export-oriented and capital-intensive industrialisation created a high demand for skilled labour. Between the 1960s and late 1980s, the numbers in white-collar jobs grew from around half a million to around four million and a half.⁴¹ Over three

³⁹ See the works by Sungsidh Priyarangsarn from 1991 to 1996 listed in the bibliography.

⁴⁰ Teeranat Kanjanakorn and Vorawith Cheroenert (1996), 'Industrialisation and Democracy in Thailand', presented at the Forum of Democratic Leadership - Asia and the Pacific "Democratisation & Co-operation in Asia", Seoul, 3-4 May.

⁴¹ Despite this large pool of white-collar workers, Thailand faced an acute shortage of skilled and technical manpower at the height of its boom years in the late 1980s and 1990s. Lee, using a political economy approach offered the reasons for this phenomenon. He compared the roles of government in industrialisation between Thailand, Germany and Japan. The last two countries adopted some kind of 'developmentalist state' role during the onset of industrialisation and took initiatives in fostering industrialisation by actively designing educational policy to expand the pools of technical manpower. Thai government on the other hand reform the bureaucracy and the educational system in the late 19th century in order to protect the old system of sakdina rule of the old order. The educational system was not designed to serve the industrialisation. See Lee (1994). See also Narong Petprasert, 'White-collar Workers in Thailand', Ph.D Thesis, Latrobe University, 1992, for an analysis of the growth of the white-collar workers and their roles in the labour movement.

decades Thailand acquired a new white-collar working class. This emergent group is often dubbed the 'middle class'. The Centre's work on the Thai middle class⁴² (Sungsidh and Pasuk, ed. 1994) shows that the democratisation trend has become an important issue in Thailand because of the growth of the white-collar workers. While some writers (Nidhi, Vorawidh, Preecha) are pessimistic about the middle class's commitment to freedom and democracy, others (Anek, Pasuk, Somkiat, Sungsidh, Ukrist) see potential in the middle class as a force for greater democratisation both in economy and politics and as a counter to political parties which are intent on protecting narrow interests.

A second wing among the political economists has advocated a rather different strategy.⁴³ Members of this wing attack the economist approach to development, on the grounds that it neglects human as humans. They seek alternative ways of thinking along the line of Buddhist economics and green economics. They strongly support decentralisation, and the dismantling of many of the central structures of political and economic control. They wish to see a rapid transfer of public resources away from defence to social uses such as including health, social services, social securities, rural development and promotion of the standard of living of poor people and the destitute in urban areas. How this will be achieved is not clear. A major study by this wing ends with this phrase: 'There is a need for political strategy in order to change the structure of power. This is inevitable. This is the most important condition which will ensure allocation of resources along the line of democratic principles.'

The NGO view

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) arose in Thailand in the late 1960s as a reaction against the top-down, urban-oriented approach to economic development. The origins of the movement were associated with Dr Puey Ungpakorn. The key idea

⁴² Sungsidh Pinyarangsarn and Pasuk Phongpaichit (eds.), *Chon Chan Klang Bon Krasae Prachthippatal Thai* [The Middle Class and Thai Democracy] (Bangkok: The Political Economy Centre, Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University, 1993).

⁴³ Preecha Piampongsanti, Chayan Watthanaphuti, Anand Ganjanapan, Kanjana Kaewthep, Kanoksak Kaewthep (eds.), *Withi wittaya suksa sangkhorn thai* [The Methodology for Studying Thai Society], Vol.1 (Bangkok: CUSRI, 1986).

was 'rural reconstruction is human reconstruction'.⁴⁴ This basic idea was later refined with contributions from theoreticians (many from the political economist perspective) and social workers in the field. After the crisis of 1973-76, many political activists chose to work through the NGOs to avoid confrontational politics. In the mid-1980s, NGOS became active in a wide range of development projects, and built a loose network of cooperation.

While there is no single 'NGO line', there is a distinctive analysis of the Thai economy and its prospects which emerges from some of the core NGO institutions such as the NGO support project.

Jaturong Boonyarattanasoontorn, the Director of the NGO Support Project argues that Thai economic development policies since 1961 were capitalist, linking Thailand with the global capitalist system. They followed the World Bank, IMF strategy of outward-oriented industrialisation on the basis of liberal economic philosophy. The core strategies were promotion of free trade, foreign direct investment, privatisation and deregulation, human resource development, macro-economic management and reduction of population growth.⁴⁵

Thus far, the analysis is identical with that of Preecha, Kanoksak and Suthy of the political economy group. But Jaturong extends the analysis by examining three ways in which the Thai government has exacerbated the uneven nature of development. First it has expanded international trade by speeding up the process to establish ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) and linking AFTA with European Economic Area (EEA) and North America Free Trade Area (NAFTA) including creation of trade networks with the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Indochina. Second, it has welcomed MNCS whose demands have distorted the pattern of government investment in infrastructure, human resources, R&D, and so on. Third, government has neglected the declining economic sectors, especially rice and tapioca agriculture. The result is that people are pushed to create their own local development strategy. Jaturong talks about the 'capitalist sector'

⁴⁴ Suthy Prasartset, 'The Rise of NGOs as a Critical Social Movement', in *Thai NGOs: The Continuing Struggle for Democracy* (Bangkok: The NGO Support Project, 1995), p.99.

⁴⁵ Jaturong in *Thai NGOs: The Continuing Struggle for Democracy*.

and the 'people's sector'. The people's sector refer to the rural people who have been neglected in the development process.

The core of local development strategy consists of: emphasis on people's right; the aim of a 'good life' not economic growth; solutions to be found in the villages, meaning that villages have the capacity to solve their own problems, based on local culture and wisdom; not opposing globalisation, but countering globalisation's impact on the environment; requesting for co-existence and not exploitation.

Six development strategies derived from the local development school:

- (1) self-reliance;
- (2) production for quality living;
- (3) community culture-based development;
- (4) the importance to popular wisdom;
- (5) group formation to establish community organisation;
- (6) return of rights over community resources back to the people;⁴⁶

Kanjana and Kanoksak Kaewthep elaborated the meaning of self-reliant development, based on a study of economic activities in rural areas through self-help organisation in two villages in the north and Isan between May-December 1985.⁴⁷

In order to be self-reliant, villagers should be able to create a third economic system, *rabop setthakit baep samachikaphap* (membership organisation) to counter the other two systems, namely *rabop setthakit phokha naithun* (capitalist system) and *rabop kharatchakan* (bureaucratic system). In other words the people must have their own independent groupings, separate from institutions which come from outside the village. For instance, to avoid domination by financial institution from outside the village, villagers need to establish *klum oom sap* (saving co-operatives) to replace BAAC (*tho ko so*). This strategy will enable rural communities to survive in the midst of capitalist development and increased penetration from outside, especially from government and *naithun*.

⁴⁶ Jaturong in *Thai NGOs*, pp.147-154.

⁴⁷ Kanjana and Kanoksak Kaewthep, *Kan phung ton eng sakkayaphap nai kan phatthana khong chonnabot* (Bangkok: Sapha katholik haeng prathet thai phue kan phatthana, 1987).

Villagers must be encouraged to become more self-reliant by developing their confidence in their own potential; creating organisations such as *thanakhan khwai*, buffalo-raising groups; encouraging participation; developing successful self-help programmes; and bargaining effectively with outsiders on issues such as prices.

The NGOs's vision and strategy for the rural people as outlined above is known as the 'community culture school of thought' or *watthanatham chumchon* approach. This approach began with the works of social workers, notably Suphot Thienwihan, Apichat Thongyu, Bamrung Bunpanya, and later was given theoretical backing by thinkers like Chatthip Nartsupha and Kanjana Kaewthep.

Chatthip is one of the originators of the political economy school. His own works and his students' theses on various aspects of Thai economic history provided the academic underpinning of the Political Economy School at Chulalongkorn University. He is still active in the Political Economy Centre's work. But his writings in the 1990s put him in the same school as the NGOs.⁴⁸

The path of *watthanatham chumchon* stresses change must begin at the village level and then spread to the whole society. This strategy does not invite opposition from the authorities, as did the earlier left-wing strategies which sought major social change.⁴⁹

The *watthanatham chumchon* group is in itself a political movement at grassroots level even though it does not offer a definite political agenda for the whole society like the usually Leftist movement. There is a suggestion that *watthanatham chumchon* and the present capitalist trends can co-exist. But the alternative society has to be selective in picking and choosing from the West. For some in this group the advocacy has a ring of cultural nationalism. As put by Chatthip,

As Thailand is entering the age of globalisation, Western culture will increasingly come into Thailand. The good part of Western culture, such as modern technology and the concept of liberty, should be welcome and should be instilled as an integral part of Thai culture. But at the same time

⁴⁸ Chatthip Nartsupha, 'The "Community Culture" School of Thought', in Manas and Turton (1991); Chatthip and Phonphilai Lertwicha, *Watthanatham kap sakayaphap chumchon* [Potentialities of the Thai village community], Bangkok, 1994).

⁴⁹ Naphaphorn, *Phatthanakan khwamdit*, p. 72.

the Thai people should be selective in accepting foreign cultures. We should receive foreign culture on our own terms. In order to achieve this goal we have to recover and strengthen our own indigenous culture.⁵⁰

As represented by Bamrung Bunpanya, the value of the villages should be adopted as value of the whole society. Chatthip stand's is that *chon chan klang* should ally with villagers to bring about a better society. He does not offer action in terms of definite political strategies.

CONCLUSION

For a long time there was no reason why the Thai economy should attract international academic attention. It could not stand as a case study for either spectacular success or spectacular failure. It offered no example of innovations in institutions or techniques. It was simply not a text book case.

In the early 1990s, the international approach to development economics went through a revolution. The classical development theory which evolved in the 1950s and 1960s was quietly dropped. It was replaced by a fascination with understanding Asia, the one region of the world which had demonstrated a spectacular record of growth in the past two decades. This new sub-discipline quickly resolved into a battle between the oponents and supporters of government interventionism. By mid-decade, these two positions were identified with UNCTAD and the World Bank. The World Bank first based its case for non-interventionist, market-friendly development policies on analysis of the first-tier NICs, especially Korea and Taiwan. After the Bank's analysis was severely undermined by better empirical work on these two economies, the Bank mounted a rearguard action based on the second-tier NICs. According to the Bank, the spurt of growth by Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, beginning in the late 1980s, had been fuelled by foreign investment and market liberalisation, with little evidence of industrial policy and other market interventions.

By the mid-1990s, Thailand had been firmly drafted into the international debate. In 1995, the WB announced that Thailand had been the world's fastest-growing economy

⁵⁰ Chatthip Nertsupha, 'A Search for an Indigenous Thai Culture', Special Panel Discussion, the 14th Conference of the International Association of Historians of Asia, Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, 20-24 May, 1996.

over the previous decade. While there are still very few international economists who specialise on Thailand, the Thai economy was now an intrinsic part of international economic debate. Yet Thai economists have taken little active part in this debate, and indeed pay it little attention.

This is not to say that Thai economists have been inactive. Indeed, there has been a spurt of economic writing in parallel with the spurt of economic growth. But the international and local debates have each focused on different concerns. The international debate has largely been about the role of government in the promotion of economic growth. The Thai debate has paid little attention to the question of the scope of government intervention, and has been only tangentially concerned with growth. Most of the Thai participants agree that as a latecomer, located in the dynamic Asian region, Thailand is able to import its growth. Rather the Thai debate has focused more on stability at one of the spectrum, and on equity and social justice at the other.

These two focal concerns reflect the intellectual background of the Thai economist community. At one end, there is a strong tradition of technocratic economics. This tradition has its spiritual home in the Bank of Thailand. It was expanded by US educational aid in the 1960s and 1970s, and has been nurtured since then by the World Bank. Its core proposition is that the Thai economy prospers through trade, and that the major role of practising economists is to maintain a stable economic environment in which trade can expand.

At the other end, there is a tradition which dates back to the intellectual ferment of the 1970s, and the attempts of that time to understand the unique characteristics and internal trends of Thailand's society and economy. From its origin, this tradition has a strong concern for equity and social justice. Over the past two decades, the tradition has become very fragmented. But the fragments still share a core proposition that the goal of economics must be a better life for the majority of the people.

In the analysis presented here, the BoT and TDRI approaches belong to the 'stability' end of the spectrum. The political economy and NGO groups are anchored at the 'equity' end. The institutional group occupy the middle ground. Many of its members have neo-classical training combined with 1970s experience and the special intellectual traditions of Thammasat. This spectrum has generated a wide range of views on the

origins and consequences of Thailand's elevation to the ranks of the Asian geese, dragons and tigers.

The management (BoT) and liberal neo-classical (TDRI) approaches readily embrace the integration of the Thai economy into the global fold because they believe that this is the best for Thailand's economic growth. They see the major risks in this economic strategy come from the low savings rate and worsening income distribution. But they believe that these problems can be overcome through human resource development policies and taxation measures. In addition, the TDRI advocates promotion of high value-added agriculture to reduce the urban-rural income gap. These approaches oppose direct government interventions, such as industrial policy.

The TDRI shows additional concerns over the problems of environment and the issues of governance. Economic tools should also be used to tackle the environment problems (polluters pay principles). The question of governance requires pressure from the public, but the TDRI would like the organised public to be neutral politically.

The other three approaches - institutional, political economy and Thai NGOs - have reservations about the extent to which the Thai economy should be integrated into the world economy. While not rejecting the reality of the present globalisation trends, many are concerned about Thailand's over-dependence on external factors. The degree of this concern varies, with the NGOs showing the most reservation.

On the whole all three take a stand similar to the UNCTAD group's opposition to the WB line in the current international debate over the explanations about the success of Asian NICS. They favour 'strategic integration with the world economy by integrating up only to the degree and in those spheres where it was desirable... in order to promote long-term economic growth' and benefits to the majority of the people.

All three of these approaches emphasise concern over the problems of poverty, income distribution and the environment. Economists in the institutional school have been active in studies on poverty and income distribution. They do not reject reform in taxation and use of property taxes as means to deal with these problems. They support industrialisation, especially rural industrialisation, and extension of service activities as means to provide employment and eradicate poverty. They also advocate direct government intervention through policies aimed at particular target groups to improve

the state of poverty and income distribution.

Political economists attempt to identify and promote progressive social forces which will be instrumental in pushing for reforms to make Thailand a better society to live in. Among the political economists, one group advocates working within the existing system, and allying with the progressive forces of the middle class (white-collar workers) and wage labour. Another group rejects the existing power structure and argues that an alternative political structure is needed to achieve a better society. But it is not clear what is this alternative political structure.

The NGOs seek an alternative development path focusing on 'the people's sector' as against the 'capitalist sector'. The aim should be a 'good life' and not economic growth. The *watthanatham chumchon* advocates want to rebuild society from the grassroots, based on people's freedom to organise their resources and their production for their own ends, within their community culture, without having to succumb to exploitation and repression by governments and big businessmen. Of all the approaches, that of the NGOs, with its introduction of 'watthanatham chumchon' as its working principle, is the most indigenously based. In this sense they are most original of all. Their attempts to affect the thinking of people's at the grassroots may make this approach the most radical politically.

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THAI STUDIES IN POLITICS AND LAW

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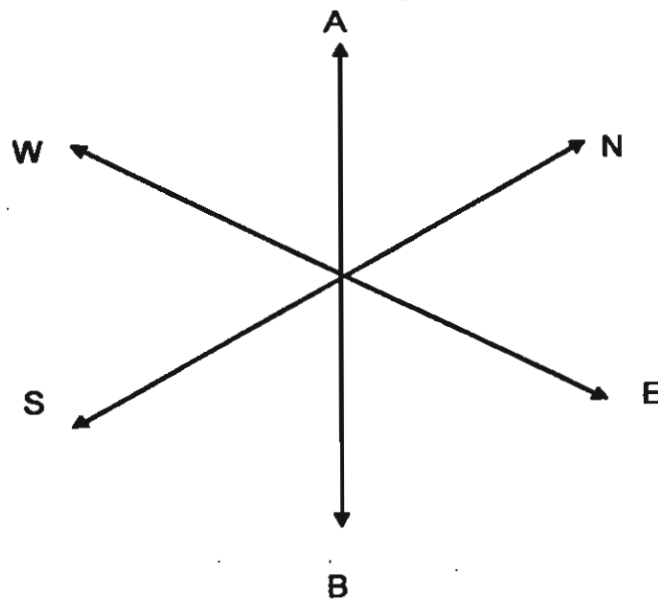
INTRODUCTION

The objective of this article is to make a critical survey of the state of Thai studies in politics and law during the last decade, the period which is long enough to see the variety and innovation. In order to accomplish this task, the author makes the following assumptions. Firstly, the contents of Thai "political" and "legal" studies are so closely related that in this article it is not deemed advisable to draw a strict demarcation between two types of works. Secondly, the author believes that the state of Thai studies in general has been developed up to the point that a rigid disciplinary encamping is obviously outdated. Hence, in this essay works are selected not because of the fact that their authors are "political scientists" or "professors of law" but more importantly on the basis that their contents are relevant to the subject under discussion. Thirdly and finally, as far as the format of the works is concerned, this paper does not include only those "research manographs" or "texts" but also "articles" in weekly magazines or even in daily newspapers. Here the criterion is not the format but, as applied above, the relevancy of their contents.

Before engaging with a cornus of works selected for our discussion, a short account on conceptual frame of analysis is needed. Here we are going to deal with three basic problematics in Thai political/legal studies : (1) how do the Thai (as individuals) think about the world of Thai politics ? ; (2) what is the nature of the present political regime ? ; and (3) what is the structure of power relationship in the current Thai polity ? Political thinking belongs to the realm conventionally known as the "political culture". Metaphorically speaking, political culture is perceived as a spectrum or band of colours seen in a rainbow. One pole of the axis is identified as the "authoritarian political culture" Whereas the opposite pole is fixed as the "liberal political

culture". By the same logic, the "political regime" axis is thus composed of the "monocracy" versus "democracy" dichotomy, and the "power structure" axis is that of "monism" versus "pluralism". Certainly, these graphic attributes (authoritarianism, liberalism, monocracy, democracy, monism, and pluralism) are all the ideal types. Their heuristic value is to facilitate us in classifying and identifying the works which are at best approximating the ideal types. Putting together, the three axes can be related to each other as in the following diagram.

Diagram I : The relationship between political culture, political regime, and power structure.



AB	=	Power Structure Axis
NS	=	Political Culture Axis
EW	=	Political Regime Axis
A	=	Above = Monism
B	=	Below = Pluralism
N	=	North = Authoritarianism
S	=	South = Liberalism
E	=	East = Monocracy
W	=	West = Democracy

In this article, the author has two hypotheses to test. Firstly, the Thai polity that has been evolved upto the present is still located somewhere in the sphere of A-N-E. This means that the Thai political system still has a monistic power structure, an authoritarian political culture, and a somewhat monocratic political regime. Secondly, scholars or students of Thai studies see, and hope to see more about, the move towards a reliable groundwork for the sphere of B-S-W. This move will strengthen the Thai polity more in its pluralistic power structure, liberal political culture, and democratic rules and practice. We will test these hypotheses by commencing from the subject of political culture, then to follow by the political regime, and finally to end up with the power structure. The final section of the article will be a critical evaluation of all contributions having discussed.

THAI POLITICAL CULTURE STUDIES

Most students of political culture in Thailand accept a definition of "political culture" as proposed by Almond and Powell that "Political Culture is the pattern of individual attitudes and orientations towards politics among members of a political system"¹. Those students also believe that political culture is a very important base for political development. Sombat Thamrongthanyawong, for example, has it that "To develop merely democratic political structure without developing democratic political culture among the people will finally lead to democratic failure".² Hence, if we can clarify accurately about the true nature of Thai political culture, we will certainly know a great deal more about Thai politics, including its prospective success or failure in a given situation.

Suchit Bunbongkam, a senior political scientist who is one among the first few who has studied Thai political culture since the late 1960s, concludes that the

¹ G.A. Almond and B.Powell, *Comparative Politics : A Developmental Approach*, Boston : Little, Brown and Company, 1966, p. 50.

² Sombat Thamrongthanyawong, *Political Culture of the Middle Class in Thai Society (in Thai)*, Bangkok : National Institute of Development Administration, 1993, p. 46

mainstream Thai political culture is a pivotal factor that causes a low level of people's political participation. Some of such values, beliefs and attitudes are as follow ³.

1. The Thai people in general believe that politics or government is a set of affairs of the leading few.
2. The people conceive of politics as a too obvious matter of seeking interests, and thus politics is a "dirty" matter.
3. The people accept authoritarianism and do not consider themselves as having power or ability to withstand or affect those in power.

Apart from this there are many studies which provide a similar conclusion.

Jirayuth Vajjanarath ⁴ finds out that most of the people he surveyed know about basic institutional structures of democratic regime quite well but do not understand the essence of the regime. Moreover, the people agree that voting is an important duty of democratic citizen but at the same time they have no faith in roles and behaviours of the elected MPs, the effectiveness of elected cabinet, and even the efficiency of the democratic regime itself.

Theeraphol Kasemsuwan ⁵ studied political alienation of the Bangkokians and found out that most of the people still believed in the importance of parliamentary democracy. But this sort of belief is limited only within the level of principle. As soon as the practice or reality is concerned, the people had a negative judgement towards the available constitution, political parties, and politicians.

³ Suchit Bunbongkam, *Thai Political Development : Interaction between the Military, Political Institutions and People's Political Participation* (in Thai), Bangkok : Chulalongkorn University Press, Third printing, 1994, pp. 67-71. This book was published for the first time in 1988. Its author remarks in the third printing that a revision is not necessary because its theoretical perspective is still fundamentally valid for explaining Thai politics of the day.

⁴ Jirayuth Vajjanarath, *Not to Vote : A Case-Study of Those who Did Not Go to Vote at Bangkhunthian District*, Bangkok, November 19, 1981 (in Thai), Bangkok : Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1982.

⁵ Theeraphol Kasemsuwan, *Political Alienation and Political Participation of the People in Bangkok* (in Thai), Bangkok : Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1986

Sunan Angkoedchok ⁶ studied knowledge, understanding and attitudes of the people in Chachoengsao province toward the members of the House of Representatives. The study finds out that the people's understanding of the roles of the MPs is different from the roles prescribed in laws. The roles of MPs as expected in the Thai legal corpus are mainly in the domain of rule making for the nation as a whole. The roles the people expected are, on the contrary, exactly securing the interests and redressing the grievances of the people in their constituencies.

Pawin Chamniprasart ⁷ studied the concurrence between knowing and practicing of democratic principles among graduate students of Chulalongkorn University and found out that the students knew the principles quite well but they hardly put them into practice.

Weerachai Khongnukoon's study concluded that the government officials of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration had a moderate level of authoritarian political personality. Female, higher age, and lower education were factors which caused a more authoritarian leaning. ⁸

Phisan Chuldilok ⁹ told us that most Senators who had military background accepted that political parties were necessary institutions for democratic regimes. However, they did not accept that Thai political parties were the true representatives of the people. Members of the political parties were regarded as being short of ideology, education and political experiences. Most Senators also had an opinion that sometimes for the sake of political stability, the military intervention was necessary.

⁶ Sunan Angkoedchok, *Knowledge, Understanding and Attitude of the People toward Roles and Responsibility of the Members of the House of Representatives* (in Thai), Bangkok : Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1986

⁷ Pawin Chamniprasart, *The Concurrence between Knowing and Practicing of Democratic Principles : A Case Study of Graduate Students of Chulalongkorn University*, Bangkok : Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1986

⁸ Weerachai Khongnukoon, *Political Personality of Thai Government Officials : A Case Study of the Government Officials of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration* (in Thai), Bangkok : Unpublished M.A. Minor-Thesis, Thammasat University 1985

⁹ Phisan Chuldilok, *Pol Capt, Political Attitudes Towards Thai Political Parties of Appointed Senators from the Military* (in Thai), Bangkok : Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1987

Kmol Thappharangsi ¹⁰ conducted an attitude survey of 1,500 informants from Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Ubonratchathani, Ratchaburi and Songkhla. He found out that most of his informants had a negative or doubtful attitude towards the roles and behaviours of the elected MPs. The cause of this attitude, according to Kmol, was the people's lack of political consciousness, knowledge of democracy, and pattern of behaviours suitable for sustaining democratic regime.

Sompoj Srimarut ¹¹ studied political worldview of the executives in industrial sector and reached a conclusion that most industrial leaders had a high value towards political participation, but about a half of them had a high level of authoritarian political worldview and believed in uncertainty and superstition.

There are several studies which assert that political culture of the Thai people is basically "democratic" as well. These studies regard the democratic political culture as the opposite to the authoritarian one discussed above. Adisak Theppaars ¹² found out that the level of democratic personality of district officers all over the country was high. Karun Walthanophas ¹³ also found out the similar result three years later. Somsak Phuaphan ¹⁴ concluded that elected municipal members throughout the country also had a high level of democratic political culture. Finally, Sunan Kasemchainan ¹⁵ studied

¹⁰ Kmol Thappharangsi, *Maj-Gen, The Elected Mps and National Security* (in Thai), Bangkok : The College of National Defence, Private Research Report, 1991.

¹¹ Sompoj Srimarut, *Political Worldview of Thai Industrial Executives* (in Thai), Bangkok : The College of National Defence, Private Research Report, 1991.

¹² Adisak Theppaars, *Democratic Personality of District Officers* (in Thai), Bangkok : Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Kasetsart University, 1989

¹³ Karun Walthanophas, *Political Attitudes of District Officers* (in Thai), Bangkok : Unpublished M.A. Minor Thesis, Thammasat University, 1992.

¹⁴ Somsak Phuaphan, *Some Factors Influencing Democratic Political Culture of the Elected Municipal Members* (in Thai), Bangkok : Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Kasetsart University, 1988.

¹⁵ Sunan Kasemchainan, *Political Attitudes and Political Participation of Thai Mass Media* (in Thai), Bangkok : Unpublished M.A. Minor Thesis, Thammasat University, 1993.

democratic political attitudes of political correspondents of newspapers and televisions and discovered that the level of their democratic attitudes was high.

THAI POLITICAL REGIME STUDIES

A great contribution to Thai political and legal studies was made in 1995 by a team of 14 scholars submitting 15 reports to the committee of Democratic Development. Almost all of these researchers got doctorate of law from European universities. Their common objective was to analyse the current Thai political regime in order to recommend measures for political reform. The movement of "political reform" has been called for since the coup d'état of 23 February 1991 which ousted the elected government of General Chatchai Choonhawan. The 15 research reports are thus the crystallizations which by nature are comparative in their perspective and policy-orientated in their tone. Undoubtedly, a great deal of understanding of Thai politics and public laws can be grasped from reading these documents, as we are going to do here one by one.

1. Methods of Revising Constitution¹⁸

Since 1932 Thailand has already used 15 constitutions, with several minor revisions. According to Poonsak, the drafting and revising of constitutions in Thailand are in essence the reflections of the actual power relationship. The constitutions of 1946, 1949 and 1974 were written under the influence of elected politicians. Their contents thus emphasize the empowering of politicians at the expense of the military and bureaucracy. The constitutions of 1968, 1978, and 1991, on the contrary opened the big channel for the bureaucratic system to share political power since these constitutions were composed by the guidance of the coup groups.

Thai constitutions, therefore, differ from democratic constitutions of Western countries in the sense that the latter are designed to protect individual freedom of the citizen and at the same time to restrain the rulers' arbitrary use of power. The Thai have never had any experience in political reform in the true sense of the terms. In order to

¹⁸ Phoonsek Waisamruaj, *Forms and Methods of Revising Constitution (in Thai)*, Bangkok : The Committee of Democratic Development (CDD) and The Thailand Research Fund (TRF), 1995.

solve many problems in Thai political system, Phoonsak recommends that a "package" of law making (including the drafting or revising of constitution and its organic law in the line of constitutionalism) must be established. Throughout this process the people must have channels to participate and make decision.

2. The Organic Law

Organic law is a set of laws that have higher status than normal laws but lower than the constitution. In Thailand, Political Party Act, Election Law, and some other similar laws should have been made the organic law by their special procedure. The tougher procedure will ensure that those who are in power will not pass the laws in favour of their groups or parties. Article 115 of the present constitution, for instance, prescribes about the Election committee but does not give any detail, signifying that the details should be given by those who are in power. Somkid Lertphaithoon¹⁷ recommends that the "principle" of passing the organic law should be written clearly in the constitution. The people should have the rights to accept or reject the draft of organic law by means of referendum.

3. Right and Liberty in the Constitution¹⁸

According to the "rule of law" of all liberal democratic states, Voraphot argues, the administrative power can interfere into the realm of individual rights and liberty only under the conditions that the extant laws provide. In the Thai case, the constitutions do recognize the equality before the law for everyone but the enforcement of it is another matter. Voraphot himself is "unable to find any exemplary case of law enforcement that applies the principle of equality before the law." (p. 80)

4. Consitutional Court¹⁹

¹⁷ Somkid Lertphaithoon, *The Organic Law* (in Thai), Bangkok : CDD and TRF, 1995.

¹⁸ Voraphot Visarutphil, *Rights and Liberty in the Constitution* (in Thai), Bangkok : CDD and TRF, 1995.

¹⁹ Kamolchai Rattanasakaowong, *Constitutional Court and Its Procedure* (in Thai), Bangkok : CDD and TRF, 1995.

Article 200 of the present constitution identifies 10 constitutional judges as composing of : (1) Speaker of the House of Representatives, (2) President of the Senate, (3) President of the Supreme Court, (4) Attorney-General, and (5) 3 legal or political science experts appointed by the House of Representatives and 3 counterparts appointed by the Senate. Kamolchai considers that the backgrounds and functions of these judges are contradictory and unsystematic. He proposes that a committee of a judges, forming the constitutional court, should be a truly independent organization making judgements on behalf of the King. In this case, the term of tenure should be long enough, such as nine years, and judges are not allowed to earn their livings from other occupations. Fifteen qualified persons will be nominated by political parties which have their member (s) in the House of Representatives, and the House will selected nine of them as constitutional judges.

5. Revising the Political Party System ²⁰

Several later constitutions in Thailand have tried to institutionalize the few big political parties. One consequence of this process of institutionalization is the emergence of the "political business" or *thurakij kanmuang*. This phenomenon, that is big business groups give financial support to political parties, is regarded by the concerned partners as a form of investment. A lot of money being spent during the election campaigns is expected to be returned afterwards. Corruption in one form or another of the elected politicians, sooner or later, will be picked up as a rationale for staging another coup, and therefore commencing the seemingly endless process of "vicious circle" in modern Thai politics.

Basing upon the German experiences, Boonsri recommended that the present Thai political system should be reformed in five aspects as follow.

²⁰ Boonsri Meewong-uthos, *Revising the Political Party System (in Thai)*, Bangkok: CDD and TRF, 1995.

(1) The enforced registration of political party should be loosened until it reaches the point that registration is merely an evidence that such a political organization will receive legally a financial support from the state.

(2) The status of political party should not be hindered by inappropriate regulations such as its candidates are not elected to the parliament.

(3) Internal administration of the political party itself should be encouraged to be democratic such as all members should have voices to make a selection of party's candidates for general election.

(4) The party's financial management should be transparent and publicly accountable.

(5) Withdrawal of membership of a politician from any political party must subject to an overseeing of a reliable and independent organization.

6. Revising the Electoral System ²¹

Since the general election of 1969 the campaign expense has been growing incessantly at an extraordinary scale. This is due, according to Paitoon, to two factors. Firstly, the electoral system is that of the majoritarian or "the winner takes all." Secondly, the electoral constituency is a mixed system composing of one or two or three representatives for each.

Paitoon recommends two things. Firstly, the whole country should be divided into equal constituencies, each has only one representative. By this means, the representation system which does not destroy the "patronage" culture can be maintained for a gradual modification in the future. Secondly, the "proportional" system of voting should be introduced to complement the existing majoritarian one. The parties' lists, applying the whole country as one constituency, would provide the voters "good persons" who are nation-wide wellknown and are refrained from buying votes since the expense would be too burdensome. The members of the House of Representatives recruited through the two electoral systems should be equal in number.

²¹ Paitoon Boonyawath, *The Electoral System that Reduces Buying Vote and Give Opportunities to Good Persons* (in Thai), Bangkok : CDD and TRF, 1995.

7. Organizations Supporting Fair Elections²²

In Thailand there are two attempts to hold the general election fairly. The first attempt was to set up the "Committee Overseeing Election" for the election of 4 April 1976, and the second one was to set up the "Central Organization for Election" for the election of 13 September 1992. However, the two organizations were ad hoc and they could not contribute much to the fairness of elections.

Paithoon recommends that the organization responsible for general elections should be established in three levels. The first level, responsible for all administrative tasks, is assigned to the Ministry of Interior. The second level, called the Committee Overseeing Election, composes of nine members : 2, 2, and 5 of whom are appointed by Prime Minister, President of the Parliament, and President of the Supreme Court respectively. The last level, called the Democracy Disseminating Committee, composes of members ranking from Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, Director-Generals, academics, and Director-General of the Department of Local Administration as the secretary of the Committee.

8. Referendum²³

Referendum was prescribed in the constitutions of 1949, 1968 and 1974, but Thailand has never had any experience in applying it. Nanthawat recommends that the method of referendum should be employed for passing of three types of law : (1) the constitution and its revising versions, (2) the organic law, and (3) the decrees which are not about taxation and financial matter.

9. Autonomous Organizations of the State²⁴

One of the most serious problems of the Thai State is that the development of the state functionaries is far behind from that of socio-economic sector. The division of

²² Paithoon Boonyawath, *Organizations To Support Fair Elections* (in Thai), Bangkok : CDD and TRF, 1995.

²³ Nanthawat Boramananth, *Referendum* (in Thai), Bangkok : CDD and TRF, 1995.

²⁴ Vissanu Varuny, *Autonomous Organizations of the State* (in Thai), Bangkok: CDD and TRF, 1995.

labour plus the somewhat overspecialization make the state organizations inefficient in providing public services and powerless in guiding or controlling the business sector.

Vissanu suggests that some organizations should be upgraded to be autonomous organizations, free from bureaucratic and political interventions. These organizations, pivotal to public interests and people's rights and liberty, should include for example : The Commission of Counter Corruption ; Commission of Foods and Drugs; Committee of Protection of Consumers' Interests; National Board of Radio and Television Broadcasting ; The Bureau of National Auditing ; The Securities and Exchange Commission ; Electoral Commission ; and Board of National Communications. Moreover, general guidelines about creating this type of organizations should be clearly stated in the constitution.

10. Autonomous Secretarial Organization of the Parliament ²⁵

In democratic countries, the secretarial organizations of the Parliaments are autonomous in both personnel administration and budget. In Thailand, the secretarial organizations of the two Houses are not autonomous from the Executive. Hence, they do not have to respond directly to the Legislative. Montri suggests that the Parliament should have its own Board of Personnel Administration which is free from the influence of civil servants and politicians. As far as the budget is concerned, the special budget committee of the parliament should also be established.

11. Organizations for Socio-Economic Advice ²⁶

Since 1961, all Socio-Economic Development Plans have been prepared and implemented exclusively by the civil service. These plans do not have any participation from the people in general, the private sector, or even the Parliament itself. All the national development plans in Thailand are therefore undemocratic and unable to response to the increasing number of new problems.

²⁵ Montri Roobsuwan, *The System of Administration of Autonomous Secretarial Organization of the Parliament (in Thai)*, Bangkok: CDD and TRF, 1995.

²⁶ Thiva Ngoenyang, *Organizations for Socio-Economic Advice (in Thai)*, Bangkok: CDD and TRF, 1995.

Basing upon the French experience, Thiva suggests that a certain form of national socio-economic council should be clearly prescribed in the constitution. The procedure of preparing the national development plan should also be revised to cover the following steps. Firstly, the plan must be drafted by the Central Planning Office, an organization under the Office of the Prime Minister. Then, the draft must be scrutinized by the National Planning Committee which have members from various private sectors. Opinions of the planning committee must be publicized. Thirdly, the National Planning Committee passes the draft to the Socio-Economic Council which have representatives from various groups of the populace as members. The council gives opinions about the drafting plan to the Cabinet. Finally, the Cabinet proposes the plan to the Parliament to pass it as a bill. By this means, the national development plan is at least indirectly democratic or semi-democratic.

12. The System of Handling and Consideration of Public Financial Bills ²⁷

In Thai parliamentary system, individual members cannot introduce the bills which are concerning public financial matter. The power to decide whether the bill is that of financial or not belongs to the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Since the speaker is a member of the ruling party, it may be understandable that he may use his discretionary power in favour exclusively of the executive. If so, the initiatives of individual members, particularly those of the opposition, in introducing the bills will be severely hindered. Aurapin proposes that a standing committee should be established to screen the matter for the Speaker of the House. To do this is another means to develop political institutions in liberal democratic polity.

13. Improving the Efficiency of the Committees ²⁸

Tongthong sees three basic problems of the Thai standing committees. The first one is that the functions of the committees are not clearly stated in the constitution.

²⁷ Aurapin Pholsuwan, *The System of Handling and Consideration of Financial Bills (in Thai)*, Bangkok : CDD and TRF, 1995.

²⁸ Tongthong Chantharangsue, *Improving the Efficiency of the Committees (in Thai)*, Bangkok : CDD and TRF, 1995

Secondly, the committees do not have authority to enforce the summons of persons or documents. Thirdly and finally, the expenditure of the committees particularly for foreign trips is often criticized by mass media as immoderate. Tongthong suggests that the functions and authority of the committees should be prescribed clearly in the constitution or the laws concerned. The expenditure, however, cannot be reformed merely through legal documents but cooperation from political communication and social sanction are also needed.

14. The System of Appropriate Political Accountability of the Government²⁹

Suraphol considers that the present Thai political regime suffers from applying the monist parliamentary system. Under this system the mechanism of checks and balance between the legislative and executive has been destroyed by the unity between the government and the majority in the House of Representatives. In order to bring back the mechanism of balance of powers, called the "rationalized parliamentary system", two lines of measures have been offered. The first one is to create the supplementary organizations such as the constitutional court, the state auditing organization, and so on. Another one is to create a new system of relationship between the legislative and the executive. In his research Suraphol concentrates only on the second measure. The major aims of this reform are (1) to increase the leadership of the prime minister and (2) to upgrade the efficiency of the legislative performance. In order to enhance the leadership of the prime minister, the method of selecting the executive leader must be revised. Suraphol recommends that the post should be filled by the one who gains the absolute majority support from the House of Representatives by means of secret voting within a given period such as 40 days after general elections. In the case the candidate is not a member of the house, an open voting is required. Among the means to improve the efficiency of the legislative are (1) the appointment of every post prescribed in the constitution must be done by a secret voting, (2) the executive is not allowed to issue the decrees apart from those concerning taxation and public finance, and (3) there are meetings which require the executive to give verbal answers to the questions.

²⁹ Suraphol Nitikraiphon, *The System of Appropriate Political Accountability of the Government (in Thai)*, Bangkok : CDD and TRF, 1995.

15. The System of Investigation of Malpractice of Those in High Positions ³⁰

In Thailand there are 4 major types of investigation of malpractice of the ones who occupy the powerful positions. The first method is the criminal justice procedure. This method is not effective since those who are in the high positions do have influence to the officials in the process. The second method is carried out by the Commission of Counter Corruption established since 1975. However, there has never been a case that any politician was tried by this means. The third one is that of the members of the House controlling each other among themselves. Again, this method has never happened. The fourth and last one is the employing of "special power" by the coup groups after seizing of power. There are few cases using this method in the past, but it is obviously against the principles of rule of law and constitutional legitimacy.

Bowomsak recommends that two boards should be established for this matter. The first one, Board of Prevention and Suppression of Corruption, should now compose of nine members, none of whom can be in private business, a government official, or a member of political party during the last ten years. These members are selected by the electors who are representatives of the political parties. The tenure of membership is nine years and it cannot be renewed. The major function of this board is to investigate and collect all relevant information about the cases and then to hand them to the second board. The second board, Board of Criminal Judges, composes of the chairperson and the other nine members, all of whom are the most senior judges of the Supreme Court next from the President. The other ten judges, using the same qualifications as for selecting the judges of Constitutional Court, are selected by the Senate and the House of Representatives. The main function of this board is to make a judgement. The judgement of the majority must be published in the gazette and regarded as final.

THE POWER STRUCTURE STUDIES

³⁰ Bowomsak Uwanoo, *The System of Investigation of Malpractice of Those in High Positions (in Thai)*, Bangkok : CDD and TRF, 1995.

1. Saneh Chammarik and Power Structure (1986).³¹

Saneh Chammarik is the scholar who has popularized the concept of "power structure" or "structure of power relationship" in Thai studies during the last decade. He divides the transformation of power structure of Thai polity, since it was forced to open to the West in the latter part of the nineteenth century, into two parts (1) the "Bureaucratic polity" (1885 - 1967) and (2) the "new power relationship" (since 1967 - 1971). Saneh told us clearly that "It is still unable in this study to give a conclusive explanation about the direction of this new power relationship since it is quite unacquainted in the context and experiences of the Thai culture." (p. 350).

Saneh agrees with Jacobs³² and Riggs³³ that the traditional structure of Thai political economy was that of "sakdina" or "patrimonial" type. This type of social structure, contrary to the "feudal" type of Western Europe and Japan, lacks the inner conditions which can create the momentum of social change by itself but needs the impulses from outside. However, Saneh considers that both Jacobs' and Riggs' analytical perspectives are too static and opts for Kautsky's³⁴ theory as a more flexible one. Kautsky accepts that the difference between the Western and Eastern types of society may be true in their early stages of modernization, but when a society can develop human resources, technology and capital within itself upto a certain point the difference would finally disappear.

The year 1885 signified a change in traditional political order since some Siamese royalties and officials in Europe petitioned King Chulalongkorn for a change to a constitutional rule as in Europe. Considered as a whole, the change in power structure from 1885 to 1932 was a process of centralization of power to the central bureaucratic machine. The so-called revolution of 1932 must be seen, not as a democratic experiment

³¹ Saneh Chammarik, *Thai Politics and Constitutional Development* (in Thai), Bangkok : Thai Khadi Research Institute, Thammasat University, and The Foundation of Social Sciences and Humanities Textbooks, 1986.

³² Norman Jacobs, *Modernization without Development : Thailand as an Asian Case Study*, New York : Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1971.

³³ Fred Riggs, *Thailand : The Modernization of a Bureaucratic Polity*, Honolulu : East-West Center Press, 1966.

³⁴ John H. Kautsky, *The Political Consequences of Modernization*, New York : John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1972

but merely as a rearranging the power relationship within the bureaucracy itself. In other words, the attempt to establish a democratic constitutional regime from 1932 to 1957 was the politics of the privileged elites rather than that of the mass, and it ended up with a failure. (pp. 127-133). Why did it fail ?

Saneh argues that one of the most pivotal factors that accounted for the success of western liberal democratic regimes was the common agreement among the power elites concerning (1) recognition of political opposition, and (2) upholding of the principle of rule of law. The agreement upon these two basic issues was severely lacking in the early stage of Thai political development. Instead, judgements of the Supreme Court No. 42/2496 (1953) and No. 1662/2505 (1962), in essence the justification of *realpolitik* of the day, laid down the legal groundwork for authoritarian rule.

Since the change in political world was determined, with legal justification, by those who were most powerful, i.e. the military and civil service, the patronage system was prospering. In Thai parliamentary regime, the "bureaucratic politicians" assumed the roles of "patrons" while the real or "professional politicians" accepted their roles as "clients", regardless of legitimate support from their constituencies. (pp. 353-4)

The "new power relationship", emerged after the 1960s, was "new" because its direction was partly determined by "extra-bureaucratic forces." These extra-bureaucratic forces are consequences of national socio-economic development which started in 1961. In the general elections of 1975 and 1976, it is obvious that the House of Representatives was the floor of the "middle class" such as those who controlled the financial business more than the other groups. The constitution of 1968 was an authoritarian one, designed by and for the bureaucratic power. The constitution of 1974 was, on the opposite side, a fully-fledged democratic one, being a product of the "14 October 1973" democratic uprising. After the authoritarian and right-wing coup of "6 October 1976", the constitution of 1978 was a somewhat middle path between the former ones. The so-called "half-leaf" democracy of the 1980s was in essence a compromise between the bureaucratic and extra-bureaucratic forces.

2. Suchit Bunbongkarn and the Role of Military in Thai Politics (1988).

In his text *Thai Political Development* ³⁵, Suchit argued that there were three basic problems in Thai politics since 1932 : (1) the frequency of coups ; (2) the weakness of political parties ; and (3) the low level of people's participation. The co-determination among these three pillars created what we may call "The labyrinth of Thai politics." We can read the chain of causation in two ways. Reading in a clockwise direction, contemporary Thai politics commenced by a coup. The coup blockaded the development of the political parties. The impotent political party system finally prohibited, or was unable to induce, participation from the people. In an anti-clockwise direction, the coup ended up people's political participation. Since political participation was blockaded, kept low, or discontinued, the people could not be the real base for the development of political parties. The weak political parties justified military intervention into politics in the form of coup. Hence, a new cycle continued.

Among these three factors Suchit emphasized most on the roles of the military in Thai politics. Thai military leaders see politics and the affairs of the state as two sides of the same coin. Professional military forces as government officials are thus inevitably involved in politics. (p. 64). Moreover, the victory of the military over the Communist Party of Thailand in the early 1980s enhanced the legitimacy of military intervention in political life. From such experiences, Thai military as an important political institution saw no other institutions or variables, such as political parties or business sector, as reliable for safeguarding the stability of the country. The widespread phenomenon of vote buying is an indicator that the MPs are not the true representatives of the people, and the people themselves are unable to use their own considerate power.

Suchit Bunbongkam is another scholar who believes that the concept of "bureaucratic polity" is still valid for explaining the present Thai politics, though its degree of concentration has been decreasing. The Thai bureaucratic polity could wipe out the challenges from the "proletariat polity" by the early 1980s. Nowadays, the "bourgeois polity" is the only force which the bureaucratic polity allows to share the power structure.

³⁵ Ibid, See note no. 3

3. Nidhi Aeusrivongse and the "Thai Cultural Constitution" (1991).³⁸

Constitution, according to Nidhi, is a set of regulations determine the ways in which persons and institutions should relate to each other in terms of power. In other words, a constitution tells us about who is powerful and under what context.

Political culture, according to Nidhi again, is a way of life, a way of thinking, or a set of values which each society employs to make a judgement that a certain type of power relationship is legitimate. Political culture is thus the ultimate regulation of power relationship. Political culture is the real constitution of a state. This constitution cannot be torn into pieces by coups. This constitution is called the "cultural constitution." Within the Thai cultural constitution, there are at least three basic institutions which have shaped the nature of Thai polity till today : (1) the monarchy ; (2) Buddhism ; and (3) the bureaucracy.

The monarchy is a "sacred" institution penetrated in every corner of Thai culture. The section on the monarchy in all written constitutions can be wholly lifted out without any threat to the monarchy since the institution itself has already been firmly established in the cultural constitution.

Though not being recognized verbally as the "national religion" in the written constitutions, Buddhism in practice has for a long time been regarded as such. In other words, Buddhism is the national religion in the cultural constitution.

Next from the monarchy and Buddhism is the bureaucracy or the state apparatus. Since 1932, the bureaucracy has obviously become the most pervasive and powerful institution over lives of the people. The Thai, however, have tried to create new measures to deal with this powerful institution. Sometimes the Thai call for "morality" to counteract the bureaucracy. "Influence" or *Itthiphol*, the form of power which lacks legal or traditional foundation, is another means sought for dealing with the bureaucracy. Military leaders, members of the House of Representatives, and the rural big men or magnates can be referred and approached as the "influential" ones in certain circumstances. Recently, the nature of interaction between the people and the

³⁸ Nidhi Aeusrivongse, "Thai Cultural Constitution" (in Thai), *Silapawattthanatham*, vol. 13, No. 1, (November, 1991).

bureaucracy has been moving more and more towards revising rules and regulations along the line of the rule of law.

4. Chai-anan Samudhavanija and *State Power and Political Power* (1992).³⁷

The main argument in Chai-anan's research report is that modern Thai politics emphasizes more on the power of state apparatus than the power of political institutions. Seen in this light, the constitutions are less important than the law regulating the bureaucracy. Since the constitutions prescribe things that are too broad and to a certain extent too trivial, the abolition of the constitutions by the coups does not threaten much the "bureaucratic polity."

According to Chai-anan the clue of the Thai bureaucratic polity commenced around the year 1938. At that time Prime Minister Phiboonsongkram, instead of employing the political power to guide and control the power of bureaucracy, mingled the two types of power into one. The Administrative Acts of 1952 and 1991 all helped to enhance the hegemony of bureaucratic power over political power in one way or another. Particularly remarkable is the Act of Administration of the Office of the Prime Minister, dated February 14, 1959, which empowered for the first time this organization to control government officials of all ministries through its inter-ministerial organizations such as the Office of the Civil Service Commission, the Office of the Auditor-General of Thailand (later on _____ an independent public agency), the Bureau of the Budget, the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, the National Defence Council (later on _____ the National Security Council), the National Education Council (later on _____ the Office of the National Education Commission), and so on.

Since 1961 the five-year national economic and social development plans, contrary to the constitutions, have never been discontinued by coups. The "people's participation" aspect of the Thai state thus has been radically overwhelmed by the "security" and "development" aspects, particularly during the fighting against communists and poverty in the Cold War period. The most central problem of contemporary Thai politics is, to conclude, that "the formal power relationship emulating

³⁷ Chai-anan Samudhavanija, *100 years of Bureaucratic Reform : Evolution of State Power and Political Power (in Thai)*, Bangkok : Chulalongkorn University Press, 1992

the western liberal democratic regime is contradictory to the real power structure of Thai society". (p. 223).

5. Somkiat Wanthana and the Patronizing Democracy. (1992). ³⁸

The present author studied the 60 years of Thai democracy in 1992 by analysing the ways in which the Thai ruling elite employed the discursive practice in acquiring and maintaining their power to rule. Three major types of discourse are (1). 11 announcements of the coup groups which I call "the proclamation of power" ; (2) 15 preambles of the constitutions which I call "the regulation of power", and (3) 50 policy statements of the cabinets (1932 - 1992) which I term "the policy of power". In other words, I tried to understand the development, or under-development, of Thai manipulation of the conception of power.

The result of the study clearly shows that the type of democracy the Thai ruling elite understood and tried to suggest the others to agree is that of patronizing one. By "patronizing democracy" the ruling elite assumed firstly that in Thai culture and historical experiences power always came from above. Secondly, in the early stage of political modernization the people were conceived as lacking in education, and consequently they could neither afford any form of self-government or exert their own independent views. Thirdly, though recently the level of education of the people was much improved, the people were still considered as victims of the new but rapidly growing phenomenon of "vote buying". In short, "democracy" in the mainstream political discursive practice means that in every step the people always need their "patrons" very badly. The cabinets, one after another, aimed at similar things-i.e. "to cultivate", "to train", "to teach", or "to urge" the people to understand, realize and value the democratic regime as the ruling bureaucratic elites see it. However, by 1990 it was obvious for the present author that the "patronizing democracy" was being challenged more and more by the "market democracy". The latter model of democracy regards vote as a kind of economic exchange. Votes are goods that are not good to be transacted through non-

³⁸ Somkiat Wanthana, "Thai Ruling Elite and Democracy" (in Thai), in Suthachai Yimprasoet, ed., *60 Years of Thai Democracy* (in Thai), Bangkok : The Committee of 60 Years of Democracy, 1993.

economic coercion. The "patronizing democracy" is therefore diminishing at the expense of economic prosperity.

6. Rangsan Thanapomphan and the Patronizing Democratic Culture (1992).³⁹

Rangsan classifies the forms of culture in Thai society into 4 types : (1) the patronizing-authoritarian ; (2) the patronizing-democratic ; (3) the capitalist-authoritarian ; and (4) the capitalist-democratic.

The patronizing-authoritarian culture is the most traditional form of culture in Thai society both in economic and political relationships. In its political aspect, the Thai people in general tend to admire those who are in power without question. In its economic aspect, the production relationship is basically that of patron-client relationship. The patronizing-democratic culture is the product of modern political transformation. Several waves of democratic political culture have been injected into Thai political life but the economic base has been able to prolong its patron-client relationship particularly in its huge agricultural sector.

The capitalist-authoritarian culture has been formed along with capitalist economic expansion after the Second World War. Though the capitalist economic relationship is based on exchange or equal and independent transaction, the capitalists in Thai society particularly in the early days had to seek political protection. The capitalists paid "tributes" to those who held political power and got privilege or monopoly in return.

The capitalist-democratic culture has been originated and pushed forward only recently by the modern entrepreneurs who want both a free competitive market and an open forum for political participation. However, at present the patronizing-democratic culture is still the dominant one. This culture provides the background and rationale for the phenomenon of vote buying in Thai politics.

The logic of vote-buying behaviour runs as follows. Firstly, several coups made the politicians the "insecure" profession. Those who had "good" qualifications did not venture into politics. Only the rich and influential ones, both local and national, come to

³⁹ Rangsan Thanapomphan, *The Impermanence of Thai Politics : An Economic Analysis of Politics* (in Thai), Bangkok : The Manager Press, 1993. A collection of articles in *The Manager Daily* in 1992 and 1993.

occupy political forum. Secondly, the elected governments in Thailand were short-lived. Political parties were not given opportunities to develop naturally. The candidates consequently did not have "policies" to offer but only "money". Thirdly, policies could not be developed to be goods in Thai political market because the bureaucratic power since 1932 monopolized the rule making function within the bureaucracy. The unstable coalition governments made the MPs' promises crippled. Fourthly, since policies were not the reliable goods, the decision of the voters to sell their votes was, according to Rangsan, exactly "the rational voter ignorance". Fifthly, the people in the countryside were overlooked by the government and bureaucracy for decades. The MPs had been already proved that at least they could offer some benefits, private as well as public, to the communities. Sixthly and lastly, economic growth made money the widespread means of exchange. Moreover, the people knew by experiences that voting was a commodity that could be exchanged. The "rational" people therefore accepted money rather than the policies which were by and large in the air.

7. Theerayuth Boonmee and the Strong Society (1992).⁴⁰

Theerayuth offered his analysis after the May 1992 event as a way to reform Thai democracy. He perceived the Thai society as a collection of a huge number of patron-client groups, each could hardly tolerate, or cooperate with, the others. Under this situation each group tried to cling to the institution that all groups respected-the monarchy. The result was that the monarchy was brought bit by bit into the terrain of political clashes. In order to solve this problem, Theerayuth suggested that three basic institutions had to be reformed : (1) the military ; (2) the local government ; and (3) the weak society.

The aim of military reform is to establish the professional armed forces that will not intervene politics by coup. To do this the armed forces ideology of "national" protection must be changed to that of "social" development. The monopolized claim of national protection was conducive, in the past, for the armed forces to intrude into other activities which were not their duties. The potentiality of defence function was reduced,

⁴⁰ Theerayuth Boonmee, *The Strong Society* (in Thai), Bangkok : Ming Mit Press, 1993

and the principle of equality among different social forces could be hardly brought into practice. In short, the patriotism of the military should be clearly defined in terms of national independence only, but the internal security ideology should be modified to social progress.

The aim of local government reform is to solve the problem of vote buying at its grassroot-the patron-client system. The patron-client system has a deep root in the past and it would be impossible to abolish it overnight. To reform the local government is to increase the bargaining powers to the people in their communities or villages in terms of economic, cultural and political sustainability.

To reform the "weak" society is to create the "strong" society or "civil society" against the already overwhelming strong Thai state. To develop the strong society is not the same as organizing big popular movements. Big organizations tend to lead to extremities and finally they will be isolated from the people. On the contrary, the strong society alternative must encourage the growth of social forces independently in every profession, level of income, and region of the country.

In general, there are four basic steps for creating a strong society. They are : (1) formation of social consciousness ; (2) formation of social organization ; (3) formation of common ideology ; and (4) crystallization of social ideology through social institutions and organizations. In the Thai case, the first two steps have been accomplished. At the moment, the process of creating a common social ideology is under way. The model of Thai society in the future is likely to be the one which sustains an equilibrium of three major factors : the strong society, the institutionalization of political parties, and the small but efficient bureaucracy and armed forces.

8. Nidhi Aeusrivongse and the Thai Middle Class Culture (1993).⁴¹

In recent years the role of the middle class in transforming the polity to be more democratic is repeatedly discussed. The protest in May 1992, majority of protesters came by cars and communicated by mobile phones, enhanced such an expected

⁴¹ Nidhi Aeusrivongse, "The Thai Middle Class Culture" (in Thai) in Sangsith Piriyaarangsarn and Pasuk Phongpaichit, eds., *The Middle Class and Thai Democracy* (in Thai), Bangkok : The Political Economy Centre, Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1993.

constructive role. Apart from that, the experiences of the western democracies teach us that the middle class is an energetic factor of democratic construction because of its several favorable characteristics such as individualism, cosmopolitanism, high education, love of freedom, and admiration of personal achievement. Nidhi agrees with these general characteristics of the middle class but emphasizes nine points which are rather peculiar to the "middle class" (*khon chan khlang rathan chonchan klang*) in Thailand. They are as follow.

(1) The culture of Thai middle class is closely related to that of the ruling upper class, the former has been trying to emulate the latter.

(2) The Thai middle class culture is at the front line and sensitive to the process of globalization.

(3) The Thai middle class neither understands nor accepts the peasant culture.

(4) The Thai middle class favours rather exceedingly a luxurious lifestyle since this has been for a long time a symbol of grace and power in traditional Thai society.

(5) The Thai middle class believes in the traditional ideal of governance that the good government is the one which benevolently interferes with the lives of the populace.

(6) Democratic burden of the Thai middle class is trifling because it is short of basic liberal-democratic values such as the beliefs in human equality, personal freedom, the rule of law, the rights of the minorities and the underprivileged, and so on.

(7) Development, for the Thai middle class, means the better change in the area of only economy.

(8) Since the Thai middle class did not develop the system of interpersonal relationship based on individualism, it then adopted the traditional system of patron-client.

(9) The Thai middle class did not brought up its own thinkers or intellectuals, hence it has not had a philosophical foundation to sustain its wealth and power.

In Nidhi's concluding remark : "So far, the Thai middle class culture may be dependent forever, and in fact it may not have much influence as it appears." (p. 65).

9. Sombat Chantornvong and Thai Election in Crisis (1993) ⁴²

The most systematic and complete study of general elections in Thailand upto now is

Sombat's. In this work, which depicted the general election of 22 March 1992 as a case study, Sombat perceives the election as the end product of the whole political process. The most proliferating "deviant behaviour" in election campaign during the last decade is the practice of vote-buying. It is deviant because its practices are explicitly forbidden by electoral laws. But although being forbidden by laws, why do the practices grow at an extraordinary rate ? Sombat sorts out factors and conditions contributing to the widespread deviant behaviour as follow :

- (1) Socio-economic differences between rural and urban areas.
- (2) Political culture and attitudes of voters.
- (3) The content of the Election Laws and the lack of enforcement.
- (4) The present constituency is too big.
- (5) Weakness and underdevelopment of the political party system.
- (6) The present electoral process which allows a voter to vote for up to 3 candidates from different parties as his MPs.
- (7) The rising role of businessmen cum politicians.

What should be deserved our particular attention are the factors Nos. 2 and 7 which are the terrains where the voters and politicians actively meet. From Sombat's research report, there are at least three very important and interesting conclusions.

Firstly, the practice of election campaign defined by electoral laws as "deviant" is in fact the very "normal" practice supported by local culture and tradition throughout the country. One should therefore bear in mind the fact that voters in the rural areas are expected to be willing to receive any material benefits from competing candidates. Sombat states clearly that from the point of view of some one who is on the receiving end under the patronage system, an average voter can see nothing wrong in such forms of

⁴² Sombat Chantornvong, *Thai Election in Crisis : Problems and Solutions (in Thai)*, Bangkok : Kobfai, 1993

political manipulation (giving cash, free meals, free drinks, free entertainment, or building of some kind of infra-structure facilities for the whole village).

Secondly, the ideal representative in the views of the voters and the state are obviously contradictory. From the state point of view, a good representative has the following attributes : honesty ; not looking down upon the people by buying votes having knowledge, ability, and morality. However, the voters under survey like the representative who possesses the following qualities accordingly : helping the community in one way or another ; not supercilious ; bringing benefits and fame to the province ; high education ; having a high potential to get a ministerial post ; and so on. (pp. 220 - 221).

Finally, since the network of the patronage system secures mutual benefits both to the voters and politicians, the reform of electoral laws and procedures will not be sufficient to solve the problem of deviant behaviour in electoral campaign. What is needed then is obviously the major reconstruction of the whole socio-political and economic structure of the society.

10 Christensen and Siamwalla and the Model Explaining Vote Buying(1993)⁴³

Vote buying in general elections has been a widespread and well-known phenomenon for several years. But, according to Christensen and Siamwalla, there is a myth about this electioneering in the countryside. A causal chain of explanation goes like this : (p. 32).

(1) Rural voters are poor and susceptible to bribery by candidates ;

therefore

(2) candidates bribe voters and spend enormous sums of money to get elected and spending more money means a better chance of winning ;

therefore

(3) having spent lots of money, winning candidates try to recoup the cost of electioneering ;

therefore

⁴³ Scott R.Christensen and Ammar Siamwalla, *Beyond Patronage : Tasks for the Thai State*, Bangkok : The Thailand Development Research Institute Foundation, 1993.

(4) they engage in corrupt activities when they come to Bangkok, and widespread corruption is thus explained.

The two analysts do not agree with this chain of reasoning. They argue that expensive electioneering is not the cause of corruption since one of the most corrupt leaders of the country, Sarit Thanarat, never went for any election. Secondly, the poverty is not the main reason for vote selling either because the voters in the much richer Central Plain sold their votes no less than those in the impoverished Northeast. Finally, it is a well-known fact that merely spending lots of money will not be assured of winning it.

To demystify the above theory, Christensen and Siamwalla propose the following alternative model : (p. 36).

(1) Because of the laxness of Thai laws and government procedures, and because corruption is extremely lucrative and largely goes unpunished, it is easy for ministers to become corrupt ;

therefore

(2) there is fierce competition for members of parliament to become ministers and for parties to be parts of the governing coalition ;

therefore

(3) there is fierce competition for individuals to compete to become MPs, and because rural electors expect candidates to be able to shower them with resources which they eventually obtain from Bangkok ;

therefore

(4) candidates buy votes from their constituents during election time as an advance payment but, more importantly, they have to bring resources to their constituencies between elections.

Christensen and Siamwalla assert that in their model of explaining Thai politics, vote buying is the end result, not the cause of corruption. The cause of corruption, to read from their model, must be found somewhere in the laxness of Thai laws and government procedures. The autonomous state, the administrative-centered

government, and the network of patron-client relationship are the real factors that shape Thai politics until only recently that they have become increasingly inadequate.

11. Grit Poemthanjit and Local Government (1994).⁴⁴

Though it is generally acknowledged that local government is the grassroots of democracy, the studies in this area have not been received enough attention from Thai academics. Since the promulgation of the first Municipality Act in 1993, there have been altogether 12 revisions, the last of which was the Act of 1980. The Thai municipality employs the executive committee-council form as the frame of government, modelling after the national parliamentary regime. As a result, the major problem happened in this form of local self-government was similar to that of national one. Members of the municipal council aspired to become members of the executive committee, similar to situation that MPs tried to become ministers, leading to the unequal relationship between the executive and the legislative.

In 1978, the city manager-council form was introduced in Pattaya City, aiming at separating the professional executive from an excessive political interaction. However, the result was not much successful. The employed professional executive (Palat) could not use his expertise at the optimum since the president (Nayok) of the elected council also wanted to perform administrative roles.

In 1985, the strong mayor-council form was introduced in Bangkok Metropolis, aiming to separate clearly the power of the executive from that of the legislative, both being elected. According to Grit this form of local self-government is rather successful, and it should be applied to urban areas in every province.

From this research one knows that the municipalities in Thailand do not satisfactorily work well. The researcher has an opinion that the national bureaucracy has dominated the local government so long that the people got confused about the roles and import of such institution.

⁴⁴ Krit Poemthanjit, *A Search for An Appropriate Municipal Government in Thailand* (in Thai), Bangkok : Faculty of Public Administration, National Institute of Development Administration, 1994.

12. Chatthip Nartsupha and Pompilai Lertwicha⁴⁵ and the Thai Village Culture (1994)

This latest important work of Chatthip (with Pompilai as co-author) is a magnum opus in its scope and intention. At the same time, this work is obviously unconventional. In its introduction, the aim of the work is "to reconstruct the pictures of cultural history at the village level from every region of Thailand." Indeed, this type of study cannot be accomplished in a short period and by one or few researchers. The acknowledgement testifies that a great number of persons contributed in one way or another to the success of the book. Apart from its vast scope, this work still employs the format and style which are different from all other works discussed thus far. Reading it is extremely enjoyable and often and often motivating. The picture of villages from different parts of Thailand as portrayed in the book are lively and hopeful which are sharply contrasted with those pictures appeared in most media during the past two or three decades. Agreeing with them or not is another matter, one certain thing is that the book is very provoking. As the twentieth century is approaching its end, this book is a splendidly courageous move against the mainstream of one globalizing culture.

The authors declared at certain that "villages have never been transformed from the agricultural stage to the capitalist one which emphasizes on individualism and private property and rights" (p. 238). As a result, "almost 150 years after the Bowring Treaty, the Thai village communities are still basically agricultural" (p. 239). Thai villages as portrayed in the work are not much threatened by current moments of powerful change. The authors, however, had already invented the protective shell for the villages in terms of theory : "as villages are basically self-sufficient agricultural units, the external powers of the state, the capital, and western culture cannot destroy their system of thought which is cohesively founded upon the close interaction of environment, mode of production, and history of the villages themselves." (p. 241).

In fact, it would be completely misleading if we think that the authors are so naive that they cannot see any dynamism of change which storms the Thai society from every corner. Their own words indicate that the opposite is true :

⁴⁵ Chatthip Nartsupha and Pompilai Lertwicha, *Thai Village Culture* (in Thai), Bangkok : Institute of Rural Development, Village Foundation, and Sang San Press, 1994.

"Around the last twenty years the rate of change increasingly caused the shortage of land in the areas close to the cities. Communities' resource bases have been trembling. Landless peasants increased. Men, women, and the youth had to find jobs outside the villages. Within the village communities, class differentiation began to emerge, and in the long run this would lead to internal conflicts. More and more people worried that rapid economic change would finally destroy the village communities, the villagers, and even the Thai culture. However, many NGO workers and local intellectuals have discovered that the spirit or social essence of the village still persists independently amidst the expansion of capitalism. Apparently it seems that the external political and economic encroachment is so great, but thus far it cannot change the spirit of village. This research confirms the view mentioned above. In short, the peculiarity of Thai society is that the spirit and ideology of the nation still exists. (pp. 224-5).

Chatthip and Pompilai use the terms "the peculiarity of Thai society", "the spirit of the nation", "the culture of the Thai", and "the village community" as interchangeable. The common attributes of these terms are the spirit of cooperation, the priority of communal sustainability and mutual benefits, and the aspiration of independent community life. This "community culture" or "spirit of the community" cannot be destroyed by the external powers of the capital, the bureaucracy, the state, or something else.

Reading it carefully, this book is not the conclusion of "history of community culture" but merely an introduction to the subject. Academically speaking, there are many things the researchers must cover in the future such as many other localities in Thailand or even "The Tai communities" outside Thailand, the latter of which are believed to be able to keep up more traditional Tai culture than the Thai in Thailand both in documents and in rituals and daily lives. To do this will make their work not merely a history of community culture but a "comparative history of community culture" in the real sense of the terms.

13. Anek Laothamatas and Two Democracies (1994).⁴⁶

According to Anek the taproot of Thai democratic problem is the enduring conflict of ideas and interests between the majority who are peasants in the rural areas and the minority who are members of the middle classes in the urban areas. The peasantry, since their votes are always the majority, choose the government but they do not form the base for policy formation of political parties. The urban middle classes, on the contrary, form the base for government policies. Moreover, the middle classes are usually the ones who overthrow the government by their pressures and protests, in collaboration with the mass media and the military. The middle classes can determine the government policies but they cannot choose the government.

Anek believes in three basic assumptions : (1) a solid democratic foundation depends on the followers more than the leaders ; (2) political institutions are more important for a successful democracy than the instillation of political culture by means of education ; and (3) a successful democracy depends on "the real structure of powers and traditional culture" rather than the implementation of format or legal measures. In order to build up a successful democracy in Thailand, Anek proposes that a political reform must be launched hand in hand with an economic reform. The aims and essential contents of the reforms can be briefly stated as follow.

(1) Political reform. The gist of political reform in the Thai context is the reform of electoral system. The ideal system which can solve Thai political problems is that of proportional representation. Anek believes that this system will open the opportunities for the parties which introduce new policies about the peasantry or the middle classes in specific to emerge. Each party which got more than 5 per cent of total votes, for instance, would received the seats proportionally. Vote buying will be extremely difficult because the whole country as one constituency is too big to spend. Nevertheless, since the proportional representation system has never been used in Thailand before, it is likely that there will be many difficulties. As the second best, Anek agrees with a combination of the two electoral systems. One half of the MPs will be elected through the majoritarian system. But now, the whole country will be divided into equal

⁴⁶ Anek Laothamatas, *A Tale of Two Democracies* (in Thai), Bangkok : Matichon Press, 1995. The work was firstly presented in the annual conference of the Social Science Association of Thailand in August 1994.

constituencies, each has only one representative. Another half of the MPs will be elected through the parties' lists, according to the proportional representation system. By the second alternative, the people in the urban areas throughout the country have a better chance to get the right MPs.

(2) Economic reform. The major purpose of economic reform is to reduce the proportion of the rural areas by increasing that of the urban ones. In practice, this means to change the villages into towns of small and middle sizes. Anek strongly believes that democracy will be successful only under the condition that the rural people must be made individuals or free men in the realm of politics. In other words, only the modernized agriculture will create the agriculturalists who are independent and suitable for a stable democracy. Anek therefore openly argues against those who admire the village communities. (p. 83). Rather than the solidarity or collaboration, the system of relationship in the villages as Anek sees it is that of the dependence of the clients upon their patrons. The "local magnates" cause a hindrance to democratic development no less than those authoritarian military junta.

The prime aim of democratic development, both by political and economic reforms, is to liberate the rural people from the patron-client relationship system. Only free individuals can join group, association, party, and "civil society". In short, only free individuals can make democracy.

14. Phitthaya Wongkul and "Democratic Community" (1996).⁴⁷

Phitthaya has worked for non-governmental organizations for a long time. Having learnt from local intellectuals from different parts of the country, he comes now to the conclusion that Thai democracy is in fact plutocracy. (p. 160). The origin of this problem can be traced back to the attempts to change the traditional structure of Thai society to be that of "western democracy" which has the same meaning with "capitalist democracy" or "liberal democracy" or "individualistic democracy". (pp. 162 - 168). Hence, Phitthaya is the only writer discussed in this paper who openly declares at the outset that he does not agree with "democracy" that most Thai academics understand.

⁴⁷ Phitthaya Wongkul, *Economy and Sovereignty of Thai Communities* (in Thai), Bangkok : Amarinth Vichakarn Press, 1996.

Apart from the devastating influence of money in liberal democracy, Phitthaya also thinks that the principles of freedom and equality in western democracy are shortcoming. The principle of "myself and mine", he asserts, is contradictory to the truth that man is a social animal.

Rejecting the whole range of western political thoughts, Phitthaya proposes his new grand social theory. Any human society can be analysed in three levels : individual ; communal ; and societal. Capitalism concentrates too much on the individual level. Socialism or communism, on the opposite side, emphasizes too much on the societal level. Phitthaya suggests that the most appropriate solution should be the Buddhist principle of "middle path" or in his own words the "democratic community" (*chumchana thippatai*). The "democratic community" is a linkage between individualism and socialism. It bases on three principles as follow.

(1) The principle of self government of the community. The community does not have to follow the policy of central government if they do not deem that it is suitable to the community.

(2) The sovereignty over natural resources and environment. The community and the government must be equal in dealing with the usage of natural resources or any project that affects the environment of the community.

(3) The autonomy of decision-making, coordination, and protection of community against the outsiders. When such an autonomy cannot work anymore, the conflict resolution by the central government according to the rule of law is then justified.

CONCLUSION

Since this article is already too long, a conclusion should be as short as possible. We have hypothesized at the outset that the present Thai political system still has an authoritarian political culture, a somewhat monocratic political regime, and a monistic power structure. To a large extent, I am sure that this hunch is confirmed. Most political culture studies assert that authoritarianism, rather than liberalism, is the mainstream of Thai political culture. Some studies emphasize the "democratic" dimensions of political attitudes of some groups of the populace as well, but here "democratic" orientations are limited mostly at the level of principles or theories. They are hardly put

into practice. The political regime is also clearly proved as more monocratic than democratic. The Thai polity lacks many institutions which are necessary for all stable democracies such as constitutionalism, the organic law, the constitutional court, the free political party system, the fair electoral system, and so on. The power structure is clearly asserted by most, if not all, students of Thai studies as a monistic one. Most researchers agree that the concept of "bureaucratic polity" is still applicable to the Thai polity, though the degree of convincing is decreasing gradually in the last decade. Some authors explain this phenomenon in terms of the unequal relationship between the "strong state" and the "weak civil society." Though the students of village communities emphasize the relative autonomy of village or local communities, none of them has ever proposed that pluralism was a bed-rock of Thai society. As far as our second hypothesis (that the Thai political system is moving or should move to the state of more pluralistic power structure, liberal political culture, and democratic rules and practice) is concerned, all students of Thai studies discussed in this article would in principle agree to this postulation, though they may differ in the matter of degree and detail. This last point leads us to some shortcomings of the concerned approaches.

At the beginning of this article, we classify three major approaches of Thai studies in politics and public law as : (1) the political culture ; (2) the political regime ; and (3) the power structure. The most obvious shortcoming shared by three approaches is the absence of a rigorous operationalization of the concepts. The currently contestable concepts in Thai studies such as the "democratic" political culture, the bureaucratic polity, the patron-client relationship, the village community, and so on, are normally taken for granted by Thai scholars. At a certain point one would wonder whether those scholars are talking about the same thing at all.

Regarding to the deficiencies of each approach, the present author has the following remarks. Firstly, the scope of the study of the political culture approach is too narrow. This stems from the fact that the approach is in essence a methodological individualism. The individuals as objects of the study are lifted out from their "histories" and "contexts." Perhaps because of this limitation we can hardly find any "comparative" study of Thai political culture. This "methodological individualism" plus lacking of a

rigorous operationalization of concepts mentioned above make the political culture studies rather trivial, if not meaningless.

The political regime approach as discussed in this article is basically employing a formal-institutional (or legal-institutional) perspective. Hence, it is fundamentally a "methodological formalism." Similar to that of political culture approach, the political regime approach suffers from its dismissing of "histories" and "contexts" of laws or institutions both from the original and the borrowing countries. "Why does an institution that works well in Germany or Japan fail in Thailand?" is a kind of question rarely asked, if any, in this approach.

The power structure approach is strong in its emphasis both on the "contexts" and "histories" of the subject matter. However, the most pivotal limitation of this approach lies in that its scope is often too broad and vague. If any study must or should be a comparative study, it would be rather difficult for anyone to study Thai society without an exhaustive survey of the subject globally. In short, the difficulty is how to set an appropriate scope of study which is practical and at the same time faithful to the principle of contextuality.

It seems to the present author that the three approaches of Thai studies run in parallel. He has nothing to offer but hoping that the more the three approaches "bend" and "blend" together, the better is for all of them.

**STATE OF THAI STUDIES ON STATE OF THE
ENVIRONMENT:
PROPERTY RIGHTS PERSPECTIVES**

BY

**Suthawan SATHIRATHAI
Pinkaew LUANGARAMSRI
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INTRODUCTION

This paper reviews three different schools of thoughts and their related literature regarding the issue of 'property rights and the environment in Thailand'. Property rights are an important institutional arrangement regulating access to, use and control of natural resources and the environment. Problems of resource and environmental degradation can easily be visualized as a result of a failure in property rights policy. These three distinctive schools are a) the social and anthropological approach; b) the political ecology; and c) the ecological economic approach.

The second section of this paper will cover the review and analysis of literature relating to each of these three different approaches. The potential topics for future research in Thailand has also been proposed by each approach. The first approach which has its base in social and anthropological disciplines has been prepared by Pinkaw Luangamsri¹ and Sutharin Khoonpol². The second approach on Political

¹ Ms. Luangamsri is a Ph.D candidate of the Department of Anthropology, University of Washington in Seattle, USA.

² Ms. Sutharin Khunphol was a research associate at Thailand Environmental Institute in Bangkok, Thailand and currently be a Ph.D student at the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London.

Ecology and the third approach on Ecological Economics are prepared by Chusak Wittayapak³ and Suthawan Sathirathai⁴, respectively.

The last section briefly discusses the potential research topics for developing new ground for research into the area of 'property rights and the environment in Thailand'. This will be an extension to what has already been proposed by each approach as topics for future research in Thailand in the second section.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE FROM THREE DIFFERENT SCHOOLS OF THOUGHTS:

PART I THE COMMONS DEBATE: THE SOCIAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH

(Pinkaew LAUNGARAMSRI & Sutharin KHUNPHOL)

"...[T]he commons is an evolving form of property, eminently suited to the 1st century - one which allows local claims, cultures and ecosystems to be defended in an era of globalization."

Bonnie McCay and Louise Fortmann 1996:25

1.1) INTRODUCTION

Common property has been the major concern by social scientists from various disciplines since the beginning of the twentieth century. Many anthropological studies on local production systems, cultures, and social organizations have emphasized the significance of common property regime which is the key element of the management of local resources. Malinowski (1926), for example, has noted the complexity of the ownership and the Canoes management of the Trobriend six decades ago. The Trobriend islanders' system of common property encompassed rules and regulations including rights, duty, responsibility and obligation in which individuals have for the commons.

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⁴ Dr. Sathirathai is a lecturer at the Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand.

However, in the mid of the twentieth century, the study of the commons has developed extensively within the critical perspectives of contemporary academic fields such as economics, political science, sociology and anthropology. These critical studies have emerged not only in response to Hardin's influential notion of the "tragedy of the commons", but as the product of the rapid change of environment and socio-politics of the late-twentieth century, particularly in the Third World countries where local movements and the struggle to protect the commons have been phenomenally and widely proliferating. Interestingly, while Hardin's model has influenced thinking in the fields of environmental study, ecology, economics, and political science, it has also become the intellectual basis for natural resource policy of many Third World countries (McCay and Acheson 1987, Peters 1994). Challenging the "tragedy of the commons" concept, the opposition to Hardin's model which Goldman (1996) called, the "anti-tragedy school," including political scientists, ecologists, anthropologists, sociologists and economists, has generated the impetus towards a reformation of the mainstream attitude toward the commons. Particularly, international development institutions such as the World Bank and UNDP, as powerful development planners, have been actively engaged in the commons discourse. This has partly been a result of the influence of some scholars from the "anti-tragedy" approach, such as Daniel Bromley and Michael Cernea, who have played a consulting role in refining the concept of development within these institutions by restructuring the commons. (Goldman 1996:6-10) This reformist trend, however, has rendered the commons debate more complicated as it is no longer the tragedy of the commons controversy that is the point in focus, but how to make the commons more productive within the mainstream development regime. The issue of commons in this respect has been incorporated as a tool within the concept of developmentalism, modernity and globalization.

In the case of Thailand, numerous studies of local resource management since the 1970s have interpolated common property into their analysis. The concern for the commons, however, has become more evident in the work from the 1980s on. This is mainly due to conditions within Thai society in which the conflict over natural resources has become an acute politico-economic issue emerging in the past 2 decades. The impact of the commons debate from the Western academic community has also

contributed to the diversifying of the discussion and conceptual frameworks of common property in Thailand.

In investigating the key theoretical aspects of the commons within the academic debate, this paper emphasizes two major schools of thought: Human Ecology and Political Economy. By considering the contribution of which these approaches have on the debate of the commons, this paper also examines the implication of these conceptual thoughts within the studies of common property in Thailand. In reviewing the development of the study of the commons in Thailand from various theoretical positions, it is also necessary to situate the analysis within the changing socio-environmental processes at both the national and international level. The investigation of the literature on the commons and natural resource management in the context of Thailand focuses on two major theoretical approaches developing since the 1970s: Cultural Ecology and Political Ecology. Through a review and critique of these distinctive conceptual frameworks, this paper also examines the emerging critical notion of community right which has become the major point in focus of many studies in the 1990s. This is done by drawing on three distinctive perspectives surrounding the ongoing studies: the community forest ideology, the incentive notion, and the social institution of the commons.

1.2) THE HUMAN ECOLOGY SCHOOL

The Human Ecologists have been the pioneer in the study of the commons from critical perspectives by initiating field-based research and case studies in communities around the world to describe the significant characteristics of local management of agricultural lands, pastures and maritime resources. This "anti-tragedy" approach includes academic scholars from various fields such as cultural ecologists, ethnoecologists, economic anthropologists, and ecologists who have developed the theory of the commons with the emphasis on local culture and social complexity of territory (Goldman 1996).

In "The Question of the Commons: the Culture and Ecology of Communal Resources", the well-known collection of critical essays written by Human Ecologists, McCay and Acheson argue against Hardin's theory of the tragedy of the commons and

his conclusion that freedom in the commons regime enables people to seek individual benefit by overexploiting the resources, eventually destabilizing the ecosystem as natural resources reach their limit. Central to the argument is the fallacy of the tragedy of the commons model which assumes that common property is the same thing as open access, the ungoverned, unregulated resources in which selfish individual strives for unlimited exploitation of resources for maximum and short-term benefit (McCay and Acheson 1987:8). It also fails to understand the complex socio-economic condition of environmental destruction by reducing the cause of natural resources loss simply to an individual activity. The Human Ecologists argue that Hardin's "tragedy of the commons" assumptions indicate an individualistic bias which ignores the cooperative nature of human communities in which social norms and regulations are fundamental to natural resource management (Runge 1981; Kimber 1981). By undermining the social aspect of property institute, the "tragedy of the commons" thesis has a dangerous tendency to restrict the solution to the commons controversy to either the state control of natural resources or the privatization of property right. This will essentially lead to the enclosure of the commons and the real tragedy of the people who have looked after the commons.

An important question is what exactly is common property, if it is not an open access free-for-all, or definitely not "everybody's property" arbitrarily used by every member? Anderson (1987), Durrenberger (1987), and Palsson (1982) propose that common property should refer to "an inclusive and exclusive notion of the common wealth involved", encompassing specified sets of use-rights. McCay and Acheson (1987) define designated common rights as a social institution, a set or a part of the web of use-rights underlying the moral economy of human communities which varies according to distinctive cultural and ecological systems.

The most significant aspect of the Human Ecologist approach emphasizes the social and cultural complexity of territory. Studies among fishing and foraging communities by many anthropologists using this approach are a critical challenge to the "tragedy" assumption of open access resource regime that often portrays these communities as examples of the uncontrollable, anarchist villains depleting wild fish and game. The study by James Acheson (1987) among the small-scale lobster industry along coastal Maine illustrates the School's critical framework with regard to the notion of

open access. Acheson's ethnographic study and human ecological studies provide evidence of the division of fishing territory and the controls among groups of fishermen who strongly defend and maintain their lobster fishing rights and boundaries from internal and external invasions. Territorial and fishing rights are also closely tied with land rights on the coast which prevents people who do not have land ownership from fishing in the defined territory .

Fikret Berkes (1987) in his study among the Cree people of James Bay in Canada, found that though the Cree fishermen don't share the same notion of territoriality with Western people, and their fishing methods are not based on modern fishing science, ecological data on fish stocks, combined with observations about Cree fishing practices and the analysis of human behavior on wild stocks, suggest that conservation exists as a part of the commons. These studies have contributed to the diversification, specification and variation of the definitions of territoriality including the ideas of overlapping territories, permeability of boundaries, and the combinations of small commonses within a large domain.

One of the most important issues on which the Human Ecologists focus is the conservation aspect of the commons. Central questions relate to whether local people are managing their resources ecologically sustainably and whether commons and conservation are interrelated (McCay and Acheson 1987:12). Among the Human Ecologist theorists, the answer to these questions vary. Hames (1987) argues that what is viewed as conservation practices is an outcome of the exploitation strategies designed to be as efficient as possible. Berkes (1987) proposes that as there is no universally agreed-upon and culture-free definition of "conservation", the already existing different and diverse meanings of conservation render the measurement of "conservation practice" as value-laden and subject to interpretation by different cultures and beliefs. Brightman (1987), Berkes (1987) and Carrier (1987) all agree that applying Western scientific concept of conservation to assess local conservation practice might lead to serious misunderstanding of local ideology and forms of resource use. The implication of conservation might be the intent product of the dominant cultural system, and/or the result of the conflict over scarce resources (Polunin 1984 cited in McCay and Acheson 1987: 14). To study conservation within the commons thus requires a close

investigation of the ways people in a particular community understand and relate to their specific cultural and ecological systems.

Consequently, the study of common property regimes, by the Human Ecologists have brought to light cultural, moral, and historical aspects underlying specific forms of this social institution. The Human Ecology school has initiated the science of locality and territoriality in the understanding of the commons, while undermining Western unilinear view of property rights which places common property within an evolutionary process culminating in the form of private property. In fact, one may argue that this unilinear view has been disproven by the research of social scientists around the world, research indicating overlapping rights of natural resources which local communities have shifted back and forth between communal right and private property right all the time. The tragedy of the commons, as Brightman argued, are, in fact, "the tragedy of the invasion" by the state, privatization of property rights and capitalism in which the commons have been rendered an open access regime.

1.3) THE POLITICAL ECONOMY SCHOOL

The Political Economists have broadened the debate of the commons with the analysis of social and political processes control and conflict over natural resources among diverse groups. These academic scholars move the discussion of the commons from a question of "what" to "why" and "how" questions. Instead of posing a question regarding the implications of conservation and destruction within the systems of the commons, or what conditions conserve the commons, theorists of this school examine why and how commons regimes have often been defined as unregulated, uncontrollable and destructive resource management. How has the process of defining and constructing images of the commons occurred? By whom? For what purpose? These types of questions have transcended the one dimensional cause-effect nexus of environmental destruction and the commons towards the unraveling of the power relations and political economy of the "commons problem".

The Political Economy approach has been adopted in studies from various academic fields such as anthropology, geography, history, economics and political science to analyze conditions of conflict over natural resources between the state,

industry, and local people which occurring since the colonial period. Guha (1993) in *This Fissure Land*, has pointed out that shifting cultivation, the traditional form of agriculture in India, has been constructed as a "problem" due to the territory conflict over the control of natural resources between the British colonial administration which used the forest land for commercial purposes, and native people, whose subsistence relied on forest land for swidden agriculture. Along a similar line, Colchester (1990) noted that in Indonesia, shifting cultivation defined as the "robber of the national economy" was the historical product of the unequal power relations by the colonial state used this label as a tool to control communal lands and local people's access to forest land.

The tragedy of the commons theory is, therefore, a product of the power relations of resource management in the society. The theory supports the Neo-Malthusian explanation of environmental destruction, relating population growth and unlimited local people's desire to exploit natural resources which has been adopted as a fundamental perception by Third World states and international development agencies. This Neo-Malthusian idea which remains influent in the environmental and development policies of many governments, has been strongly challenged by political economy analysis of deforestation, the conceptual approach most powerful in the critique of the Neo-Malthusian connection between environmental degradation and population growth (Moore 1993). By contextualizing deforestation, Political Economy theorists have moved beyond simple cause-effect logic underlying perception of forest destruction as a consequence of one single activity, and towards an analysis of the political and economic processes of modernization and industrialization.

The political economic context is thus most important to the analysis of the commons regime. The Ecologist (1992, 22:4) argued that it is not easy to define the commons. This is because it is not a closed, static system, but a regime whose continuing existence is the product of constant interaction and struggle within and between communities, and between these communities and the external world. (p.126). Threat and invasion from outside has been the established conditions providing the impetus for the commons to emerge, evolve and mushroom everywhere in the world. The commons is, therefore, a symbol of the search for local autonomy in the

management of resources of a community. As The Ecologists pointed out, the commons refer to the right of local people to define their own fabric of resource regimes, and to design their own rules to resolve the conflicts over resources unacknowledged by state laws. In this respect, the boundaries of common regimes extend beyond the rights to merely natural resources, but include the access to knowledge, language, plant, street, or even silence which people jointly use.

1.4) DISCUSSION

Political Economy and Human Ecology have enlivened the debates of the commons since the 1970s. These schools' ethnographic and empirical studies have contributed to an understanding of the complexity and specificity of cultures, beliefs, and locality - the key elements that constitute common regimes. However, the Human Ecological approach for its criticized by their focus on local complexity and cultural specificity, a focus which makes it difficult to see beyond locality and territoriality to the broader and rapid socio-economic changes, in a globalized economy and the transformation of subsistence communities to industrial communities. In response to this criticism, McCay and Fortmann in the introduction of the *Cultural Survival Quarterly: the Voices from the Commons* (1996, 20:1) argued that it is an error to perceive the commons and its existence as either parallel or irrelevant to the society as a whole. On the contrary, cases of native people in Ecuador protesting against the activities of Occidental Oil Company in the Amazon, or the struggle of local people in Zimbabwe against the state's expansion of protected areas, indicate the evolving form of the commons in which people have consistently defined and redefined their own rights and benefits in relation to the power of the state, industrial capitalism and transnational corporations. Other studies have also pointed out that the commons not only works in traditional agricultural communities, but are lively, viable and significant for the livelihoods of working class communities. This can be seen in the case of the worker communities in the suburb area of North America who put their effort to preserve and regenerate home forest area (Brown 1996).

It is interesting to note that studies of the commons from 1990 onwards has increasingly emphasized the impact of intervention by external political and economic

forces on the security of commons regimes. As the conflict over natural resources has become more complex, contemporary debate has encompassed local ecological knowledge, biological diversity, and intellectual property rights issue which have consequently elaborated and extended the concept of territoriality.

At the same time, the tendency towards polarization between promotion of the state and private property rights on the one hand, and community rights on the other, within the commons debate, has been subdued by the current interest of international development planners in the commons. In recent years, there has been a shift in the nature of the debate of the commons as influential development and financial agencies such as the UNDP and the World Bank have adopted the language and discourse of the commons in their development planning. This has rendered the issue of the common property more complicated as it has been incorporated into the global economy of resource management, while the ideology of the commons has been normalized by the utilitarian perception of the "development expert". Consequently, and without changing the fundamental approach of modernization and industrialization inherent in the programmatic developmentalism of these international development agencies, the commons has been transformed into an instrument to underplay the tension of commons-based local resistance and while simultaneously converting the commons into an "economically productive area".

1.5) COMMON PROPERTY IN THE CONTEXT OF THAI STUDIES

Since the 1970s, Thai and Western scholars in Thailand have studied the commons within diverse theoretical frameworks and emphases. The research on the commons has been growing and developing its conceptual analysis throughout the past three decades as the result of changing resource situations and conflicts among diverse social groups within Thai society. Recent social and movement and debate over resource management and property rights in many countries around the world has also contributed to the need to develop a conceptual tool explaining social and ecological issues in Thai society. It is worth noting that in Thailand the study of common property in Thailand tends to combine theoretical concepts with local realities and environmental situations rather than focusing only on Western theoretical frameworks. Most of the work

is, as a consequence, interdisciplinary and contextualized. In investigating the works and conceptual frameworks developed within the Thai contexts, it will be apparent that the similarities, differences, and tensions within and between these approaches have been constantly unfolding.

1.6) CULTURAL ECOLOGY VS. POLITICAL ECOLOGY

The literature on local communities and resource management which can be characterized as cultural ecology began with *Farmers in the Forest: Economic Development and Marginal Agriculture in Northern Thailand*, edited by Peter Kunstadter, E.C. Chapman and Sanga Sabhasri (1978). Of the most interest is this book's interdisciplinary approaches to the study of shifting cultivation in northern Thailand, approaches combining diverse academic fields such as anthropology, economic, forestry, and legal studies. This collection of various essays supported by intensive field research, was considered a most significant work in the study of highland resources as it opened new dimensions in the conceptualization of shifting cultivation. Particularly, *Farmers in the Forest* considered the aspects of ethnicity, the specificity of tropical ecosystems, subsistence economies, and the changes in economics and populations in the analysis of the complexity of traditional forms of cultivation and land use in upland and highland areas. Debunking the myth of shifting cultivation as a nomadic, uncontrolled, and destructive form of cultivation, Kunstadter and Chapman classified four major types of traditional agriculture characterized by the diversity of land use relating to ethnicity, land tenure systems, agricultural productivity, circulation of nutrition and fertility of soils and forest in the swiddening system. This categorization of land use systems has subsequently formed the basis of most analyses of shifting cultivation.

The stability and sustainability of traditional agriculture is, as the study suggests, closely linked to the conditions of population growth and movement, as well as the modern market economy. Kunstadter viewed this variable as a potential pressure on land use and consequently on traditional agriculture which needed to be resolved by modern agricultural innovation and economic development. It is also pointed out in this book that the major constraint and obstacle for highland agriculture development is the marginalization of customary rights by state legislation which has prevented ethnic

minorities from claiming and gaining communal rights to land and forest. This has destabilized forest land use regimes and resulted in resource insecurity for local communities.

Cultural ecology analysis of shifting cultivation has continued to be prevalent and influential in contemporary studies of local resource use in highlands. For example, Christanty's (1986) study of classification systems for shifting cultivation, local knowledge of upland resource use, and sustainability of forest and land management. At the same time, population growth remains a focal point as critical indication of ecological sustainability in traditional agricultural systems.

Apart from land use and traditional upland agriculture, the research of the commons within this approach has also encompassed diverse systems of resource management such as traditional irrigation organization- *muang fai* (Uraiwan Tankimyong 2528) and community forests (Uraiwan Tankimyong 2533, Viyuth Jamratbhanthu et al 2533). Central to this analysis is social organization and local cultural beliefs which are the core of management of the commons. Focusing on social-ecological interrelationship, the study of traditional irrigation, in particular, has brought a new aspect of social relations, usually concerning kinship and other social networks, into the analysis of social structure. River and the division of water-user groups, the allocation and management of water resources, therefore, constitutes an important form of social fabric and relation in local communities. Uraiwan (2528) has pointed out that the success of water resource management and the agrarian economy relies on the adaptive strategies of local communities in forming an effective organization to manage the traditional irrigation. These include administrative structure, the division and allocation of duty, obligation, equal distribution of benefits as well as mutual exchange of shared benefits and appropriate responsibility. The research on cultural beliefs underlying the management of common property has been initiated in the literature on community forests by such studies as that of *Don Poota* in the northeast, the forest which is the center of the village in which the ancestral spirits reside, or the concept of "we don't disturb your property and you don't disturb ours" (*hao bo ya khong su, su bo ya khong hao*) in a Karen village in the north. These studies reveal important cultural rules by which community forests have been conserved and protected.

Since the mid-1970s, cultural ecology researches have opened new dimensions in the study of local resource management systems. There are, however, some shortcomings in this approach in explaining the commons phenomenon. The main criticism of cultural ecology is its emphasis on the micro-adaptive model which largely neglects the important condition of external political economic structure intruding on the dynamics of local management of the commons. As Peet and Watt (1993) argue, although the cultural ecology approach has contributed enormously to social science in defending local knowledge and its scientific status as not inferior to that of Western science, it has been constrained by its structural-functional perspective which limits the analysis within the community level and neglects the complicated and wider political economic relations outside but nevertheless influencing local settings. The limits outlined by Peet and Watt are evident in some of the studies of resource management in traditional agriculture in the highlands of northern Thailand such as *Farmers in the Forest* (1978). The absence of political economic dimension has inevitably rendered the "population growth problem" a pre-existing, static, unchanging and self-perpetuating "problem" which is both ahistorical and apolitical. Viewing demographic change from merely the micro and physical dimension has led to a one-dimensional, either-or solution of the land use pressure in the highlands - either improve this system, or to replace it with other systems. Absent from this type of analysis is the political economic factors and state policies which have defined "population growth" as a problem.

The question posed by political economist is when, how, and why population has become a "problem" (Jarosz 1993). This question has led to a central issue of the commons debate, the development regime of the state which has been the fundamental force that impact and change the community, population, and highland resource situations for more than four decades. The single emphasis by cultural ecology only on cultural adaptation of community to environment has also downplayed the issues of intra- and inter-community conflict as well as state-village unequal power relationship. This can be seen, for example, in the work of Uraiwan (2528) in which the state centralization and reformation of local administration has been viewed from only positive attitude as it is of benefit to local people to channel their power to traditional management of irrigation (p.169-170). However, as the political ecologists criticize, the

conflict between the state authority and local communities over water resource has been neglected.

The political ecology approach can be considered a critique of cultural ecology (Peet and Watt 1993), or a bridge to fill a gap in cultural ecology (Sheridan 1988). This approach, however, is not new within the Thai study, but has continually developed from political economy approach since 1980s. Philip Hirsch (1989) in *Forest, Forest Reserve, Forest Land in Thailand* held that forest degradation in Thailand should be analyzed from political economy point of view rather than be simply considered as a bio-physical or ecological problem. As he maintained, the analysis of macro-structural relation helps unravel the external political and economic power including the unequal structure of land tenure and resource distribution which has been the major force driving powerless poor people into the forest. In "The State in the Village: The Case of *Ban Mai*", a case study of the village in the west of Thailand, Hirsch has traced the historical development of deforestation from logging to the expansion of cash crop and the fluctuation of cash crop economy in the late twentieth century. The intrusion of state authority and its new administrative structure of resource control and legislation replacing customary right, and the allocation of natural resources based on patron-client relationship have provided benefit from natural resources to people who have access to capital and gain close relationship with local authority. At the same time, this unequal structure has prevented the accessibility of poor peasant to their resources.

The most powerful aspect of political economy in the analysis of deforestation lies in its capability of not only connecting this problem with social and political relations which are the significant factors in the control and conflict over resources among different groups of benefits, but also unraveling the dominating power of Western science and theories underlying the concept of resource management and control, particularly the nexus of population growth and deforestation. Larry Lohmann (1993) has pointed out the distorted power of Western science regarding the notion of "overpopulation" which reduces and objectivizes human beings and communities to a matter of figure and statistical entity in measuring and assessing its value and relation to "natural resources". In controlling the powerless, and poor "population", particularly the ethnic minority in the highland of Thailand, this science has been utilized and

implemented by a few groups of elites and international agencies. At the same time, this statisticalization of "population" has curtailed the unequal power relation within the society in which a few privilege have enjoyed their unlimited exploitation of resources.

Other studies have expanded their focus to spatial analysis of state structure of resource control and access- territorialization, the new technology of power used by the modern nation-state in the control over resources. In *Territorialization and State Power in Thailand*, Vandergeest and Peluso (1995) have pointed out that the modern Thai nation-state have used this concept as the strategy to centralization of the resource management and to control of people, people's activities, access, resource use by people, and redefining of property rights. Copying the modern forestry science from the West, the restructuring of forest management have been implemented by the state through the use of modern technology such as mapping, survey, demarcation and zoning, as well as the new forest regulations and laws. The commoditization of space through forest and land legislation emphasizes state and private property right, while overrides customary system of resource management. This process has not only culminated in the clash of resource use between state and local people, but also led to the resistance by disadvantageous local people in many communities who deny the state domination. As a result, the process of territorialization has practically failed.

"Geo-political" approach as a tool to analyze resource politics has also been adopted in the work of Stott (1991) *Mu'ang and Pa: Elite Views of Nature in a Changing Thailand*. In analyzing deforestation in Thailand, Stott has traced the historical change of the state's and elites' perception of *pa* (the realm of the uncivilized, wild, outside the state power) and *mu'ang* (the realm of civilized, center of the state power). Since *pa* no longer was the realm of untamed as in the premodern state, but represents *thammachat*-the valuable resource pool significant for the country's conservation and economic development.

Political ecologists also maintains that the politics of resource conservation in Thailand reflects the competition and conflict of the use of resource between the state, private enterprise and hill ethnic minorities who are the most marginalized group within Thai society. Anan Ganjanapan (1994, 1996) states that the politics of conservation is at the same time the politics of ethnic minority. Forest encroachment and illegal logging

have been the immediate result of the skewed structure of state forestry control and legislation system in benefit from resources between from resources between private sectors and poor people including the hill ethnic minorities have been unequally distributed. Conflicts between private property right and community right which significantly result in the increasing vast area of forest destruction has been largely caused by the uneven policy of the state which while authorizing private ownership of forest land through the S.T.K. project (Land Use Right Project) and the land reform policy and supporting economic development within the fertile forest, the state authority neglects customary right by evicting people from the protected area through the expansion of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. The connection between hill people and deforestation has then been used as a political tool by the state to cover up its insincerity to conserve the forest. Such policy has violated community right, equality and sustainability of resource development. The politics of conservation is therefore not only the confrontation between local communities and state agencies, but represents the inherent conflict in which the state exercises and expands its power to completely control the forest. (1996:5)

Central to the politics of resources, as Anan maintains, is the disregard of community right in the use and control of natural resources under the forest legislation and policy. Highland agriculture, particularly shifting cultivation, has been regarded as an illegal and destructive pattern of land use. The use of forests for subsistence in the form of traditional community forests within "protected areas" is no longer legally accepted. The lack and suppression of legal rights on the part of the community—including ethnic hill people—to manage and protect their natural resources has forced the community to rely on the market economy and unstable/insecure modern economics for their livelihood, expanding agricultural land or losing such land to the continually rising tide of land speculation. This situation reflects the processes through which the forest has come to be considered a form of open access, which in turn has arisen from the fact of state centralization of forest management.

Nevertheless, within the aforementioned processes of struggle and unequal power relationships, we can see that the local people are not simply passive victims at the mercy of the state's control. Rather, Anan (1995, 1996) has noted the efforts of both

lowland and upland peoples to protect the rights of the community to manage their own forest lands. These efforts appear in the form of a struggle to protect the forest from destruction under state projects—for example, in the case of the Karen who are protesting the logging of the pine forest by the Forestry Industry Organization, or in the establishment of local organizations to take care of community forests of various communities in hundreds of villages throughout the country. These struggles, as Anan has emphasized, do not represent an attempt to return to the past culture or way of thinking of some previous era; rather, they are a contemporary product of the struggle for power over resource control, reflecting in turn a popular revolution in which the people seek to claim rights over those of the state.

Earlier analyses based in politico-ecological thinking, while offering a high level of critical thinking on the topic, are subject to criticism that their macro-level analyses are not reflective of popular opinion, neither on the micro-level nor from a cultural perspective (Moore 1993). However, studies of the Thai situation since 1990 may be exceptions. The occurrence at various locations throughout the country of strong grassroots protests and struggles over the control of resources between the people, and the state and industrial capital have lead scholars to increasingly turn their attention to studying the views, culture, beliefs, and methods of communal resource control. The study of communal resource control has developed into an important area of study. In the past decade, scholars from various fields who are interested in the subject of resources management have analyzed the conditions behind and the stages of movement on the part of the community and various societal groups—e.g. the emergence of non-government organizations, especially those concerned with advancing legal rights in community forests, while at the same time attempting to find a solution to the problem of the struggle for legal title to Thailand's natural resources presently limiting only for the state and the private sector.

1.7) COMMUNAL RIGHTS: IDEOLOGY—INCENTIVES—SOCIAL INSTITUTE

A seminal work which has lead to the expanded study of community rights in forest management is the 1991 "The Evolution of the Opening of Forest Land for Subsistence Agricultures", edited by Jemsak Pinthong. This book represents a study of

the history of the opening of forest land by the people of the various regions of Thailand, i.e. the north, the north central region, the central plains, the northeast, and the south. Of special interest in this work is its description of the community's efforts to respond to the problem of resource management. Including both empirical information and intensive study of the views and beliefs of the villagers, this study describes changes and developments in the resources field and local settlements ranging from the forest community era to the forest competition period, and the direct relationship between these changes and the state monopolization of forest control for the purpose of economic development through state forest development policy, and influence of external economic forces. This study has opened a new line of thinking regarding the definition of "forest"—a term which is no longer simply physical- or economic-based but views the forest as a community resource, one part of the "cultural whole". This study, which look at the problems of the forest from the point of view of the villagers against the process of moving villagers from protected forest areas, proposes instead an alternative of "people living with the forest" to solve the problem of resource deterioration. Important policy recommendations toward this end include the encouragement of community participation in the management of protected forest areas, which participation would include everything from the demarcation of the forest area in a way which is congruent with the production culture of the community, to the development of standards with respect to the people's land usage and the assurance of the rights of the people in the community forest.

In the current decade, then, community forestry has come to be viewed as a solution to the problem of the management of forest resources—a model which challenges western modes of thinking regarding forest management which have dominated the state administration and management of the Thai forest for more than a decade, and which led to the forest being viewed merely as an economic cog and physical entity. This concept of community forests, while shaking up the existing centers of state power, represents an examples of the commons which are lively, constantly shifting and being re-born in the midst of grassroots protests and state efforts to control and manage the forest.

An important question is thus: What are the important conditions which may connect resources and the community under a system of secure legal communal title? Many studies have attempted to answer this question from various angles. This paper will review three important lines of thinking, i.e. the ideology of community forest, incentives, and societal institutions of communal resources.

1.8) THE IDEOLOGY OF COMMUNITY FOREST AND COMMUNAL RIGHTS

(*Sidthi naa moo*)

Chaladchai Ramitanont, Anan Ganjanapan and Santhita Ganjanapan (1993) have suggested that community forests be considered an "element of the cultural whole" which belongs to the community. In the view of the villagers, the forest is not merely a physical entity. Rather, the meaning of "forest" encompasses authority and ethics which are based in a system of societal relations with respect to space—ideology which has been developed from a way of life connected to the forest and native agriculture from historical times. This concept has been passed down for generations and was codified into law in former times—e.g. the laws of Mangraisastra which provided for the punishment of those who violated and destroyed the sacred forest, also known as the "Forest of the Guardian Spirits." Contemporary concept regarding community forests is therefore based in the idea of traditional rights and responsibilities in community control and management of the forest—an idea encompasses the rights to receive benefit from the forest which disseminate to those who carry out the responsibility of protecting the forest. Nevertheless, villagers do not explain the ideology of community forestry simply through reference to the benefits to be gained therefrom. Understood through the medium of traditional beliefs in spirits and sacred protectors in the forest surrounding the village, the violation of the forest by other peoples is held to be offensive to the spirits, and such violation must be followed by a ceremony of propiation.

These *de facto* rights thus refer to communal rights over the resources of the community (Yos 1996), not to any private rights to the resources, which would in that case not be open access. In the same vein, forests which are managed by the community have clear restrictions on the rights to their use. These restrictions rest on the authority of the community and are based in custom arising from the way of life and

culture of the community. It is important to note that the ideology of community forestry is not a value system or popular idea of any one particular era. Rather, it is an ideology which has been (re)produced and passed down through the generations. In studies of community forests in the north, Shaladchai et al (1993) has clearly noted that the rights and responsibilities of the commons is but one part of the rights of the community to control other rights (i.e. usufruct rights), which are in turn based in social justice and a sense of equitability toward the ecology. The aforementioned rights are held to exist through such time as people continue to use their labor to transform and utilize their resources for subsistence benefit, ceasing to exist when that utilization ends. An example is found in the farming systems of communities in forest areas, e.g. the Karen and Lua, where the right to agricultural use of the land ends when a farmer abandons his fields to lay fallow and regenerate, ultimately reverting to forest, at which time others have the right to come onto and use the land. At the same time, the natural rights which direct these usufruct rights are based in concept regarding natural rights for making a living, which allows individuals to use or harvest resources for their subsistence. These rights extend to naturally occurring resources even when such resources appear on land which others are using—for example, the gathering of mushrooms or naturally occurring vegetable plants on land which is being used by someone else in the community. These communal rights may be seen not only in the management of land and forest, but also in the management of other types of resources such as watersheds and water resource in traditional irrigation system.

Even though the ideology of community forests is an old and traditional concept, it has been reproduced in the context of contemporary society. In areas which are experiencing a high level of competition for resources, villagers will protect their traditional rights by reformulated the aforementioned ideology. In some cases, villagers will adapt the original ideology in order to make it more congruent with and acceptable to the government authority. For example, they may establish an official organization to take care of the forest, such as within the village committee or subdistrict council, and attempt to record the various regulations in writing in order to serve as acceptable legal evidence. Those regulations pertaining to natural rights, which hold that humans should have the right to use their own labor toward their subsistence, have been upheld even

within areas where the community is changing its behavior toward and relationship with the forest—an important point which the villagers cite in claiming rights and justice, and in negotiating with outside forces, as in the case of poor landless peasants in many locations in the north who have turned to cutting the forest for sale in order to make a living—a situation which has arisen in the era of resource competition between logging concessions and various state development projects, e.g. dams, which have caused villagers to lose their fertile agricultural land; as well as from policies which encourage commercial agriculture and lead to the expansion of agricultural land into forest areas, and including systems of state management of the forest which use the law as a means to control the land and forest resources. Communities use the “right to make a living” principle to claim for equitable resource use in the same way as do various power factions (Anan and Mingsam 1993).

Scholars who follow the community forest ideology model have examined the conditions necessary for the development of a strong relationship between the forest and the community and have seen that these processes arise in the presence of eight important factors as follows:

- 1) The community has a high level of cohesion.
- 2) Resources may still be found in abundance.
- 3) There is the possibility of communal benefit.
- 4) There is a consciousness of taking care of the forest, for which there are four precursors, i.e.
 - a) a consciousness arising from custom, belief, and the reception of a reproduced ideology
 - b) a consciousness arising from the necessity of taking care of the ecological balance
 - c) a consciousness arising from a struggle against invasion by outside forces, and
 - d) consciousness arising from drought.
- 5) There is strong community leadership.
- 6) There has been the establishment of community organizations.

7) There is a tradition of resource management which holds that resources comprise the rights and communal wealth of the community.

and

8) There is long-term and just resource management.

An important point put forward by studies of the community forests is the necessity of reform of the power structure in the state management of forests, with assurance of the legal rights of the people and state support for community resource management.

1.9) INCENTIVES AND COMMUNAL RESOURCES

Studies of communal resource management in Thailand which explain the bases and benefits of this system from an economic perspective hold that this is a new topic in Thai scholarly discourse. One interesting work is Suthawan Sathirathai's 1995 "Rights and the Problem of the Commons." This work follows an ecological economics approach to analyze the conditions underlying communal participation in the management of communal resources (i.e. common-pool resources), and property right regimes.

This work differs from studies which examine the topic in light of the ideology of community forests in that it emphasizes the analysis of the role of incentives in communal resource management. Suthawan poses an interesting question, i.e. what in the system of communal resource management will entice people to manage their resources, given the fact that incentives are generally individualistic—that is, individuals generally look to gain the greatest possible benefit for themselves, thus leading to each individual seeking his or her maximum benefit rather than cooperating with each other, eventually leading to the situation of open access and the tragedy of the commons as Hardin has hypothesized. One possible answer, as Suthawalya suggests, is that the cooperation for communal resource management is itself a condition which gives rise to longer-term and more benefit than competition as may be seen from the example of the formation of groups which have been established in order to preserve community forests in many communities, preventing the encroachment on the land of outside individuals or the state.

In analysing the problems of state policy pertaining to rights in forest resources, this study makes similar suggestions to those of the aforementioned studies of community forests. According to Suthawan, the state consolidation and monopolization of power in establishing the rights over the national forest resources in only the form of the state ownership has lead to the problem of competition for resource use between the the state and the people, rendering forest become one of open access, which ultimately leads to the problem of resource depletion.

The state centralization of forest management has also resulted in the insecurity of the local *de facto* communal right, particularly as private enterprises have been granted privileged right to resources over local communities. However, this insecure circumstance has also been an impetuous that motivate local people to conserve forest and forest land, as the movement to forest conservation serves as a tool for negotiating local *de facto* communal right (p.16)

In classifying community forests in Thailand, Suthawan divides community organizations into two major types characterized by the length of time. The first type is the community forest established by local people within a period longer than 10 years. The latter is a new organization recently set up in the past 10 years. As she points out, the denial of communal right of the first type by the state will eventually create a condition that lead to the destruction of the system of community forest conservation. At the same time, the latter type of community forest has emerged in response to external forces and pressures within resource competition. By legally acknowledging these forms of community forest management by the state under conservation obligation, it will create an incentive for local communities to preserve the forest. However, as Suthawan argues, this legal acknowledgement of the state needs to be accompanied by several requirements such as the conservation rules and systems of communal right developed within the communities. The systems of communal right can be classified into two levels: the implementation level, and policy planning and management level. The first level refers to the right to resource utilization, while the latter encompasses the rights to managing communal resources, to setting criterion of inclusion and exclusion of resource users, and to transferring benefits and right to resources to other members. Within the communal right systems, the right to resources does not necessarily always

refer to the right to own resources. In many cases, right to resources can be usufruct rights, while some kinds of resources such as agricultural lands in the communal managed watershed area can also be owned by individuals.

Legal recognition of communal right by the state is, thus, the main suggestion of this study. This recognition is the most significant condition which will encourage/support the sustainable use and conservation of natural resources by local people. At the same time, it is also a process in which the status of the commons will be socially legitimized.

1.10) COMMONS AS SOCIAL INSTITUTE

Commons as social institute is another interesting concept in the analysis of the commons. One important study is Chusak Wittayapak's "Village and the Resource Management Potential: A Case Study of Communal Resource Management in the Watershed in the North". By transcending the bimodal concepts of the state property right and private property right or the state and market, this study explores an alternative or strategy of local resource management by using the watershed management by local people in the upper north of Thailand as a case study.

Denying the idea of "communitarianism", this work differs from other studies of the commons. As Chusak argues, the polarization of local community and state has prevented a possibility of co-management between the local people and the state - the possibility of which can not be ignored since most local communities have already been incorporated into the larger politico-economic system of the society.

Commons by definition is neither a physical element, nor a natural object. Rather, it refers to the structures of right and obligation which reflects the relationship between people and resources, and between people within the society relating to such resources - - the structures which are controlled and relegated by social institute (p.4). Social institute here refers to social rules formulated by a society to determine the relationship between community member and resources, to appropriate the benefit of resources, and to transform them into a ownership form. The commons regime is, therefore, a social unit with definite membership, accurate boundary, mutual benefit common rules and community norms under the system of communal right designed by the groups.

However, commons regime is not only formulated upon institution or regulation, but also based on physical condition, technical constraint of communal resources, economic, social and cultural factors, and structure of the institute in controlling resource use. The study of watershed management in three communities evidently illustrate the significant conditions, the distinctive physical characteristics of three watershed areas and different socio-economic settings, which result in differences in terms of resource control and regulation as well as resource dependency.

The viability of commons regime is maintained through three significant objectives: for sustainable use and conservation of natural resources, for an equitability of resource use, and for sustaining local security. The extent to which these objectives are attained depends on different conditions within certain communities such as the strength of village leader, and of existing organizations.

Of most significant proposition put forward by this work is the need to institutionalize local management of watershed as a means to ensure the equitability of resource distribution. Furthermore, according to Chusak, the institutionalization of local form of resource management will also help strengthen the informal customary practice, particularly within the tide of the rapid change of socio-economic forces and market economy. Chusak also calls for a support from the state to promote the idea of resource co-management between local people and the state. This is to ensure the security of local management of watershed and to prevent the possibility of an open access situation which often occur after the destruction of commons regime due to the lack of legal recognition.

The aforementioned idea has also been supported by many scholars including forestry academic. In "Evolving Management Systems in Thailand" (1990), the analytical work on forest problem from forester's perspective, Komol Pragtong, a forest expert who supports community forest approach, and David Thomas, an agro-forester, point out that forest management by the state has too many limitations. At the same time, forest management by private sector has caused vast destruction of natural resources, and threatened customary laws of local communities. The solution to this problem is, therefore, the co-management between state and local communities in resource management encompassing the idea of agro-forestry.

Although the three concepts regarding the commons: commons as ideology, commons as incentive, and commons as social institute, differ in terms of analytical focus and perception towards the relationship between local community, state, and market, a close investigation suggests that they are complementary rather than contradictory. Importantly, all of them share a common ground to seek for an alternative to conflict over resource and property right which go beyond the state monopoly of property right and privatization of the commons. In echoing the movement of local people and NGOs on community forest over the past decade, these works call for a legal recognition of communal right in the management of natural resources.

1.11) CONCLUSION

This paper reviewed the concepts and the ongoing debate regarding the commons and communal right in both Western and Thai contexts which have developed for the past three decades. While the academic debate on the commons in the West tends to focus on theories and concepts, the commons debate among the Thai scholars emphasizes more on empirical data and knowledge gained from field study. Since the debate on the commons in Thailand has emerged out of the real situation of resource conflict in various location, most of the studies aim at seeking an understanding of the phenomena and also alternatives to the commons conflict. Of the very first and important effort is the research study on community forest done by the Project of Research and Development in cooperation with NGOs from all over Thailand. Like western Human Ecologists who have initiated the community-based approach as a tool to counter the generalized thesis of "tragedy of the commons", the "community forest research project" has emphasized customary practice of resource management and communal right in negotiating with the monopoly of state property and private property which has deprived local communities from their resources. These academic efforts have not only stimulated conceptual thoughts among scholars, but also resulted in the adjustment of state and international agencies' policies. The community forest movement comprising local people, NGOs and academic which has been struggling for the enactment of the community forest bill is a significant phenomenon which represent the

demand for a recognition of communal right and a radical alteration of the structure of resource management of the present decade.

However, on a close scrutiny, the change in the dominant idea and concepts regarding the commons should also be carefully analyzed within the context of political ecology. As Goldman (1996) noted, the discourse of commons has been recently adopted by certain international agencies such as the World Bank, despite the fact that mainstream development direction geared toward modern economy and industrial capitalism at the expense of natural resource remains unchanged. Definitely, this is not a change in terms of structure, but a co-optation of people's discourse in which the "commons" and "co-management" have been used as a tool to subdue the increasing tension between the state, development agencies and local people. At the same time, the state remain the sole institute agency who holds the real power in determining the policy and regulation regarding common property, and the guideline of people participation. The shift in the commons debate, in this respect, is inevitably and closely linked with the politics of developmentalism.

Importantly, the commons itself should be defined in a broader sense than a territorial bounded resource like land and forest. In contemporary conflict over resources at both national and international levels, the definition of resource is no longer confined by territory basis but encompasses non-territory resources such as biological diversity, genetic resource, and local wisdom. These non-territory resources have been highly competed between transnational co-operation, state and local communities, and also increasingly significant, particularly regarding intellectual property right--the topic that has yet been fully investigated by the Thai scholars. This aspect of commons debate will be an important topic of the late 1990s which will further broaden the horizon of knowledge with regard to common property.

PART II STATE OF ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES: POLITICAL ECOLOGY PERSPECTIVE

(Chusak WITTAYAPAK)

2.1) INTRODUCTION

In their very first statement of the book *Land Degradation and Society* Blaikie and Brookfield (1987) defined land degradation as a social problem. Of course, soil erosion is an environmental process, but the process to describe it as degraded land involves social signification. Blaikie (1985) views the soil erosion problem in the developing countries in the context of political economy and colonization. In other words, it is a search for social causes within the interaction between natural and human causes of environmental degradation.

Ten years later, in his latest work, Blaikie (1995) reiterates his idea about the social construction of environmental change. That is, people construct their environment or landscape in a social manner. He argues that scientific understanding of the environment is no longer accepted uncritically, but that the scientists themselves are also a subject for analysis. The conventional view is that science produces objective truth and provides a rational non-political basis for policy making. In other words, it represents a matter of "truth talking to power". Thus, most politicians have realized that scientific knowledge is an indispensable tool for rationalizing their policies and neatly de-politicizing the socio-political issues altogether. However, this role for science has recently come under increasing criticism because it falsely separates facts from knowledge claims and values.

Social sciences in recent years have significantly transformed to a more interactive mode of thinking in which there is no objective reality as such, but many subjective ones which are provided by different people who see their "real" environment in their own way. Blaikie (1995: 204) wrote about trend of social sciences in viewing environmental problems that:

By the act of viewing our environment we interact with it and bring to our view our own social construction. Many social sciences, particularly

sociology and politics, have substantially re-negotiated their own epistemologies along these lines. Even economic and quantitative human geography have been affected by the challenging but worrying shift of ground under their feet. Within geography, part of this change has been negotiated, but part still reveals a fault line, between phenomenology and post-modern interpretations of space and society on the one hand and quantitative modeling, computer applications and physical geography on the other. However, within sociology, development studies and to some extent in geography too, new and much wider vistas of environment and society are being created.

Giddens (1982, 1984 cited in Blaikie, 1995) acknowledges that while structure of power and expected patterns of behavior concerning space and time are profoundly important in explaining human behavior, people in their everyday lives try to make sense of these structures in a partial way through recursive learning and experience. People struggle with these individually interpreted structures and the outcomes are often unintended. Thus a more interactive relationship between structure and agency is becoming more important. This mode of thinking helps us to understand why rational appeals by environmentalists to change our habits and practices in the name of environmental conservation may receive very little response. People may be locked into a particular spatial structure of work and residence and a linking transportation network, which make it difficult for them to comply with environmentalists' demands, even though they agree with the ideas. Nonetheless, they may respond in other ways, which are seemingly irrational, but can be understood in the context of their attempts to interpret and handle the structures in which they play their part.

In the same manner, this interactive approach may also help us to understand why farmers may knowingly cause soil erosion or the highlanders expand their cultivated land into the forest reserves. It applies the same way in the development process, which involves a group of actors. Each of them has his/her set of objectives, which he/she seeks to achieve by different strategies. Therefore the development agents are subject to analysis as they are part of the solution but may also be part of the problem. Thus, to

examine the environmental issues is not just to look at the natural landscape but the viewer and the optic -- not just the physical processes and changes in the environment but how different people construct them socially (Blaikie, 1995).

Another aspect of the study of society and environment is called the production of environmental change. In this manner, it is not only real physical changes, but also the contested way in which they are selected and signified. For example, issue of the globalization of the environmental crisis, which refers both to the physical changes of global ecosystem interdependence and global socio-economic systems as well as the globalization of discourse about it. This brings together a cast of actors ranging from internationally recognized scientists, development experts, transnational companies, indigenous forest dwellers, the Green Movement from more developed countries (MDCs), and peasants in less developed countries (LDCs). Each brings his/her own experience, culture, and understanding to social construction of the environment.

The new trends of social sciences stimulate the people to take on a complicated world of contested and plural understandings, and to question why certain aspects become an issue at all and how environmental and social problems are set up and framed (Blaikie, 1995, emphasis in original). As a result, scientific interpretations of the environment are increasingly seen as only one form of "truth" and are drawn into discourses about environment and development. In other words, science is no longer an unquestionable fact. The global warming issue, for instance, may be a scientifically recognized fact but it is also a social construction. Thus our consideration must not only concentrate on what the scientists tell us about global warming but also on the way in which this environmental issue has been socially produced.

The framing and content of this global crisis has become narrowly technical in conception and is preoccupied with the purely environmental concerns of climatic forecasting. Moreover, the culture and institutions of scientific inquiry have also shaped the way in which the forecasting has been carried out. Therefore, it has excluded many other alternative ways of thinking and structuring these global issues.

To illustrate further discussion, the global issue of biodiversity depletion can be viewed in different ways. This issue in the same manner causes people to take the scientific evidence seriously and at the same time to question its technical basis and its

hidden agenda in political use. The high profile cases of endangered species may mean that the scientists are able to convince funding support from the public in the North but may contradict alternative views of biodiversity advocated by other parties. Biodiversity may be understood by forest dwellers in the developing countries as a list of species needed for diverse sources of food, medicines, dyeing material, etc. However, these criteria of biodiversity will be quite different from a prospecting transnational pharmaceutical company looking for medicinal compounds.

To conclude this interactive approach, Blaikie (1995: 209) points out that "Only by acknowledging multiple views, understanding the politics of how actors present their views and pursue their projects, can current scientific and conservation thinking be literally brought down to earth".

This paper aims to explore an emerging approach in analysis of environmental problems in the context of the Thai political economic configuration. To achieve this, first, it examines the political ecology paradigm as a critical view of society and environmental interaction with an emphasis on developing countries. Second, it reviews the state of knowledge of the environmental issues through the view of political ecology. Third, it provides a critical view on those being reviewed. Finally, it proposes some new ground for analysis of growing environmental problems Thai society is now facing.

2.2) POLITICAL ECOLOGY; A CRITICAL APPROACH IN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

The politicization of the environment causes the mainstream approaches in studying man and environment relationship such as human ecology and cultural ecology face the impasse (Bryant, 1997). Research on environmental problems which joins the natural and social sciences needs a dynamic approach in which social sciences serve to explain the processes and forces that bring about ecological change. To meet such a requirement, a political ecology is emerging as a body of scholarship that combines the concerns of political economy and the principles of ecology. Blaikie and Brookfield (1987: 17) describe political ecology as encompassing *"the constantly shifting dialectic*

between society and land-based resources, and also within classes and within society itself.

The tenet of political economy embedded in "political ecology" is a critical or class approach. This approach may incorporate one or more of these following assumptions. First, global capitalism has historically posed obstacles to development for many developing countries. Second, these obstacles are made more difficult by the state, which may have favored the interests of a small group of elites. And, third, relations of production in developing countries have often hindered rather than assisted efforts in national economic development.

The critical political economy in political ecology gives primacy to social causation in explaining the relationship of people to their natural environment. For example, Schmink and Wood (1987: 39) describe their political ecology approach as an illustration of how economic and political processes determine the way natural resources have been exploited. Similarly, Blaikie and Brookfield (1987: 100) state that their regional political ecology approach places first emphasis on social and economic causation. The implication of this approach is that the conventional explanation for the linkages of poverty and environmental degradation, such as uncontrolled population growth, short-sighted development policies, or lack of management technology, seem to be too superficial, and in fact not sufficient.

The view of "ecology" embedded in political ecology is the principle, which sees the ecosystem and biosphere as an inherently vulnerable and limited system. In this regard, it is assumed that the process of population growth and economic and industrial development will eventually face biological limits of tolerance, and that people must do something to assure that those limits are not surpassed.

In the 1980s, social science scholars were increasingly aware of linkages between environmental problems and political significance, especially in the developing world (Bryant and Bailey, 1997). An analytical approach that integrates environmental concerns and political forces was sought. The term political ecology has since emerged as a kind of new paradigm for examining the interplay of environmental degradation and political economic development. Bryant (1992), in accepting the above definition of political ecology, cautions that economic reductionism must be avoided on the ground

that, first, it fails to attribute the significance of ecological factors. Second, it neglects other sources of environmental change by de-emphasizing the role of state policies and international forces. Third, it excludes the powerless peasants and other less-chance groups. Being well aware of the above weak points, the Third-World political ecology is then conceptualized with the view that it must be sensitive to the interplay of diverse socio-political forces, and the relationship of those forces to environmental change and management.

Bryant (1992) explored extensive works in this new field of interest and provides the promising conviction of how political and environmental understanding is being integrated. He proposed Third-World political ecology as a framework for understanding this emerging research agenda which encompasses three critical areas of inquiry: (1) the contextual sources of environmental change; (2) conflict over access; and (3) the political ramification of environmental change.

For contextual sources of environmental change, the concerned topics include state policies, international relations, and global capitalism. These topics reflect the increasing impact of national and international forces on the environment in the world of growing political and economic interdependence. There are inherent and continuing conflicts between the state's role as protector of the environment and the villagers whose livelihood survival ultimately depends on those natural resources (Walker, 1989). For example, Hirsch and Lohmann (1989), and Hafner and Apichatvullop (1990) examined Thai forest policies responding to forest decline, while Peluso and Poffenburger (1989) did a similar study in Indonesia.

For international sources of environmental change, interstate warfare is the most obvious facet of this interaction not yet fully examined. For example, the social and ecological effects of American environmental warfare in Vietnam are still lingering after decades (Kemf, 1990). Social and ecological disruption can also be a result of peaceful interaction of states such as through international aids. First-World states have stimulated socially and environmentally disruptive policies and practices in many developing countries. The large-scale projects like hydroelectric dams have contributed to widespread deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and people displacement. For example, Banasopit (1988) and Lohmann (1990) examined the environmental

consequences of commercial forestry and growth-oriented development projects in Thailand.

State policies play a pivotal role in many human-environmental interactions. As well as directing the priorities and practices of the government, such policies help to structure social discourse about environmental issues and are crucial to a broader understanding of the politics of environmental changes. Thus, their origins, content, implementation, and impact require thorough analysis. State policies are not formulated in a political and economic vacuum. Rather, they result from struggles between competing agents seeking to influence such policies. Given the general policies having environmental implications, the number of actors involved may include government agencies, national and transnational corporations, non-governmental organizations, multilateral agencies and foreign governments. The challenge is to identify the different and often conflicting pressure on policy-makers in order to understand a particular policy outcome. How previous policy choices have contributed to environmental change, and how such change in turn has affected the decision-making process, must also be investigated.

If the state is a *"theater in which resources, property rights, and authority are struggled over"* (Watts, 1989: 4), then state policies manifest that struggle, often nurturing the interests of powerful economic elites and instigating both political unrest and ecological disturbance. State policies, then, are an embodiment of social conflict and struggle and the vested interest of the state itself. Such policies, however, cannot be understood in isolation. Not only do policies embody conflicting objectives, but their fate may also be linked with those of other policies. Forest policies, for example, may attempt to reconcile an interest in conservation with pressures for commercial use within a broader context where tax, trade and industrial policies often prejudice the outcome (Gillis and Repetto, 1988).

Both international and national sources of environmental change must be situated within a broader context of global capitalism. Global capitalism, as mostly embodied in the transnational corporations (TNCs), is a powerful source of environmental change. An examination of the link between global market forces and environmental change, then, might begin with an analysis of the individual TNCs, move

to the broader economic context and conclude with an assessment of the general socio-political vicinity within which TNCs operate.

The second components of the Third-World political ecology framework address conflict over access or property rights, and emphasizes location-specific struggle over the environment. The framework examines the relationship between access rights, local struggle and ecological transformation (Peluso, 1992; Hirsch, 1990a). Embracing both the historical and contemporary development of conflict, this theme manifests how those powerless fight to protect the environment their livelihood relies upon. Several studies compare and contrast the colonial and post-colonial experiences to illustrate continuity and change in local struggle (Peluso, 1992; Watts, 1983b; and Guha, 1989a). These studies, drawn from diverse socio-political and ecological settings, pinpoint the major transformation brought about by colonial rule and the bitter legacy of state-peasant antagonism over control of environmental resources that, even today, shows no sign of vanishing.

Conflict between peasants and state or economic elites not only involves questions of land, but may embrace the struggle over flora and fauna (Peluso, 1992; MacKenzie, 1988), soil conditions (Hirsch and Lohmann, 1989), and water supplies (Peters, 1984). The complexity of conflict over access is partially attributed to the tenurial system and social institutions regulating access, control and use of environmental resources. The role of women in conflict over access is also crucial, and yet, has been neglected. Agarwal (1990) examines the role of Indian women in struggles to retain access to land, water, and forest resources.

Conflict over access to natural resources is a powerful source of social disintegration. Embracing peasant relations with political and economic elites, this conflict may lead to the development of environmental movements, which are an important strategy for the poor attempting to preserve the environmental foundations of their livelihood. Historical perspective serves as a useful reminder that conflict over access is intrinsic to social development and essential to an understanding of contemporary struggle.

The final component of the research framework as proposed by Bryant (1992), the political ramification of environmental change, focuses on the impact of

environmental change on socio-economic and political processes. However, this should not be construed as a view of environmental determinism, but rather as a reciprocal relationship embedded in the first two components. Research into the political consequences of environmental change explores the ways that environmental change affects socio-economic inequalities, and political instability. Two basic questions on this agenda are: first, to what extent is the cost of environmental change borne by socially disadvantaged groups, and how does this unequal distribution of costs reconcile existing socio-economic inequalities? second, under what circumstances does unequal exposure to environmental change modify political processes? For example, Blaikie (1985) states that soil erosion adversely affects both small rural producers and the urban poor. Thomson (1985) explores how desertification in Niger reinforces inequalities. And Zaman (1989) examines how riverbank erosion in the Brahmaputra-Jamuna floodplain of Bangladesh threatens the dependency of landless peasants and displaces rural elites. This literature emphasizes the vulnerability of the poor to ecological degradation such as soil erosion, desertification, and deforestation. But they are also threatened by changes, which, superficially, might be considered environmentally beneficial. For example, in the case of commercial tree plantations, Lohmann (1990) and Hirsch and Lohmann (1989) observe how eucalyptus planting in Thailand may hinder opportunities for grazing and the collection of minor forest products, and even degrading local soil and water flow regulation.

Moreover, the willingness and ability of the poor to contest their plight should not be ignored (Scott, 1985). Following Scott's *Weapons of the Weak*, Peluso (1992), and Hafner and Apichatvullop (1990) raise the arson and theft as examples of everyday resistance. Thus, it is hardly surprising that peasants faced with a threat to the natural resources indispensable for their livelihoods have often resorted to overt collective resistance. However, it is only over the last two decades that Third-World environmental movements have gained momentum, mostly as livelihood struggles. Hirsch and Lohmann (1989) and Lohmann (1990) look into various movements instigated by rural Thai people to contest eucalyptus and hydroelectric dam projects. Many livelihood struggles in the North result from state policy in the expansion of protected areas. The struggles involving ethnically dominant and economically subordinate groups have

currently formed into a wider network (Chusak, 1996). However, the linkage between ethnicity, ecological change and political protest still needs more investigation, especially, the marginalization of both resources and people that may lead to the vicious circle of environmental degradation and poverty.

Bryant (1992) agrees with Blaikie and Brookfield (1987) that research on the political ramification of environmental change should be responsive to the social and ecological marginality of the poor. For instance, these following questions should be explored. How do resource users become spatially and economically marginalized? How does such marginalization relate to ecological marginality? How do these forms of marginality interact to produce a downward spiral of human and environmental degradation? Most importantly, how can individuals and groups caught in this trap organize resistance? How successful is such resistance in overcoming political and economic power configurations inclined to maintain the status quo? And, how do political and economic elites attempt to defuse protest and reaffirm power relations? Although episodic forms of environmental change -- droughts, floods, and other disasters -- occur independently of human design, their impact on social communities is by no means exclusively or even predominantly "natural" (Watts, 1983). Environmental change may not only reflect existing inequalities, but it may also insidiously reinforce them in the long-term.

With growing concern over the environmental problems in the Third World there has been considerable debate regarding the causes of ecological degradation. Social scientists -- geographers, sociologists, and anthropologists, in particular -- have sought for a critical approach with an emphasis on the political, economic and social structures and processes which underlie the human activities leading to environmental degradation. Principally, these scholars argue that environmental problems have not been adequately explained, if at all, by the conventional rationalization -- overpopulation, economic irrationality, and technological inadequacy. To further clarify this emerging approach, Neumann (1992) summarizes that the most fundamental context of political ecology perspective should entails the following attributes. That is: (1) a focus on the land users and the social relations in which they are entwined; (2) tracing the linkages of

these local relations to wider geographical and social settings; and (3) historical analysis to understand the contemporary situation.

As Blaikie and Brookfield (1987) have noted, environmental degradation is extremely difficult to measure; thus the very claim that degradation is taking place is a highly subjective judgement. For Neumann (1992) the expression "threats to national parks" is likewise problematic and a value-laden judgement. For example, in the case of wildlife conservation in Tanzania, the prevailing interpretations of government officials and conservationists on the origins of threats to the parks are that overpopulation and the ignorance and irrationality of local people are to blame. The official report thus goes on to imply that local residents do not understand the value of conservation so it is necessary to "educate the masses of people in surrounding villages, to teach them that wildlife has an important part to play in the national heritage" (Neumann, 1992: 88). The Thai forestry officials also carry similar view on conservation policy to rationalize the expansion of protected areas.

Viewing the situation from a political ecology perspective, Neumann (1992) tries to demonstrate that this interpretation is seriously flawed and that to use it as a basis to formulate conservation policies is to risk failure and face the decline of biodiversity within the park. Historical analysis explores the establishment of national parks under British colonial rule and the tightening of state control over access to resources at the expense of indigenous rights. The establishment of national parks is, in essence, a process of reallocation, which involves the introduction of new social structures for controlling access to natural resources. It is thus a political process. The conservation advocates, however, view the establishment of national parks not as a political struggle but a moral one. In most cases, the implementation of wildlife conservation policies in developing countries typically involved the state denying the peasants access to traditional resources, often affecting land use practices and dislocating entire settlements, thereby threatening the very existence of the communities.

Wildlife protection, or any conservation policy, is often a political endeavor, producing winners and losers. An understanding of why a particular conservation policy is resisted can be pursued by just asking who loses and who gains (Blaikie, 1985). As state control over natural resources tightened, local customary political structures were

put aside. Peasants were never recognized as participants in the debate over resource conservation. Political struggle was carried out above them and once resource control was decided, they had little opportunity to challenge the decision. In the case of wildlife conservation in Tanzania, the local people have continued to lose ground in terms of control over critical resources since independence. The peasants are largely excluded from the formal political process and are left to whatever defense they can gather, such as *de facto* alliances with commercial poachers, foot-dragging in regards to compliance, and piecemeal tactics to strengthen customary claims to land and resources.

Neumann (1992) suggests that micro-level politics and informal political structures should be given a more prominent role in analysis in order to expand the political ecology perspective to illuminate resource use conflicts and environmental problems. He refers to the work of Scott (1985 and 1987) on "everyday forms of resistance" that offers compelling potentialities for enriching research on the social origins of environmental degradation. According to Scott (1987) such actions as poaching or encroachment on state forestlands are forms of everyday resistance, aimed not at reforming the legal order, but at "undoing its application in practice".

Following Scott (1987) a few studies have highlighted the relevance of local politics to land use and ecological issues. For instance, Guha (1989a) and Peluso (1992) both examine the local struggle over access to forest resources. Peluso, using historical analysis, compares the variations of peasant resistance to forest policy as responses to different forms of Indonesian state control, whereas Guha links the origins of the contemporary grassroots environmental movement to a history of peasant resistance to state control. Moore (1992) also feels that most political ecology research emphasize too much on macro politics. In struggles over resources, villagers do not invest only for material resources but they also invest to have their cultural practices recognized. For instance, in Thai context, the Karen people in the North, on the one hand, have contested to keep their rights in protected forest upon their livelihood depends. On the other hand, this struggle is also for the significance of their traditional knowledge and ways of resource uses to be recognized. They often combine rituals with their contest for forest resources, for example the tree ordaining and indigenous classification of forest.

2.3) A CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL ECOLOGY

Adoption of the political ecology approach, to some scholars, may mean that too many social factors are incorporated in the environmental process. Too much politicizing environment may ignore other potential sources of environmental change. Nonetheless, Peet and Watts (1993) identify six areas of scholarship that can extend the frontier of political ecology. First, it is necessary to refine *political economy* in political ecology. Most of the new work centers on efforts to re-theorize political economy and environment at several different levels, especially the notion of biological tolerance and limitation. Second, it is necessary to treat politics in political ecology seriously. Peet and Watts (1993: 239) feel that *political ecology* has very little politics (emphasis in original). They point out that "there is no serious attempt at treating the means by which control and access of resources or property rights are defined, negotiated, and contested within the political arena of the household, the workplace, and the state". The integration of political actions –whether everyday forms of resistance, civic movements, or organized party politics – into questions of resource access and control have proven fruitful. For example, Peluso (1992) tries to link the historiography of criminality with everyday resistance to show how Indonesian peasants contest state forest management. Third, further extension is needed on the complex analytical and practical association of political ecology and civil society. The growth of environmental movements largely unregulated by the state poses the critical question of the relations between civil society and the environment. The fourth theme focuses on the problem of constructing and deconstructing sustainable development. This theme is linked to Blaikie and Brookfield's (1987) emphasis on the plurality of perceptions and definitions. Discourse analysis, especially in terms of social construction of knowledge, is deployed with effect in understanding the variety of environmental discourses around sustainability. The social construction of the environment and nature as an embedded theme in human geography has recently been taken up again in the context of conservation (Moore, 1994; Neumann, 1992). The fifth aspect is about the question of doing environmental history. In providing a much-needed perspective on the historical development of environmental alteration,

political ecologists may raise important theoretical and methodological issues for the study of environmental history. The sixth critical point is the question of *ecology* (emphasis in original) in political ecology and the extent to which political ecology is attached to somewhat outdated notions of ecological principles, system ecology. Botkin (1990), for example, raises the so-called new ecological concepts, which pose problems for the theory and practice of political ecology. The environmental issues based on the conventional principles of stability, harmony, and resilience may need to be re-thought. Theories of new ecology have recently challenged the conventional principles of ecology (Zimmerer, 1994). If the new thought of ecology gains momentum and causes paradigm shift political ecology may also need change in both theoretical foundation and practices.

Political ecology may be seen as a response to the growing politicization of the environment. Political ecology discourse in the 1990s also seems to be directly concerned with institutions and organizations in the context of shifting configurations of state and market role. Peet and Watts (1993) have suggested that the future focus of political ecology be on the analysis of social and environmental movements, particularly the new social movements in the Third World. They foresee it as a field that draws together the explosive growth of organizations and civic movements around sustainability with an implicit critique of development paradigm.

2.4) STATE OF THAI STUDIES ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS: A POLITICAL ECOLOGY PERSPECTIVE

The term "political ecology" is seemingly new to the Thai academic community, especially the political ecology approach lay out in this paper. Nevertheless, it by no means claims that the critical views on the interaction between society and environment haven't existed before. There have been some studies on resource degradation and its causal relation to the social economic system in a particular area since the late 1970s. To name one, Kunstadter, Chapman and Sabhasri (1978), in the keystone book *Farmers in the Forest*, examined the interplay between the highland ecological system and ethnic minority societies. The book featured the political economy in the study of the cultural ecology of highland Northern Thailand. The Royal Thai Government's concerns over

security, international pressure on opium eradication, and downstream environmental stress had influenced policies and measures on land use and socio-economic development in this area. The indiscriminate implementation of these policies had been undertaken at the expense of livelihood changes and infringement on the highlanders' customary rights on natural resources. Other research works involving ethnicity and natural resource management in highland Northern Thailand include those of McKinnon and Bhruksasri (1983) and Cooper (1984). The first dealt with the hilltribes and their social economic transformation corresponding to the Thai State enclosure of natural resources and political economic development in the highlands. The latter focused on the Hmong and their adaptive responses to resource scarcity in the highlands.

Rapid decline of forested areas in the last three decades put the Royal Forestry Department (RFD) under heavy criticism. Losing faith in state management of the forest, academics and social activists looked for alternatives to manage the forest resources of the kingdom. Shalardchai (1985a), in his book, *Pahmai Sungkhom Kub Kampattana Chonnabot* (Social Forestry and Rural Development), although shedding some new light on the rubric of people participation in forest management, stimulated a defensive echo from the status quo in the RFD and other establishments. The book, although drawn from various cases elsewhere, proposed community forestry as another way of forest management. This book and its resultant critiques among the development think tanks also caused the RFD to have a serious look again at its community forest program.

Political economy school of thought, one half of political ecology, has been well established, particularly at Chulalongkorn University led by Chatthip (1984 and 1991). He is a leading scholar who introduced Marxist political economy analysis to Thai academics and put "community culture" in the spotlight. At the same time, a group of academics at Chiang Mai University including Anan (1984 and 1989), Chayan (1984) and Shalardchai (1985b) have laid a firm foundation in community study in diverse aspects of Northern Thailand. Initially, these works lacked clear linkages between environmental degradation and property relations in natural resources. The shift of focus of these political economic groups toward the environmental problems has occurred recently in accordance with the growing concern on natural resource depletion and environmental degradation in both urban and rural areas. This important transformation

can be seen in Uralwan, Anan, Shalardchai, and Sanay (1988), Shalardchai, Anan, and Santila (1993), Shalardchai (1994), and Anan (1992, 1994 and 1996). In addition to the above northern-based scholars, Banasopit (1988) examined the roles of teak industry in Northern Thailand in the political economic transformation of the Thai State during the reform period of King Chulalongkorn. Thongchai (1994) documents the process of the territorialization of the Thai State by using the power of the map to demarcate national boundaries. His narrative on the transformation of Siam to the modern Thai State gives a striking notion of the construction of nationhood. This excellent study helps demonstrate the way the Thai State still uses its control of mapping technology in the enclosure of forestland.

During 1990-1991, a research team led by Jemsak (1992) conducted a thorough study on the historical development of forest encroachment all over the country and produced a book entitled *Wiwaddhanakarn Khong Karnbukberk Thidinthamkin Nai Khetpah* (The Evolution of Land Acquisition through Encroachment in the Forest Lands). This study, using an historical approach, traced the settlement of people in the state forestlands in each region. The research results answer the critical question why there are over 10 million Thais living illegally in the state forestlands. The study reveals historical and regional differences in encroachment and residency in forestlands. The periodic changes in the pattern of resource uses give a clear picture of linkages between natural resource exploitation and macro-level social, economic, and political development, especially the penetration of state and market forces in rural areas. World capitalism also plays a part in rural transformation and commercialization of local land-based resources such as wood products and minor forest products. If anything is lacking in this study, from the political ecology perspective, it might be the minor coverage of conflict in property rights at local level despite its rich village-level data. It is also short of mentioning about people resistance towards increasing pressure on changing pattern of resource uses.

The above study became the stepping stone for another valuable research project leading to the voluminous book, *Pahchumchon Nai Prathes Thai : Naewtany Kampattana* (Community Forest in Thailand : Development Perspective). This study, particularly the Northern region part, was conducted by almost the same group of

researchers, including Anan, Shalardchai, Santita, Yos, and legal experts like Bovornsak, Chareon, and Pisith. This Participatory Action Research (PAR) project was coordinated by the Social Research Institute, Chiang Mai University under the directorship of Chayan Vaddhanaphuti for the Northern region and by the Research and Development Institute, Khon Khaen University under the directorship of Mongkol Danthanin for the Northeast region. It is the most complete scrutiny of community forestry existing in Thailand. The legal history of forest management examined by legal experts shows how the Thai State has tightened its control over forest access (Saneh and Yos, 1993). Micro-level studies selected from various communities of each region provide a deep insight on community interactions with forest resources and with the state regarding the rights over resource uses, in both historical and contemporary dimensions. The results of this study are ramified for policy initiative to incorporate people participation in local forest resource management. Moreover, it aimed to induce institutional change when the research team publicly called for the promulgation of community forest law to recognize community rights over local forest resources, and equated them with democratic rights and processes (Saneh and Yos, 1993). The call for legal recognition of common property resource management like community-based forest management has become the contested terrain of those with power and those without.

The Western scholars whose work can be put under the rubric of political ecology include Feeny (1988), Hirsch (1990a, 1990b, 1992, 1993 and 1996), Lohmann (1990 and 1991), Vandergeest (1993, 1996a and 1996b), and Lynch and Talbott (1995). Mostly they have commonly voiced their concerns over environmental degradation and resource depletion in Thailand resulting from the growth-oriented economic development policies. Feeny, with previous work on political economy of productivity in Thailand, indicated that commercialization of agricultural products had direct effects on forest encroachment. Increased crop production through expansion of cultivated lands into the forestlands resulted from the combined effects of government policy emphasizing export of cash crop produces and sheer demands of the world market.

Hirsch (1990a), his earlier work in particular, offers the view on development discourse of the state apparatus in contradiction to the village-level discourse of

development participation. He contends that combined forces of state presence and market penetration in the villages accelerate the encroachment and settlement in the state forestland. Current works of Hirsch (1990b, 1992, 1993 and 1996) focus more on environmental issues like deforestation, impact of reforestation schemes, and the politics of conservation, especially in the context of state-village interactions. Probably, he is considered the scholar who has produced the most work of political ecology issues in Thailand. Lohmann (1991) has for many years examined specific issues like biodiversity, eucalyptus plantations, golf course proliferation, and hydroelectric dam projects, with emphasis on the environmental movements of the people who resist these activities.

Vandergeest (1993), also one of the leading political ecology advocates, has always been critical about the evolution of property relations in the Thai nation-state transformation, from property rights over people to territory control. The Thai State has increasingly expanded its control over forestlands, mostly at the expense of local control of communal resources. The state has then become more involved in the administration of property rights of land-based resources (Vandergeest and Peluso, 1995). The process called territorialization is about exclusion and inclusion of people within particular geographic units, and about controlling what people do and their access to natural resources within those territories. Although the reasons behind territorialization were the need to make territorial claims, protect resources, and collect taxes, most states later often employed territorial administrations to organize surveillance, gather information about the population, force them to settle down, and organize close control over people's everyday activities (Vandergeest, 1996a). On the current issues of increased protected areas in Thailand, Vandergeest (1996b) argues provocatively that conservation policies, especially those under the RFD administration, might have been formulated as the solution to a bureaucratic crisis such as budget allocation and competing control over forest land among the government agencies.

For legal aspects, Lynch and Talbott (1995), as lawyers, extensively examined the legal framework for community-based forest management in Asia and the Pacific region. In the case of Thailand, although the kingdom has never been colonized, they point out that its forest management has been influenced by the European mentality. The British model of forest management was transplanted to Thailand by a British forester

hired as the first Director-General of the RFD. The centralized administration of the state forest needed a supporting bureaucracy and legal system, therefore numerous laws were enacted to ensure that the state had a complete control over forest resources. They state that the Thai government has only provided rhetorical support for the concept of community-based forest management; meanwhile, most forest-dweller communities are labeled as illegal occupants in the state forestlands. The primary goal of all current official community-forestry programs in Thailand has only been to increase the number of planted trees. There are no tenurial assurance for community forestry (Yos, 1993). The legal definition of "forest" is also problematic in the first place. In addition, to classify it as "degraded" forest is even more involved with technical and political factors. For this particular issue, Bovomsak, Chareon, and Pisith (in Saneh and Yos, 1993) have already provided insightful information on the historical development of Thai forest laws. Furthermore, Pragtong and Thomas (1990) also examined the evolution of forest management in Thailand since the logging period until the conservation-oriented management at present. However, those studies cited above, except for that of Bovomsak et al, have rarely mentioned about customary rights and the traditional management system unrecognized by the formal legal framework.

For the issue of property rights, especially the common property resources (CPR) management, it has only been discussed recently in the study of natural resource management and the environmental problems in Thailand. Nevertheless, the CPR management system has actually endured in rural Thai society for several hundred years. There are at least two empirical studies supporting the fact that CPR management has existed in local resource management. First, Suthawan (1993) is convinced that assurance in resource tenure can be an important incentive for hill farmers to adopt soil conservation measures. She believes that property regimes may be diverse in Thai society, depending on available institutional arrangements. Property regimes in natural resources and the environment are not limited only to private property and state property, but can also be at some point of the continuum between the two polars (Suthawan, 1995). Second, Chusak (1994) also confirms the viability of CPR management in community-based watershed management in Northern Thailand. Drawing from empirical evidence around the Upper North, he concludes that CPR

management in watershed forests has been thriving in local communities for generations, even without a legal basis. The traditional irrigation management known widely as *Muang Fai* has been with the livelihood of the Northerner for over 700 years and become the solid ground for cooperation in CPR management in watershed forest. With present legal and political constraints, he suggests that co-management with genuine power sharing between the state and the communities might be feasible. In the pace of agrarian changes under the influence of modern Thai State and market forces, the indigenous CPR management needs to be legally recognized and protected by the state mechanisms.

Unequal power relation between the urban elites and marginal mass in the periphery can lead to bias and misperception about the origin of environmental problems. When environmental problems occur in downstream lowlands those who live there look for the culprits somewhere else. The highlanders are usually blamed for environmental damages in the lowlands. Deforestation and shifting cultivation in the upper watershed forest have become the conventional explanation for the major causes of lowland floods in rainy season, water shortages during drought season, sedimentation in the reservoirs, and lacks of recreational area. Despite the fact that settlement in the flood prone area, mismanagement of land, and over-consumption of water also contribute largely to those environmental problems, lowland urbanites, however still believe on the myth of deforestation and shifting cultivation. As Enters (1995) points out that what are the facts is often confused with what would you like the facts to be? Scientific research that revealed the counter-narrative findings was not given the significance. For, instance, Forsyth (1995) found that soil erosion in the highlands predated settlement of the hilltribes. The hill people themselves have normally avoided cultivation on the steep areas for the reason of unfertile soil in the long run. However, environmental policies and conservation measures still respond to the myth and conventional narratives. They aim to control the access to natural resources and limit pattern of resource use of the marginal people. The highlanders are always considered as the villain of environmentalism.

Another strand of political ecology although it is not a focus of this paper deserves to be mentioned, and in fact shares some of the common themes discussed

above. It is centrally developed around the environmentalism idea and the green movement such as the Green Peace group and the Green Party in Western Europe. It was derived from the belief that the present political, economic, and technological systems were not ecologically sustainable (Atkinson, 1991). It seeks fundamental change in economic behavior, worldview, and ethics regarding man and environmental relationships. Part of this idea is rooted in Schumacher's book (1973) -- *Small is Beautiful*. Some scholars look for oriental ecophilosophy such as Buddhist political ecology (Jones, 1993). This brand of political ecology focuses more on the developed countries and aims at national and global politics. Since it originates from the Western industrialized countries the main concern is central around the environmental problems that affect the quality of life of people. It somehow overlooks the conflicts in resource access and property relations at the micro level. Unlike the Third World political ecology it does not have much to say about everyday form of resistance of the powerless people. Nevertheless, its strength is in its strict concern over ecological limits. Its strategies on the environmental movement can be useful contextual sources for the environmental movement in the developing countries.

Preecha (1995a, 1995b, and 1996) whose idea derives from the political economy school based at the Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University, mainly advocates this strand of political ecology in Thailand. Schumacher (1973) and other Buddhist economic thinking influence his proposition called green economics. Preecha's view of political ecology is in line with those, which developed in Western Europe such as O'Riordan (1981), Porrit (1987), and Turner (1988). The most publicized environmental movement, like the Green Movement and the Green political party based on the urban middle classes, seems to be the domain of his political ecology endeavor. The conventional concept of "sustainable development" in the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987) is also one of his principles. However, Preecha's political ecology is still within the locus of economic thinking, if only as an alternative to the conventional Marxist and Neo-Classical economics. He rejects formal economy and adopts the steady-state economy as a proper economic system for Thai society to avoid an environmental crisis. Because of his strong tie with political economy school, Preecha has maintained his

interest in grassroots environmental movement cum social movement with increasing force pressing on the power-that-be.

2.5) CONVERGING TREND OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN THAILAND

The 1990s have seen the emergence of environmental movements in developing countries. These movements are usually formed around common interests in a variety of terrains of struggle, often in opposition to the state and other political and socio-cultural institutions. These include the protests of dam construction, reforestation through eucalyptus plantations, and eviction of people from the forest reserves known as the *Kor Jor Gor* scheme. These protests have illustrated the reality of the socially disadvantaged and powerless people whose livelihoods were affected by the economic growth policies that allocate natural resources in favor of the social elites. Proliferation of resistance in the form of environmental movements reflects two major alterations. First, the ecosystems have been exploited to the point that exceeds their carrying capacity. The environmental degradation has gradually affected the micro ecosystems that rural life depends upon. Second, current political and social development has weakened the prominent role of the state in natural resource management while the resurgence of market forces has not fully substituted that of the declining state. The current political atmosphere also accepts diverse ideas and social significance. This situation allows several negotiation processes to occur.

The incidents involving arson and vandalism of eucalyptus nursery houses in the reforestation scheme are well understood as the everyday form of resistance of local people toward the state environmental policies. This kind of protest usually occurs where their voices cannot be heard in a formal political arena. The mass demonstration against the resettlement of people living in the forest reserves, the infamous *Kor Jor Gor*, has shown that the military-backed conservation policy can be in jeopardy. The people movement against Pak Mun dam and other dams in the Northeast of Thailand expresses the voices of the socially disadvantaged peasants whose livelihoods are affected by the economic-growth oriented development projects that withdraw rural resources to the

core areas. Although the protest could not actually stop the project, it did cause the state and other benefactors to invest or compensate more on environmental and social costs. The environmental policies inevitably produce the winners and the losers.

Those peasant movements have later developed into the network of small-scale farmers of the Northeast. Their experience in negotiation with the state convinces them that collective movement is more likely to succeed. The social movement like the Forum of the Poor is an example of environmental movement cum social movement, which in fact manifests that the environmental problems and social problems are inseparable. In Northern Thailand, the expansion of protected areas, such as national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and class 1A watersheds can be considered as a result of modern environmentalism supported by the urban-based middle class people. These people only recently turn to appreciate the forest in the new form of *Thammachat* nature and wilderness. Despite in the past these elite people viewed the forest as *Pa Thuan* – uncivilized, savage, and untamed – believed to be outside the Thai space (Stott, 1992). Increased demands on recreational values of the forest from the urban people are in conflict with the way forest dwellers view the forest as sources of their survival. Conservation policy thus becomes the battlefield for people with unequal power relation generating further conflict and resistance.

Protected area policy has stirred up discontent among the forest dwellers as the park officials intend to relocate them from park areas. In fact, some highland communities were already evicted from the newly declared protected areas. These people are marginal, powerless, and economically disadvantaged in the larger Thai society. They staged the protests and took to the streets to express their hardship from the government policies. This collective resistance gave birth to the Northern Farmer Network as the regional organization to negotiate with the government concerning the environment-poverty agendas. The forms of resistance by the Northern Farmer Network are not violent as like resource vandalism in the Northeast. Their struggle is rather in the form of contested points of view and knowledge. They invented their own discourse on resource management to contest with the state discourse. For example, the Karen minorities call their agricultural system "rotational cultivation" instead of "shifting

cultivation", a pejorative term labeled by the state and the conservationists as a destructive system.

They sometimes adopt the government conservation discourse to explain their patterns of forest use. The Karen classifies their forestland into watershed forests, wildlife sanctuaries, community forests, village woodlots, and sacred groves. They employ mapping techniques, usually used by the government to make claims of forestland, to demarcate their village boundaries and forest uses. All these strategies are an attempt to contest with the state discourse that keeps saying the people and forest cannot co-exist. The government campaign to reforest 50 million *rai* to celebrate His Majesty the King's 50th anniversary of accession to the throne is also contested by the villagers' call for ordaining 50 million trees to commemorate the same event. Strategic contest for forest access is not just to secure material resources but also to give meaning to their cultural practices.

Struggles to have their communal rights recognized by the government were ramified by a call for institutional change, the promulgation of a community forest law in order to legalize the villagers' *de facto* rights in forest management and environmental conservation. The villagers were successful in pushing a community forest law through the cabinet council. They also managed to have the RFD compromised on the issue of community forests in protected areas. However, this, in turn, evoked strong opposition from the urban-based conservationists (deep green) fearing that the community forest law would give a free license to the local people to plunder the forest resources and threaten the fragile biodiversity. Not surprisingly, this disagreement represents dualism in environmentalism - a clear class conflict and dividing views on environmental conservation between rural villagers and urban middle-class people. The community forest law eventually becomes political terrain for the stakeholders to contest their view and discourse on environmental conservation.

Urban environmental problems are mostly centered on pollution problems such as water, air, noise, and traffic. Responses to these problems are usually in the form of collective concern over the seriousness of the pollution in the particular area. The voices of the urban people are mostly heard by those responsible for the problems and the mechanisms to tackle the urban pollution are already at hand, although temporary.

However, the measures to tackle urban environmental problems usually concentrate on technical solution. For example, they plan for more roads, express ways, and computerized traffic light as solution for traffic congestion despite the root cause of the problem lies in social and political structure that needs institutional change. Under present circumstance, the ones with power and the have can avoid direct effect from environmental problems while the powerless and the have-not must face polluted environment inevitably. In Bangkok traffic, the upper class people can stay comfortably in their air-conditioned car while the lower class people have to risk their life in the poor condition bus and expose themselves to the pollution (Ross, 1997).

In contrast, the industrial pollution occurring in the peripheral areas quite often receives slow responses, if any at all. The case of the Northern Industrial Estate in Lamphun is an example of the struggle of the workers to get attention from the government and the private firms on the harmful pollutants and unhealthy working environment that has claimed the lives of more than 20 workers. The government instead attempted to play down the voices of the workers for fear of damage to foreign investment. This has led the local workers to form a group called the Lamphun Forum to raise the problems to be heard in national politics. The "not in my back yard" (NIMBY) phenomena also occur in many urban and suburban areas where the people oppose the much needed but unpleasant facilities like the construction of garbage plants and toxic waste-treatment plants. The cases of the garbage plant in Hang Dong District, Chiang Mai and the toxic waste-treatment plant in Rayong illustrate the collective movement of local people suffering from environmental policies that favor one group of people and condemn another.

Two high-profile incidents of factory related pollution in the region are air pollution from EGAT's Mae Moh power plant in Lampang and water pollution from the Phoenix Pulp mill in Khon Khaen. Every year the villagers within the vicinity of Mae Moh power plant and lignite mine suffer from sulfur dioxide and dust. Meanwhile the people live on the riparian of the Nam Pong River have to tolerate water pollution from the pulp mill that causes the death of fish. These are periodic change in the environment but the problems have never been solved outright because the vested interest of the powerful

people is involved. People suffering from the pollution have to opt for informal political arena to voice their concerns, as the government seems not to treat the case seriously.

Proliferation of the environmental movements has signified the complexity of the environmental problems. The environmental degradation is no longer viewed as a mere ecological process. It is linked to the contextual sources of socio-economic structures and political processes. Mainstream environmental study alone may not be sufficient to trace the root causes of the problem. Multiple views on the environmental problems will be widened by social and economic differentiation between rural and urban, and between the rich and the poor. Division of ideas on nature conservation is witnessed from the recent split between the urban-based conservationists and the forest-dependent villagers regarding protected area management. Thus the environmental policies that produce winners and losers tend to heighten social conflicts and extend the political process to a wider arena. Some may turn to violence.

2.6) CONCLUDING REMARKS ON ENVIRONMENT DEVELOPMENT NEXUS: DYNAMIC ROLES OF STATE, MARKET, AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Environmental concerns in the 1990s are not only caused directly by the increasing ecological crisis but also fueled by the drastic change in global economics and the politics of the late 1980s. Poverty has become inseparable from the development-environment debate. Eradication of poverty through strengthening and protecting livelihood strategies is as much an environmental sustainability issue as a resource-based development question (Peet and Watts, 1993). In short, the environmental crisis is in fact a poverty problem.

Periodical evolution of development paradigms can be seen as a constant oscillation of dominant roles between the state, market, and civil society. The 1950s were the time when the state-led development planning was accepted widely. In contrast, the 1980s were the period in which the market was shifted to a center stage of the development paradigm. By the 1990s, in a rather different geopolitical and economic environment, role substitution between state and the market that prevailed in the past is not capable to tackle the newly-emerged problems, the environmental conflicts in

particular. Development discourse seemed to gravitate around the "balance" between state, market, and civil organizations (Janvry, Sadoulet, and Thombecke, 1993). In other words, the 1990s have demonstrated a growing concern with *institutions*, whether expressed in terms of agrarian institutions, state-society institutions, market institution or social movements that are expanding rapidly. In general term, it is a matter of good governance. Roles of big, clumsy, and inefficient government organizations may be reduced to pave the way for more diverse social institutions to take on the tasks.

In addition, a dilemma that, both neoliberal, authoritarian, and bureaucratic development approaches have not succeeded in solving the postmodern conflicts. This provides considerable momentum for a focus on institutions within civil society, especially arrangements based on negotiation, cooperation, and persuasion. Local institutions, in particular, have proven to be able to solve growing conflicts between environmental conservation and economic development. As Janvry, Sadoulet, and Thombecke (1991: 4) remark, "when the state fails to deliver public goods, insurance, management of externalities, minimum basic needs, and democratic rights, civil organizations may fill the vacuum. The same holds for the market where market failures lead to the emergence of civil institutions, many of which take the form of organizations." In short, the role of grassroots organizations has emerged in the context of diminishing states and expanding markets (Uphoff, 1993). Re-construction of common property institutions and the promotion of local knowledge systems and resource management are seen as the emergence of civil institutions.

The rise of political ecology has been shaped and challenged by wide-ranging debates within social theory. In the late 1980s and early 1990s it was the period in which postmodernism began to influence social sciences. The advent of environment-versus-development discourse was one of its outcomes. Environmental crisis is one of many world problems that theories developed in the modern age are short of proper explanation (Gare, 1995). An attempt here to assess the state of knowledge on the environmental problems through political ecology approach is by no means to ignore other approaches in studying man and environment interactions. The author only offers an alternative perspective that might be useful in viewing the environmental problems in Thailand. This view is based on current environmental issues and their reflections.

Environmental discourse channeled through many environmental activities and movements can speak for itself about which direction the social scientists should pursue the environmental problems.

PART III PROPERTY RIGHTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT: ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS APPROACH (Suthawan SATHIRATHAI)

3.1) THE TERM 'ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS'

The term 'Ecological Economics' can be defined as "a new 'transdisciplinary' approach to understanding and managing the ecology and economics of our world for sustainability⁵ on local, regional and global scales" (Costanza, 1991).

Ecological Economics is quite different from conventional 'environmental and natural resources economics'; its domain encompasses the entire web of interaction between economics and ecological sectors with institutions as linkages. While environmental and natural resources economics mainly emphasizes the adoption of conventional economic tools, ecological economics will include also ecological and institutional framework for analysis. Nevertheless, it is not an easy task for the development of a new transdisciplinary approach to take place, especially when conflicts between various disciplines exist. It is also difficult to entirely divorce ecological economics from environmental economics; conventional economic tools of analysis will have to be applied when appropriate (Costanza, 1991). The range of the ecological economics approach is, therefore, rather wide, encompassing various aspects of economics. In this paper, the emphasis will be on the application of institutional economics in analyzing the roles of property rights in natural resources and environmental management.

⁵ Indeed, there has been a lot of debate over the term 'sustainability' itself. In this context, sustainable development will be defined according to the Brundtland Commission as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987). Even though sustainability is a general target to be achieved, it is, however, not the aim of this paper to focus on the definition of the term.

While environmental and natural resources economics has been quite well-established, ecological economics has only recently emerged in western countries including organizations as the Beijer Institute of Sweden, the Institute of Ecological Economics of the University of Maryland in the US and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) in the UK. In Thailand, there are several organizations which use the environmental and natural resources economics approach such as the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) and Faculties of Economics of several universities, including that of Kasetsart, Thammasat and Chulalongkorn. However, no organizations in Thailand have formally adopted the ecological economics approach. Faculty of the Environment and Resources of Mahidol University may be closer in adopting this new approach but with the inclination towards ecology rather than economics.

Generally, conventional environmental and natural resources economics has concentrated on valuation based on welfare economics and applied price theory; it has particularly focused on how to price or value natural resources and the environment when there is no market. Less emphasis has been put on institutional aspects except for the issue of 'property rights' which have been accepted as an important concept but with more weight put on private ownership.

Ecological Economics, on the other hand, emphasizes linkages between ecological and economic systems; property rights institutions are seen as part of "cultural or social capital" by which societies convert "natural capital" that is natural resources and the environment into "man-made capital" (Berkes and Folke, 1995). This social capital or an institutional sector is like a set of rules of a game which determines such a conversion process of which sustainability has been considered as a target (see the diagram and its explanation developed by the author in Figure 1). Property rights regimes in focus include not only private property but also open access, communal property and state property; they also exist along a spectrum ranging from open access to private ownership (Hanna and *et. al.*, 1995; Eggertsson, 1993).

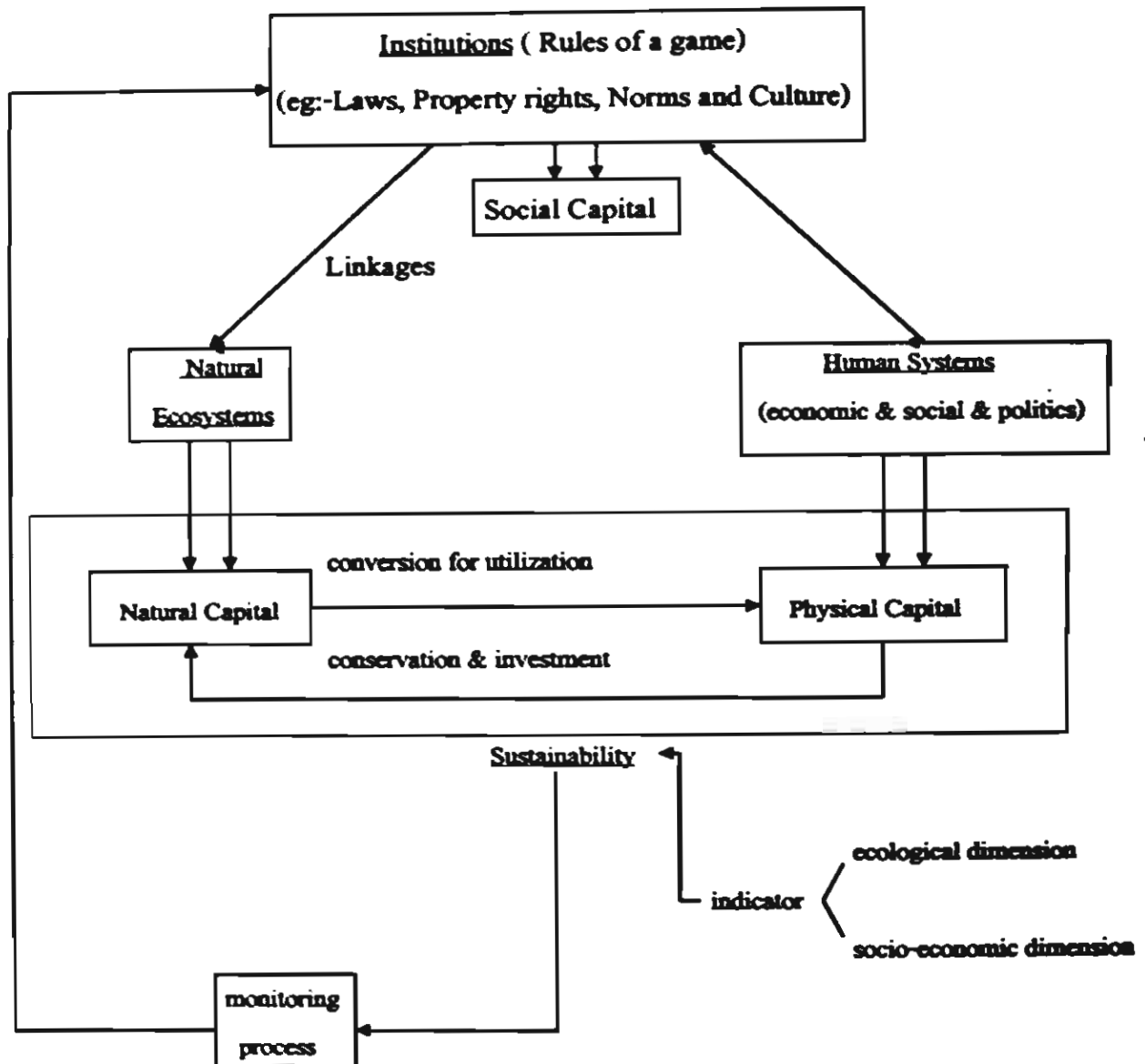


Figure 1:

The diagram shows a relationship between 'natural ecosystems' (natural resources and the environment) and 'human systems' which comprise economics, social and political systems. The maintenance of the human systems requires conversion of natural capital into physical capital used in the production process. At the same time, in order to keep the conversion process sustainable, investment in management and conservation of natural resources and the environment is vital. The concept of 'sustainability' is, however, debatable both in terms of its own definition and with respect to how to measure it (indicators). Moreover, natural systems and human systems are linked through 'institutions' which regulate and control the process of converting natural capital into physical capital. Institutions are like rules of the game and mainly include, laws and regulations, property rights, norms and culture. They can also be called social or cultural capital. Institutions are dynamic and adaptive to changes in natural ecosystems and human needs. If sustainability can be well defined and measured, the process of converting natural capital for human use can be monitored. It is therefore possible to redesign and adjust institutions accordingly so as to maintain both ecological and human longterm objectives.

As previously mentioned, the ecological economic approach highlights linkages between ecological and human systems partly through property rights regimes. Performance of a property rights regime can be measured in three dimensions: economic, social and ecological which are also interconnected (Hanna and *et. al.*, 1995). This paper, however, will focus more on the economic dimension. Property rights regimes are an important institution and incentive in dictating the use and conservation of resources.

3.2) PROPERTY RIGHTS REGIMES AS AN INSTITUTION AND INCENTIVE

Institutions are formal (laws and regulations) and informal (norms and customs) rules and constraints which structure incentives and influence human interaction (North, 1990). 'Property rights' are bundles of entitlements which define rights and duties of owners in the use of a resource; 'property rules' are rules under which those rights and duties are exercised (Bromley, 1991). The combination of both property rights and property rules define a 'property regime' which create a certain security of people's expectation about their control of resources (Bromley, 1989). In this respect, property rights regimes are an important institution.

Moreover, since property right systems are intrinsic to the use of resources and include their associated benefits and costs, it is clear that the prevailing systems will certainly influence incentives and behaviour with respect to the allocation of resources (Coleman, 1966; Ciriacy-Wantrup, 1985; Libecap, 1989).

Generally, property rights regimes or property regimes can be classified into the following 4 categories:- i) open access ii) communal property iii) private property and iv) government or state property.

Open access refers to the absence of property rights. Communal property are arrangements in which a group of people or a community jointly control a resource. Private property is the control of resources by private individuals. When a resource legally belongs to or is supposed to be controlled by the state, it is considered to be under a government or state property regime. However, resources formally labeled state property may in practice be controlled privately or by groups. In several occasions,

the open-access situation may also be caused by the state imposing controls without having the means by which to enforce it (Bromley and Chapagain, 1984; Commander, 1986; Repetto and Gillis, 1988; Feeny and *et. al.* , 1996).

In the arena of natural resources, it is well known that a situation in which property rights are ill-defined or absent, leading to an open-access or *res nullius* resource, will culminate in resource degradation (Clark, 1977; Dasgupta and Heal, 1979; Hardin, 1968; Stevenson, 1991). This is caused by the over-exploitation of the resource due to everyone having free access to it with the result that nobody has any incentive to manage or conserve it for future use (since someone else can always come to harvest it). This is a prime example of when "everybody's property is nobody's property". The classic works by Gordon (1954) and Cheung (1970) analyze the case of open-access fisheries in which their arguments can be applied to the open-access resource situation in general. An open-access situation can be better described by a game-theoretic framework in the form of one shot Prisoners' Dilemma Game (PD)⁶ (Stevenson, 1991; Sandler, 1992; Ostrom and *et. al.*, 1994).

Property rights regimes have to perform important functions of limiting use, coordinating users and responding to changes in environmental conditions (Hanna and *et. al.*, 1995). In the absence of property rights, as in the case of an open-access situation, there is no incentive for conservation and efficient allocation of resources, leading to overexploitation. It seems clear that there will be benefits in filling in this institutional vacuum. However, it is also important to realize the transaction costs involved in the establishment of well-defined property rights which include costs of exclusion, coordination, information gathering, monitoring and enforcement (Eggertsson, 1991 and 1993; Hanna and *et. al.*, 1995). These costs are also determined by the characteristics of a resource as discussed in the following section.

3.3) COMMON POOL RESOURCES AND COMMUNAL PROPERTY REGIME

Recently, there has been a debate surrounding the famous Hardin's "Tragedy of the Common" approach which claims that all resources held in 'common' will inevitably

See end notes 1 for explanation.

be overexploited (Hardin, 1968). Several works have criticized a terminology used, such as 'common', and questioned the accuracy of this approach (Wade, 1988; Ostrom, 1991; Bromley, 1992; Quiggin, 1993; Feeny and *et. al.*, 1996). In fact, the tragedy occurs as a result of an open-access situation rather than because resources are held in common. The heart of the issue seems to be centred on the confusion between the characteristics of the resources and the institutional arrangement over the control of the resources in question.

The word 'common-property' resources is confusing. In fact it refers to a kind of resource for which exclusion is difficult and joint use involves subtractability (Ostrom and *et. al.*, 1994; Feeny and *et. al.*, 1996). However, the term is often used to refer to open access which is a type of property regime, not a class of resources. It is better to use the term 'common-pool resources' (CPR) to define a resource which has two important characteristics, i.e., exclusion is not possible or involves high costs but at the same time its use is subtractable⁷. Global climate and fishery resources are clear examples of this type of resource. Nevertheless, because of its characteristics, property regimes over the control of CPR may easily fall into a category of open access or no property. This is partly due to the high cost involved in establishing well-defined property rights over a resource as a result of the in exclusivity characteristics of CPR. Policy solutions to this problem has become another issue of the arguments.

When resources are CPR, there is a tendency that policy prescription becomes polarized, either to privatize (Demsetz, 1967; Johnson, 1972; Welch, 1983) or to nationalize them (Carruther and Stone, 1981; Ophuls, 1973).

A private property regime, characterized by the highest exclusivity and transferability, has been advocated on the ground that it creates incentive for the efficient allocation of resources (Cheung, 1970; Demsetz, 1967; Furubotn and Pejovich, 1972). However, because the regime provides the most exclusive ownership structure, its implications for equity often becomes questionable (Dasgupta and Heal, 1979; Libecap, 1986; Eggertsson 1991). Moreover, an exclusive private property regime may not be applicable to a situation where exclusive and enforcing costs are paramount such

⁷ See end notes 2 for explanation.

as ocean fishing. (Eggertsson 1991; Feeny and *et. al.* , 1996). When there is a possible economy of scale in resource management, such as grazing (in a less capital-intensive society), imposition of a private property regime in which land may have to be divided into small parcels for each individual owner may not be the most suitable (Field, 1985; Dahlman, 1980)

In a state property regime, ownership and control over the use of resources are in the hands of the state. It often becomes a metaphor, especially in developing countries, that the public domain will have to be protected by the state (Ostrom, 1991). This includes, for example, forest land, watersheds and fisheries. Individuals and groups may be granted usufruct rights over the resources for a certain period of time (Cerneea, 1985). However, it often becomes the case that the imposition of state control, either directly or indirectly, without the ability to enforce the arrangement leads to an open-access situation which culminates in resource degradation (Bromley and Chapagain, 1984; Commander, 1986; Repetto and Gillis, 1988; Southgate, 1988).

While policy prescription has so far concentrated on these two types of property regimes, several pieces of evidence have supported the argument that common or communal property is a promising type of property regime for CPR (McCay and Acheson, 1987; Ostrom, 1991; Bromley, 1992). In fact, provided that exclusivity is well enforced, a common property regime is similar to private property for the group (Bromley and Cernea, 1989). It is only when exclusivity completely breaks down that the resource becomes an open-access one like the one described by Hardin in the "tragedy of the common" (Hardin, 1968). The free rider problem is commonly blamed for the break-down of the common property. Based on the strict self-interest assumption, there is an incentive for individuals to shirk responsibility to the group or community to which they belong. This free rider problem can be represented by the prisoner's dilemma game in which players prefer a non-cooperative outcome to a cooperative one, leading to an inferior Nash equilibrium (Runge, 1981; Sandler, 1992). The paradox is that individually rational strategies can lead to a collectively irrational outcome (Campbell, 1985; Taylor, 1987).

In fact, the justification for privatization or nationalization of the common resource is based upon the belief that there is a need for an external force to change the outcome.

However, there is evidence that local rules can successfully regulate the common resources without having to be imposed from outside (McCay and Acheson, 1987; Wade, 1988; Ostrom, 1991; Bromley, 1992). The group incentives which facilitate coordinated behaviour in communal property regimes can be analyzed as the assurance game⁸ (Runge, 1986; Sandler, 1992). In this type of game, there is no longer a dominant strategy such as a non-cooperative strategy which is a dominant outcome in the standard Prisoner dilemma. The key is that the decision to use common resources will be conditional on the expected decisions of others. Participants will design their own self-binding contracts based on information as well as customs or conventions they have which will better fit the local situation. In enforcing their regulations, they can even hire someone outside as an enforcer (Runge, 1986; Ostrom, 1991).

Moreover, from the game-theoretic analysis, even though the Nash equilibrium of a one shot PD game is a defecting strategy, a cooperative outcome can result from a repeated PD game given that 'retaliation' is effective⁹ (Sandler, 1992; Seabright, 1993; Ostrom and *et. al.*, 1994). The idea that repetition can sustain cooperation comes from the fact that individuals who are tempted to defect may decide not to do so since they may lose the benefits of cooperation in the future. As long as the discounted future returns are high enough (with a low discount rate) and the high costs of retaliation outweigh the benefits of defecting, cooperative equilibrium strategies can occur. This helps explain successful cases of local communal management of CPR. Given time, people will build up long-term interactive relationships and expect to gain in the future from cooperation. This is contrast to the situation when they look for only short term benefits, like in the case of open access. Cultural norms and traditions can help to build up 'trust' for assurance and form 'punishment' to enhance the costs of retaliation (Seabright, 1993). A secured communal property regime is vital to ensure the net long-term streams of benefits from cooperation. Nevertheless, there are cases in which de jure rights imposed by the state come into conflict with existing de facto communal property regime (Lynch and Alcorn, 1991). Once the indigenous management system

⁸ See end notes 3 for explanation.

⁹ See end notes 4 for explanation.

has been undermined by new legislation, it may lead to an open-access situation (Wade, 1988; Gibbs and Bromley, 1990; Ostrom, 1991).

3.4) A SPECTRUM OF PROPERTY REGIMES AND CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS IN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

A property regime in resource management is a structure of rights and duties which characterizes the relationship of primary decision units (such as households or community) to one another with respect to the resource and their uses (Bromley and Comea, 1989). The scope of these primary decision units will influence the types of property regimes whether that regime is private property, state property, or common or communal property (Bromley, 1991; Ciriacy-Wantrup, and Bishop, 1985; Wade, 1987).

The discussion in the previous section focuses mainly upon three distinctive types of resource management regime, namely private property, state property, or common or communal property. In fact, property rights exist as a continuum, ranging from open-access conditions at one extreme to very exclusive rights held by individuals, namely private property rights (Libecap, 1986).

The model developed by Field (1985) based on common grazing land has examined factors which drive the property rights system to vary from the common or communal property where the degree of exclusivity is low to the most exclusive individual ownership. The model focuses only on one dimension of the property, i.e., the degree of exclusivity which can be determined by the optimal number of commons. As the number increases, along with the degree of exclusivity, the property rights system will move towards private property. There are three types of cost functions in the model, namely standard cost of production, cost of internal governance and cost of exclusion functions. The optimal commons is determined when the marginal return to investment on internal governance is equal to the marginal return to exclusion. When the costs of internal governance fall as a result of some exogenous factor such as people adopting a common ideology, the return to investment per monetary unit spent on internal governance will increase. In this case, the new equilibrium will associate with smaller optimal number of common (larger size of commons) which means the property rights

system will move towards a communal property regime. If the technological change reduces the cost of exclusion, the marginal return to investment on exclusion will be greater. The new optimal number of commons in this case will be higher (smaller size of commons) which implies the shift of the property rights system towards a private property regime. However, the model becomes indeterminate when one assumes that the value of the resource increases. Even though the model emphasizes only one aspect of property right, i.e., exclusivity, it provides a basic analytical framework in understanding the spectrum of property rights (See Figure 2).

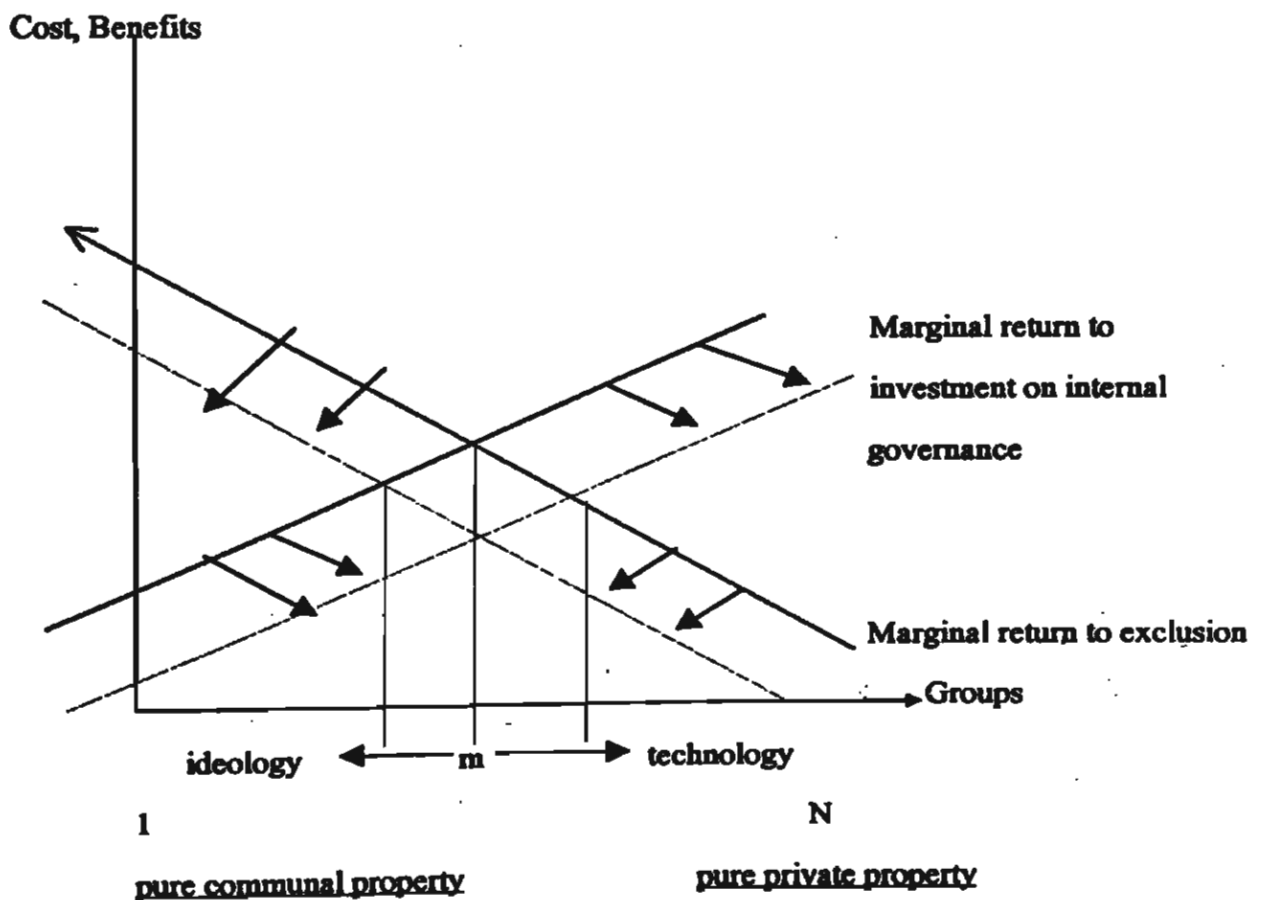


Figure 2.

Another interesting aspect of applying property rights analysis in resource management problems is that property rights can be divided (Barzel, 1991). It is important to note that "property is not an object but rather a right to a benefit stream that is only as secure as the duty of all others to respect the conditions that protect that stream" (Bromley and Cernea, 1989). Nonetheless, an object or in this case, a natural

resource over which a right extends has several attributes. As an ownership of the object or even of an organization can be divided (Alchian, 1977; Posner, 1986), it might be possible that different decision-units can have rights over distinctive attributes of the same resource including, its management. As a result, different kinds of resource regimes can be applied to different attributes of the resource.

The model developed by Bromley and Hodge (1990) gives a good example of rural land as a factor of agricultural production being privately owned but with property rights to other land attributes, i.e, country-side and community attributes (CCA), which include the environmental quality and services of the land may be with the collective. The model shows that by shifting the entitlement from the status quo in which farmers have control over all attributes of the land to the alternative property rights arrangement, the new level of rural environment can be enhanced. (higher level of CCA) The higher level of CCA is the result of the shift in the initial property right. Under the status quo, those who are concerned for the rural environment have to bear all the transaction costs involved in the bargaining process while the land owners have to bear all transaction costs in negotiating for the reduction in CCA in the alternative entitlement. In fact, under each kind of entitlement, there will be an optimal level of CCA. When there is a general agreement to allocate certain rights to the land owner and to the state, that combination of rights determines a particular reference point (Hodge, 1989). The two extreme entitlements, i.e; the one in which property rights over the CCA are with farmers and the one in which property rights over the CCA are with the state represent two different reference points. There will be a continuum of possible reference points (with corresponding optimal levels of CCA) ranging between the two extreme entitlements, each of which defines different degrees of private property rights as attenuated by collective decisions.

The above model provides a good analytical framework in analyzing possible contractual arrangement regarding rights to the use of land. Other contractual arrangements which also give useful theoretical guidelines are the open-field system and the sharecropping arrangement.

The open field system is unique in terms of the property right arrangement, i.e, a) there is private ownership of an arable land but collective ownership of grazing

grounds; b) private decision-making regarding crop growing has been attenuated by well defined social rules and regulations; c) private ownership of arable land is in the scattering of strips under the fallow system; and d) the privately owned arable land becomes interchangeable with the collectively owned grazing area (Dahlman, 1980).

One of the scholars in this area who tried to explain such a peculiar contractual arrangement is Dahlman (Dahlman, 1980). His crucial underlying assumption is the increasing return to scale in grazing. It then becomes the question of choice between a private or a collective property regime; which one will better exploit the economy of scale in grazing. The criterion is the transaction costs. He concludes that transaction costs are lower under collective rights as long as outside users can be excluded. However, there is the potential problem that an individual farmer can consolidate his arable plots to increase his holding, thus leading to higher bargaining power in grazing. To prevent such a problem, scattering is then introduced in order to make independent grazing impossible and to encourage more interaction in the community. McCloskey (1986), however, explained the scattering as a behaviour toward risk. Farmers diversify their plots of land against crop failure. McCloskey, concluded that high transaction costs prevent other cheaper forms of crop insurance. In short, transaction costs become the key underlying factor in explaining this kind of contractual arrangement.

Sharecropping is another interesting contractual arrangement which is considered to be inefficient according to a standard neoclassical economics (Johnson, 1950). However, several theories have been developed to explain its existence (Cheung, 1969; Stiglitz, 1974; Barzel, 1991). The interest of the present discussion is not on sharecropping per se, but on the theoretical framework related to property rights used in explaining such a contractual arrangement.

Barzel (1991) adopted the concept of residual claimants in explaining the choices of tenancy contracts. The concept of residual claimants has been used in the theory of economic organization (Alchian, 1977). For example, the person who monitors the team production should be granted the right to claim net earning of the team after payments to other inputs has been subtracted (residuals). In receiving this residual reward, he, as a residual claimant will have incentive to reduce shirking in the team production since his earnings also depend upon the performance of the team.

Barzel (1991) compared three types of tenancy contracts namely the wage contract, the rental contract and the share contract. He explains that when land is uniform while there is a variability in labour input, the tenant becomes a residual claimant since he can solely affect the outcome. The rental contract will be appropriate because it provides an incentive to the tenant who can claim whatever is left over after paying the fixed rent. On the other hand, when labour input is uniform and there is a variability in land instead, the landowner will be a residual claimant. In this case, a wage contract is suitable because the expected outcome will be the function of land quality only and this gives the right incentive for the land owner to improve and maintain his land quality. However, in reality there is a variability in both input factors: land and labour. Therefore, both the land owner and the tenant are residual claimants and that is why share tenancy, which stands halfway between the wage contract and the rental contract, applies.

According to Barzel, the party who is more inclined to affect the outcome by manipulating the particular attribute (a residual claimant) should be granted rights to control such an attribute. (Barzel, 1991) In fact, natural resources and the environment comprise several attributes. Consequently, the ownership or the property rights of such resources may be divided among residual claimants of each attribute of the resource. Barzel has provided an interesting analytical framework which may be applied in analyzing different property regimes and contractual arrangements in resource and environmental management.

3.5) TOPICS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH IN THAILAND

In Thailand, there has not yet been an empirical research which has directly applied this type of analysis. However, there are several studies which have recorded and investigated successful cases of local communal management of natural resources and the environment, particularly forests in different regions of Thailand (Deetate, 1989; NGO-Cord *et.al*, 1989; Kanchanapan and Kaosa-ard, 1991; Thungsuro, 1991; Ramitanond *et.al*, 1993). It is interesting to observe that these cases may be classified into 2 broad categories: the cases in which local communities have had long established cooperation in management and conservation of forests for more than a decade, and other more recent cases in which local communities have been conserving forests for

less than 10 years. The first category may be explained in the game-theoretic context by the repeated PD game. These people have developed long-term interactive relationships and constructed effective rules and norms which successfully induce cooperation. Through their experiences, some villagers have also realized the direct benefits from the conservation of watershed forests uphill in terms of water availability for growing paddy¹⁰.

The second category is probably more interesting. There seems to be a trend among farmers and local communities to use conservation as a strategy to claim rights on land and forest resources (Sathirathai, 1993 and 1995). The empirical study on the impacts of property rights on the adoption of soil conservation practices in northern Thailand has indicated that direct benefits of soil erosion control from the farmers' point of view may not be sufficient to induce their adoption of the systems. Farmers, however, tend to adopt soil conservation practices as a bargaining strategy to claim land rights (Sathirathai, 1993). The policy implication is that land rights that are conditional on the practice of soil conservation systems may be used as an incentive for farmers to adopt such systems. The same may apply in the case of forest conservation; communal property rights granted to local communities conditional on their protection of communal forests may be used as an incentive for forest conservation. At present, the new legislation on community forests is about to be promulgated¹¹. An empirical research is therefore needed to understand 'incentive systems' required in inducing and sustaining cooperative actions in the management and conservation of community forests in the both mentioned categories.

Property rights, although, are not in themselves sufficient conditions for resource sustainability, they are necessary conditions (Hanna and *et. al.*, 1995). In this situation, it is important to understand how a communal property rights regime has evolved in those cases classified under the first category and how property rights regimes can be used as policy instruments in the cases belonging to the second category. Moreover, since property rights can be divided as discussed in the previous section, it is possible that

¹⁰ Based on the author's own interview with local villagers in Ban Tung Yoa, Lumpun Province, for example.

¹¹ The Community Forest Bill is now in the process of being submitted to the first reading of the House of the Representatives.

different types of property regimes can be applied to different attributes of the same resource. For example, an arable land of a local watershed may be designated private property whereas a non-arable land of the same watershed may be assigned under a communal property regime. A thorough research is required before property regimes can appropriately be designed to induce the right incentive.

Last but not least, a research is also required to evaluate the performance of property right regimes. A good example of this type of research is the study conducted by Ostrom and Gardner (1993) which compared farmer-managed irrigation systems with governmental agency-managed irrigation systems in Nepal. It turned out that the farmers' systems are more productive and the results of the study could be explained by a game-theoretic analysis. It is also important for all this research work to incorporate ecological consideration into the analysis. According to Berkes and Folke (1995), there is evidence of co-evolution, making local communities and their institutions in tune with the natural process of the particular ecosystems. A research conducted should also take into account this important issue.

END NOTES:

1) The prisoner's dilemma (PD) game can be shown to represent open access. Imagine two cattle owners who use a grazing area that is at its maximum economic yield. Bringing in extra cow will become suboptimal. However, if one herdsman decides not to cooperate by adding another cow to the grazing ground while the other herdsman cooperates, he will earn extra income from the additional cow while causing a negative return to the other person. If both of them cooperate, no one gains or loses at this point. However, if both of them defect by adding more cows to the area, both herdmen will lose a portion of their income. The pay-off matrix is shown in Figure A. There is no guarantee that if one herdsman cooperates by not adding another cow, the other herdsman will do likewise. On the contrary, there is an incentive for them to become free riders since they realize that if they cooperate by not adding more cows, the other person will be likely to shirk any-way. A Nash equilibrium for this game is therefore for both herdmen to defect by bringing in additional cows the result of which is a tragedy for both of them.

		Herdman 2	
		Co-operate	defect
Herdman 1	Co-operate	0, 0	-3, 1
	defect	1, -3	-2, -2

Nash Equilibrium
(N.E.)

Figure A.

Source : Stevenson 1991

2) In economics, it is possible to classify goods or resources based on two important attributes: 1) exclusion—the ability of excluding individuals from benefiting from a good and 2) subtractability— one person's consumption of a product will reduce the availability of that product to other people. Based on these criteria, the four types of goods can be identified:- private, public, club or toll goods and common-pool resources (CPR) (see Figure B.). Private goods can be best analyzed by theory of markets. Public goods are opposite to private goods. CPR share with private goods the subtractability attribute and with public goods the difficulties of exclusion.

		Subtractability	
		Low	High
Exclusion	Difficult	Public Goods	Common -Pool Resources
	Easy	Club goods	Private goods

Figure B.

Source : Ostrom and et. al.,1994

3) In the assurance game, there is an incentive for both players to cooperate. Imagine two hunters trying to capture a big fierce animal. If one hunter commits while the other defects there is a tendency that not only both of them will not get any food, they may even be threatened by the angry animals. From the pay-off matrix in Figure C., there are possible 2 Nash equilibrium. However, for both of them to cooperate is likely to dominate since it is a win-win solution which means they both gain.

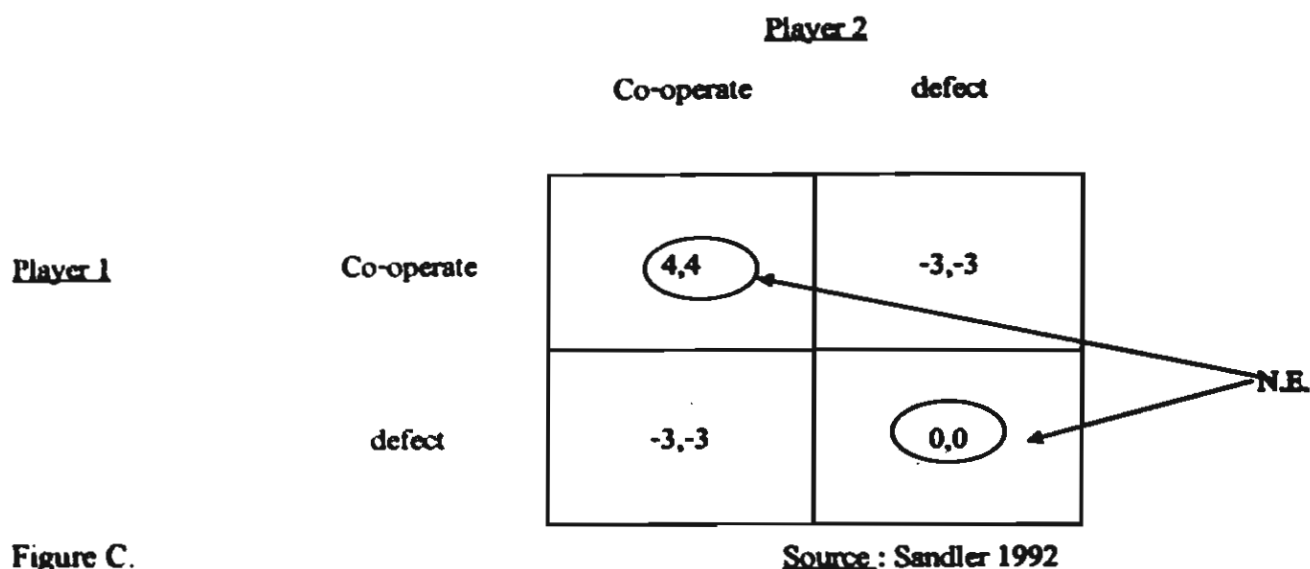


Figure C.

4) Experiments conducted by Axelrod (1984) using a computer to simulate repeated PD games indicated that the strategy that worked best was a 'tit-for-tat strategy' from which retaliation is also effective. If the game is infinitely repeated, cooperative behaviour is the rational response to a tit-for-tat strategy. With an infinite horizon, there is an incentive for both players to cooperate since the expected gains will outweigh those from defecting and each player can expect the other to behave in the same manner.

POTENTIAL RESEARCH FOR NEW GROUND OF KNOWLEDGE

Problems of environmental and natural resources degradation including inequality in the access to and control of natural resources can come about as a result of an inadequate property rights policy in Thailand. A good example is the case of forests in Thailand. Under the current law, forests belong to the state with the Royal Forestry Department (RFD) acting as the sole governmental agency empowered to manage and control all forest land, which accounts for almost half of the country. However, without effective control and monitoring, most of the forest area has become an open-access area and has been destroyed at the alarming rate of almost 3 million rai per annum in the last 3 decades. In the previous section, problems of natural resources exploitation have been discussed in length in the context of property rights.

The potential topics for future research in Thailand have already been identified by each approach in the previous section. It is not an easy task to propose research topics for developing new ground of knowledge regarding property rights and the environment

in Thailand based on the three different approaches altogether, there are certain conflicts in these various disciplines. However, the common view shared by all the approaches is that property rights could play a vital role as a policy instrument in correcting the existing problems of environmental and natural resources degradation. Although property rights are not in themselves sufficient conditions for resource sustainability, they are certainly necessary conditions. Another common view shared by these approaches is that property rights regimes exist in continuum along a spectrum ranging from open access to private ownership with common or communal property in between. In Thailand, the design of appropriate property rights regimes to be used as policy instruments are essential.

In order to appropriately design suitable property rights regimes, there is a need for thorough research work in order to develop analytical frameworks based on various approaches including that of anthropology, political ecology and ecological economics. Important factors and conditions which bring about the success or failure of different kinds of property rights regimes along the spectrum need to be identified. This kind of research work has to also be carried out both on the theoretical and empirical basis.

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**THE DEVELOPMENT AND TRENDS OF
LITERARY STUDIES IN THAILAND**

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THE DEVELOPMENT AND TRENDS OF LITERARY STUDIES IN THAILAND

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The purpose of this article is to survey the development and trends of literary studies in Thailand from the beginning to the present time with concentration on these last 3 decades (1965-1995). By analyzing some distinguished researches on literary studies which contribute new trends, new paradigms or reinterpretations of major literary texts and create interesting debates among scholars in this field. The attempt will be made to criticize and evaluate these works and suggest new trends for the future.

The contents will be divided into 5 parts.

Prologue: Paradigm Shift in Thai Literary Studies

Part 1: The Pragmatist: Traditional Thai Poetics As a Paradigm for Literary Studies

Part 2: The Hegemony: Literature as National History and Identity

Part 3: The West Wind: The Paradigm of The New Criticism

Part 4: The Anti-Hegemony: The Local Voice

Part 5: The Outsiders: The Extrinsic and the Interdisciplinary Paradigms

Trends for the Future: The Interdisciplinary Paradigms

This article is the conclusion of my two researches: *The Development and Trends of Literary Studies in Thailand from the Beginning to 1985* (Boonkhachorn: 1987) and *The Development of Literary Studies in These Past Three Decades and Trends For the Future* (in progress).

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PROLOGUE: PARADIGM SHIFT IN THAI LITERARY STUDIES

Thomas S. Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970: first published 1962) suggested that particular learned communities or specialities rested upon acceptance of "a set of recurrent and quasi-standard illustrations of various theories in their conceptual, observational, and instrumental applications" These are the community's paradigms, which can be found revealed in its "textbooks, lectures, and laboratory exercises. (Kuhn: 1970, 43) A paradigm is constituted by a set of beliefs which both enables and constrains research: a framework or scaffold which can underpin or support further work but which of necessity also excludes a range of possibilities. Kuhn's concept of the paradigm shift entered into literary study in relation, very often, to arguments about interpretation. We interpret the evidence of a text differently when our literary paradigms change, just as the scientist interprets the evidence provided by an experiment when his or her scientific paradigms change. (Hawthorn: 1992)

In this article, the effort will be made to analyze the paradigms and the paradigm's shifts in Thai literary studies from the beginning to the present time.

PART 1: THE PRAGMATIST; TRADITIONAL THAI POETICS AS A PARADIGM FOR LITERARY STUDIES

Before the contact with the West, the center of cultural and literary activities were the royal palace and the temples. The literary texts which descended to the present time were the productions of these two centers. Popular or common or folk literature certainly did exist; however it is hard to trace the historical periods of those oral literatures. The major literary activities supported by the royal palace had authority until the Western educational system influenced Thai literary study.

The word "poetics" is Greek in origin and means "the art of poetic creation. "Poetics signifies writing that deals with the art of poetry or presents a theory of the art. The most famous instance of such a treatise is Aristotle's *Poetics*. Emil Staiger, in his afterword in *Basic Concepts of Poetics*, concludes that poetics is only a question of the practical instructions which would accomplish for the poet what the doctrine of

counterpoint and harmony does for the composer. Poetics teaches what it is that constitutes the nature of poetic creation. Poetics organizes the available models and in so doing poses the problem of genre. Poetics instructs the experienced poet wanting to write.

Poetics in this sense is similar to the concept of poetics which appeared in the ancient Thai textbooks about prosody. Even though the word "poetics" had not yet been coined until a few decades ago when the knowledge of Western literary criticism influenced Thai literary scholarship, the concept of Thai poetics tended to emphasize pragmatism or practical knowledge more than theoretical knowledge. In Thai, there is nothing corresponding to the *Poetics* by Aristotle. Indian textbooks about prosody, such as *Wuttathai* or *Alangkarasat*, the art of poetics and elaboration, were occasionally cited but were not translated into Thai until the beginning of the Rattanakosin period. Kusuma Raksamani in her research titled "*Kan Wikhro Wannakhadi Thai Tam Thritsadi Wannakhadi Sanskrit*" (*The Analytical Study of Thai Literature by Sanskrit Theory of Literature*) concludes that the Sanskrit theory of literature i.e. in *Alangkarasat* never influenced Thai literary circle until Rattanakosin period. (Raksamani: 1989). Thai scholars seemed to adapt and choose only certain parts of these Pali and Sanskrit textbooks, then added Thai examples, commentary and their own points of view based on their own aesthetic and moral values. Even though there is no elucidation of the concept of Thai poetics, this concept can be indirectly derived from literary texts themselves and from textbooks about prosody.

The concept of poetics existed in Thai literary history before the contact with the West, even though the word "poetics" itself had not yet been coined. Some excerpts from traditional poetry express the poetic repertoire, the poetic process and the aesthetic values of poetry which indicate that from the very beginning of Thai literary history, the poetic phenomenon had already been observed, at least by the poets themselves. Thai poetics emphasizes on heavily the musicality of words. The musicality of Thai poetry originates from the tonal nature of the Thai language itself, from the choice of words (which includes prosodic constraints, rhyme, alliteration and assonance), and from special techniques for each prosodic form.

When explaining poetic creation or the aesthetic values of poetry, the concept of traditional Thai poetics tends to emphasize the musicality of words. The aesthetic of poetry rests heavily upon the quality of the melody of sounds which are beautiful to the ears of the listeners. This melody of sounds means the smoothness which originates from the harmonious choice of words in the well-organized order based on the strictness of poetic constraints and some specific techniques of expression.

Emphasis on the musicality of words is obvious from the beginning of the emergence of Thai poetry during the early Ayutthaya period (1350-1488). Three masterpieces of this period, *Lilit Yuan Phaay*, *Thawathotsamat* and *Lilit Phra Law* express similar standard of poetic evaluation. During that time, there was a literary convention which can be called "attawiphak" or self-evaluation in which poets (or scribes) evaluated their own works by comparing melodious poetry to celestial garlands decorating the ears of the listeners. According to the poet, his excellent poetry will endure through time. It is noticeable that the poet, with complete confidence, highly evaluates his own work; however, the reason may be because under royal patronage, poets devote and dedicate their poetry to the king; therefore, only a perfect work should be given in order to praise and entertain his patronage.

รู้มลักสรรพศาสตร์ถ้วน	หญิงชาย
จักกล่าวกลอนพระลอ	เลิศผู้
ไพเราะเรียบบรรยาย	เพราะยัง เพราะนา
ลมปี่ลุ่เสียงลุ่	ล่อเล่าโลมใจ

Having known all knowledge of women and men,
I will tell the poetic story of Phra Law, the Perfect,
Narrated meticulously, most enchantingly,
Together with the sound of a melodious alluring flute.

Another stanza from the same source, *Lilit Phra law* expresses the poet's evaluation of his own poetry along with an expression of his intention to please his royal patron.

สรรเสริญขับอ่านอ้าง	ไดปาน
ฟังเสนาะไดปาน	เปรียบได้

เกลากลอนกล่าวกลกานท์

กลกล่อม ใจนา

ถวายนำเรอท้าวไท

อิราชผู้มีบุญ

The chanting pleasant sounds are beyond compare,

Peerless, melodious.

The artistic poetry soothes the hearts,

It is provided for the meritorious king.

It is obvious that the aesthetic value of poetry expressed in this work is based on the melodious sounds caused by neatly narrated words which can be compared to the sound of a musical instrument. This verbal melody moves and enchants the listeners. The first priority of poetic values or literariness is the musicality of words. The function of poetry is similar to that of music in which the euphony of rhythms enchants, enriches and in some cases enlightens the ears, the heart and the mind of the listeners. The emphasis on the quality of sounds still carries on to the modern period though it is not the only distinctive feature by which one evaluates poetry.

Another interesting observation can be made from these excerpts. The poetic repertoire expressed here consists of three elements. These are the producer who is the narrator or the chanter, and the text which is not the written one but the text as performance including the music and the receiver of the text who is emotionally moved by the melodious poetry. As for the narrator or the poet, he claims that he has the understanding or the knowledge of all women and men, and therefore he understands human nature and is the perfect one to narrate this poetry which is about human passions. According to the Buddhist point of view, passionate love causes misery and is one of the origins of troubles. The experience and the mature understanding of human emotions and nature are the basic knowledge that a poet is supposed to have in order to compose artistic poems. Thus it is a portion of the poetic creation.

The aesthetics of Thai poetry rests strongly upon the quality of "phakro" which signifies "melodious, sweet, musical and harmonious, pleasing to the ears and tuneful." The boundaries of poetry and music are interrelated in the area of aesthetics. The poetic process can be divided into three major elements: *the poetic process, the medium and the receiver process*. The creative process includes the melodious quality of sounds, the

action of creative process and the action of sender. The medium consists of words and sounds. The receiver processes the action of receiver and the effect on the receiver. As for the receiver process, the only action mentioned is listening and the effect on the listeners which can be divided into three steps. First, poetry like music, addresses itself to the ears. Secondly, it will entertain, move, enchant or soothe the heart and the soul of the listeners. And in some cases it will reach the third stage; that is, it will broaden the mind of the learned persons or scholars. Poetry can entertain, enchant and enrich the ears, the heart and the mind of those who listen to it.

Thomas Hudak in the chapter about "The Aesthetic of Sound" in *The Indigenization of Pali Meters in Thai Poetry* notices that the central problem of the definition of what constitutes a melodious sound (phairo') is left to the student's intuition. Hudak, from the linguistic point of view, concludes that the specific techniques used to create a language that is melodious are reduplication, intensification, the use of puns, the use of elaborate expressions, the use of particles, and the use of special vocabulary. (Hudak: 1990)

What Hudak explains as the "student's intuition" or "subjective" can be perceived from the Thai point of view as "learning from the Masters" or "listening to the voices of authority." This traditional way of learning in the Thai social context means that competence in poetic reading and aesthetic evaluation is based on the student's experience of prior texts. The more one reads, the more one can develop the ability to evaluate because the familiarity of the poetic sounds of prior texts will become the norms of poetic evaluation. In other words, memory becomes the basis of aesthetic evaluation. This way of learning is common in every field of traditional Thai arts. For example, the way to learn a Thai musical instrument tends to be by heart rather than by musical notes. The "wai kru" tradition or "pay respect to the teachers or masters" tradition is, therefore, very significant in the Thai social context because the knowledge from the teacher will guide the student's way to experience and to produce his or her own creativity.

The authoritative reference or the voice of the master has been used as a paradigm of learning since *Jindamani*, the first textbook that explains the "science" of poetry by concentrating on prosodic form. In *Jindamani*, each prosodic form is

explained briefly in prose and is followed by the pattern of numbers of words with rhymes and tonal constraints. The best example of that prosodic form, an excerpt from a literary text, is given as the masterpiece of that genre. Then the constraints of that prosodic form are explained in that prosodic form itself. This pragmatic way of learning gives the immediate effect of the aesthetic values in the unity of the sounds and meaning. It is understood that the accumulation of the authorities in memory enables the reader to recollect the prior texts when s/he encounters new texts. The comparative process and the horizon of expectation generates the aesthetic evaluative action in the immediate process which may vary with the intertexts and the reading competence of the reader. (Boonkhachorn: 1992)

The traditional Thai literary convention also emphasizes the mimesis of the authorities or the imitation of the master pattern. The "paying respect to the teacher" tradition or "wai khru" is active not only in the literary field but also in other domains of cultural activities, such as music, painting, sculpture, etc. As for the literary convention, this type of mimesis can be seen in the fixed structure of literary texts. These "fixed" or constant styles of narrating can be classified into two categories: the general literary composition and the literary convention for specific genre. The literary convention of mimesis offers two types of literary activity. First, the follower paradoxically copies the master as well as competes with him. In this way, the innovation is similar to the restoration in the sense that the later poet chooses to follow only the best and improves the weak points for the better.

This paradigm of traditional Thai poetics dominates the literary world. It can be said that the literary perception conducted in classrooms has been influenced by this traditional paradigm.

PART 2: THE HEGEMONY; LITERATURE AS NATIONAL HISTORY AND IDENTITY

Somdet Krom Phraya Damrong Rajanuphap or Prince Damrong (1862-1943) played the most important role in Thai literary circle when he was the head of Wachirayan Library (at present, the National Library). He can be called the founding father of Thai literary historiography. The great achievement of Prince Damrong lies in his attempt to create a set of systems for Thai literary history. (Nagavajara, 1985) Most of

the textbooks about the history of Thai literature published nowadays can be said to follow the pattern set by Prince Damrong. During the time when Prince Damrong was the head of the National Library, manuscripts were classified, edited and printed as books with brief introductions on each manuscript's history and its author. Prince Damrong himself was interested not only in literature but also history and archeology. He concentrated on editing Thai manuscripts and initiating the foundation of a historical approach to literature in the light of history and archeology. His historical approach to literature, together with biographical and generic approaches, emphasized the historical background of literary works and authors. He wrote the studies on many important genres such as drama, the *Sepha* (a Verse Narrative), the *Kap He Rua* (The Boat Song) and *Sakkrawa* (Verse Repartee).

Prince Damrong in *History of the Royal Library* explains the process of collecting and editing. First, the staff had to act as collectors of the manuscripts. Secondly, they had to fulfil the function of editors, and thirdly, the personnel also engaged themselves in the dissemination and promotion of the Thai literary heritage. In the Preface of *Sepha Khun Chang Khun Phaen* (The Story of Khun Chang Khun Phaen), Prince Damrong states that the process of editing various manuscripts was very complicated and difficult due to variations of different versions. He had to solve these problems by cutting out obscene parts, polishing up words and style and editing for coherence.

From this introduction it is interesting that the printed literary works circulated until the present time are products of the evaluative and editing processes of the period. Originally, *Sepha Khun Chang Khun Phaen* was folk literature with all the elements of the folk literary tradition, such as sexual jokes, black humor and local color. The print version of *Sepha Khun Chang Khun Phaen* is the sophisticated revised version of this folk masterpiece. It is, therefore, necessary to remind oneself of the differences between the manuscripts and the printed versions. This process of "chamra" (mean to clean, to purify, to revise) or editing has been the literary tradition since the Ayutthaya period. In many manuscripts, at the end of the story, writers (or sometimes the scribes) will make the text open by inviting later poets or readers to revise if they think that some parts are inappropriate.

Prince Damrong's editing also emphasizes the historical and biographical background of each literary text. He analyzes style, compares various versions, and chooses the most appropriate one. Many texts are decided to have multiple authors over their histories. Although Prince Damrong never wrote a complete history of Thai literature, it can be said that no history of Thai literature would have been possible without his pioneer efforts. As the authority of Thai literary historiography, he is the pioneer of this field. Obviously, his works have both strengths and weaknesses. His great achievement lies in the question of authorship, oral history in writing literary history of some texts, and the development of literary genres within a historical framework.

However, there are many weak points in Prince Damrong's works which are worth considering. First, his standards of aesthetic and moral judgements were based on his social class, political values and aesthetic taste. These standards influenced his editing and the rewriting processes. Secondly, literary history from Prince Damrong's point of view was dependent on political events, for he tended to use political events as the main factor in dividing literary periods. In this way, literary history does not have its own life as one cultural activity interrelated with others in the social process. "History" in this sense is the chronology of events which tend to center around the royal dynasty. Thirdly, his hypotheses about the historical period of some manuscripts have been proved by later scholars to be wrong. However, because of his authoritative voice, the majority of the textbooks still follow his assumptions as true statements. Prince Damrong's contribution to Thai literary study helps later scholars, i.e. Pleung Na Nakhon, to draw the whole frame of history for Thai literature based on Prince Damrong's hypotheses of the time and period of each literary work. Because of the lack of textbooks about the history of Thai literature, Pleung Na Nakhon's *Prawat Wannakhadi Thai Samrap Naksuksa* (History of Thai Literature for Students) is still the most popular in this field, even though it was written in 1937 and many classifications of Thai literary works to historical periods have been challenged by scholars. It is ironic that later scholars and students in this area tend to follow what Prince Damrong had stated without further study or discussion. Later on, when the New Criticism made its way in Thai literary circles, the historical approach and the traditional text-edit approach were mostly ignored.

During the past two decades, the work by Niyada Laosunthorn, *Literary Consideration* (1992), is interesting in that it challenges conclusions of literary history. The work, a compilation of her academic articles concerning her survey of literary manuscripts supplied by the manuscript and inscription service department of the National Library, concentrates on history of Thai literature, the editing of manuscripts, and the tracing of the real period in which a literary work is written, which bravely challenges old conclusion. For example, in "*Yuan Pai klong Dan: New Proposal*," Niyada believes that *Lilit Yuan Phai* was written during the reign of Phraboromrajadhirat III (1488-1491), an eldest son of Phraboromtrailokanaj. In "*Phali Son Nong, Thotsarot Son Phra Ram and Ratchasawat: Who is Real Author?*", she proposes that King Bommakot wrote these three masterpieces, not King Narai as having been long concluded by the literary association committee, headed by Prince Damrong.

Niyada also conducted another research, in form of dissertation, named "*Pannasachadok: History and Its Significance for Thai Literature*," in which she surveyed 63 versions of 21 Thai literary works, which were influenced by *Pannasachadok*. In this research, she also proposes that the masterpiece might have been written before 1265. In "*Khleng Lokkanit: Study on Its Sources*" (1944), Niyada attempts to seek the sources of *Klong Lokanit*, written by Somdet Krom Phraya Dechadison, by judging from its manuscript and its Pali and Sanskrit scriptures. Therefore, it is not hard to say that Niyada has a significant role in the survey of ancient literature, challenging long-settled conclusions and producing new knowledge for literary studies.

There are so few people who have attempted to conduct a literary research by adopting historical approaches and to concentrate on the editing of manuscripts. A portion of those people are students at the Thai Inscription Section, Silpakom University. Mostly, the improvement of manuscripts has been a task of foreign scholars, such as Dr. Gilles Delouche, from University of Paris, an expert on Tai. He deems the editing of manuscripts as crucial, proposing that scholars must explain characteristics of each manuscript, compare each of them, and thoroughly analyse each of them. These processes must be carefully observed as scholars have to arrange literary text accurately and present information of all manuscripts available, not just from one version of manuscripts. Delouche considers the editing of manuscripts as the most important

process, should we wish literary studies to be effective and to make a great leap. Literary critics will waste their time if they trust poorly-editing literary works. In order to work more effectively, Delouche suggests literary scholars to work together in order to edit manuscripts, gather every version of manuscripts available everywhere in Thailand, at the National Library, in temples as well as personal libraries, and subsequently have all manuscripts microfilmed and kept at the National Library. Considering next processes, he maintains that research be conducted on the history of the Thai language, vocabulary, orthography, and grammar, so that the ancient Thai language can be comprehended. (Gilles Delouche: 1985)

The trend of literary historiography and editing unpublished manuscripts declines in these past two decades.

PART 3: THE WEST WIND; THE PARADIGM OF THE NEW CRITICISM

The influence of the New Criticism emerged after 1932 in the continuing articles by H.H.Prince Narathipphongraphan in *Prachachat* (later reprinted as a book titled *Witthaya Wannakam* or Literary Knowledge). He stated that he had integrated the concepts of literary criticism from Arnold Bennett's *Theory in Literary Taste* by Abercrombie, and from I.A. Richards in *Principles of Literary Criticism*. In his opinion, the guidelines for criticism have two steps. These are, first, to analyze the sounds of words and style which conveys the deep meaning, and second, to proceed from sound to senses, images, and emotions. I.A. Richards' four kinds of meanings (sense, feeling, tone, and intention) were applied along with close reading practices to excerpts from Thai classical literature. Prince Narathipphongraphan was the pioneer who introduced and applied the New Criticism to Thai literary study. Later on the New Criticism was explained in detail in the well-known textbook by Dr.Wit Siwasariyanon (first published in 1943): *Wannakhadi lae Wannkhadiwican* (Literature and Literary Criticism). However, the New Criticism had not yet widely influenced the practice of Thai literary study until 1970 when Chonthira Sattayawatthana wrote her thesis "*Kan Nam Wannakhadi Wican Phaen May Ma Chay Kap Wannakhadi Thai*" (*The Application of the New Criticism to Thai Literature*). This Thesis presents some major approaches from the western world which include the psychological approach of Sigmund Freud, the archetypal approach of Carl

Gustav Jung, and the aesthetic approach, especially the close reading technique of I.A. Richards. As for the aesthetic approach, the close reading presented in the thesis emphasized the four kinds of meaning together with symbolism, paradox, and ambiguity. Excerpts from traditional and modern Thai literature are analyzed by using practical criticism as a paradigm of study.

This thesis established a precedent for succeeding graduate theses and has had a major influence on the teaching of Thai literature in higher education. The close reading technique seems to be the most successful part of this thesis, which has influenced the trend of Thai literary study in many ways. First, the application of the New Criticism to Thai literature vitalized the literary world, which at the time was made stagnant by the technique of paraphrasing and memorising archaic vocabulary. Second, the aesthetic approach of close reading is suitable for Thai literary studies which traditionally emphasize aesthetic evaluation more than interpretation. This "objective" or "scientific" approach seemed to upgrade with linguistic explanations the subjective mode of literary study. Third, for graduate study, *the trend in literary research has been guided by the close reading approach (or the "micro" approach) limiting research to a single piece of literature and tending to ignore context, especially social context*. It can be said that the objective of close reading is "aesthetic appreciation" instead of the many other modes of interpretation.

Another consequence of the institutionalization of the New Criticism is the focus on artistic creativity and original authorship. The most distinguished proofs are the literary awards which are major events in Thai literary circles nowadays. The intentional and the affective fallacies still play their important roles on the literary stage. With the institutional and pedagogical practices of the New Criticism still active, how can a paradigm shift occur in order to break out from the institutional self-closure and the closed evaluative criticism that limit the study of the wider social process within which texts are written and read?

PART 4: THE ANTI-HEGEMONY THE LOCAL VOICE

In these last two decades, the progress of folklore and regional literary studies in many institutions all over the country is the promising sign. Studies in local literature

have obviously been developed in quantitative terms. Many educational institutions have founded their cultural centres, for examples those in Chiangmai, Mahasarakham and Songkhla. They also offer courses at the postgraduate level. These have led to a great number of theses and research papers dealing with the transliterations of ancient manuscripts, which in turn comprise the major database for studies in regional literature. In every region of Thailand, the centers for local cultural studies play the important roles in collecting, conserving and transliterating the unpublished local manuscripts. Together with the departments of Thai language and literature of each institution, the local literary study became one of the major trends of Thai literary studies in these past three decades. Educational bodies which help champion such studies include the Thai Studies Section at Srinakharinwirot University-Songkhla, the Lanna Studies Section at Chiang Mai University, the Northeastern (I-san) Studies Section at Srinakharinwirot-Mahasarakham. Apart from these, research papers on manuscript transliteration can also be found at the Thai Inscription Section, the Department of Eastern Languages at Silpakorn University. The approaches and methodologies of such theses and research papers include those attempting at depicting the picture of regional literary studies as a whole, at selecting to study literatures of certain group of peoples, at studying regional literature in comparative manners, and at conducting studies in a definite topic or story.

Information concerning regional literature can be gathered from literary sources, such as "koi"(or "but"), and palm-leaf manuscripts, or from interviews. It can be said that cultural centers in each region have played a significant role in gathering information before it is forever lost. Another point worth mentioning here is that not only information from each region from Thailand, but that from the Tai region in the South of China, has also been acculated, resulting in the widening of the scope of literary studies in comparative manners.

Many M.A. theses by graduate students of these universities are the products of editing these local treasures, i.e. *"The Analysis of Tai Lu Langka Sip Hua (Tai Lu's Ramayana)"* by Charoen Malarot (1986); *The Comparative Studies of Nang Phom Hom in Lanna, Northeastern, and Tai Lu versions "* by Kaysorn Sawangwong (1988). Eventhough these theses have been conducted in a small and inclusive scale, they constitute an interesting trend in that they help increasing the amount of information

regarding regional literature and extend its scope onto an international level. Moreover, they in turn become a move to preserve unpublished manuscripts and benefit the studies of the Tai tribe, which to fully understand require the application of other areas of studies.

In addition to research in the form of theses, there also exists an attempt by Anatole Roger Peltier, a foreign researcher, to transliterate Tai Lu and Tai Kheun literatures. Peltier is an expert on Lanna's art and culture, as seen in his transliteration work of *Chao Boonlong (The Golden Peacock)* (1992), an ancient Lanna religious preaching, and in his comparative study of literary manuscripts of Tai Lu and Tai Kheun from Chiengtung in Northern Myanmar, after which were transliterated into Thai and subsequently translated into English and French. Judging from and comparing versions of the manuscripts, Peltier also transliterate *Sukwanna Wua Luang (The Golden Ox)* (1993), a Tai-Kheun's local Buddhist pitaka from Chientung, into Thai and later translated it into English and French. His research has become an interesting trend which should be promoted since it signifies an attempt to preserve manuscripts before they vanish, as well as to make regional literature known to the nation.

Another foreigner who has played a prominent role in conducting research on Lanna regional literature is Harald Hundius from Keal University, Germany. Not only does he take interest in transliteration research, but he has also studied the relationships between Lanna literature and society. He deems that Buddhism has become a moral code which determines the mentality of its social members. Literature itself reflects moral values which have been generated by Buddhism. Hundius remarks are also interesting because he believes that more important than the research itself is the fact that local monks and villagers should be encouraged to appreciate and preserve their own cultural heritage, of which they can make use when studying their own intellectual heritage. It is his belief that should Thailand wish to preserve its uniqueness, this heritage itself can be of immense use later. (Harald Hundius: 1995)

The use of other areas of knowledge and disciplines to study regional literature is another noteworthy trend. This leads us to better understanding in historical, social, and cultural manners. The Art & Culture Publishing House, led by Sujit Wongthet, once organised an academic seminar on *Mahakap Khong Usakhanay Thaw Hung Thaw*

Cheung Wiraburut Song Fang Khong (The Epic of Southeast Asia: Thaw Hung Thaw Cheung, Heroes of The Khong River), and collected a great deal of research work concerning this epic, conducted by academics from the past to the present, such as Jit Phumisak, Thida Saraya (a historian), Srisak Walliphodom (an archeologist), Prakong Nimmanheminda (a literary scholar), Maha Sila Wirawong and Duangduen Boonyawong, two academics from Laos. The study of a specific literary work from different perspectives made by scholars from various areas of studies was an interesting trend, even though the editor's conclusion could be argued in certain points. It can be said that such academic seminar is able to generate knowledge which should be further promoted.

In terms of research on regional literature, the thesis on "MahaKap Thaw Ba Cheung: An Analytical Study" by Prakong Nimmanheminda (1987) represents an attempt to study this epic from the National Library's manuscript, which Maha Sila Wirawong has transliterated. In this work, Prakong conducted the study by way of comparing it with other versions of the epic, analyzing the unity of the epic by judging from its content, language usage, and evaluating it in terms of content and literary art. This thesis inspired the aforementioned seminar. This signifies that a thesis in an educational institution can engender an academic debate in a large scale, and lead to the contribution of new knowledge.

Comparative Studies in regional literature, whether the same work in the same period or different regions is comparatively studied, or whether local literary work is studied in line with that in the royal court, or whether the same regional literary work in different regions is studied, are beneficial in that information gathered can be used to help depict the whole picture of Thai literary history. These theses include "Shared Characteristics Between Phra Malay Phun Ban lae Phra Malay Kham Luang" by Wattana Na Nakhon (1982), a thesis of the Program in Comparative Literature, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University; and "Lanna's Versions of Ramayana: A Comparative Study" by Phichit Akkanit (1984). At present, we have not yet had any textbook or research on the complete making of Thai literary history.

If we take a look at the research on regional literature in terms of regions, the studies in the North, the South and the Northeastern regions have greatly advanced. In

each of the regions, local literary scholars can be referred to and the amount of research work is on the rise. Surprisingly enough, the Central region, however becomes the region in which the least amount of research work on its regional literature have been conducted. The majority of the research work tends to concentrate on oral literature, rather than on manuscripts. Many cultural centres in the Central region do not possess a satisfactory amount of research work dealing with the preservation, dissemination, and survey of Central regional literature. Perhaps the most outstanding centre is that of the Petchaburi Teaching College, in which Lom Phengkaew takes a regular academic post.

A doctoral thesis which attempts to accumulate and promote manuscripts of the Central region is *"Klon Suat of Central Thailand: An Analytical Study"* by Trisilpa Boonkhachorn (1987). The thesis (under the supervision of the Thai Department, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University) aims at gathering unpublished manuscripts of Klon Suat, which have been collected from the ancient manuscript department of the National Library and from rural areas, at seeking to establish relationships between Klon Suat and the folk culture of the Central region, and at studying the development of this folk literary genre.

Taking into account the trends and movements regarding regional literature during the past 15 years, we can see an interesting growth in quantitative terms in all regions in Thailand. Regional educational institutions have played an important role in the preservation, dissemination and survey of regional literature. The studies embrace literary manuscripts which have not yet been transliterated and published, as well as oral literature, sources of which gradually vanish as time goes by. The growth of the regional post-graduate studies becomes a significant factor increasing numbers of research work and theses on regional literature. Nevertheless, in terms of quality of the work and its theory and methodology, it can be said that most of the work focuses only on the structure of the literary texts, i.e. form and content. Some show an attempt to study regional literature in line with society. Literature is regularly used as a foundation from which social values will be extracted for further analysis. (Siraporn Na Thalang: 1995). Regional literary studies are still confined in educational institutions in form of theses or research papers. The main motives of such studies stem from personal interest and the appreciation for regional literature, hoping to be preserved and to be

more widely acknowledged. Yet, no research so far has attributed its motive to the need to answer certain questions in which society is currently taking interest, and which regional literature can provide with satisfactory solutions. Regional literary studies generally are conducted through similar processes and methodology. The similar patterns and processes of study the same group of data inevitably leads to similar research conclusions. Current problems posing against the studies are both internal and external. The external problem is: how can regional literature be acknowledged by wider community, not confining itself in the realms of educational institutions or academic world like at present? The internal one is: how can we find and apply other new methodologies so as to avoid dullness and monotony of the results of the studies? (Bayan Imsamran: 1995)

PART 5: THE OUTSIDERS; THE EXTRINSIC AND THE INTERDISCIPLINARY PARADIGMS

Rene Wellek & Austin Warren in *Theory of Literature* divided the approaches of literary study into two types: the intrinsic and the extrinsic approaches. The extrinsic approach cover "other" disciplines, i.e. society, psychology, ideas. In Thai literary studies' domain, the contributions of the "outside" scholars are extremely challenging and productive. The extrinsic paradigms generate in the literary world in these past three decades are, for examples, those of sociology, political sciences, history and Marxism. The research work by Nidhi lewsriwong, Sombat Chanthornwong and Chaianan Samutthawanit are good examples showing how scholars of the other areas of studies use literature as data in their research.

The best example is the debate about literature in the Early Bangkok period by Nidhi lewsriwong and the "inside" scholar, Duangmon Jitjamnong in her Ph.D. Thesis titled "*Khunkha lae Laksana Den Khong Wannakhadi Samai Rattanakosin Ton Ton*" (Literary Values and distinguished characteristics of the Early Bangkok Literature).

Nidhi lewsriwong, a distinguished historian, in *Watthanatham Kradumphi Kap Wannakam Ton Rattanakosin* (Bourgeois Culture and Literature of the Early Bangkok Period) concluded that the literature of the Early Bangkok period was produced and consumed in the society when the Sakdina literary tradition of the late Ayutthaya period

declined. The higher classes, a combination of the ruling class and the new bourgeoisie began to acknowledge the popular literary tradition. The combination of these two literary cultures engendered the lively higher class culture of the Early Bangkok period.

Moreover, there are several theses of Faculty of Political Sciences, Chulalongkorn University, which attempt to study literature in terms of politics. The theses as such are *"The Analysis of Sam Kok (Romance of the Three Kingdoms) in terms of Politics,"* and *"Ramayana" and its Political Meaning."*

As for literary students, even though they wish to study literature using interdisciplinary paradigms, they usually fail to do so as they do not possess enough knowledge of other areas of studies to make their research subtle and quality-bound. However, there are still theses which attempt to adopt other disciplines of studies in literary studies, especially those under the supervision of Program in Comparative Literature, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, where the belief that the attempt to relate other disciplines of studies to literary studies is an appropriate trend is strongly encouraged. The most popular approach is to study the relationship between literature and society. However, most of the work concentrates on finding social values as reflected in literature. Such theses are "Rural Society Reflected in Thai Novel" by Priyapom Nusanan (1988), and "Urban Society in Thai Contemporary short Stories" by Areeya Hutintha (1996). Another popular approach is to seek relationships between literature and religion or belief. The theses which adapt such approach are "Kamma of Buddhist philosophy in Novels by Krisana Asoksin" by Walapa Alapat (1986)

The Emergence of Comparative Literature's paradigm

During the past 15 years, comparative literature has been gradually developed in Thailand although it remains just a small trend. Comparative literature is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country, and the study of the relationships between literature on the one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief, such as the arts (e.g. painting, sculpture, architecture, music), philosophy, history, the social sciences (e.g. politics, economics, sociology), the sciences, religion, ect., on the others. In brief, it is the comparison of one literature with another or others,

and the comparison of literature with other spheres of human expression. (Remak: 1961)

One of its important textbooks in Thai, *Comparative Literature* (1982) by Sutha Sastri attempts to provides readers with fundamental comprehension of comparative literature as a branch of sciences, with its theory and approaches of literary studies. The trend of comparative literature is able to expand and create new vision for literary studies because it is "the study of a literary phenomenon from points of view of more than one literature or from its co-ordination with one or more intellectual branches of studies." (Sutha Sastri: 1982)

Chetana Nakavajara 's work is beneficial to the domain of literary studies in Thailand. His work are *Basic Theory of Literature* (1979), *Access to Critical culture* (1981) (both of which is a compilation of his articles dealing with the application of the theory of literary studies to the current situation of literary studies in Thailand) and *For the Survival of Humanities: Compilation of Academic Articles*(1982-1989). Chetana has played a prominent role in the development of Thai literary studies in that he has produced basic knowledge of literary theory. As he said in his article "The Direction of Comparative Literary Studies," the trend of comparative literature is a suitable one because "in the modern world, literary studies which are able to provide its people with important solutions have to be conducted in a comparative way. It is my belief that literature possesses enough universal traits for us to study it in transnational manners." (Chetana Nagavajara:1989) In addition, he also proposes the idea that "art illuminates one another" by emphasizing on relationship between literature and other disciplines of arts, which comprises one of the trends of Comparative Literature. For Chetana, studying literature is studying life, as he once said that "the highest attainment of studying literature is to become a scholar, and the content of literature itself is human life, which is created by poets in artistic forms. To know literature profoundly, therefore, means to know human life. ... To study literature is an excellent way to sharpen your wits and literary scholars have a right to proudly express their attitudes towards humanity." (Chetana Nagavajara:1981)

Feminism is another interesting trend of literary studies research. Over the past 15 years, a portion of theses and research under the comparative literature section has

been devoted to the study of feminism in literature, such as "The Social Status of Thai Women (During 1932 - 1950) in Novels by Dokmaisot and K. Surangkhanang" by Saisamom Cheitrongkam (1995), "the status of Women in Novels by Kritsana Asoksin (1954 - 1987)" by Wirawan Srisamran (1990). Therefore, feminism as another trend of comparative literature provides another alternative which brings literary studies and society into close relationships.

It can be said that the studies of literature by linking it with other disciplines of studies is a proper direction of literary studies. Therefore, trends of comparative literature may be an answer to cause literary studies in Thailand to possess universal characteristics and to relate themselves to other areas of knowledge and belief in a mutually beneficial way.

Epilogue and Trends for the Future

The domain of literary studies over the past 15 years has not been such a hive of industry. In general, theses and research work have been devoted to studies concerning aesthetics and literary structural analysis, rather than to studies concerning manuscripts. An increasing number of theses attempts to deal with contemporary literature, yet their approaches are confined to the analysis of literary elements or the analysis of relationships between literature and society by seeing literature merely as a reflection of society. Theses and research work dealing with Thai literature usually attempt to conduct the studies in a low-scale basis, that is, the aesthetics analysis of a specific literary work. The influence of the New criticism can still be perceived in such an approach and its result usually becomes the insistence on literary value of a specific literary work. Theses and research work which effect new vision in literary studies have yet to distinguish themselves.

In these past three decades, some interesting trends can be observed.

First, the expansion of the literary texts as objects of study which covers not only the royal and religious texts, but also the oral and folk literary texts including the media creates new horizon for Thai literary studies. The emergence of local literary study is promising and flourishing in these last two decades.

Second, the New Criticism's paradigm is continually active in academic institutions which tends to generate ahistorical and aesthetic-oriented perspectives and leads to the "micro" study of literature.

Third, the lack of new paradigms in literary discourse is one factor that causes the stagnance of Thai literary studies. The "extrinsic" scholars, fortunately, contribute controversial debates in literary circles.

Under this circumstance, how can we move to the future?

THAI LITERARY STUDIES IN THE IVORY TOWER?

The situation of literary studies within the university is not fundamentally different from the situation of any other disciplines. The situation is that the various disciplines have ceased to speak to each other. They have become too specialized. The problem is how to reconcile the "academic" literary studies to the general life of the culture in the world because the university is not really the whole world.

THE INTERDISCIPLINARY TREND AND THE COMPARATIVE LITERATURE'S PARADIGM

The specialization of literary studies, or rather the over-specialized or the separation of literary studies from other disciplines should be reconsidered. It is the necessity to understand literary texts in relation to other texts, whether belonging to other languages and cultures, other disciplines, other races, or other sex. (Koelb & Noakes, ed.: 1988) This is one principle that Comparative Literature in all its forms has stood for over the years and this paradigm seems to be one of the most appropriate paradigms for the future of Thai literary studies.

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