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. n 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state of Thai studies in general has been developed up to the point that a rigid disciplinary encamping is obviously outdated.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 concernced, 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 corpus 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.

<u>Diagram I</u> : The relationship between political culture, political regime, and power structure.
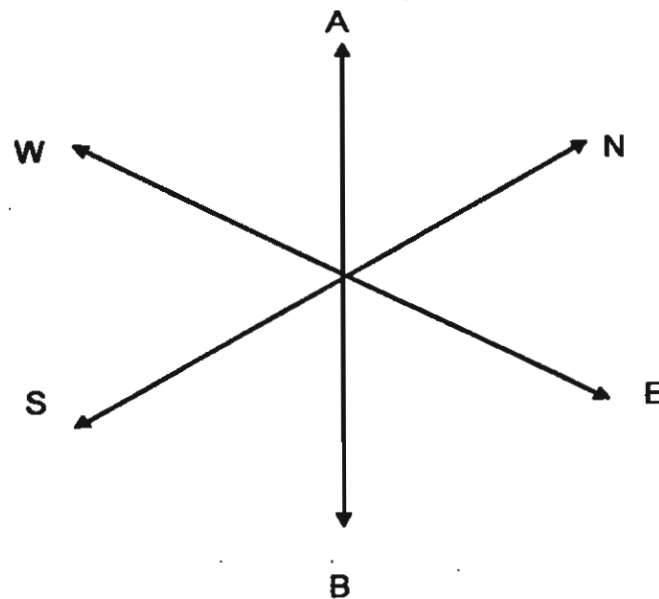
AB	=	Power Structure Axis		
NS	=	Political Culture Axis		
EW	=	Political Regime Axis		
A	=	Above =	Monism	
B	=	Below =	Pluralism	
N	=	North	=	Authoritarianism
S	=	South	=	Liberalism
E	=	East	=	Monocracy
W	=	West	=	Democracy

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

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[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.

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[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 supustition.

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] aslo found out the similar result three years leater. 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'e'tat 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 Constitution[16]

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

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[16] Phoonsak 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 Lertphaithoon [17] 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 Constitution [18]

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 Court [19]

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

[18] Voraphot Visarutphit, *Rights and Ligerty 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 truely 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.

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[20] Boonsri Meewong-ukhos. Revising the Political Party System (in Thai). Bangkok: COD 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 condidates 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.

Paithoon 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 whold 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.

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[21] Paithoon 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 Elections [22]

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, adademics, and Director-General of the Department of Local Administration as the secretary of the Committee.

8. Referendum [23]

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 State [24]

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 Boonyawatn. Organizations To Support Fair Elections (in Thai). Bangkok : CDD and TRF. 1995.

[23] Nonthawat Boramananth. Referendum (in Thai). Bangkok : CDD and TRF. 1995.

[24] Vissanu Varunvu. 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 Broacasting ; 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.

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

[26] Thiva Ngoenyuang, *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 drafing 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 dicide 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, pasticularly those of the opposition, in introducing the bills will be severely hindered. Aurapin proposes that a standing committee should be extablished 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.

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

[28] Tongthong Chantharangsu, 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 particulary for foreign trips is oftenly 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 refo rmed merely through legal documents but cooperation from political communication and social sanction are also needed.

14. The System of Appropriate Political Accountability of the Government[20]

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 ligislative 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.

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[20] Suryshol Nitikraiphoj, 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 Suppussion 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

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[30] Bowornsak Uwanno. The Systme of Investiggtion 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 transfomation 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 Jacobs [32] and Riggs [33] 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 Westum 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's [34] 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 modemization, 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 Chulalongkom 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

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[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, Modemization 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 Ocober 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 Bunbongkam 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 fre-quency 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 Thailandin 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 widespreading 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.

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[36] 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

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[38] Nidhi Aeusrivongse, "Thai Cultural Constitution" (in Thai), Silapawatthanatham, 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 governement 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 "secutrity" 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

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[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 it 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

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[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 dicision of the voters to sell their votes was, according to Rangsan, exactly "the rational voter ignorance". Fiftly, the people in the countryside were overlooked by the government and bureancracy 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 "ratonal" 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 percieved the Thai society as a collection of a hugh 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 terrarin 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,

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[40] Theerayuth Boonma. The Strong Society (in Thai). Bangkok : Ming Mitr Press, 1993

and the principle of equality among different social forces could be hardly brought into practice. In short, the patriotism of the military shold 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

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[41] Nidhi Aeusrivongse, "The Thai Middle Class Culture" (in Thai) in Sangsidh Piriyarangsan 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) Domocratic 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-chient.

(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 Chantomvong 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. If 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 condidates. 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

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[42] Sombat Chantomvong, *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 diviant 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 chace of winning ;

therefore

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

therefore

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[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

governement, 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 asspired 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.

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[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 Lertwicha[45] 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 peoiod 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 anthors, however, had aleady 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 :

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[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 havebeen 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 comfirms 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 carefuly, 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 majaritarian system. But now, the whole country will be divided into equal

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[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 relatinship 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.

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[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 contraditory 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 ; communual ; 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 autonamy cannot work anymore, the conflict resoluton by the central government according to the rule of law is then justified.

CONCLUSION

Since this article is already too long, a condusion 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 cleary 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 Tha 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. Firsly, 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 Gumany 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 approariate 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

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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 Pinkaew Luangaramsri[1] and Sutharin Khoonpol[2]. The second approach on Political

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Ecology and the third approach on Ecological Economics are prepared by Chusak Wittayapak[3] and Suthawan Sathirathai[4], 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 APPROCH

   (Pinkaew LAUNGARAMSRI & Sutharin KHUNPHOL)

   "...[T] he commons is an evolving form of property, eminently suited to the 1st century – one which allows local laims, 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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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 phenomenonly and widespreadly 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 impetuous 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 Cemea, 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 deestablilizing 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 idelogy 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-Multhusian 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-Multhusian 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-Multhusian 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 impetuous 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 Equador 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, Kundstadter 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 continuingly 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 Jermsak 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 Mingsarn 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 analyszing 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 perpective, 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 ERSPECTIVE
(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