C H A P T E R V

RELIGION AND THE POLITY

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1. The Main Sources of Thai Political Ideology : Traditional and Modern

Thai political ideology is a syncretism of an indigenous tradition with adaptations from ancient Indian and Khmer cultural borrowals and a selective blend of recent adaptations from the West. Historically, Indian, Khmer or Kampuchean and Mon traditions are the main sources in a period prior to and after the fall of the Ayudhyan kingdom, and the European cultural contact began since the reign of King Rama IV in the mid-nineteenth century, continuing till after the World War II. These do appear to be the bases of Thai political ideas and identity.

. The Classic Traditional : Patriarchal and Divine Kingship

Patriarchal kingship refers to the concept of Pho Khun or father of the people. This conception of the kingship seems to be either of Thai or Mon-Buddhist origin. According to Wilson Thai historians claim it to be an ancient and a purely Thai tradition.[1] In this regard Prince Damrong refers

to certain suggestive Thai terms, such as "Pho Ban", the father of the village and persons under his rule being called "Luk Ban", the children of the village; "Pho Muang", the father of the town; "Pho Khun", the father-chief and his various officials "Lukhun" the children of the chiefs. Thus it can be seen that the traditional Thai method of government was like the father ruling his children, which also happens to be a principle of government in Siam today.[2]

As a father of the people, the king was the leader in war and the wise councellor and judge in peace. One particular of the king, that of the judge of final appeal and source of redress for a grievance is much emphasized. To fulfil this function in Sukhodaya down to the early reign of King Rama V (19th century) a king placed a gong in front of his palace and came out to hear the appeal for redress if and when the gong was sounded by the grieved.[3]

Added to the aforesaid is the religio-political origination of Thai kingship which is based on two key concepts of Hindu Devaraja - divine king and Buddhist Bodhisatva - a Buddhist messiah.[5]

On the one hand, the king, according to the Buddhist theory, is regarded as a Bothisatva or incipient Buddha, as also Chakravartin or Universal Emperor. This belief which is still held by all orthodox Siamese Buddhists is derived

proximately from imitation of the great Indian and Siamese Buddhist kings, particularly King Ashok, and is strengthened in the minds of the people by evidence from the popular Indian Jataka stories.[4] On the other hand, the king, according to the Hindu theory, is identified with either Siva or Vishnu and this theory attained its great importance in ancient Kampuchea.[5] It was introduced to the Siamese polity and attained a firmer foothold. A. D. 1431 and transferred many Khmer Brahmans and officials to Ayudhya, through whom the cult of Devaraja (divine king) and the Khmer ideas of government were adopted.[6]

The combination of these two theories of kingship has been summarized by Mosel : A central feature of the new Ayudhyan order was the concept of devaraja, a highly specialized form of an earlier Indian theory of the divine kingship. The concept implies two qualities : divinity and absolutism, related in such a manner that divinity functioned as ideological means for justifying absolutist ends. In the Indian theory the king was receptacle for divine essence of Shiva and Vishnu. Among the Thais this was adjusted with Buddhism so that divinity rested upon being a Bothisatva, or a Buddha-to-be, although among the masses the king was probably worshipped as a god, as the original Indian theory would require. But in any case the ideology proclaimed the state to a microcosmic

representation of the cosmic microcosm ruled by a divine king whose capital city was the symbol of the city of heaven. Thus inherent relationship between social order and cosmos functioned to legitimate political authority and ensure its widespread acceptance.[7]

In these Hindu-Buddhist religious streams, power is regarded as divine. It is hardly to be wondered at, because government which exercises such overwhelming power on earth was regarded as divine. The ruler in particular was revered as an embodiment of God or his agent.[8]

The main function of the king, writes Reynolds, was to constitute the central pinnacle - the bond between the divine and the human, around and above which the Thai civil order took form. The king was closely associated with the figure of Indra, the great God who ruled in the heavenly realm which was located at the peak of Mount Meru, the central mountain of the Thai Buddhist cosmology. As Indra ruled and maintained the order of Dhamma in his domain, so the Thai monarch was to rule and maintain the order of his earthly kingdom.[9]

However, king has been enjoyed to closely follow the Buddhist virtues and precepts, viz., "He (the king) abides steadfast in the ten kingly virtues,* constantly upholding the

*The ten kingly virtues (Rajadhamma) are : alms-giving, observation of ethical precepts, liberality, justice, kindliness, endurance, freedom from anger, freedom from cruelty, restraint of heart, care not to give offense by language.

five common precepts and on holy days the set of eight precepts, living in kindness and goodwill to all beings. He takes pains to study the Dhammasat and to keep the four principles of justice, namely : to assess the right and wrong of all service or disservice rendered to him, to uphold the righteous and truthful, to acquire riches through none but right means, and to maintain the prosperity of his state through but just means."[10]

These two theories of kingship as above indicated were in no way contradictory and have continued to be compatible. Court Brahmans surrounding the king with Hindu ritual, especially on the occasion of his coronation when the Chief deities and more particularly Shiva were invited to descend to the earth to become emerged in the person of the crowned king; while at the same time the common people and Buddhist monks more generally regarded the king as a Bothisatva. A few kings favoured Brahmanism more than Buddhism, but this was exceptional.[11] A detailed analysis of the rituals and royal taboos whereby the Siamese kings not only conformed themselves to the cosmological forces of the universe but in so doing assured security, harmony, life and prosperity to their people as well, as brought out by Wales in his "Siamese State Ceremonies."[12] The Sanskritic literature, such as Dharmasastra, Ramayana and the later codified

Rajasastra on the one hand and the Pali literature, such as Buddhist Jataka stories are the main sources from which the governmental legitimacy of the ruling elites was drawn in conformity with the already existing tradition.

These two combined theories of kingship have gained such a profound influence in the earlier time and to some extent even at present, producing a degree of absolutism, perhaps even greater than that of Indian or Khmer kings. This was because no well-organized self-governing institutions or well-formed social class like Brahmins in India stood up to check the excessive political power enjoyed by the monarchy and/or the ruling elites, nor were the masses able to check such power elites, which has every now led to the despotic rule.

Here exist two planes of culture : one enjoyed by the aristocratic ruling elites and another by the masses or non-privileged classes. That of the former refers to Buddhism and court Brahmanism and that of the latter makes reference to folk Buddhism, associated with folk Brahmanism and animism as earlier indicated. Common to all of the elites, as also non-elites are the Buddhism and the kingship which bind the local units to the royal centre. The outstanding fact is the unbroken continuity for many centuries of interaction between the local communities of Thai people and the pervasive Buddhist faith and tradition that held the communities together.

However, according to Reynolds, the resultant consensus was not free from other problematics. In Thai history the stability of authority that any particular centre could maintain was always highly problematic. Economic, political and social links joining the various local communities to one another were minimal; thus the extent and intensity of the authority the king and his court could exert depended on the ruler's military capacity and his success in developing various kinds of ties to bind the local units to the royal centre and to his own person. In this situation it is not surprising that in each of major royal centres a strong emphasis came to be placed on the cultivation of specifically civil modes of religious expression.[13]

What is much concerned here is not merely the focal role of the divine monarchy but also all the implications which flow from it for the nature of the state, its political and social organization. The conception of .. kingship both Hindu and Buddhist, brings into focus the cosmological world view earlier discussed. Indeed, the key concept[14] in the Thai versions is that Mount Merut is at the centre of our universe, and that it is surrounded by a series of seven concentric mountain ranges and intervening seas; an eighth mountain range doubles as the outer wall of this world system (Chakrawan).

Rising above this horizontal, terrestrial system is vertical system of some twenty layers of heavens: each contains angels. Beneath the terrestrial system is descending series of 5,120 hells, also arranged in layers. Similar systems of heavens and hells exist in indefinite numbers throughout the many universes beyond the universe of this world. Residence in heaven and hell is neither permanent nor removed from the affairs of the terrestrial world. The inhabitants of the hells ever work off their demerits; when completed, they return to the terrestrial world.

The significance of the cosmological order is twofold. First, Thai society is thought of as potentially a microscopic representation of the moral order. As such, society, if it is to be moral, must be ordered in accordance with the cosmic order. It is to the ruler's prime responsibility to assure this morality in part by carrying on certain religious ceremonial functions, or by conducting state ceremonies, such as the now obsolete topknot ceremony for the crown prince in which the king allegorically represents Shiva descending from sacred Mount Kailasa. Here the cosmos is not a special or temporal concept but a moral concept. And in the all-important morality play of religious and state ceremonial ritual, it is a king or his representative, as protagonist, who helps to correctly align society and the cosmic order

and assures the triumph of morality (virtue) in both the society and the world order. In fact, this is the vital kingly role in the religio-social realm.

The second significance of the cosmic order is that the concentric zones whether drawn horizontally or vertically from the original point, represent zones of ascending or descending morality from that focal centre. Within this worldly order morality radiates in diminishing strength from the most moral individuals and the religious order (the Buddhist Order) to earnest lay believers and to ordinary mortals who may be ranked in descending degrees of holiness (merit). The ruler and members of political authority, because of their vital mediating role in the cosmic order, stand between the most moral Sangha and the lay populace at large.

To view the cosmic order in this manner it is suggested that the moral essence descends in intensity within the political order itself from the head of state through the ruling elites to the bureaucratic staff. Layers represent the bureaucratic system, traditional Sakdina grades and since political modernization, the civil service ranks. Without the political order, layers of social stratification descend from the most powerful to the least powerful and prestigious in the society.

Furthermore, unlike China, in Thailand the political-cosmic and the religious-cosmic moral rules or responsibilities are not combined in the same class of the people. It is the duty of members of the Thai political order, as a secular, moral superior, to assist the Buddhist Order as the religious, moral superior by supplementing the latter's efforts to spread morality in the social order. The political order accomplishes this by protecting the society's moral individuals and deeds against the immoral and by protecting the religious order and the faith. The ruler elevates the most moral in the Buddhist Order to manage ecclesiastical affairs as discussed earlier.

Still further, the political order protects the morality of the social order by protecting the nation, the religion, the Buddhist Order and the cosmic symbols of political order, viz., the capital city, from possible attacks by hostil outsiders. To carry out this mandate the polity may have to wage (and call upon the Buddhist Order to support) a righteous, moral war contrasted with a war of blood and lust. The moral war must be faught only if all other sources fail. To cause death of others is religiously condemned, but if the choice must be made, then, to surrender to moral evils is worse than bearing arms and fight. Thus members of the Buddhist Order are called on to bless military equipments and soldiers going

into battle and to purify those who return after battles. Monks councel the military on morality but neither preach for war, nor take an active part in hostilities and also act as moral advisers to key political decision-makers as much as possible in order to provide a moral check on the unlimited powers of political leaders and prevent them rise of excessive despotism. However, the ability of advisers to influence the rulers has depended on the persuasive capacities and the strength of the advisers' personalities, as also the willingness of the kings and bureaucratic elites to listen.

Still more to the religio-political commitment is, first, the recognition that no members of the Buddhist Order are allowed to utilize the moral advisory role to establish a firm right to participate continually in the political-secular decision-making process. On the contrary the role does enable the political decision-makers to claim that their pervasive decisions are moral. That is why members of the Thai Buddhist Order are not by the law permitted to play an active role in either the local or the national politics. In the long run such participation hurts the religious order as in Burma and Vietnam.

Further, the existence of moral-advisory role by the religious order in the political sphere helps identify political decision-making as moral rather than legal, as

personal and individual rather than universal and as subject to abstract rules and goals which are moral rather than merely pragmatic. However, civil religion of this kind began to erode when it could neither deny nor cope up properly with the new Western influences penetrating Thailand in the 19th century.

B. The Modern Monarchical Constitutionalism

In the course of the cultural contact with the West since the mid-19th century, Thailand was exposed to new knowledge and technology as well as ideology, values and a perspective on the nature of empirical reality. Western influences emanating from the economic and political imperialism of Britain and France have undermined the religion-centred Thai polity. The Western knowledge, technology and values worked their way into Thailand through the Christian missions. In many ways the missionaries brought the West to Thailand, providing some incentives to reforms in Buddhism and security in general, during the rule of Rama IV and V and thereafter, since the middle of the 19th century onward.

Even since the days of King Rama IV and King Rama V in the mid-nineteenth century several young men of succeding generations were sent up to attend some of the then well-known universities in Europe especially England, France and Germany.

During their stay abroad they were extensively exposed to new political ideologies and reformist trends based on empiricism and positivism, then prevailing in England and France, and idealism inclusive of Marxism then emerging in Germany. These influences brought back by the European educated young Thais finally resulted in the overthrown of the absolute monarchy in 1932 and the country was politically placed under the so-called constitutional monarchy patterned on the British parliamentary model. Since then Thailand has experienced many traumatic setbacks and has so far failed to stabilize her experiment with parliamentary democracy. As regards Marxism, it has never been permitted to function as a regular political movement in Thailand.

2. The Political Organization Based on the Kingship Model

The meagre philosophical evidence available from the inscription of King Ramkamhaeng, points to the expressions used in addressing the kings and other leaders, such as Pho Khun (the father of people), Pho Muang (the father of the town), Pho Ban (the father of the village) and Pho Krua (the father of the family), as already cited. These suggest a governmental organization based on the patriarchal kinship after the nomadic stage, when the Thais were historically engaged in advancing southwards from their earlier homeland

in Yunnan as earlier stated. As settlements were established, the organization based on family relationship was modified by the new factor territorial continuity. Constant warlike preparations and watchfulness had still to be maintained and hence the form of community organization basically remained military. The chief was both headman of the village and military leader, who owed feudal alligiance to the Chao Muang or lord of the countryside. Several such Chao Muang constituted a feudal state governed by a king having a title, "Chao Phen Din", literally, "lord of the land".[15]

During the Sukhodayan period and the first century of the Ayudhyan period[16] the Siamese seem to have continued to be organized on military lines, the soldier-officers performing both military and civil duties in the kingdom.

In the days of the Sukhodayan kingdom the capital was the seat of political power. The kingdom was functionary divided into suitable territorial units, such as Rajadhani (the centre), Muang (town-states) and Pradeshraj (tributary states). Below these were a number of mubans (villages). This arrangement associated with military garrisons and agricultural activities. Production of rice was the main source of income and of state revenues that supported the political structure and the military.

King's direct governing power hardly extended beyond the capital. Around the capital were the neighbouring territories or outlying cities and towns governed by a feudal nobility. The king sent out princes to rule over the four satellite semi-autonomous town-states known as Muang Luk Luang (towns of royal sons).* They were often succeded by their own sons. These princes held their lands as fiefs from the king and themselves lived on them, governing them paternally as semi-independent states, parcelling out their lands to a semi-hereditary nobility. Each of them held the rank of a general whose warlike duty was to mobilize all the able-bodied men to form army divisions for the defence of the kingdom. The vassal nobles of various ranks shared with him responsibilities. Under them were the lesser chiefs in a hierarchy of subinfeudation. Finally the peasants were placed lowest in the hierarchy. Here, Thai society appears to have been crystallized into four broadly and loosely organized social classes : a political-military elite, a cultural-religious elite, as discussed earlier, a merchant-artisan in the urban at the capital city to be discussed later, and a peasantry in the rural.

Outside these belts lay a broad domain of tributary states

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* Muang Luk Luang include Sajanalaya, Songquew, Sraluang (modern Sawangalok, Pisanulok and Pichitr, respectively) and Kampaengpetch.

(Pradeshraj), such as Luang Prabang, Viangchan (Vientiane), Nakorn Sridhammaraj etc. Each was under its own hereditary ruler but all acknowledged some obligations to the Siamese royal dynasty. They were duty-bound to provide soldiers in the event of war and send annual tributes to the royal court of Sukhodaya.

With the annexation of Ankor Thom from the Khmer into their own domain the Thais of Siam at Ayudhya came in contact with a new political culture. The Ayudhyan polity was reorganized on the model borrowed from the Khmers, which helped consolidate Ayudhyan dominance from the fourteenth to the early eighteenth century. This period also witnessed the introduction and elaboration of Court Brahmanism, making it intrinsic component of Thai social and political structure and a subordinate component of the Thai religious order.

The Khmer religious specialists-cum-intellectuals well-versed in Buddhism and Court Brahmanism helped King Trailokanath known hereafter as King Trailok (1448-1488) initiate the Indian-Khmer political model into the Ayudhyan polity in the fifteenth century. He organized the central administration on the departmental basis, appointing the ranking officials to administer the various departments for interior affairs, the capital area, the royal household, finance and agriculture. Officials were assigned lands according to their status and were required to live on the

revenues of the estates so assigned.[17]

The government reorganized by King Trailok under advice from the Khmer was centralized and pyramidical in structure with the king as the head of state as well as de facto Prime Minister at the apex. Under him there were co-Chief Ministers or "Aggarmahasenasenapati". One co-Chief Minister was called "Samuhakalahom" and administered the southern provinces. The other co-Chief Minister was called "Samuhanayok" (Mahadthai) and administered the northern provinces. According to tradition the former supervised military affairs and the latter, the civil. However, according to Riggs, there was no clear-cut division of supervision either as military or civil activities. In fact, all royal officials from the king himself down to the lowest freemen undertook to lead military campaign, as also to conduct civil administration. So actually the distinction between the two may have been used mainly to indicate primaries specified at the time of enlistment and assuming command.[18]

The two co-chief ministers were assisted by four ministers called "Senabodi," who headed the four ministeries, namely, the Krom Muang or Ministry of Local Government which was in charge of the affairs of the capital; the Krom Wang or Ministry of the Royal Household which dealt with the palace affairs including the king's bodyguards, harem and personal

treasury, and the administration of justice; the Krom Klang or Ministry of Finance which also served as the Royal Treasury and dealt with foreign affairs and foreign trade; and the Krom Na or Ministry of Agriculture which was in charge of cultivation of rice and crops, food supply and land tenure.[19] Other important offices or departments directly responsible to the king were those dealing with the church affairs and the Court Brahmans, who were judicial and legal advisers to the king; registry of the people, the royal properties, the royal elephants and royal scribes. There were also other minor departments dependent on the major ones.[20]

There were two other high Dignitaries or Krom, namely, Maha Uparaja or the Heir Apparent and the Rear Palace. The former headed the Department of the Heir Apparent (Wang Na or the Front Palace) located in a mansion in the front side of the royal palace. He was frequently called upon to lead the army. The latter is known as Wang Lang, who headed the Department of the Rear Palace located in another mansion at the rear of the royal one. This incumbent frequently played the role of a commanding general. Both the front and the rear palaces are not usually thought of in the same context as the other kroms because their functions were limited to taking care of the high princes in every way.

The jurisdiction of the Ministries and Departments was either the central capital (Wang Rajadhani) or the outlying provinces including the vassal territories. The basic functions of their governance were to maintain peace and order; to collect information on manpower, elephants and other resources; to mobilize conscripts upon request and use corvee labour; and to collect a share of the area's wealth for provincial use and transmission to the capital. The provincial governors were supposed to encourage agriculture. They were to provide manpower and wealth to the capital as well as manpower for defence. But some of them were treacherous with the potential for revolt, perhaps even for assualt on the capital. These provinces were organized into four hierarchical classes. The first-class provinces, Pisanulok and Nakorn Sridhamaraj, the most strategic two, were relatively large frontier regions of importance to the defence of the kingdom. Some of the seven second-class provinces were also strategically important. Eight third-class provinces were of less consequence. Finally there were some fourth-class provinces (Muang Noi) subordinate to the major provinces rather than to the central government.[21]

All these provincial governors were not salaried but were assigned income from the land on the Sakdina basis by the king. On this basis they came to be known as Kin Muang or

Chao Muang (Lords of Fiefs). Thus all the Chao Muang controlled all functions of governing their own domains. They were tended to act as independent rulers whenever the direct political, military or sacred powers of the king at the centre declined. To keep a check on them the institution of biannual confirmation of allegiance and royal tribute through the "Drinking of the Holy Water" ceremonial was set up. They were also controlled by the institution of hierarchy.

The basic mechanism that supported the political structure was the institution of Sakdina, yasa, Rajadinanam and Tamnaeng. Sakdina literally means "power over land", thereby implying the grades of "dignity marks" under which was organized every conceivable status level in the society, from slaves and common men to the senior princes of the realm. Under this Sakdina system a person was allotted a degree of dignity and privilege measured quantitatively. Slaves obliged to their masters who were by and large royal officials, were given a sakdina grade 5 rai (1 rai = 2/5 acre). Freemen and commoners obliged to the king or some royal department of court were registered to receive the sakdina grade of 25. With this as a base each official or prince was allotted his sakdina grade up the scale, viz., 10,000 for the minister and a maximum of 100,000 for the prince appointed

to the office of Wang Na. The Sakdina of the king was considered to be beyond computation. Officials with ranks above the Sakdina of 400 were appointed directly by the king and those with the ranks below the 400 level were appointed by ministers and provincial officials. This system was a part and parcel of the patron-client relationship by which Thai society was traditionally integrated.[22]

Additional means used to define systematically the rank and status of officials are : Yasa, a series of honorific titles, some of which are of ancient Thai origin and other derived from Khmer terminology; Rajadinanam, the elaborate names assigned by the king, which became the names of the incumbents of official posts; and Tamnaeng, or terms indicating the grade or rank of a particular official. For high-ranking officials other status symbols were also used, indicating royally conferred betel nut boxes, palanquins and so forth.[23] In addition, the duties and privileges of the major officials in the system were spelt out in the royal edicts or laws drawn from the religiously oriented sources, such as Dharmasastra and Rajasastra.

The polity of this kind was designed to organize society to serve the state or more precisely the king. All the officials were supposed to serve the state or the king who in return for their services granted them land rather than

fixed salary. With certain exceptions the commoners were to pay taxes to the king in the form of corvee labour service for a maximal period of six months a year and earned their living for the rest of the year by cultivation of the land granted to them by the king and to some extent by trade. The slaves were exempted from tax-payment of any form but were full-time subjects of their masters.

The socio-political organization of the Thai earthly kingdom was conceived a reflection of the supernatural realm in terms of norms and values (Dharma) and control. The ruler or king was identified with the more clearly defined divine entities, such as Indra or Shiva, as also Bothisatva, and so were his aides-de-camp. Their roles were regarded divine accordingly. Aristocratic distinctiveness was institutionalized through the religio-political ceremonies and rituals, such as those of installation or coronation, tonsure, creamation, worship of dead kings, royal audiences, oath of alligiance, royal bounty (Kathin), royal anniversaries and royal taboos. Distinctions were further confirmed by the life-style and practice of endogamy within the aristocratic class.

To strengthen this line of development, a good number of laws or royal edicts were codified with the help of Court Brahmans (Purohit-Chief Chaplains and Hora-astrologers), who were also Buddhists, on the basis of Dharmasastra which

later on resulted in the creation of Rajasastra. Other codified laws worth mentioning include the sacred Code of Manu, the Palatine Law A. D. 1458, the Law of Civil Hierarchy of A. D. 1454, the Laws of Military and Provincial Hierarchies of A. D. 1454, the Laws of Slavery, Husband and Wife, Inheritance, the Laws of Judges etc.[24] Thus the Thais of Ayudhya carefully integrated into their own established practices some cultural elements of Indian and Khmer traditions by compatabilities.

Associated with these reorganization is the development of the Sukhodayan Buddhist Order. The Buddhist monasteries served as the educational centres for the populace whereas the Court Brahmans confined their activities within the palace wall working under the Department of Court Brahmans. The monks associated themselves with the court and the populace, working under the Department of Religious Affairs. Then the Buddhist temples, in addition to being a place of worship, became schools, despensaries, orphanages, refuge for the old, places of arts and architecture etc. The monks served the populace as school-masters, doctors, engineers, architects, poets, painters, carvers, and metallurgists etc.[25]

To sustain a secular life on conformity with the civil religious values the Sangha undertook to create literature

for the people with the full support of the kings and their subordinates. Buddhist literature in Thai went into a good number of volumes and was enjoyed by the people in general. The literature, for instance, includes Mahachati Kamlaung and Nandopanandasutta Kamluang to mention only the oft-referred two. In addition, Chindamani, the first text book on the Thai language lesson intended to teach the Thai language to the populace was composed. All these works are nothing but a form of education designed to socialize the masses in line with the Buddhist ethics (manifest function) on the one hand and to integrate particularly the local units into the royal centre through the monks (latent function) on the other. Some of the literary texts contain the legends of incarnation of the Buddha's previous life before his enlightenment. They are full of heroic kings who live up to Buddhist Dharma. In this regard, King Ashok also provides an exampary model similarly, the literature based on the Sanskritic texts was enjoyed by the court and mostly expressed in modified form of the laws, ritualistic formulae, usages, idioms and astrology.

Thus in many ways, the social organization in the Ayudhyan kingdom was by and large similar to that in Sukhodaya. However, with the help of the newly introduced bureaucratic and Sakdina system the Sukhodayan four-class social organizations

were modified and readjusted and consequently resulted in the creation of a more crystallized and differentiated organization of aristocracy, bureaucracy based on military and civil functions, religious order, serf-type peasantry, merchant-artisan, and slavery in Ayudhya. The last category, according to Wales, already existed in Sukhodaya but was not strongly established. In Ayudhya it became highly elaborated.[26]

All these politico-religious institutions got modified, added to and elaborated at more than one time under leadership of the post-Trailok Ayudhyan kings particularly King Naresuan and King Narai, so as to adjust to the respective social environments and times. At the end, they were disordered upon the collapse of Ayudhya in 1767, but restored to their status quo by King Taksin at Dhonburi and King Rama I at Bangkok.

3. The Chakri Reform : Inauguration of Political Modernity

King Mongkut or Rama IV :

As already noted, Thai contact with the West had occurred as early as the beginning of the sixteenth century and caused both positive and negative consequences in the form of trade, Christianity and Colonialism. A Thai-Anglo Treaty was concluded in 1855 by King Mongkut of the present

Chakri dynasty and Sir John Bouring on behalf of Great Britain and was followed by France, the United States of America, Denmark, Portugal and Prussia with similar treaties between 1856-1862. King Mongkut's farsighted response to these Western contacts was to launch a movement to reform the old Thai institutions. With his unique personal background of being a studious and thoughtful prince-monk, he was well-fitted for this onerous task.

The former prince-monk, Mongkut was not only well-versed in the established Thai culture particularly Buddhism but also uniquely oriented to modern scientific knowledge and culture of the major Western nations. During his long period in monastic life he associated himself with the peoples of the West Christian missionaries, traders, and shipmasters - not only to learn Christianity but also to study Latin, English, geography, mathematics, chemistry, physics and astronomy. He started his work by reinterpreting Thai tradition especially Buddhism and the institution of kingship in favour of the modernizing tendencies in line with reformatic-neotraditionalistic process. He returned to earlier teachers and texts (original Buddhism) while rejecting the intervening traditions of Brahmanism, Spirit Worship and superstition with a view to bring the Thai civil-religious ethos in conformity with the ethos of scientific approach.

The major impact of his monastic experience was on his religious understanding. In a mood of deep self-question he devoted himself to Pali studies and quickly acquired intimate knowledge of Buddhist scriptures and a sure command of the sacred language. In 1837 he was named abbot of a new monastry established by the king, where he and his followers started a movement that was ultimately to take a form as the reform "Dhammayut" sect, devoted to rigorous promotion of the original Buddhist teachings.[27] They rejected all the practices that had no authority other than custom. They accepted all canonical regulations not merely following mechanically but endeavouring to keep their significance in their consciousness. They were expected to understand the formulae they recited, the reasons for the rules they were subject to, and the meaning of acts they performed.[28] In effect, he launched a Buddhist reformation. The Dhammayut sect doctrines have spread widely, exercising a leavening influence over the Siamese, though not universally accepted so far by all.[29]

However, in all fairness, it has to be pointed out that the emergence of the Protestant-like Dhammayut school has divided religiously oriented Thais into two broad classes of people. On the one side aristocracy has been in its favour, while the masses have tenaciously stayed with the Catholic-type

traditional school of the Mahanikaya as well as the old concept of kingship. This divisive development has taken its course in such a way that it has become dysfunctional to the Buddhist Order itself, leading to social tensions and strains, especially between the two schools.

On the whole, by his judicious selection and rejection of various components Prince Mongkut had created a new Buddhism - or as he more modestly thought, had revived the original Doctrine. He was fond of saying that there is nothing in it that conflicts with modern science. He could point to the laws of physics to show that given causes produce given effects. If these laws govern material universe, is it not reasonable to assume that similar laws govern the moral domain, so that every deed, whether good or evil, is inevitably followed by its appropriate consequence? Discouraging meaningless acts of merit-making Mongkut encouraged deeds of social value : "while only the rich could afford to build monasteries and hospitals, the poor could bridge a stream with a few bamboo poles or remove sharp thorns from a public path; all could give alms in proportion to their means, in money, or in service; all could practice kindness and self-restraint."[30] The reinterpretation of this kind is undoubtedly in compliance with the fundamentals of Buddhist ethics discussed earlier.

In April 1851 this able, mature and intelligent prince-monk

left the monastic life and became King Rama IV and ruled the country from 1851-1868. He was the most broadly educated oriental monarch of his time, uniquely equipped to cope with the West when the need to such talent was great.[31] The most telling impact of his reformation of purified Buddhist tradition was on the monarchy itself, for he began to look self-critically upon the royal role in terms of both Buddhist piety and western rationalism.[32]

He lost no time to redefine the concept of divine kingship - the cult of Devaraja of Brahmanic tradition in the light of Buddhist doctrine. For example, he complied with the tradition of coronation but viewed it more as a secular matter. On this point, again to quote Griswold : the most that King Mongkut could do was to revise the ceremony slightly, so as to reinforce the Buddhist elements that had been introduced into it, and add a human touch. All the other most conspicuous features necessarily remained Hindu. He had no objection to Brahmanism as long as it did not threaten to contaminate Buddhism itself. The Brahmanic elements could be admitted as supportive to a Buddhist monarchy, so long as they were not mistaken for Buddhism.[33] Whereas in Brahmanistic tradition the king was Devaraja, or human vehicle of the gods, for Vishnu or Shiva, in Buddhist view the king was human.[34] This was the view expressed by King Mongkut.

In the long run, Mongkut initiated several reforms to reconstruct the polity and initiated a new image of kingship in keeping with the Western model, linking civil religious ethos with social and political values. With the same in view many of the old customs and ceremonies based on divine kingship were reconsidered and reinterpreted in Buddhist terms. Some were replaced by those based on the Buddhist considerations, for instance, the royal Kathin, Visakha Puja, Magha Puja and Asalaha Puja to name only the most celebrated ones which persist until present day. Similarly, secular ceremonies, such as the king's Birthday and the Coronation Anniversary celebrations were instituted, emulating the Western patterns.[35] However, the rites for the new ceremony were wisely drawn from Siamese religion and culture and were most easily understood by the people. He chose these occasions, for example, to confer public degrees of learning on distinguished monks and presented food to the monks participating in the ceremony, which was made a gala four-day celebration. The Brahman pandits, however, were not neglected and secular officials were granted promotions. New orders of merit or honours were presented at these events.[36] All these ceremonies are still regularly celebrated to this day with certain modifications.

With his far-reaching perspective King Mongkut exposed

his son, Prince Chulalongkorn and also the children of the nobility and dignitaries of the kingdom to the modernizing influences by undergoing a modern education training under the Western teachers, such as Mrs. Leonowens, Dr. Chandler, Mr. Robert Morant. This private instruction in the palace was later on extended to establish the King's School (Suan Anand) in 1878; Rajakumar (Royal Children's) School at Suan Kulap in 1883; and the First School at Wat Mahan for the public in 1884. This was followed by several other schools, all of which paved the way for modern education.[37] Later several of the talented young scholars were sent out to European countries, such as England, France and Germany to get acquanted with modern ideas, knowledge and technology. This had far-reaching consequences for the further setup which is still search of moorings stability.

King Chulalongkorn or Rama V :

Prince Chulalongkorn succeeded to the throne at a minor age of fifteen on demise of his father, King Mongkut in 1868. The country therefore, was under the regency from 1868-73 and run by Chao Phya Srisuriyawongse (Chuang Bunnag) the most powerful man in the kingdom of the time. In 1871 King Chulalongkorn or Rama V was sent on an official voyage to observe British administration in Singapore, Penang, Rangoon, and subsequently to the Indian administrative centres, such

as Bombay, Delhi and Culcutta, as also to Java under the Dutch. His entourage included several of his brothers, senior officials, and numerous other officials. The king was able to see during his tour many of the more obvious accomplishments of Western colonial administration, such as post offices, jails, hospitals, schools, telegraph offices, museums, railways, factories, etc. He was entertained in grant style by the governments of the two colonies, which must have made some impression on the nineteen-year-old king.[38]

The political climate of Siam began to change in the late 1870s. The country witnessed radical reorganization of the Ayudhyan type of political structure soon after King Chulalongkorn took over the monarchy in 1873 at the age of twenty and ruled the country till 1910 as the de facto king. He was inspired with many modern ideas and nurtured ambitions of building a New Siam of his visions. The most celebrated of his accomplishments were the reformation of the country's administrative system, and the peaceful and gradual abolition of slavery by the Decree of 1874, fully enforced by 1905. The former reform included that of the Buddhist Order and the obligatory corvee labour service, and the latter reform covered the traditional royal audience, particularly the institution of taboos and prostration in the king's presence, as also other less civilized social practices. This reconstruction went toward not smoothly but at least persistently,

despite domestic obduracy, and the great crises in international relations whereby Thailand was forced to surrender some of her territory to France and Great Britain.[39]

The administrative reconstruction was marked by a sweeping reorganization whereby many of the old courts and chambers were eliminated, their duties and some of their personnel being absorbed into new ministries. New functionally specialized departments were created to carry out essential new activities with defined legal authority for administrative staff, graded salaries, and fixed daily working hours. This radical reform was carried out under the Royal Edict 1892.[40] In 1875 King Chulalongkorn took up the fisical reform as a Pilot Project by establishing the Revenue Department. Then followed the departments of Post and Telegraphs, Maps and Surveys, Railways, Foreign Affairs and Education, all of which met with a good success.[41]

The reorganized structure can be looked at two levels : central and provincial. The Ayudhyan central governmental organizations of six traditional ministries (Kalahom, Mahadthai, Muang, Wang, Klang and Na) plus a miscellaneous cellection of agencies including those established during the first half of King Chulalongkorn's reign, were reorganized and replaced by the reoriented ministries in the light of the 1892 Edict. They are as follows.[42]

A new Ministry of Justice was created to control the entire judicial system of the nation. A new Ministry of Defence was established to replace the old Ministry of Military Strategy as well as the Marine Department, the Elephant Department, and the Armament Department. A new Ministry of Lands and Agriculture was established to regulate agricultural taxes. The previous responsibility of the Ministry of Lands for export and import duty collection was transferred to the Ministry of Finance. A new Ministry of Finance was designated to take over financial responsibility from the traditional Ministry of Port and Foreign Affairs in 1885 and overhaul the financial apparatus developed during the first half of the reign. The responsibility for the collection and disbursement of revenue was eventually to be centralized and assigned to it. In 1890 a Ministry of Public works had been created, including the Department of Post and Telegraph; this ministry was retained as part of the new structure. The traditional Capital Ministry and Controlling Committee, the royal and common officials were superseded by a new Ministry of the Capital (Nakorn̂ban) under a single head.

The old department of Clerks and Scribes whose functions had enormously increased, was elevated to the status of the Ministry of the Privy Seal (Murathathon). The Ministryof Education has been initiated earlier, in 1889

when the Department of Education (established in 1887), the Hospital Department, the old Department of Morals and Religion (or Ecclesiastic Affairs) and the Bangkok Museum (established in 1878) were combined. This ministry was retained in the new plan of organization. The Palace Ministry and Ministry of the Royal Household, was continued although it was no longer to be responsible for the administration of justice. The Department of Foreign Affairs, actually established in its modern form prior to 1892 was elevated as a ministry in the new structure. A new Ministry of Interior, the core of the reorganization was to be in charge of provincial administration and absorbed the territorial administrative functions - mainly civil - hitherto performed by the two traditional ministries of Mahadthai and Kalahom.

The heads of these ministries and the head of the older department of Military Strategy whose ministerial rank was retained, were constituted into a twelve-member Council of Ministers (Lookkhun Na Sala) that was presided over by the king himself. This new council replaced the traditional six-minister council. Under the new system there was to be no diarchy of two co-chief ministers as before. The entire reorganization was to be set forth in law. However, in the first instance, all of the ministerial posts were filled by the members of the royal family.

In the task of restructuring and integrating administration the king was assisted by a set of like-minded modernizers, such as Prince Damrong, Prince Naris, Prince Devawangse and Prince Rabi on the one hand, and certain able Western advisers as Rolin-Jacquemyns, James Mac Cathy, George McFarland and W.J.F.Williamson etc.[43]

Perhaps the most important reform concerned the new territorial administration introduced by Prince Damrong in the newly created Ministry of Interior (Mahadthai). The traditional disparate types of provincial units were replaced by a uniform on line of the British pattern developed in Burma. The kingdom was divided into "Tesabhiban", or a system of territorial (or local) governments. It involved the creation of a regional organization in which half a dozen provinces were combined in a monthon (circle) under the control of a commissioner. The size would not be too big for the commissioner to supervise the work himself. An official of a rank between a senabodi and a governor would be sent to supervise the work in every monthon. That person would carry out the orders of the senabodi and would also give advice. This meant that the senabodi had only the duty of laying down the plan and the commissioners were to carry it out.[44]

The monthons were established as a check over Kinmuang-based autonomous governors under the old dispensation. Small

groups of households were designated as muban or villages under the Puyaiban and villages were grouped into communes or Tambon, headed by the Kamnan responsible to the district officers. These monthons linked not only the Central authority with towns and provinces but they brought under control the traditional provincial government by the Kinmuang-based autonomous governors known as "Chao Muang", i.e. Lords of Lands. The administrative procedure was systematized by an appropriate set of bureaucratic rules and regulations.[45]

Thus without formally displacing the provincial governors (traditional Chao Muang) Prince Damrong brought them gradually under control by superimposing regional commissioners. These were trusted and carefully chosen men who were sent out as control agents of the Ministry of Interior operating from official centres built by the government. At a later stage the control of the governors was further undermined from within by dividing each province into districts (amphurs) under the control of district officers directly appointed by the new Department of Interior. The governors were no longer the chief judges of the provinces, nor were their offices quasi-hereditary any longer. In course of time, all the hereditary Chao Muang came to be replaced by Phu Warajakarn Changwad or career administrators as governors under central control and designated, "King's servants" (Kha Luang).[46]

By about 1920 the Ministry of the Interior had involved into an elaborate, formulized, administrative apparatus. Its central organization consisted of the office of the Ministry and the headquarters staff of nine departments, each under a director-general. Its personnel were divided into a central office group and the field service. The latter was located in 16 monthons, 71 provinces and 369 districts. Within the districts were 4,723 communes or tambons composed of 48,825 villages, according to the Ministry's Statistics of 1912.[47]

In similar manner the organizational activities concerning justice, education, and other state affairs previously controlled by the Chao Muang were gradually restructured into stable territorial units, thanks to the joint efforts of the concerned ministries. This arrangement continued till 1932.

After the 1932 Coup, the administration by monthons based on the Tesabhiban model was dropped and replaced by one which was province-based. This primary administrative division of the country has continued down to this day. Similarly local self-government through municipalities and sanitary boards was instituted. Finally all the dignity titles and the Sakdina system were completely abolished and

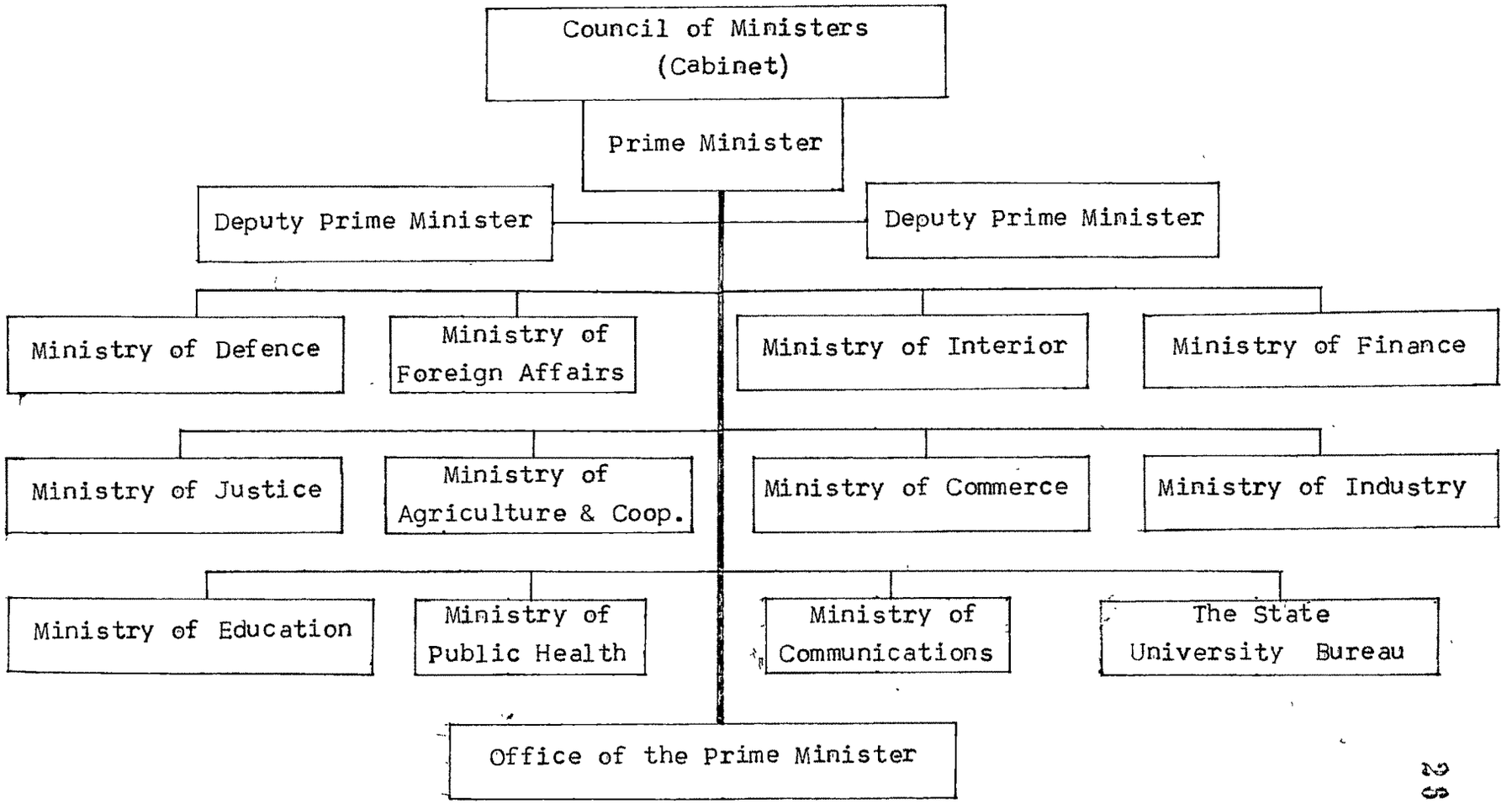
superseded by a hierarchical pattern of modern bureaucracy.

Presently a government led by the Prime Minister consists of thirteen ministries; namely, the office of the Prime Minister, Defence, Foreign Affairs, Interior, Finance, Justice, Agriculture and Cooperatives, Communication, Commerce, Education, Industry, Public Health, and the State University Bureau, as shown in Chart 3. Each ministry is headed by a Minister with a secretary (a political official), an Under-Secretary, and one or more deputy Under-Secretaries. Each department under the ministries is headed by a Director-General with one or more deputy Directors-General, and heads for divisions and sections below them.

Each of the ministries has its hierarchy of functionaries at 71 provinces (Changwat), subdivided into 555 districts (Amphur) and subdistricts (King Amphur) which cover 5404 communes (Tambon) and below them 48,837 villages (Muban). Side by side with these, there are units of local self-governments at 71 provincial centres (Ongkarn Barihan Suan Changwad) including special one at Bangkok-Dhonburi Metropolis. Similarly there are 119 municipalities (Tesaban) and 684 sanitaries[48] (Sukhabhiban) as shown in Chart 4.

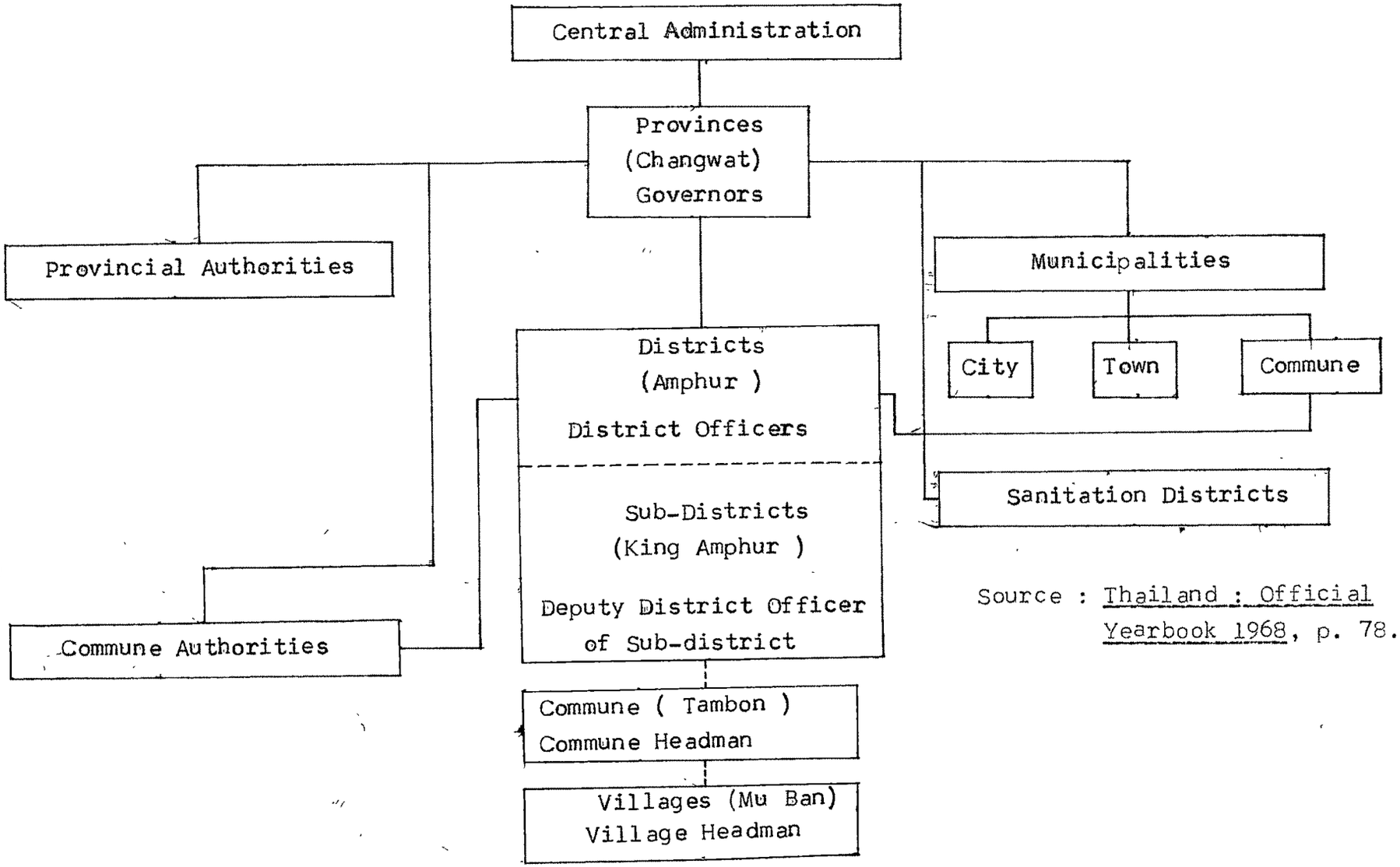
A Changwat is under the direction of the Governor (Phu Warajakarn Changwad) who is a career civil servant appointed

Chart 3 : The Government of Thailand, 1975



Source : Thailand : Official Yearbook 1968, p. 58.

Chart 4 : Structure of Provincial and Local Government, 1975.



Source : Thailand : Official Yearbook 1968, p. 78.

by the central Ministry of the Interior. Officials representing any of ministries working in a changwad are usually placed under the general supervision of this provincial governor, but are functionally under control of their respective ministries as regards their work.

An amphur is headed by a District Officer (Nai Amphur) who plays an administrative role similar to that of the provincial governor but in the narrowly demarcated jurisdiction of a district. A district is divided into a subdistrict headed by a deputy District Officer (King Amphur), playing the same role as does the district officer. Both are career civil servants appointed by the Ministry of the Interior and have in their jurisdictions a whole group of the other officials representing the various ministries. Below this is a commune which is subdivided into villages as the smallest units. The heads of both these units are not appointed but elected by popular vote and are responsible to the district officer for their charge. Similarly all the local self-government institutions have elective office-holders assisted by nominated officials. The Buddhist Order is organized on lines similar as above and contributing its share for a stable and orderly polity, through socializing the masses.

Developments in the Buddhist Order also were reorganized on similar lines. The transformation carried out by the two

kings, Rama IV and Rama V of the Chakri dynasty transformed the monarch from a Brahmanical god-king to a Buddhist human king. This gave the Thais a viable basis for legitimizing their polity and stabilizing the Buddhist nation. The mythology associated with the Codes of Manu was weakened and gradually lost its legitimizing force in the long run. King Rama IV and King Rama V transformed the kingship and thereby subversted the traditional role of the monarch itself for the Thai polity. At this stage of religio-political development in Thailand, a good deal of cosmological super-arching was dropped as superstition with the help of redefined Buddhism. This reformation latently led to an overthrow of the old conception of hierarchy in the secular field as well. As the redefined Buddhism supported by Western empiricism and positivism grew to be powerful, hierarchical aristocracy and kingship were either greatly weakened or abandoned.[49]

Closely associated with this development is the recodification of the religious texts which were either rewritten or reintroduced in favour of Buddhism. The classic text, Pathomasombhodhikatha composed by Prince-monk Praparamanujitjinorosa, contained the literary stories of the Buddha's previous lives and royal genealogy; the Jinakalamali (Seal of Garlands of the Epoches of the Conquercy) by Ratanapanya Thera was similar from the view point of the Buddha's life but with more emphasis on the

accounts of the relics and other symbols of his continuing power; and Phra Malaya Sutta, a story of the monk, Phra Malaya by name visiting the subhuman realm of woe and thereafter the heaven of the thirty-three gods (Tusita) where he meets the Future Buddha Sri Ariya Metreiya and questions the latter concerning the time of his coming into the world.[50] The Traibhum Praruang Text also got revised. The rediscovery of Thailand's past as in case of King Ramkamhaeng's inscription points in the same direction. Added to these texts is the fact that the textbooks prescribed for Buddhist studies of different courses (Pali and Nakdham) were systematically designated and written or readjusted accordingly. The Buddhist textbooks were, for the first time, printed by the printing machine. Through King Mongkut's effort the first modern Thai printing machine went into operation at Wat Bowonnives in Thailand. Similarly, Mahamakut and Mahachula academies for the Buddhist studies were established for the purpose. Thus in every way the Chakri reforms opened up a new era of social relationships and roles in Thai society, paving the way for the transformation of traditional society into a modern one.

4. The Bureaucratic Polity : Continuity and Consolidation of Political Modernity

After 42 years of his long reign King Chulalongkorn

passed away on October 23, 1910. In recognition of his manifold contributions to modernize the country, Thais still refer to him as Phra Piya Maharaj or the Beloved Great King. However, this was also a critical period in Thai history, and country's independence was maintained under stress and sacrifice of the southern provinces, namely, Kelantan, Kedah, perlis and Trengganu to Great Britain and modern Kampuchea and Laos to France. Chulalongkorn's reign was followed by that of King Vajiravudh or Rama VI (1910-1925) and King Prajadhipok or Rama VII (1925-1935), respectively.

Reformation of orthodox traditions under kings Mongkut and Chulalongkorn had identified three pillars of Thai civil religion, namely, the Chat (the nation conceived in terms of both territory and people), the Sasana (the special religious dimension identified primarily with Buddhism), and the Mahakasat (the king or monarch), with an emphasis on the first.[51] This tripartite civil religion was actively infused by King Vajiravudh's effort to enrich a specifically national identity and spirit earlier launched by his predecessors. In his various speeches and writings King Vajiravudh, an author and actor of sorts emphasized the centrality of the concept of the nation. He introduced Buddhist prayers in schools, police stations and army barracks and included a commitment to Buddhism in the oath taken by members of the Wild Tiger Corps,

a special paramilitary organization he himself organized. However, he also sought to cambat the more pacifist tendencies in Buddhist tradition by focussing attention on the fact that both the classic texts and contemporary ecclesiastical leaders o affirmed the nation's right to take military action either in self-defence or in the cause of justice.

He also devoted his attention to recounting the deeds of the great royal heroes of the past, such as Phra Ruang who defeated the Khmers and established the first Thai kingdom of Sukhodaya and Uthong the founder of the kingdom of Ayudhya. Again given his immediate concerns, military virtues of these royal heroes and their followers were singled out for special attention and praise. Thus the nation has emerged as supreme focus of civic identity and devotion. Since 1932 this emphasis on the primacy of the nation has become increasingly recognized by the population at large. The country's flag reflects symbolic identity of the three core bases of Thai national patriotism. The red is identified with the nation, the white with the religion, and the blue with the king.

National aspiration for a democratic form of political order with parliamentary form of government had come into public notice as early as 1880 when Prince Svasti Sobhon and ten other princes and noblemen sent to King Rama V a petition

asking that a constitution be established. In the same decade a radical named Thienwan was canned and jailed for advocating a change to a parliamentary form of government.[52] The democratic forces were somehow controlled due to King Chulalongkorn's political competence. However, his successors, King Rama VI and King Rama VII were relatively incompetent rulers.

Rama VI, a gifted writer and dramatic actor, was indifferent to matters of governmental routine. He depleted the privy purse of the palace by uneconomical expenditures on tours and state functions. Official corruption was rampant and so was the state bureaucratic inefficiency. Councellors, cabinet meetings and other consultative councils were ignored. He did meet individual ministers but at these meetings he usually announced policy. Money, titles and decorations were given away freely. The appointments are said to have been largely controlled by patronage and in some cases the sinecures were created for the satellites. He offended the regular army by showing favouritism to the bodyguard known as "Siapa-Wild Tiger Corps" who were provided with clubhouse, a drill hall, uniforms and a rugby football team. In fact he instituted an experiment in democratic polity, providing one of his palaces for that

purpose but his erratic conduct did much discredit for a capricious absolutism. As a result the democratically oriented coups de'tat were planned but were somehow betrayed and uncovered in 1912 and 1917.[53]

King Rama VI was succeeded by his younger brother, King Rama VII who entertained liberal sentiments governmentally but unfortunately he was a weak personality, lacking in administrative capacity and incapable of implementing his ill-defined convictions and permitting the High Council to become a virtual monopoly of princely incumbents who were firmly opposed to democratic reform. He offended the nobility, the army and the bureaucracy by a series of economy measures. In short, the downfall of the absolute monarchy was caused by the three converging trends. First trend was the diminishing psychological power of the monarch. This was a result firstly of democratic ideas from the West which softened the more extravagant claims by the dynasty itself, and secondly of the different personality of Rama VII. The second trend came from the increased self-assurance based on professional expertise among officials - especially those who had been educated in Europe. This group nursed a sense of resentiment against the growing royal monopoly of power. The third trend was the worsening state of finances in which the government

found itself as a result of the developing world depression and the unproductive expenditure[54] under King Rama VI. It is undeniable fact that the bureaucratic polity and its subsequent development undermined and became dysfunctional to the monarchy itself.

The frustrated bureaucratic group turned to a final resort, namely, revolutionary action or rebellion against the absolute monarchic regime and engineered the successful bloodless 1932 coup. However, the overthrow of the monarchy had, according to Sifin, produced a power vacuum and it could not be immediately filled with a panoply of Western-type representative institutions. Power came increasingly to be wielded by those who had access to military force. For them the democratic ideas were vague and were matched by no blue-print for the future. To them revolution meant access to power and elimination of a source of their insecurity and inequality, and also in some way, "national progress". They left social system little touched - particularly the kingship was retained as a legitimating symbol.[55] This has now become a mere ritual in Thai polity.

The 1932 coup was organized by about a hundred active participants, only twelve of whom actually planned the coup strategy. The takeover was based on control of the small

group of military forces in the capital and the communications system essential for any countermeasures. The revolutionaries came from two groups : junior officials, most of whom had acquired revolutionary ideas in the course of their European education and a small number of disaffected senior military officers. They include Dr. Pridi Phanomyong, Phya Phohol, Luang Phibulsongkram and Nai Kuang Aphaiwong in the main, around whom the revolutionary clique and political activities were organized.

There was no active participation of the masses as such in the national politics, and the "democratic government under the parliamentary framework introduced by the coup failed and brought in another coup. In the course of events the country had experienced coup after coup. The democratic constitution and other democratic institutions were over and again suspended. The country's constitution went into a number of revisions and was time and again restored to the original form of democratic government but has so far failed each time. All the subsequent crises, coups and power shifts have revolved among the bureaucratic elites and their associates.Following the latest coup in 1977 the country has been ruled by a nominated bureaucracy led by military oligarchy, under the 1976 interim constitution, which was replaced by the 1978 permanent one most recently passed by the National Legislative Assembly (consisting of 366-nominated

members), and now in effect.

However, participation in active parties by the representative politicians in Thailand is a matter of speculation. Whether or not the parliamentary political system is applicable to the Thai political climate is very much in doubt. The 1932 coup was staged with the great intention to place the country under a political pattern based on the parliamentary model. As it was, the provisional constitution imposed by the revolutionalists of June, 1932, was followed by a permanent constitution in December 1932. Another new constitution was enacted in 1946, only to be overthrown in 1947 by a second provisional charter, followed by another permanent constitution in 1949. In 1951, the 1932 constitution was reinstated. It was subsequently revised in 1952. In 1957 this constitution was temporarily suspended, but was again reinstated. In 1959 a third provisional (interim) constitution was imposed. In 1968, a new permanent constitution was promulgated, which was suspended in 1972 by imposition of the still another interim constitution.[56] The 1973 student coup resulted in the creation of the 1974 permanent constitution, which was suspended in 1976 and was replaced by the interim constitution of 1976. The most recently enacted permanent constitution of December 1978 is now in force, replacing the 1976 interim one. This is to be followed by the national general election soon, due in

April 1979 as per declared date. Be that as it may, no radical change is visible in the light of the present constitution.

Clearly, on the basis of the permanent constitutions the political parties and parliaments were established and were obviously intended to legitimize decisions previously taken by the ruling circle of military and civil service politicians. But the constitutional documents by themselves can not provide effective norms of political behaviour. They were simply used to cast a cloak of legitimacy over the operations of succeeding rulers and to set the stage for a play to be enacted by the non-bureaucratic performers, namely, the parliaments, political parties and electors. These performers played their parts for most of the time, failed to satisfy their political audience and to meet the public demands. The rules were changed continuously with the express purpose of promoting the interests and inclinations of the winning group.

In line with the constitutional documents at different times, a good number of political parties were organized, whose nominees got elected by popular vote, to the House of Representatives for the first time in 1933. In all, twelve subsequent elections were held and were contested by too many

political parties reflecting little commitment, less compromise and too many demands. To take an example, in 1975 there were more than 42 political parties, such as Democratic Party, the Agrarian Socialist Party, the Socialist Party of Thailand, the Social Justice Party and the New Force Party - to name only the leading parties - which nominated their candidates for the 12th National General Election. On the other hand, participation of the masses in active politics as revealed by the voting pattern was by no means promising. The turnout was quite low in fact lower than 40 per cent. Besides, the earlier elections were also very poor in their turnout as shown in Table 5.1. Thailand has had so far as many governments formed on the basis of the 13 general elections. However, each of them survived only for a brief span in office. This was simply due to the fact of too many political parties, too little commitment to stability, too many demands for rapid change from the left, too much concern for status quo from the right. There was also an overemphasis on personality cult and an unwillingness to compromise.[57] At present, political activities through party system are being articulated and organized as also reorganized for the coming general election.

The bureaucratic elite : Military and Civil :

Under the Thai political conditions a great majority of those who reach the political pinnacle of cabinet ranks emerge

Table 5.1 : Participation of Populace in Active Politics by Voting in Thailand, 1933-1969.

Election No.	Date	Eligible voters	Actual voters	Turnout of voting %
1	Nov. 1933	4,278,231	1,773,532	41.45
2	Nov. 1937	6,123,239	2,462,535	40.22
3	Nov. 1938	6,310,172	2,210,332	35.03
4	Jan. 1946	6,431,820	2,091,788	32.52
5	Aug. 1946	5,819,662	2,026,823	34.92
6	Jan. 1948	7,176,464	2,117,464	26.54
7	Feb. 1952	7,602,591	2,461,291	38.76
8	Feb. 1957	9,859,039	5,668,566	57.50
9	Dec. 1957	9,911,118	4,370,586	40.10
10	Feb. 1969	14,820,080	7,285,832	49.16

Source : Khanchai Bunpan, ed., Election '18 in Thai (Bangkok : Prajajat, 1974), pp. 13-15.

from career within the bureaucracy, both military and civil. It is the inner core of the highest military elites which constitutes the real effective decision-making group in Thailand. Second in importance to the military are the few topmost bureaucratic elites from the civil service, whose political interests and demands are articulated and integrated in close liaison with those of the army elites. These bureaucratic elites or the modernizing oligarchies are the real power elites[58] of Thailand. With their military or civil ranks and the like, earned on the bases of hereditary wealth, family standing and education they have claimed their political rights to rule the country. These elites grouped into competing factions have altered by rotation through military coups and/or intervening popular vote. They are by and large the second or third generation descending from those who were the power elites during the absolute monarchy prior to the 1932 coup.

The June 1932 coup was obviously intended to establish effective organs of parliamentary and popular government so as to change the power structure of the traditional polity. The actual political system that was set up in 1932 corresponds to the implicit premises of the June menifesto. But the cabinet members reflected the former power structure unchanged, which was merely transferred from one power elite to another.

They, for most part, had been career bureaucrats who had subsequently arisen to political eminence. In the conduct of their roles as members of the ruling circle these cabinet members have proved to be more responsive to the interests and demands of their supporters in the bureaucracy than to the concerns of other interest groups, political parties or autonomous bodies outside the state apparatus.[59]

In the post-1932 system which emerged after the Coup, the ruling clique seizes the seats of power by a sudden coup and then uses these positions to establish and maintain its authority. But the constituency of these members of the clique is the bureaucracy itself. These are primarily from the military and to a lesser extent, the civil agencies. A minister, when he steps into his ministry, possesses the traditional authority of his office, and he can expect to get deference, respect and obedience from his subordinates which tradition demands. He is obligated by tradition to look after these subordinates. In order not to disturb his authority and perhaps that of the whole clique he must look to fulfilling his obligations adequately. His ministry then becomes his constituency, and he represents it in the cabinet. He fights for its budget, and the prospects of its employees. The success with which he achieves this depends upon his relative position within the ruling clique, although the best he can expect is a compromise with his fellow ministers.[60]

Elsewhere, commenting on the Thai polity in contrast to the European parliamentary systems Wilson points out that the Prime Minister of Thailand draws power from the bureaucratic constituencies via the cliques rather than from popular constituencies by means of parties.[61]

Under the constitutional monarchy for 45 years or longer, Thailand has witnessed many political crises, coups and 40 shifts in the governmental set-up. Of these, 22 governments were led by the bureaucratic elites for a duration of more than 37 years in office, and 18 governments by the non-bureaucratic or non-career officials had a duration of less than 8 years.[62] The recently overthrown Thanin government (1976-77) was one restored by the military with its cabinet members predominantly recruited from the bureaucracy. The chief of the government was himself a bureaucrat drawn from the office of the country's Supreme Court. The present government since November 1977 is led by the military elites with the Prime Minister and the majority of his cabinet members drawn from the bureaucracy, both military and civil.

Further, a look at the list of the 1932-1958 Thai cabinet members reveals that out of 237 men who served during that period a total of 184 may be classified as career officials or bureaucrats vis-a-vis 38 who were non-officials or non-bureaucrats. Additional 15 men can not be classified in either of these categories, because of lack of adequate

information. Of the career officials, 100 were civil servants and 84 were military officers[63] as revealed in Table 5.2.

Next in importance to the bureaucratic elites vis-a-vis the polity are the economic elites who have organized their economic activities in such a way that their interests and actions carried out by the economic elites are achieved by subordinating theirs to those of the bureaucratic elites who are by and large the decision-makers. Therefore, commercialists and industrialists, - not to mention the agriculturalists whose activities are always aligned in support of the bureaucracy - must adapt their interests with those engaged in statecraft. Both the power elites are closely interdependent for mutual benefit.

By and large the majority of Thais go in for agricultural occupation and a few enter government services (bureaucracy). The economic activities based on commerce and industry are for the most part carried out by resident non-Thais. Those actively engaged in the secondary economy are the Thai-born second or third generation citizens of foreign blood, especially the Chinese who have settled in Thailand. For the sake of their own interests in the economy they associate themselves with the bureaucratic elites and thereby enjoy considerable economic privileges.

Table 5.2 : Bureaucratic Participation in Thai Cabinets 1932-1958

A. Summary Figures

	Total		Promoters*		Nonpromoters		Repeaters*		Nonrepeaters	
Civil Servants	100		14		86		51		49	
Military Officers	84		39		45		43		41	
All Officials	184	(77%)	53	(95%)	131	(72%)	94	(88%)	90	(69%)
Nonofficials	38		2		36		11		27	
Unidentified	15		1		14		2		13	
Total	237		56		181		107		130	

B. Analysis

		Repeaters		Nonrepeaters	
	Total	Promoters	Nonpromoters	Promoters	Nonpromoters
Civil Servants	100	12	39	2	47
Military Officers	84	28	15	11	30
All Officers	184	40	54	13	77
Nonofficials	38	0	11	2	25
Unidentified	15	1	1	0	13
Total	237	41	66	15	115

* Notes : Promoters : refer to those who join the cabinet on the basis of the group promotors of coups detat, and otherwise, nonpromoters.

Repeaters : refer to those who join the cabinet more than three times; and nonpromoters, those who join the cabinet less than three times.

Sources : Fred W. Riggs, Thailand : The Modernization of Bureaucratic Polity (Honolulu : East-West Centre Press, 1968), p. 315; and Khanchai Bunpan, ed., Election '18, in Thai, (Bangkok: Prajajat, 1974), pp. 91-154.

These secondary economic activities include private and public enterprises in which directly or indirectly, those in the bureaucracy with cabinet or non-cabinet ranks are involved. Those who served as cabinet members during 1932-1958 as above noted are, for example, those who engaged themselves in the large-scale private enterprises, as either firm or company board chairmen or director members. As shown by Riggs, 61 of the 237 men who had been cabinet members between 1930-1958 held positions on boards of directors of 42 commercial/industrial corporations, and most of them, if not all, held board memberships of corporations. More significantly, there were in the country 42 leading business corporations whose shareholders included the cabinet rank politicians. Each of these corporations had three or more ministers as its board members. The ministers who held board memberships of more than ten different corporations, to cite an example, include Phao (26 memberships), Sarit (22 memberships), Prapas (19 memberships), Lamai (19 memberships), Thanom (17 memberships), Sawai (14 memberships), Siri (13 memberships) and Pramarn (11 memberships).[64]

In fact, these business corporations are dominantly owned and managed by members of non-Thai minority groups including Chinese, Americans, Europeans, Indians as well as Pakistanis. However the Chinese community is overwhelmingly

conspicuous and sets a pattern which may be regarded as decisive. Several, if not all, of Chinese power blocks were, according to Skinner, able to mobilize political support from different quarters within the Siamese power elites, in order to enhance their own security and prestige. In other words, each of the major Chinese groupings probably sought to win support from more than one clique within the power elites. Whereas the Chinese leaders had to rely for influence upon the ability to pay their elite board directors, the Thai leaders depended on direct forms of bureaucratic and political control. Their board memberships were a consequence rather than a cause of their power positions. The most popular solution to this problem found by leading Chinese businessmen was to enlist the permanent support of influential Thai officials by effecting formal business alliances with them. This was accomplished in different ways. First of all, Chinese leaders reorganized many of their major commercial and financial corporations to include on the boards of directors, top government officials and other members of the Thai power elites. Secondly, new cooperations were formed on a cooperative pattern, whereby Chinese supplied the capital and entrepreneurial skill and Thai officials supplied protection for the Chinese. And thirdly, Chinese businessmen with their citizenship joined semiofficial Thai enterprises in a managerial capacity.[65]

In contrast, the public enterprises are capitalized from public revenues and operated by the public or state corporations, i.e. the Thai power elites themselves. In 1957 there were 141 enterprises operated by the governmental agencies which were managed by respective ministers as given in Table 5.3. Both public and private enterprises are the core sources of economic wealth by and around which the political interests and activities are articulated and organized. Their relative position in the context of the national economy shall be discussed later.

Table 5.3 : Government Enterprises in Thailand as audited in 1957.

Ministry	Number
Industry	47
Interior	30
Agriculture	18
Finance	10
Defence	6
Education	6
Public Health	6
Communications	5
Economic Affairs	4
Other ministries and agencies	9
	141

Source : Fred W. Riggs, Thailand:The Modernization of Bureaucratic Polity, op. cit., p. 305.

5. The Church and the State : Their Functional Reciprocity

After the 1932 coup the orthodox traditions of Thai civic religion - Buddhism and kingship - have been interrupted and considerably weakened. Brahmanistic elements were already on the wane soon after the redefinition of traditions carried out by King Rama IV. Yet they have significantly remained as the sources of social integration of the nation as a whole. The leaders of every government after 1932 have been well aware of this social integrative function. Sheer existence and operation of the religious machine (the Buddhist Order), as a source of moral authority, has so far provided a much needed support to a series of governments. According to Piker, this was possible because of two conditions in the national polity.[66] Firstly, Buddhism as the national religion has maintained itself at a distance from partisan political involvement. Thus its ability to sanction any government which has achieved power has been retained in tact through all thick and thin. Secondly, by virtue of their religiosity the monks are highly respected and indeed venerated by the people in general. The respect tendered to the monks and by extension to the institutionalized religion can be transferred in some measure to the regime via open approbation of the government by the monks and through the formal or national religious hierarchy in general.

Apart from this, the populace, especially the villagers are prone to feel that if the monks, who are venerated above all others, support the regime, it must be worthy at least of their passive acceptance. This is not, of course, to say that they are blind to the real corruption and inefficiency that attend the governmental action in Thailand on both local and national levels. Indeed, they do know it but feel at least reluctant to take a position towards their government that they know to be in opposition to the viewpoint of monks and the national religious establishments. These trends have recently been reinforced by the threat from the Communism-oriented insurgents who are believed to be in opposition to the religious practices and pernicious to the national security. Further, the monks of the national religious hierarchy, especially those of Phra Rajagama status including Somdej Phra Samgharaj, have evidently acted as the mediating figures whose influences help to ease the country's crises through a difficult period of transition. Such figures in Thai history as Phra Wanarat of Ayudhya and Prince-monk Vajirayanavarorasa of Bangkok stand out to provide a good example in this regard. In the years following the reign of King Rama IV, who had successfully redefined Buddhism, down to this day the democratically oriented Buddhist interpreters have followed his footstep so as to present Buddhist teaching in such a way that it could support both traditional values and

those of democracy. On the other hand, receprocally, any of the alternating national governments and their leaders have lost no time to proclaim themselves as the champions and protectors of the national religion - Buddhism.

Since 1932 the different governments and their leaders have continued to support Buddhism, particularly in ways that would enhance their own authority and charisma. For instance in the late 1930s the government of Phibool Songkram sponsored the construction of a new Buddhist temple called "Wat Mahathat" (the Temple of Great Stupa) on the northern outskirts of Bangkok; and soon thereafter, a very important image known as the "Buddha Sihing" - which had a well-known mythical history extending back to the Sukhodaya kingdom and beyond - was taken from the royal chapel and installed in the wat, obviously intended to be a new national shrine. More recently, the generals who came to dominate the government from 1950s to the early 1970s sought to legitimate their power through a variety of lavish and public displays of Buddhist piety.[67] The installation of Buddha Navarat Image at the governmental centres across the country points in the same direction.

In addition, the Buddhist Order has so far enjoyed the protection and patronage from the national government. In order to stabilize and reinforce the traditionally organized

Buddhist Order the Ecclesiastical Acts were passed and put into effective operation by the state. On the basis of the established practices (the Vinaya Codes) upheld by the modern law the Order is hierarchically organized in a way to maintain an intimate liaison with the national administrative bureaucracy. Notably, the secular order has had the greater influence and control over the religious order than the reverse. The government can so effectively control the Sangha that it can hardly take an action in opposition to the former. To make things fool-proof the monks are by the state law banned from the active politics at the local as well as the national levels. The popular attitude also is in favour of the monks' nonparticipation in active politics and partisan political involvement. For instance, in the 1975 by-election to the National Assembly at Chiangmai Province a few politically motivated monks and novices campaigning for a candidate nominated by one political party met with a strong opposition from the various sections of the society. To say this is not to say that the Buddhist Order has no role to play in Thai Polity. On the contrary, the Order does take active part in its specific way in Thai polity. Table 5.4 reveals popular attitudes towards monks' participation in partisan politics. It is overwhelmingly in the negative.

Table 5.4 : Rural and Urban Distribution of Male and Female Opinion Regarding Monks' Partisan Role in Politics by 419 Lay Respondents, 1975.

	Rural, N = 190				Urban, N = 229			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Should participate	9	4.73	7	3.68	10	4.36	7	3.05
Should not participate	90	47.38	53	27.89	125	54.59	67	29.28
Not sure	19	10.00	12	6.32	10	4.36	10	4.36
Total	118	62.11	72	37.89	145	63.31	84	36.69

However, in retrospect the monks stand out as the political socializing agent from the viewpoint of the civil religion. The importance of role of the merit-making by monks is not to be minimized. The Kathina, for example, does meet not only the religious requirements of an individual but also serves social functions, especially the political function. The various folk ways or shows such as Mualam(in the Northeast), Likae (in the Central); and Manorah (in the South), to cite only a selective few, which are organized by the wats during the religious festivals have the same implication apart from their entertaining value. The role of the monks from the standpoint of

traditional as well as nonspecialized communication is of considerable significance for the polity and society.

Equally or more important is the role of the highly organized and explicitly structured mass media especially the journalists, which is indispensable to modern political socialization.[68] The mass media consumption (per 1000) in Thailand is estimated as follows : daily newspapers circulation - 13.7% (1960), radio ownership - 7.5% (1956) and TV set ownership - 1.6% (1960).[69] The present level of mass media consumption is brought out in Table 5.5.

Amongst these socializing agencies contributing to the nation-building activity, one has to include all the educators - from primary teachers, upto university professors and educational administrators - who implant and infuse the national life with political socialization either directly or indirectly, through agency of modern institutions of education. Through them the political ideologies, such as democracy, liberalism, nationalism, socialism etc. are being communicated to the masses by implication, especially the younger generation.

In view of these roles in political socialization, the institutions of monks, journalists, teachers, though not basically involved in active politics of the country,

Table 5.5 : Availability of Mass Media[a] in Thailand 1960-1968.

Daily Papers[b] in Bangkok :

Number in Thai : 22 (1955); 16(1959) and 11 (1968)

Number in English : 2 plus two weeklies (1960) and 3 (1974)

Number in Chinese : 5 (1958) and 4(1968)

Combined circulation of Thai dailies - 754300

Papers in provinces (mostly published every ten days to coincide with announcement of the results of the State lottery) :

Number in Thai : 49

Weekly,[b] Fortly and Monthly Publication :

in Bangkok : varieties between 30 to 60

in Chiengmai : 5 weekly papers.

Radio :

Number of licensed sets : 150,000 (1956) and 3,000,000 (1968)

Number of Stations : 17 (1960) and 29 (1968)

Television :

Number of licensed sets : (in Bangkok) 34-40,000 (1960) and 350,000 (1968)

Number of Channels : (1960) in Bangkok : 2

(1968) in Bangkok : 2

in Provinces : 3

Motiom Picture Theatres :

Number of theatres : 195 (1958)

Number of seats : 99,300 (1958)

Books and pamphlets :

Number produced : 1081 (1959)

Notes : (a) All the figures are mainly for 1960 and 1968 unless otherwise indicated.

(b) The number of newspapers and weekly, fortly and monthly publications is on the increase and the decrease caused by democracy (by elections) and political crises (by coups detat) in the corresponding order.

Sources : Thailand Official Yearbook 1968, pp. 461-470 and Jame N.Mosel, "Communication patterns and Political Socialization in Traditional Thailand" in Lucian W. Pye, ed., Communication and Political Development (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 193.

do have a position of great significance in the over-all process of modernization of the polity. The forms of communication which they handle are essential and meaningful to the political functions, such as interest articulation, interest aggregation, and rule-making etc. It is these agencies who are laying the basic requirements for further political socialization and thereby provide the nation with the coming generations of power elites. In this regard, the importance of their roles is second only to that of the institution of family.

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40. For comprehensive analysis in this regard see Riggs, op. cit., Ch. 4. pp. 110-131 and Wyatt, op. cit., Ch. 4, pp. 84-101.

41. Siffin, op. cit., pp. 52-58 and Riggs, op. cit. pp. 117-119.

42. The discussion that follows is adapted from Siffin, op. cit., pp. 59-60.

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