

15 September 2011

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The Rise and Fall of Siamese Civic Nationalism

Student Number: 12700940

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the MSc in
Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict.

Word count: 15,499

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Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict course director Eric Kaufmann for introducing me to the concept of civic-ethnic nationalisms during one of his lectures at Birkbeck College, and guiding me to many helpful materials in writing this dissertation.

My interest in the relation between nationalism and royalism in Thailand's political history is owed to Thongchai Winichakul. Furthermore, I am in enormous debt to Somsak Jeamteerasakul who has not only written extensively on the subjects of history and democracy in Thailand but also personally inspired me to critically investigate the revolution of 24th June 1932 and its contested meanings.

Last of all, this dissertation is dedicated to those who lost their lives in Thailand's political crisis of April-May 2010.

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Abstract

This dissertation attempts to interpret the 24th June 1932 Revolution in Thailand, known as Siam at the time, and the events that followed with the perspective of *Civic-Ethnic Nationalisms* dichotomy, a concept chiefly developed by historian Hans Kohn. It seeks to demonstrate that 24th June Revolution is a beginning of new form of nationalism in Siam, specifically, *Civic Nationalism*, which could be distinguished from *Ethnic Nationalism* apparent in the periods before and after the revolutionary years. It also provides analysis of the short-lived *Siamese Civic Nationalism*, explains its failure, and assesses the validity of *Ethnic-Civic Nationalism* typology.

Part I Civic and Ethnic Nationalism

What is Civic and Ethnic Nationalism typology?

Historian Hans Kohn (1891-1971) formulated the concept in many of his works, primarily in *Idea of Nationalism* (1945) and *The Age of Nationalism* (1962). Kohn outlined the evolution of nationalism in two patterns: Western Europe on one hand, Eastern Europe on the other, each displaying its own distinct characteristics. Western European nationalism, Kohn argued, was born in a strong secular bourgeois background, as a result of industrialization and ideals of bourgeois democracy which stressed on values like Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, whereas Eastern European nationalism arose later in largely agricultural society, formulated by Romantic intelligentsia rather than urban middle class. Kohn also identified Western European nations like the United States, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, and Switzerland as *civic*, and categorized nations in Central-Eastern Europe like Germany and Slav-speaking nations as *ethnic*.

Kohn's civic-ethnic framework extends beyond observation of historical development of nationalism in those nations; it also suggests a theoretical typology that divides nationalism into two opposing characteristics: Civic Nationalism and Ethnic Nationalism.

Civic Nationalism

Civic Nationalism seeks commitment to the state and society as a whole, across all ethnic groups, accepting diversity in ancestry. The nation in this concept is a political community where every citizen progressed toward common destiny, toward achievement of liberal values like equality, civil rights, and democracy. It is "forward-looking" in character (Kuzio, 2002).

Concerning cultures, civic nationalism is supposed to be "culture-blind", not upholding any particular ethnic culture, but established rational cosmopolitan public culture for all (Brown, 2000). Its loyalty is toward the institutions, the

people, and the common political principles of the community; any newcomer could be admitted into this citizenship if he or she pledged commitment to the national cause.

Civic nationalism is individualistic, voluntary, upholding free will, and egalitarian, representing the democratic spirit of the West, where this type of nationalism arose.

Ethnic Nationalism

Ethnic Nationalism (or Ethnocultural Nationalism) relies on national identity through appealing to primordial components related to myth of biological connection and cultural uniqueness; for example, common ancestry, language, religion, and kinship (Kaufmann and Zimmer, 2004). Ethnic Nationalism is the perception of national community as continuity from pre-modern times, each citizen a blood-brother descending from the common ancestry, bound together by unique culture (such as language) and shared customs (such as religion).

Furthermore, Ethnic Nationalism operates on a historicist paradigm: it tends to believe that the nation had experienced an exemplar Golden Age in some past, and seeks to base the present outlook of the nation on that Age. Therefore, ethnic nationalism can be said to be *backward-looking* in character. What's more, due to its perceived root in kindred, Ethnic Nationalism tends to be exclusive: since national community is a manifestation of the national ethnic group's will of self-determination, the way of life of the prevailing ethnic group is also the appropriate, national norm that all should follow (Janmaat, 2006).

Ethnic Nationalism is also described to be reactionary and autocratic in nature, as opposed to the liberal outlook of Civic counterpart.

This dissertation will adopt the theoretical dichotomy of Civic-Ethnic Nationalism to investigate whether such trend existed in Siamese national identity before, during, and after 24th June Revolution.

Criticism of Civic–Ethnic Nationalism Framework

The methodology is not without controversy, however. Kuzio (2002) criticized the typology, calling it a “myth”, on the ground of historical inaccuracies and hypocritical approach to the subject. For instance, all Western nationalisms had experienced element of cultural, historicist distinction, ethnic conflicts are present even in countries identified as Civic Nationalism, defying the claim of Civic “culture-blindness”, and even if some nations could truly be categorized as Civic states, liberal concepts like democracy and egalitarianism are not guaranteed in those societies. Kuzio also pointed out that ethnic-civic difference is not static: many Eastern European states, after all, became civic after the collapse of the Soviet Union, raising question concerning the validity of civic-ethnic dichotomy.

Indeed, many additional examples support Kuzio’s criticism. British national identity, described to be ‘civic’ by Kohn, exhibits some ‘racial uniqueness’ of the British – portraying itself as an exceptional island civilization (Law, 2005). Nationalism endorsed by the Chinese Communist Party privileges the Hun majority while aggressively excludes racial minorities, in spite of its civic ideology of Marxism-Leninism (Yahuda, 2000). Last of all, American nationalism – perceived to be democratic and liberal – could be exclusive and very martial in nature (Pei, 2007).

The last example mentioned above is highlighted specifically by Kaufmann (2000; 2004) who dispels the perception of American nationalism founded on cosmopolitanism and liberal republicanism (Kohn, 1957). Kaufmann argued that until 1960s the outlook of American nationalism had been in fact dominated by ethnic-based White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) ethics and identities.

Re-assessing Civic-Ethnic Nationalisms

In spite of many well-established criticisms, the framework of Civic-Ethnic Nationalisms is still useful. The dichotomy simply needs a radically altered interpretation that diverged from original thesis proposed by Kohn.

Laborde (2002) proposed a 4-layered perspective rather than Kohn’s 2-ended spectrum. The new civic-ethnic framework would seek out the elements of (1)

primordial links (2) *social culture* (3) *political culture* (4) *abstract universal value* within a nation in order to determine its character; nations that exhibit (1) and (2) more than (3) and (4) would be categorized as Ethnic Nationalism.

Similarly, Janmaat (2006) agreed that Kohn's distinction of Civic-Ethnic is still valid, but opted for a 3 dimensional framework, one that is based on *ethnic-cultural-political* rather than simply *civic-ethnic*. Drawing from various surveys, Janmaat concluded that the loyalty to the nation in fact centers on a varied degree of political (how the citizens view their nation's political and democratic accomplishment, and its institutions), cultural (the citizens' pride in historical, linguistic, and cultural uniqueness), and ethnic (the citizens' identification with the ancestral and racial myth) dimensions.

Although Kaufmann (2006) rejected the static categorization of Civic-Ethnic Nationalism in American identity, he implied that the dichotomy does exist but merely varies in chronological rather than geographical space. A nation – America, in Kaufmann's case – might witness both Civic and Ethnic resurgences in its historical identity, depending on the social and political sentiment in certain periods. In fact, even Kuzio (2002) appeared to recognize this 'shift' of Civic-Ethnic paradigm. This is the view that this dissertation will adopt in approaching the conceptualization of ethnic-civic nationalism and 1932 Revolution in Siam.

Conclusion

Civic-Ethnic Nationalisms dichotomy could be adopted to detect paradigm shift or change of political structure in a nation, denoted by any divergence in civic or ethnic elements. This would be demonstrated by discussing the changing nature of Siamese nationalism before and after the 1932 Revolution. Nonetheless, it should be stressed that this typology holds no moral judgment. Categorization of Civic and Ethnic element is solely for analytical purpose; it does not guarantee that Civic Nationalism would be more liberal or progressive. Indeed, as the dissertation will reveal of 24 June Revolution, their civic nationalism can be forceful and illiberal.

Part II Historical Background

Formation of the Siamese Nation: Prior to 19th century, present-day Thailand consisted of collection of major city-states and smaller towns which paid tribute to the stronger ones, with no clear boundary, let alone a sense of nationhood. It is only the arrival of **European Imperialist powers** that changed this. In a contest involving mapping (an idea absent from Siamese mentality prior to this contest) and military aggression (Thongchai, 1991), both France and Siam (specifically Bangkok's royal court) scrambled to claim territories in what is modern-day Indochina as their own – a contest after which Siam emerged as a modern nation: **a community clearly defined by boundary and a central government.**

Bureaucratization and Absolute Monarchy: **Absolute Monarchy** is as recent as the Siamese nation itself. Adopted from the Western states by royal court under King Chulalongkorn (1853-1910), or Rama V, in 1870s as an instrument to wrench control of Siamese state from rivaling factions of noblemen, the Siamese Absolute Monarchy was characterized by Bangkok's **centralization of power, modernization, and monarchy's status as political clique** dictating all affairs within the state (Batson, 1984; Piyanart, 2007).

Crisis and Fall of Absolute Monarchy: After Chulalongkorn's death in 1910, the system he built started to disintegrate. Neither of the two subsequent kings, Vajiravudh (1910-1925) nor Prajadhipok (1925-1935), known as Rama VI and Rama VII respectively, shared a feature of a strong helmsman like Chulalongkorn.

Widespread discontent among military officers, bureaucrats, and the public paralleled the decline of Absolute Monarchy. Each group had its

grievances. Favoritism displayed by the royal government angered the military and bureaucratic officials who felt that only those close to the kings could hope for successful careers, coupled with the impression that the monarchs were too weak to remedy the situations (Charnvit, 2004). The more politically-conscious among the public repeated calls for replacing Absolute Monarchy with a Western democratic constitutional monarchy went unheeded by the government. Newspapers which criticized the monarchy frequently faced censorship and closure. However, it was economic trouble that affected the largest part of population. Siam under Absolute Monarchy was already plagued with conservative, autocratic budget management; the Great Depression in late 1920s dealt a fatal blow to the crippling nation (Batson, 1984; Charnvit, 2004). The royal government imposed further taxes on the population, especially the rural peasants, rather than cutting the royal family's luxurious expenses. All these grievances were address by the People's Party in their Manifesto proclaimed on 24th June 1932 (See Appendices).

Formation of the People's Party: In 1927, seven Siamese students studying abroad met in Paris to discuss a plan to overthrow Absolute Monarchy in Siam. They eventually formed the People's Party (Thawatt, 1972). Two of the seven students need to be singled out here: **Pridi Banomyong** and **Plak Khittasangkha**. The two symbolized a distinct difference within the People's Party that would later play a role in determining ideological outlooks of post-1932 governments, affecting the shifting force of civic – ethnic nationalism of Siam.

Pridi Banomyong (also known by his title, *Luang Praditmanutham*) was a student born in Ayutthaya province, north of Bangkok, in a humble trader family. Educated in laws and political science, Pridi emerged as leader of the civilian wing of the People's Party and served as "brain" of the group. Plak Khittasangkha (commonly known by his title *Luang Pibulsongkhram*, or simply *Pibul*), was a lieutenant in Siamese artillery division. Like Pridi, he was born in a petty merchant family. Pibul was responsible for helping organize the military wing of People's Party alongside other senior military officers.

The People's Party gradually expanded its membership via **personal connection** in secrecy to avoid detection; members were personally invited by their friends or colleagues rather than recruited broadly, and many of the members knew each other personally, reflecting the nature of Siamese bureaucracy of the time (Thawatt, 1972). There was no mass mobilization, no organization to propagate the ideology to the general public, and membership was largely limited to bureaucratic and military circles (though some civilians were admitted into the group).

Fall of Absolute Monarchy: on early morning of 24 June 1932, the Coup Promoters seized power in Bangkok. Rama VII, residing in seaside resort at the time, was given ultimatum to accept **Constitutional Monarchy** as a new form of government or a republic will be installed. The king agreed, marking the end of Absolute Monarchy in Siam, and the first “contemporary” constitution was declared.

Compromises and Conflicts: The early period was therefore marked by compromising between the People's Party and the royal establishment: a conservative, palace-backed *Phaya Manopakornnitada* (or, in short, *Phaya Mano*) was appointed as the first President of the People's Assembly (in actuality the first Prime Minister of Siam/Thailand), a **permanent constitution** was endorsed by the king in December that year – limiting the power of monarchy but still flaunts traditional royal glory in its wording, and the government resembled that of a coalition between the New Order and the Old Regime (Kobkua, 2003). However, their difference, both between the 2 camps and within the People's Party itself, started to surface as early as March 1933 when Pridi proposed his nationalist Economic Development Plan to the Assembly, which caused uproar and put him under widespread accusation of Communism (Somsak, 2001).

Counter-Coups and Counter-Revolution: The lull after 24 June Revolution came to an end in April 1933 when royalist faction of the government led by

Phaya Mano suspended the constitution and disbanded the Assembly, effectively starting the first incident of the long series of **coup d'état** in Thai history. Pridi, accused of being a Communist, went on exile, while *Phaya Mano* moved to remove other members of the People's Party from power. Sensing an attempt to bring Siam back to Absolute Monarchy, the People's Party under Pibul launched another coup in June. *Phaya Mano* was forced to resign, and Pridi summoned back to Siam amidst protests by royalists who saw him as Communist. The turmoil came to violent collision in October that year. Provincial armies, commanded by *Prince Bovoradej* and other powerful royalist figures, advanced on outskirts of Bangkok in an open revolt known as **Bovoradej Rebellion**. The royalist forces demanded complete surrender of the government and restoration of Absolute Monarchy. Pibul, appointed military commander by the People's Party, ignored the ultimatum and defeated the rebels. Thus ends the bloody conclusion of bloodless 24 June Revolution (Thawatt, 1976).

Consolidation of Power: Bovoradej Rebellion prompted the People's Party to purge all important government and military posts of royalist elements. The king fled to England and abdicated the throne in 1935, residing there until his death. In the following years the People's Party began their consolidation of power over Siam while keeping vigilant lookout for potential threats from the royalists. It is in this period that civic nationalism project was undertaken.

The Pibul Era: Pibul was appointed prime minister of Siam in 1938, and received title of Field Marshal. With distinct tendency for autocracy and fascism, Pibul departed from civic nationalism of previous years. Pridi's faction became marginalized as Pibul's military clique assumed power (Stowe, 1991). The following years came to be known as Pibul Era, distinguished by rise of the military, pro-Japan foreign policies, and cult of personality around Pibul. Siam was renamed Thailand in 1939. Thailand invaded Indochina in 1940, was occupied by Japanese armies in 1942 and subsequently joined the Second World War. Disagreeing with Pibul's declaration of war on the Allied, Pridi

participated in the Allied operation as leading figure in clandestine Free Thai Movement – a move which later guaranteed Thailand's position as an Allied victorious nation after the end of the war (Baker and Pasuk, 2005). Pibul was voted out of his Prime Minister position in 1944, and Pridi's faction in People's Party made a brief comeback to political arena.

Part III Three Waves of Siamese Nationalism

To discuss the topic, definitions of the terms are required.

Nation: Anthony Smith defines it as “*a named human population occupying a historic territory and sharing common myths and memories, a public culture, and common laws and customs for all members*” (Smith, 2003: 24). However, a *nation* should also have a degree of *political unit* as well (Giddens, 1994: 34). Nation, in this sense, is a politically conscious entity and not just a group of people with common identity which could also be something more (ethnic, race) or less (tribe).

Nationalism: Although Anthony Smith’s (Smith, 1991: 73) “*an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, unity, and identity on behalf of a population some of whose members deem it to constitute an actual or potential nation*” is quite appropriate for this dissertation, some other points have to be added. For instance, **nationalism** is not universal: it is, according to Kedourie, “*a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century*” (Kedourie, 1996: 49). Therefore, all nationalisms – Siamese ones included – are political product imported from the West.

There are at least 3 distinct forms of nationalism: the Primordial, the Situational, and the Constructivist views (Brown, 2003). The Primordial perspective tends to see nationalism as something that emerges out of natural, innate, organic, emotional sense which yearns for self-determination, and the “hidden” knowledge that one is born into particular linguistic, racial, or homeland community (Smith, 1981; 2003), whereas the Situational view regards nationalism as a rational, deliberate response to create an ideology that a modern, industrialized state requires (Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm; 1990). The Constructivist perspective would reveal that nationalism is, like the Situational view suggests, a constructed ideology, but out of irrational reasons rather than

rational ones. In this view, nationalism is a xenophobic fiction of the elite to appeal to confused, insecure state of mind of themselves and the mass (Kedourie, 1993). Nationalism in this sense is a constructed identity to ease the sense of lacking one (Brown, 2000: 23-25).

The first two may apply to many societies, but they would not apply to Siamese nationalisms. As this dissertation will discuss, there was no mass movement in awakening into their “pre-existing” unique identity, nor was there any need for nationalism to be imposed in the largely agricultural Siam – a nation that had not gone through many steps of modernization and industrialization like those in the West. It is largely a product of “from-the-above”, in cases of both ethnic and civic nationalisms, as this dissertation will discuss. The most likely explanation for Siamese nationalism would therefore be Constructivist argument.

Pre-24 June 1932 Ethnic Nationalism (1910s – 1932)

“Is this country ready to have some sort of representative Government? ... My personal opinion is an emphatic NO.” (King Rama VII’s memorandum, quoted in Batson, 1984: 288)

It is quite unclear when nationalism actually started in Siam. King Mongkut (1804-1868), or Rama IV, is often credited with personally “discovering” the Inscription Stone purportedly built in reign of Sukhothai period during one of his jungle trips (Piyanart, 2007). It portrayed Sukhothai as a prosperous, power city-state ruled by benevolent king. Whether the “discovery” is genuine or not, one thing is certain: this is the narrative of Siam the elite wanted to promote (Thongchai, 1994: 153-154).

However, to describe Rama IV’s aforementioned attempt as a nationalist activity would be historically inaccurate, for many components of nationalism defined in the previous chapter are absent: namely, it lacked a mass movement and the means to propagate the idea. Nationalism had to wait until, at the earliest, around 1910s (see the end of this chapter).

We can distinguish 3 important elements of Ethnic Nationalism in this period.

1. “Thai” as a **race**, not as a nation.

The word “*chart*” (ชาติ) in Thai language is peculiar. In modern day sense, it means nation in a territorial, boundary sense, whereas in pre-1932 era it meant something different. The etymology of “*chart*” is revealing: the word was originally associated with meanings like “birth” and “life” in Buddhist cosmological concept.

For example, “*chart nee*” (this life – ชาตินี้) means the current reincarnated form of one’s soul whereas “*chart nah*” (next life – ชาติน้ำ) means the rebirth in the next cycle of karma (Thongchai, 1997: 134-135). “*Chart*” can also denote essence, or a caste, a social rank (Vandergeest, 1990: 228). It could be equally used in both “*chart kasat*” (born-as-king – ชาตிகษัตริย์) or “*chart prai*” (born-as-peasant – ชาติไพร่), and “*chart Thai*” (born-as-Thai - ชาตินไทย).

Tied with the newly imported notion of “nation”, the elite explained that to be a Thai national is to be born as a Thai. Birth is the important keyword here. The elite often refers to being “*chart Thai*” or (Thai-born) in primordial term (Thongchai, 1997: 135-139). A myth of common descent explains the history of the Thais whom the Rama VI specifically described as an “organic society” (Charnvit, 2004: 59). In this account, Thais are a tribe, a race, which had been bounded by blood throughout the ages; the linear of kinship had run from the ancient years of nomadic journey and Sukhothai kingdom to the present Siam – a view initially proposed, in fact, by a Western missionary, W.C. Dodd (1923). The most evident example is a work by some aristocrat authors, most notably *Khun Vichitmatra*. The narrative suggests that the Thais are a tribe which originated in Altai Mountain Ranges, in Mongolia, from whence they had been migrating gradually across the vast, desolate lands of northern China – continuously harassed by the Chinese raiders. In southern China they had settled down for some time, before the Chinese again attacked these peaceful settlers. The Thais were once again forced to move southwards, leaving trails of their “kin” in the region, ending up in what is today Siam/Thailand (Khun Vichitmatra, 1928). Throughout the countless years of hardship, defensive warfare, and migration the Thais had banded together to present time.

Prince Damrong, another prolific author in the 1910s, also contributed to the notion of Thais as a race by claiming that there are certain characteristics unique of the Thais: *love of independence, toleration, and assimilation* (quoted in

Breazeale, 2008). Images of the Golden Age of the ancient Thais are regularly evoked to create a romantic ideal all Thais should follow (Copeland, 1993; Vella: 1978: 202-213). Much of this genre resembles folk nationalism found in German romantic thoughts.

It was also in this period that the field of archaeology was first introduced to Siam extensively. Siamese Archaeological Service was created in 1924. The purpose of archaeology, wrote King Rama VI, was to “make the Thai more aware that our Thai race is deep-rooted and is not a race of jungle-folk” (Vajiravudh, 1954: 9). The elite argued that history of Siam can be divided into linear successions of capital cities: Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, Thonburi, and Bangkok, with each period assigned to the name of different capital cities (Baker and Pasuk, 2005:75; Thongchai, 1997: 162). The elite, therefore, backed their claim by interpreting the temples and archaeological sites of the past as identity of the Thais. To look into the future of the Thais, these elite propagators appeared to argue, one must look into its past (Vella: 1978: 205) – hence, the nature of backward-looking of Thai Ethnic Nationalism.

2. Thai Nationalism as reactionary force against “external threats”

The nationalism propagated by the royal elite in this period has its enemies: mostly it is the Western Imperial powers and the ethnic Chinese residing in Siam. The fear of Chinese influence in Siamese affairs among the Absolute Monarchy elite was quite evident. With the Chinese immigrants numbering over 792,000 in a nation of only 8 million-strong population (Charnvit, 2004:57), the Siamese ruling clique had a reason to be alarmed. When the Chinese immigrants flexed their muscle by organizing a strike across Bangkok in 1910, the industry and commerce of Siam plunged into chaos (Charnvit, 2004:60). Rama VI himself penned many articles and books attacking the Chinese, accusing them of being the “Oriental Jews” who refused to assimilate and exploited resources in Siam, stealing the wealth of Siamese for their relatives in China (Wyatt, 2003: 216). The royal government viewed the Chinese with

utmost suspicion. They reinforced the vision of potential *geg meng* (“revolution”) by the Chinese ethnics living in Siam to copycat their fellow kin in mainland China. In their view, the Chinese were supposed to assimilate into Thai (Baker and Pasuk, 2005: 114-116). The paranoia toward the Chinese ethnics also influenced the Siamese monarchy’s reluctance to establish an electoral democracy in Siam as the ruling clique argued that the Chinese voters would only vote for candidates with Chinese background and Chinese agenda¹ (Charnvit, 2004: 61).

The mentioned hostility against the Western Imperial powers was expressed in form of irredentism. As mentioned in the historical background section, although historical evidences suggest that the boundary of Siamese nation is a result of struggle between Siam and French Imperialists in which the Siamese court ‘lost’ the claim to Indochina but still ‘won’ the claim to Northeastern Siam, the royal elite had been articulating the event as a tragic defeat of ‘defenseless’ Siam in the face of the mighty West (Wyatt shares this sentiment in his description of the events. Wyatt, 2003: 184-197). Their aggrieved humiliation amounted into vengeful type of nationalism which seeks to redeem itself. The irredentist notion that Thais had the duty to “take back” Indochina had been lurking ever since (Thongchai, 1997: 128-163). It has been suggested that the elite had been remarkably scarred by the realization that their power was no match against the Imperial Powers (Thongchai, 1997: 141) – a sentiment that would correspond well to the Constructivist view of nationalism. However, due to Siam’s cowed relations with the West, it appeared that this irredentism had not manifested itself in any active movement during the Absolute Monarchy era.

3. The monarchy as center of Thai nationalism

Apart from the perception of Siamese history as descending from various kingdoms, the royal elite had made it abundantly clear that the monarchy is

¹ This fear, by the way, was proved to be baseless as post-1932 elections showed no trend of ethno-demagoguery

central to identity of the Thais (Baker and Pasuk, 2005: 106-107; Copeland, 1993). The kings are described to be defenders of Thai kingdoms throughout the ages. Rama VI went as far as stating that loyalty to the monarchy is requirement to be a Thai. Siamese society had been described as an organic one: the monarchy acting like the “head” while royal subjects beneath the monarchs were merely other parts of the body. Naturally, in Absolute Monarchy where kings are regarded as *Lords of Lives*, there was no thought of popular sovereignty (Copeland, 1993). Therefore, the vision of “nation” advocated by the Absolute Monarchy was a strictly hierarchical society, not a community where all citizens were equal. Political will of the people had no place in this type of nationalism (Wyatt, 2003: 217). When calls for popular model of politics were made, typical responses from the royal elite stated that the Siamese public “lacked enough knowledge to govern themselves” (Vella, 1978: 72), and therefore “not ready for democracy”. The Absolute Monarchy clung to its paternalist mentality to the last years of its rule: King Rama VII told an American newspaper as late as 1931 that Siamese people were obedient to him like “children”.

The culture of printing press played a major role in this period. Proliferation of newspapers, books, and magazines² in Siam marked the new chapter of nationalism in Siam – a period in which “imaginings” took shape, found their ways into the audience, and collided. Proponents of ethno-royal nationalism, like Prince Damrong and King Rama VI himself, could now propagate their thoughts in the press (Vella, 1978: 243-255). Simultaneously, another form of nationalism was also being formed, spearheaded by writers and journalists of commoner background. The most notable example was *Kulap Saipradit*, pioneer of social-realist novels in Siam which told stories of commoners’ lives amidst society of inequality and injustice (Charnvit, 2004). As mentioned, these newspapers helped paving the way for democratic sentiment among the population, eventually accumulating in the overthrow of Absolute Monarchy by the People’s Party and establishment of civic nationalism in June 1932. Anderson’s thesis of

² By 1927 there were 127 printing presses and 14 publishers in Siam (Baker and Pasuk, 2005: 107)

how printing press enabled the “imagination” of a nation (Anderson, 2006) is brilliantly demonstrated once again.

June 24th Civic Nationalism (1932 – 1938)

While it is correct to say that democracy had not arrived in Siam, the hope of democracy had. Soldiers, students, intelligentsia, had drunk deep of the strong wine of desire for “Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite.” (Landon, 1939: 42)

The question of what June 24th Revolution means still needs to be addressed. A wide array of importance and manner of the event had been ascribed by many academics, and public perception of the revolution varies. There may be three narratives here that should be addressed.

24 June as mere shift of power from one group of elite to another

“24 June 1932 Revolution” is often called “24 June 1932 change of governance” by this view – description devoid of any ideological implication. This interpretation contends that the People’s Party merely represents another group of elite which used Constitutional Monarchy and electoral democracy to establish a new order for their own gain. Siamese social structure had hardly been altered, since 24th June was merely a change of power players, hence not even qualified for the term “revolution” (See: Thaamsook, 1992; Kobkua, 2003; Piyant, 2007). This is the view this dissertation aims to oppose by illustrating that 24th June 1932 and the subsequent events could be considered revolution that introduced many new aspects to Siamese society. However, this view still correctly stated that the revolution is, after all, limited to a certain clique of New Order.

24 June as class struggle

This view, which asserts that the 24th June 1932 Revolution was a movement of the proletariats to overthrow the feudalistic ruling class (See: Ungpakorn, 1997; 2000), is directly in contrast with the previous one, and also problematic. The social structure of Siam in 1930s – one that lacks both strong politically-

conscious rural peasants and vibrant political culture among the working class – is hardly a fertile ground for class revolution. As mentioned previously, the People’s Party didn’t extend its influence to the proletariat at all. However, this view holds some value that there was indeed political consciousness displayed by urban population, expressed via debates in the press.

To argue that the revolution is a class struggle (the likes of 1917 Russia) would be an exaggeration, but to argue that People’s Party is an isolated attempt by a single power clique to seize power with no popular support is even more questionable. This dissertation will therefore adopt the synthesis of the 2 contradictory views: the overthrow of Absolute Monarchy June 24th was a coup perpetrated by a coalition of bureaucrats and military officials backed by popular consent, with certain degree of ideological conviction (See: Charnvit, 2004; Thamrongsak, 2000; Nakharin, 1990). This view contends that the economic and political displeasures felt by the public at large in the twilight years of the Absolute Monarchy were enough to constitute a “ripe” situation for the overthrow of the Old Regime (Charnvit, 2004: 31).

Furthermore, there is the third view we could adopt to interpret the 24th June revolution:

24 June Revolution as a Nationalist Quest

The revolution on 24th June 1932 was an action of the Coup Promoters who were aggrieved with the conditions of Siamese society and politics which could be considered ‘backward’ compared to other ‘advanced’ Western nations, and the inferior status of Siamese nation in the international community (Charnvit, 2004; Copeland, 1993; Barme, 1993). It is identical to the grievous, insecure emotional factors categorized as the Constructivist formation of nationalism mentioned earlier. Major members of the People’s Party echoed this sentiment. Pridi expressed his concern over the weakness and vulnerability of Siam, besieged by two Imperialist superpowers in the regions (Pridi, 1972: 2). Another member of

the Coup Promoters also explained that his decision to join the People's Party stemmed from 'advancement' he had witnessed in the West, which he contrasted with the backwardness of Siamese society (Prayoon, 1974: 3).

Although it had been pointed out that this external threat from foreign powers was not very obvious (Vandergeest 1990: 204) – in spite of all the unequal treatments, Siam had never been directly colonized, thus denying a strong opposition against Western powers to be formed – and the events that followed the revolution revealed that the Imperialist powers had no intention to interfere in Siam in the first place, the fear of these nationalists appeared to be genuine enough (Wyatt, 2003: 234).

Siamese 24 June 1932 Civic Nationalism could be described in 3 main aspects.

1. *Nation as community of common destiny shared by the “people”*

Nation is often referred to as an entity in which all citizens of Siam are directly tied to. Although this rhetoric could be found in Absolute Monarchy type of nationalism as well, the post-1932 attitude seems to differ: it directly proclaims the voluntary and participating aspect of citizens within the same nation. After 1932, a “*common good*” ethics was preached repeatedly by the government. In theoretical term, it meant that citizens of Siam should see themselves as belonging to the nation – nation is hereby described as a community, no longer an ethnic race as depicted by the Absolute Monarchy. In practice, the “*common good*” was physically enforced among rural population as well; the post-1932 state often conscripted the local community to contribute to the state project on their own initiative, fund, and labor (Vandergeest, 1990:240-242).

Another layer of nation depicted by the 1932 Revolution is even much more distinct: the popular sovereignty and decrease (if not rejection in some cases) of royalism.

The name of the People's Party (*Kana-Ratsadorn* คณะราษฎร, or *Kana-Ratsa คณะราษฎร* in some accounts, meaning literally *Group/Party-People*) itself is intriguing. The evocation of “the People” or *Ratsa* (ราษฎร) is possibly a direct opposition to another word which was extensively associated with the Absolute Monarchy culture: *Raja* (*King, Royal* – ราช). Although the usage of “the People” (*Ratsa/Ratsadorn*) preceded the coup in 1932 by many decades – dating back to the reign of Rama V – the word became increasingly associated with antagonism against the monarchy during 1920s especially among the press which was frequently attacking the Absolute Monarchy government and demanding democratic constitution during that time (Charnvit, 2004: 21-22; Baker and Pasuk, 2005: 116; Copeland, 1993). “The People” would come to play a central role in the event that toppled the Absolute Monarchy and beyond it. On 24th June itself, Manifesto of the People's Party extensively refers to the term “the People” as it heralded a new era of legitimacy in Siam (See appendices).

Moreover, “the People” envisioned by the 24 June Revolutionaries are rather different from the concept of “folk”. Pridi himself made it clear that “People” was his translation for the word *Ratsadorn* (Pridi, 1972: 6). Ethnic nationalism's elevation of folk or peasant as ‘the people’ (Smith, 2003: 34) does not apply here. “The People” is distinctively political and modernist. The 24 June revolution makes no attempt to refer to historical background of the folk to justify the revolution, and there are even hints that the revolution itself even goes as far as rejecting the folk culture, dismissing it as “backward” and undesirable (Copeland, 1993).

Glorification of “the People” was carried out alongside decreasing of the royal influence in public life (Stowe, 1991; Thaamsook, 1992). The first (“temporary”) Constitution of Siam, proclaimed on 27 June 1932, was written without any of the “royal language” that usually accompanied state institutions. Royal ranks and titles were promptly abolished as the revolution ‘attempted to

break down all remaining particularizing representations and *to replace them with national ones*' (Vandergeest, 1990 emphasis mine) Plan to confiscate royally-owned properties was also conceived (Batson, 1984:238), but abandoned when it was exposed that many government members planned to repurchase those lands themselves at much lower price, causing much embarrassment to the government (Wyatt, 2003: 251). Nonetheless, Crown Property, once fused into state treasury during the Absolute Monarchy, was now separated and overseen directly by the government (Somsak, 2006). Many royal ceremonies were abolished, including the Oath-taking Ceremony which required bureaucratic officials to swear their allegiance to the king during Absolute Monarchy years. (Thaamsook, 1992:46)

The prefix "*Nai - นาย*" (Master) used to apply to someone in higher rank during the Absolute Monarchy, but in post-1932 period it was used as simple prefix in front of any ordinary name (Vandergeest, 1990:227). For instance, Nai Lert would be equivalent to Lord/Master Lert in pre-1932, but he would simply be Mr. Lert after 1932.

Rise of the new form of 'egalitarian' architecture also accompanied the 24th June Revolution. Collection of new architects, many were educated in the West, came into prominence after the revolution and introduced influence of Neo-Classic and Art Deco into Siamese architecture. They celebrated simple, geometrical formats with and few or no sophisticated decorations while rejecting the traditional architecture denoting royal power found during the Absolute Monarchy (Chatri, 2005: 26, 30-32, 36).

Furthermore, it was also during this revolutionary period that, for the first time, commoners - as citizens of the nation – were subject to political mobilization and ideological propagation. As mentioned earlier, although concepts of nationalism already existed during the Absolute Monarchy, it was largely limited. The Siamese civic nationalism, on the other hand, turned toward the common

people (Terwiel, 2002: 111; Copeland, 1993). This was done in both ideological and pragmatic sense.

The former involves indoctrinating (“educating”) the mass about the new system of government, concepts like freedom, electoral democracy, duty as citizen, and the Constitution³. Tens of thousands of booklets explaining about the revolutionary government and its principles were distributed to villages across the country. A typical ‘educational trip’ dispatched by the government to provinces outside Bangkok would consist of talented speakers travelling to give speech about newly installed democracy to the local audience (Thaamsook, 1992:78-80).

The latter is more explicit: reminding the citizens to serve as “ears” of the government, to be vigilant against political enemy who seeks to topple to Constitution (and the government itself). This latter trend was much intensified especially after the bloody counterrevolution of Bovoradej. The government, endowed with advantage of radio, for the first time in Siamese history initiated propaganda via the airwaves and mobilized supports for their side during the revolt (Copeland, 1993). Many citizens, including rail workers and boy scouts, showed up to volunteer for the fight against the rebels, but the government eventually turned down their offer (Thawatt, 1972).

2. Nation as Political and Ideological Community

Contrary to the image of nation as envisioned by the Absolute Monarchy thinkers of nationalism, civic nationalism of 24 June Revolution stressed greatly on value and ideology, rather than identity (Copeland, 1993). It is also very political. This is hardly surprising, as the 24 June 1932 Revolution brought in the new sphere of politics – a field once entirely alienated from vast majority of the population during the monarchist regime. Politics was not in the interest, nor was

³ The People’s Party outlined their ‘democratization’ project in 3 stages: firstly, establishment of People’s Assembly to oversee the national affairs; secondly, Siamese population’s ‘learning of democracy’ for 10 years; thirdly, after 10 years of ‘learning’, fully elected government. (Stowe, 1991: 26)

it considered to be, of the commoners or the rural peasants, let alone a national agenda (Anderson, 1978: 194-200; Charnvit, 2005: 30-32, 46-49). Now, in post-1932 Siam, people themselves were the sources of legitimacy of the regime (at least in theory), and the regime had to legitimize their rule by stressing values instead of simply asserting a mythical ground for authority as the Absolute Monarchy had done.

Sovereignty

The 24 June revolutionaries had explicitly constructed their argument around the need for “real” sovereignty of Siam (‘Sovereignty’ is ranked first in the People’s Party *Six Points*. See appendices). The nation, they argued, did not enjoy a full status of sovereignty under the Absolute Monarchy administration, as they bowed to the Western Imperialists’ imposition of unequal treaties and treatment upon Siam (Copeland, 1993). For instance, Siam could only represent herself diplomatically to the West with the rank of *minister*, not *ambassador*. Indeed, although some major alteration to these treaties was achieved by the end of First World War, Siam was still under impression of unequal rank with other nations in term of legal sovereignty by 1932 (Charnvit, 2004). The People’s Party government immediately set this as their priority. Pridi headed the negotiation with foreign powers and managed to secure all modifications within years (Landon, 1939: 60). The longing for sovereignty is very unique feature of 1932 civic nationalism. Another example of this nationalist fervor in post-1932 period is the introduction of economic nationalism. State enterprises such as the Fuel Division in Ministry of Defense and Siam Cotton Mill were established shortly after the overthrow of the Absolute Monarchy (Landon, 1939; Wyatt, 2003).

However, in the downside, overt obsession with sovereignty also fermented anti-West attitude among the citizens and this would later result in resurface of irredentist spirit of pre-1932 ethnic nationalism.

Democracy and Civil Rights Though faced with uneasy early stage of

revolution, the post-1932 revolutionary government managed to install electoral democracy under concept of Constitutional Monarchy and displayed some level of commitment to the cause. Partial election was held as early as 1933 and universal suffrage was granted in 1937 (Stowe, 1991: 99). Morality and Political Science University⁴ was founded by the government to provide education to commoners (until that time Chulalongkorn University was the only university in the nation, admission was limited to students with elite upbringing) especially in subjects of political science and liberal democracy – Pridi himself was seated as the first director of the university (Charnvit, 2004). Meanwhile, political consciousness, which had been taking momentum since later stages of Absolute Monarchy, continued to flourish in earnest under the civic nationalism of 1932 – despite occasional disruptions from the regime which sought to limit what the press could report (Landon, 1939: 49).

Political culture became vibrant even among lower class of the society (Ungpakorn, 2000). Education budget was quadrupled in the first few years of the revolution, with new schools built and the existing ones better funded, in an attempt to increase literacy and understanding of politics among the population (Landon, 1939: 55; Vandergeest, 1990:241). Prior to the revolution, education was neglected by the Absolute Monarchy to the point that many teachers in the rural countryside were forced to teach with no salary at all (Vandergeest, 1990: 245).

Nevertheless, the effect of the democratization was far from perfection. In the rural countryside, effects of the political change was felt at least in local governance, but it still lacked the animated political culture as experienced by urban and middle class population. Moreover, in spite of democratic success in other areas, Chinese immigrants continued to be marginalized as in the era of Absolute Monarchy (Barme, 1993: 107; Landon, 1939: 92-94).

⁴ It is now known simply as Thammasart (*Morality*) University.

Toward the Ideals If Absolute Monarchy could be categorized as backward-looking, the civic nationalism of 1932 was starkly forward-looking, distinctively identified by their Utopian idealistic goals. From the beginning, the People's Party declared a highly ambitious goal – to bring about the Utopian era of *Sri Ariya* for all Siamese. It should be noted that the declaration was somewhat against orthodox Buddhist cosmology; *Sri Ariya* would come only at appointed time of 5000 years BE. This sentiment displayed some level of materialism: the People's Party appeared to insist that Utopia was possible within capability of humankind (Nakharin, 1990). Almost immediately after the coup, the more radical faction of the People's Party set out the plan for such Utopia: Pridi's Economic Plan presented to the Assembly (See Landon's translation of the Plan in: Landon, 1939: 260-293). It called for total *nationalization* of all productivity, abolishment of privately-owned lands, and establishment of state as the sole employer. The measure, Pridi argued, would lead Siam into a society of equality. The plan was accused of Communist influence (Somsak, 2001) and was eventually not pursued⁵, although some elements of it were adopted nonetheless, such as cooperation among farmers (Wyatt, 2003: 239). The regime regularly reminded the Siamese citizens that they must contribute ever to the idealist goals, expressed in countless pieces of propaganda and artworks during the civic nationalism period (Chatri, 2005: 138-139, 159, 170).

The aforementioned “forward-looking” nature of the 1932 revolution could be highlighted by the meaning of “modern” or “advanced” in Thai language – *gao nah*, literally, “forward-pace”. Advancement and progress were seen as movement through linear time, a universal truth of barbaric backwardness toward civilization. Concepts like high, ahead, good were the goals of the nation and its citizens, ever away from ignorance, backwardness, low (Nakharin, 1990; Copeland, 1993). The grievance of Siam being a backward nation was mentioned previously as the cause of the June 24th Revolution, and that grievance appeared

⁵ Nonetheless, when questioned by the Assembly, Pridi admitted that he based his plan on “the socialist pattern with an admixture of liberalism” (Landon, 1939: 307)

to continue its influence in the years that followed the coup. This resulted in a forward-looking pursuit toward modern ideals undertaken in a large by the state. 'The officials took on a new role', wrote Vandergeest, 'no longer simply administrators, they also became educators, leaders, and moral examples. The more advanced were enjoined to take positive action to move the entire nation "ahead".' (Vandergeest, 1990) It was a pursuit of state ideals via implementing state-sanctioned public culture; that is, the state started to regulate and shape the society in minutely detail in order to achieve the Utopia promised by the regime. The regulation covered wide ranges of activities in everyday life – from what time the citizens should get up to how they should wear their clothes (Thaamsook, 1992: 77-78; Copeland, 1993). Mainstream academic thoughts tend to categorize this attempt of state-sanctioned public culture as belonging to the later Pibul Era, but evidences suggested that it was in fact pioneered here in the period of state's Utopia (Terwiel, 2002:108-109).

Indeed, the impact of the revolution on Siamese ideals far exceeded the political sphere. Buddhist cosmology and concept of morality itself appeared to be altered as Siam embarked on the quest toward modernity after the 24th June Revolution (Reynolds, 1976).

3. Institutional and symbolic loyalty

The epitome of civic nationalism is the channeling of citizens' loyalty to its institution and symbols. Post-1932 Siamese civic nationalism is rich with such expression. The most apparent case was probably the *Cult of Constitution* introduced by the revolutionary regime.

The Cult of Constitution

Following the ratification of Defense of Constitution Act in the wake of Bovoradej Rebellion, the government did not simply rely on networks of state detective police and vigilance of the citizens (Thaamsook, 1992: 36-40) to deter any further attempt of royalist counterrevolution, but actually went out of the way to establish a culture of worshipping the Constitution in the literal sense. Images

of the Constitution, represented in a folded manuscript resting upon the *paan* or traditional container which was originally used to accommodate Buddhist holy text, were rapidly produced by the government in various methods. The images appeared both in prints (e.g., banknotes and stamps), fine arts (Barme, 1993: 112), and sculpture. The latter was manifested in statues such as the *Monument of Constitution's Defenders* in Laksi area – the site of battle between the People's Party and royalist troops – equating the action of the government during the Bovoradej Rebellion with defending the sanctity of the Constitution, and Constitution statues in front of many local town halls in outlying provinces (Chatri, 2005: 49, 52). Processions associated with the presence of the Constitution were very elaborate, with ceremonies and symbolic instruments accompanying the Constitution that would have normally been used with religious and royal objects (Saichon, 2002), indeed, this was due to the fact that, at the height of its cult status, the Constitution was promoted as *sing-sak-sit-kong-chart* – *สิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์ของชาติ*, meaning Sacred Object of the Nation (Baker and Pasuk, 2005). A British diplomat in Siam of the time, who had visited a 'Constitution pavilion', described the portrayal of the Constitution as somewhat even more sacred than that of the king, with the Constitution seated on an altar larger than the nearby Buddha and portrait of the King, surrounded by offerings of candles and flowers. "In other words," he wrote in a report to London, "Semi-divine honours were being paid to the Constitution" (Barme, 1993: 111).

In Bangkok, a replica of Constitution was placed in the middle of Sanam Luang (*Royal Field*), a site once restricted exclusively to the royal cremation ceremonies and other related state duties during the Absolute Monarchy, under Siamese traditional pavilion with soldiers standing guard around it, and citizens were encouraged to pay visit and bow to the Constitution, in manner of showing loyalty. (Chatri, 2005: 150) Boy Scouts were instructed to salute the Constitution when walking past one, and many songs with lyrics glorifying the Constitution were written (Thaamsook, 1992: 78). Members of the National Assembly were required to swear allegiance to the Constitution, and the political prisoners

arrested in connection with the Bovoradej Rebellion were similarly forced to swear their loyalty to the Constitution before their releases were approved (Barme, 1993).

Kedourie asserted that nationalism could evolve into 'civic religion', i.e., a secular version of religious millennialism which would supply the nationalist sentiment with sanctified symbols and loyalty instead of traditional religion (Kedourie, 1993: 92-103). Civic religion is also mentioned as one of the main features of civic nationalism. Hobsbawm, writing of the French Revolution, pointed out "mass production of monuments" and specifically "invented traditions" to install new sacred entities (such as 'Goddess of Reason') were key elements of civic religion propagated by the Revolution (Hobsbawm, 1983). Siamese Cult of Constitution could be interpreted in the similar manner.

Apart from the Constitution, the 1932 civic nationalists propagated their ideals by restructuring public holidays and state ceremonies. Although the celebration of anniversary of Revolution on 24 June was discussed in the Assembly but the coup leaders eventually turned it down, fearing the occasion would be seen as display of "arrogance" by the royalist supporters (Charvit, 2004: 219), the regime did indeed invade territories of loyalty held by the Absolute Monarchy before the revolution. Public holidays were altered; birthday anniversary of the monarch was no longer celebrated publicly (Somsak, 2004; Nakharin, 2006, 165), and the Constitutional Day was declared important for the public, for example (Thaamsook, 1992: 79).

Post-24 June 1932 Ethnic-Civic Hybrid Nationalism (1939-1944)

“We, the whole nation, can act as one person.” (Field Marshal Pibulsongkhram, quoted in Baker and Pasuk, 2005: 126)

The period is often known as **Pibul Era** as it centered on Field Marshal *Plak* (known by his initial *P.* or *Por*) *Pibulsongkhram*. As mentioned in the Historical Background section, Pibul was one of the revolutionaries who joined the People’s Party and gradually gained his prestige and influence in the subsequent years after the revolution in 1932 due to his part in organizing June 1933 Coup and suppressing Bovoradej Rebellion (Stowe, 1991).

Pibul was generally credited for much of the era’s projects, but there was also *Khun Vichitwatakarn*, thinker and prolific author who served as ideological aide to Pibul, whose published ideas closely resembled Pibul’s governmental works (Saichon, 2002).

Vichit was, like Pibul and Pridi and many other 24 June coup promoters, educated in France. He had worked as bureaucrat under the Absolute Monarchy and certainly had connection with the coup promoters, though he never joined the People’s Party as he was a conservative royalist. Vichit was a passionate writer. He absorbed many ideologies and twisted them with his own stance, creating a bizarre mixture of nationalism, Buddhist magic, and fascism in his works (Barme, 1993: 45-52, 78). Vichit increasingly became close to the military faction of People’s Party, especially after Bovoradej Rebellion in which he switched to government’s side, and eventually secured close relation with Pibul. During *Pibul Era*, Vichit oversaw many projects, including the radio programs, cultural committee, and Department of Fine Arts (Saichon, 1991). It is very probable that much of Pibul’s ideological outlook came directly from Vichit (Kobkua, 1995).

As a writer, Vichit advocated nationalism, or what he called “*latthi-chu-*

chart – ถิ่นชาติ (cult-upholding-nation). He believed that the world is distinctly divided into different nations, with different destinies to be realized by each nation's citizens – nations are the source of ultimate loyalty (Saichon, 2002). Vichit stressed importance in individual prowess and success. He advocated that in order for a nation to be successful, the citizens must undergo through the course of **Human Revolution** – a radical change of how we acted into a lifestyle and mentality suitable for building a great nation – and obedience to a strong leadership, preferably a military dictator, who shall safeguard the nation, leading it to greatness (Barme, 1993; Copeland, 1993). Nevertheless, he still displayed much of his conservative and traditional ideology, arguing for glorification of the past of the country. In a way, Vichit's works interestingly reflected the hybrid nature of civic – ethnic nationalism in Pibul Era.

Vichit was certainly not alone in promoting ethnic nationalism. Already as early as 1935, signs of support for authoritarian, aggressive nationalism had started to surface under the civic nationalism regime. For example, a military academy had been exposed to have adopted a map of “*Lost Territories*” to teach its cadets that Siam had lost Cambodia and Laos, and it was her duty to take them back. This resulted in protests from the French Consulates (Baker and Pasuk, 2005). A book entitled *How to Love the Nation* appeared in 1935 with contents that seemed anachronistic of its time. Written by a little-known author, it basically reprinted (literally) ethnic nationalist literature that was exhorted by the pre-1932 nationalists and would be exhorted again by Pibul Regime, calling for “*Lost Territories*” to be reclaimed and displaying much of totalitarian language (Terwiel, 2002: 112-114). A trend was clear: the ethnic nationalism of pre-1932 period was making a comeback in a wholly new situation. Now equipped with post-1932 popular nationalist fervor, it would soon manifest in a spectacular state-sanctioned ideology with mass movements, a phenomenon even its advocates under the Absolute Monarchy could only dream of – if they ever had known the concept of popular nationalism.

“Return” of Ethnic Nationalism

Many elements of pre-1932 ethnic nationalism were to be found extensively in the nationalist project under Pibul government. The glorified myth of common descent of the Tai race, mentioned in the Absolute Monarchy era, had returned to governmental rhetoric again in Pibul Era (Baker and Pasuk 2005: 139). Most notably was the resurgence of the Tai race discourse, once confined to limited circles such as authors, academic and elite thinkers before the 1932 revolution.

The ideological conviction of the great Tai/Thai race that had scattered across the Southeast Asian peninsula had prompted Pibul regime to change the name of Siam to Thailand in 1939 as the government argued that Siamese were in fact part of the great race of Thais (Kobkua, 1995). This dissertation also adopts the change of Siam to Thailand as the visible milestone of ethnic nationalist triumph.

Discourse of Tai/Thai race was now endorsed by the state, propagated actively and aggressively. Pibul regime advocated the creation of Great Thai Empire, and the public was wrapped in the irredentist, ethnic nationalist emotion. Street demonstrations demanded the reclaim of “Lost Territories” while newspapers reproduced the sentiment of “Thailand for Thais” (Wyatt, 2003). This ultimately resulted in the invasion of French Indochina and even more xenophobic anti-Chinese campaigns. The government banned foreigners from taking up many careers in Thailand, closed down many Chinese schools and newspapers, and nationalized some Chinese private businesses (Barme, 1993). Buddhism was declared the pillar of the nation, effectively excluding Christians (Varisa, 2007) and Muslims in turn. Muslims in the south, where the Malay ethnics still retained much of their cultural identity, were greatly discriminated.

This issue would eventually return to haunt modern day Thailand in the form of ethno-religious conflict (Baker and Pasuk, 2005).

The theme of “Golden Age” myth had returned to public discourse of nationalism. For example, Vichit’s plays, performed at National Theatre with governmental endorsement, were prominent display of such propaganda. In his plays, he claimed that in order for Thais to go forward, they must look backward, to appreciate and imitate the good values of the bygone Golden Age of Sukhothai (Barme, 1993: 162). These values were strikingly familiar to what Absolute Monarchy thinkers would promote: namely, warlike bravery, sacrifice, and the love of their blood-brothers.

The similarity between pre-1932 ethnic nationalism and the nationalist projects undertaken by the Pibul government was no coincidence; in fact, for some reason it even appeared that Pibul regime deliberately imitated the idea advocated by Absolute Monarchy nationalists. For instance, Pibul publicly praised Rama VI as the great contributor to Thai nationalism, in spite of his disdain toward the rest of Thai monarchy in general (Stowe, 1991). Indeed, Pibul Era nationalism was described to be Siamese traditional nationalism “minus the monarchy” (Baker and Pasuk, 2005: 138).

Despite its commitment to propagating ethnic nationalist thought, the real peculiarity of *Pibul Era* was its extensive usage of civic nationalism aspects to propagate ethnic nationalism messages. Statues, monuments, and state ceremonies that were initiated by the 1932 revolutionary civic nationalism were not only continued but actively extended. The outcome was a hybrid of civic – ethnic nationalism: purely civic aspects like Constitution Fair, announcement of June 24 as National Day to commemorate the revolution, construction of Democracy Monument, but there were also civic display of ethnic narrative like a monument glorifying the great deed of villagers in Ayutthaya kingdom that fought against the Burmese invaders to death (Chattri, 2005).

Extension of civic nationalism and state-sanctioned public culture

As mentioned, Pibul Era was also famous for expressing its nationalism in civic symbolism and language. The decrease in royalism from public life was also continued from the spirit of 1932 revolution (Saichon, 2002: 31). Pibul took the anti-royalist campaign to the new level by launching an offensive revamping of loyalty symbolism in Thailand. The Garuda, symbol of Thai royal family, was replaced with the Cock, personalized symbolism of Pibul (Stowe, 1991: 220). Rama VIII, then a juvenile king, was overshadowed by the veneration of Pibul himself. His rank was promoted to Field Marshal, and was referred to as *Dear Leader* (*thaan-phu-nam* – ท่านผู้นำ) in the public. He enjoyed cult of personality built around him. Songs were written and province names dedicated for him. His portraits were adorned in governmental offices, and his slogans were routinely published in newspapers. (Kobkua, 1995: 83; Saichon, 2002: 40-42). However, it might not be a novelty after all: loyalty of Siamese population merely shifted, from the king as the leader of the Thais, to Constitution, and now to the civic leadership of the nation. The military also replaced the monarchy as revered civic institution, depicted as the Savior of the Nation (Copeland, 1993).

The state-sanctioned public culture initiated by the post-1932 regime was now enforced in full, with even more spirited intensity. In term of the everyday life, Pibul regime released series of ***Cultural Mandates*** dictating many activities in order to achieve “civilization” (Vandergeest, 1990). The edicts instructed the Thais to wear modern clothes such as suits, trousers, skirts, hats⁶, and gloves, to stand in attention to national anthem which was played at 8 am and 6 pm daily, to celebrate New Year’s Day on 1st January rather than in the traditional month of April (Kobkua, 1995). New set of ‘simplified’ Thai language, with elimination of

⁶ Somehow, wearing hats was particularly important. Citizens without hats could not board a bus or use service at government offices (Wyatt 2003: 244).

words or alphabets that the regime deemed to be “archaic” and “outdated” was enforced. Status and gender were also absent from Pibul’s Thai language (Baker and Pasuk, 2005). “Standard” was another keyword during Pibul Era. Thais were to speak only “standard” dialect – that of Bangkok. Even way of greetings was standardized, restricting Thais to greet one another with only the word “Sawasdee” (Saichon, 2002). Many of the practices mentioned here in fact continued in Thailand to this day.

In short, only the progressive, civilized, modern image was endorsed by the regime. Only the “standard” set by the regime was the civic universality of what it meant to be Thai. Strangely, as one could discern, this “standard” was very homogenizing and Western-influenced; one might have hard time finding uniqueness of Thai culture in Cultural Mandates and other projects conducted during Pibul Era, but at the same time the Pibul regime also bombarded Thais with glorification of their distant past, of their unique racial characteristics. This is truly hybrid end result of ethnic and civic nationalism.

Part IV Assessing and Interpreting Siamese Civic Nationalism

Why the need for Civic Nationalism?

Personal ideological conviction of the 24 June Coup Promoters

As described in the historical background section, the People's Party was tightly based on personal relations. Ideologies in the People's Party were consequently divided along the line of personal figures: Pridi's circle exhibited a more radical, progressive element which constituted civic nationalism in this dissertation, whereas Pibul's tended to be more favorable toward strong military leadership (Thawatt, 1972). Dominant ideology therefore depended on whose faction was more powerful at the time: civic nationalism prevailed in 1932-1938 under Pridi whereas ethnic-civic hybrid nationalism flourished under Pibul from 1939-1944.

It should be added here that even Pibul, who was usually described as a 'rival' or 'counterpart' of Pridi in the military faction, seemed to share some ideological basis with Pridi in terms of civic nationalism – this was evident in Pibul's continuation of civic nationalism project in his Prime Minister years, albeit resulting in a more aggressive and more authoritarian expression (Nakharin, 1990).

Way to distinguish 24 June Coup government from the Absolute Monarchy

A revolution – or at least an overthrow of pre-existing political system – could not be completed without establishing a new legitimacy opposing to that of

the pre-revolutionary era (Hobsbawm, 1996). In the Siamese case, the 24 June revolution installed a counter-culture of civic nationalism, that of nation as community of the citizens in equal terms and popular democracy, to oppose the legitimacy through ethnic glory and hierarchical myth disseminated by the elites under Absolute Monarchy.

However, this is not to say that civic nationalism and its entailing democratization of Siamese society were mere equipment invented by the People's Party. The popular grievance against the Absolute Monarchy's refusal to reform, their desire to have constitutional, electoral democracy as the political system, preceded the revolution, and the public support enjoyed by the 1932 coup leaders reflected that the public were in favor of the change brought forward by the revolution (Baker and Pasuk, 2005). Therefore, probable explanation for this would be that the public sentiment against Absolute Monarchy precedes the revolution; the revolutionaries merely installed civic nationalism to appeal to the public.

Inclusive way to draw support for the regime

This is a tactical analysis of the civic nationalism proposed by the 1932 coup leaders. Unsurprisingly, the immediate situation following the overthrow of Absolute Monarchy was certainly precarious for the new regime. The royalist faction was still very much active, there were ever threats of subversion among the People's Party members themselves, and unreliable loyalty among many cliques in the armed forces meant that a counter-coup was constantly probable (Thawatt, 1972; Thaamsuk, 1992). Therefore, it was predictable that the Coup Promoters – especially the more progressive camp – resorted to mobilizing support from the public. Politicization of the mass was mentioned earlier in this dissertation, but it should be stressed here again that the earliest attempt of mobilizing support for the regime began during *Bovoradej Rebellion* when the government was obviously in danger of being overrun by the revolts. The practice

continued well after the incident, as the revolutionaries were still fearful of royalist counterattack. Rhetoric of equality and popular sovereignty was certainly intended to cut across the social strata of Siamese nation divided earlier by nobility and birthright (Nakharin, 1990). This was evident with the commoner-based public support for the civic nationalist government, as opposed to the exclusive, elite-based power enjoyed by the Absolute Monarchy.

There is suggestion that the civic nationalism proposed by the revolutionary regime also aimed to reach into the Chinese immigrants in Siam, who were long oppressed and marginalized by the Absolute Monarchy, by preaching an ideology that was not based on ethnicity (Vandergeest, 1990: 214). This might very well be the case, although evidences might suggest the contrary; the treatment of Chinese ethnics during Siamese civic nationalism did not greatly improve from that during Absolute Monarchy. As mentioned, the line between 1932 civic nationalism and 1939 hybrid nationalism was hard to define precisely because of this factor.

Does It Succeed?

It is fairly reasonable to point out that Siamese civic nationalism evidently failed in many aspects. Most importantly, the fall of civic nationalism was marked by the rise, or return, of ethnic nationalism under Pibul Regime. The 'hybrid' ethnic type of nationalism promoted by Pibul was unlikely to succeed if a substantial support for the ideology had not already existed (Terwiel, 1991). Indeed, the gradual development of many elements which rhymed with ethnic nationalism had been cultivated right under the shadow of civic nationalism regime even before Pibul ascended to power, and the revolutionary government appeared to be uninterested in combating those elements. Therefore, while the years of 1932-1938/1939 are considered the moment of civic nationalism, it could very well be seen as *gestation period* of ethnic nationalism, too (Terwiel, 1991: 117).

Nonetheless, the failure to establish a civic nationalism as initially envisioned by the 1932 Revolutionaries was most obvious and decisive in the lack of actual implementation of democratic and civic projects as promised. Siam 6 years after the 24 June Revolution did not resemble much of the Utopia painted by the Coup Promoters. Democratic governance was not realized, electoral politics was still significantly weak, and the government often resorted to authoritarian behavior such as news censorship when it was criticized by the press. The exclusive nature of the People's Party meant that the Party preferred to convene in backstage conclave rather than engage in public debate whenever sensitive issues arose (Stowe, 1991: 89), much restricting growth of democratic governance. Coupled with continuation of xenophobic, anti-Chinese practices endorsed by the revolutionary government, it could only be concluded that Siamese civic nationalism was very illiberal.

Inequality was far from being eliminated, and Siamese society still experienced severe problem of wealth distribution gap despite the rhetoric of nation as community for all citizens of equal status; the structure of patronage system, corruption among leading officials, and exclusion of the poorer mass from wealth sharing was still considerably widespread in spite of some improvements from Absolute Monarchy (Landon, 1939; Baker and Pasuk, 2005). The People's Party also engaged in some corruptions, most notably the Crown Property lands previously mentioned and the irregularity in state enterprises (Stowe, 1991: 102). Furthermore, the mass also appeared not to appreciate the ideals or principles propagated by the revolutionary regime. The novelty of democracy was not well understood, especially in the rural area (Wyatt, 2003); the most notorious example was the report which alleged that some villagers even mistook the Constitution as a newborn son of one of the Coup Promoters (Chatri, 2005: 150).

To sum up shortly, the radical re-engineering of ideology among the public was not achieved by the revolutionary government, and failure to provide real,

meaningful improvements to the mass may have led to apathy among much of the public toward the new ideology of civic nationalism.

Why the Failure of Civic Nationalism?

Infighting among the regime

In this perspective, the failure to implement ideological projects of civic nationalism (and democratic governance) was due to the internal difficulties within the People's Party itself. The People's Party, as mentioned, was formed out of tactical need to overthrow the Absolute Monarchy without broad consensus in predominant ideology, and consisted of wide collection of different backgrounds, political beliefs, and characteristics (Thamrongsak, 2000). The regime was also plagued with factionalism, with members grouping themselves around different camps, causing much disunity which would bring about the eventual collapse of the People's Party (Thawatt, 1976). Even during the years of their consolidated power, the disunity among government officials would certainly bar the more radical advocates of civic nationalism from exercising their ideals (ironically, radical forms of civic nationalism were only achieved with the rise of Pibul Regime who sidelined all notable opposition by his authoritarianism). This was also due to the lack of ideological accord among the People's Party: some were more radical or committed to the idealistic cause than others, whereas some could be completely indifferent (Nakharin, 1990; Copeland, 1993). Hence the plausible reason to why the regime failed to produce major restructuring of Siamese society in the post-revolutionary world.

Although the Coup Promoters initially threatened the Absolute Monarchy with republic should Rama VII failed to agree with the revolution's demand, their commitment to republican cause is highly doubtful. The coup promoters, after all, agreed to compromise with the aristocrats after the Revolution (Kobkua, 2003). This could also illustrate the lack of any serious radicalism in the People's Party.

Problematic historicism

Hutchinson proposed a theory stating that revolutions often draw their legitimacy, identity, and narratives of the revolution from different layers in local history or, more commonly, myths (Hutchinson, 1987). This view holds that in order to be successfully appealing to the mass, revolutionaries generally need to claim that they are acting on the historical basis of the nation: for instance, they could describe themselves as descendents or imitators of great national heroes in the past, trying to bring the nation to the righteous course as it was during the distant, glorious past – a methodology called **Historicism**. The theory might as well suggest that a revolution that attempted to “break away” from these traditional, mythic, historicist approaches might find it more difficult to raise support or identification from the mass. This view also coincides with Smith’s thesis which holds that nation-building process – revolution included – heavily relies on appealing to ethnic, primordial roots (Smith, 2003).

That might be the case for Siamese civic nationalism, and the ideals and appearances promoted by the 1932 revolutionaries in general. The civic nationalism proposed by 24 June Revolution was futuristic and forward-looking. It did break away from elemental narratives of Siamese myth or history. Contrary to the Absolute Monarchy who proclaimed themselves as defenders of Siamese nation ever since the Golden Age, the 24 June revolutionaries did not seek to identify themselves with any of mythic saviors at all. Even the image of people they claimed to represent was that of *people*, a novel idea, and not primordial, historical *folk*. Many other cultural aspects associated with the People’s Party were distinctive departure from traditional outlook of Siamese background, namely, the architecture, the rhetoric, the image of the nation and community put forward by the Party; coupled with attempt to decrease the influence of royalism, which was undoubtedly seen by many as overshadowing identity of the Siamese,

the People's Party was creating a new history *ex nihilo*. Without a committed, successful campaign to convince the mass to abandon the primordial mentality and accept this new identity, this view argued, the attempt would only fail.

However, an entirely opposite view could be offered. Perhaps the civic nationalists in Siam during the volatile years of 1932-1938 failed not because of their novelty, but precisely because of their reliance on the primordial resources. Firstly, the 24th June Revolutionaries were unwilling, or unable, to confront the royalist influence and legacy in radical, uprooting manner. The monarchy, after all, was allowed to survive. The People's Party also drew from traditional layer of Siamese culture. They made references to Buddhist cosmology in their propagation of futuristic ideals, adopted traditional ceremonies or symbolism but fine-tuned them for their new sanctity instead of abandoning them altogether, and continued to support many of pre-existing values that were prevalent during the Absolute Monarchy (See *1932 Civic Nationalism* section). It might be because the People's Party was reluctant to confront, and eliminate, these elements from public consciousness that the ethnic nationalism was able to make a comeback later under Pibul Regime.

Resilience of Grassroots and Rural Culture

Governments and bureaucratic in Thailand often see themselves as the superior, enlightened entity who know what is best for the rural, 'uneducated' population in outlying provinces of Thailand, especially in the north and northeast where traces of primitive agricultural society were still much prevalent despite some incursion from Bangkok. Attempts were made to transform the rural society into community desired by the central authorities, with mixed outcomes. Civic nationalist regime was, unfortunately, one of the failed examples of attempts to homogenize the rural, grassroots identity, only to be met with resilience of the culture which was perceived by the state to be passively obedient (Vandergeest, 1990).

The revolutionary government pursued considerable amount of projects with aims to “educate” and “modernize” the rural population (Thaamsook, 1992; Stowe, 1991). Examples include the denouncement of superstitious beliefs, assertion of naturalistic science in education, and the discouragement of practices deemed “anti-modern” by the authorities –foreshadowing the more aggressive, notorious programs undertaken by later Pibul Regime. One should bear in mind that the engagement was committed with the principle of mobilizing support from the mass, a direct engagement with the rural population was therefore central to the establishment of revolutionary society, unlike the Absolute Monarchy who remained somewhat indifferent to these outlying rural communities’ opinions. However, it turned out that the grassroots culture was more resilient than the regime (or other regimes in modern-day political history of Thailand) expected.

Additionally, apart from indifference of the rural mass toward idealistic goals thrust upon them by the revolutionary regime, perhaps it was also the lack of committed effort into propagating their idealistic goals toward the mass, or it might even be because of clear comprehension of their own goal and ideals, that help bring about the failure. Some of petty, awkward policies implemented by the officials in post-1932 period might indicate how confused and far from essentially understanding the principles of civic nationalism and democratic governance.

Conclusion

Comparative discussion of the 3 different manifestations of nationalism would reveal that there exists intricate relationship between each of them, which would assist our understanding of 24 June Revolution and its legacy of civic nationalism. The 1932 revolutionary civic nationalism could not be studied in isolated case. Whereas June 1932 was a direct opposition to the Absolute Monarchy version of nationalism, as illustrated earlier, the same could not be said in its relation with the post-24th June (or ‘Pibul Era’) nationalism that surfaced

after 1938 – a relation more problematic to conceptualize.

One could propose that the essence of civic nationalism proposed or at least envisioned by the 24 June Revolution had been 'betrayed' by Pibul regime who added it with the ethnic nationalist element of Absolute Monarchy – this was coupled with the long-expected collapse of the People's Party which had been suffering from internal disputes for years, especially between Pridi and Pibul. However, to analyze that Pibul nationalism was a complete divorce from (Pridi's?) civic nationalism would be misleading (Terwiel, 1991). As demonstrated, Pibul Era drew extensively from civic nationalism, not rejecting it. Pibul's hybrid ethnic-civic nationalism was not a discontinuity from 1932 civic nationalism, but a continuous transformation.

Furthermore, as we accept the hybrid structure of ethnic-civic nationalism in Pibul Era, we should pay attention to the traces of the 2 nationalisms, ethnic and civic, that could be found in different periods as well. The fate of the civic element in Thai nationalism was tellingly similar to how much it departed from spirit of 24 June 1932 Revolution: after the royalist coup in 1947 and throughout the revival of conservative-royalist faction in 1950s civic nationalism was gradually replaced with the Absolute Monarchy ethnic nationalism. When Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat launched a palace-endorsed coup in 1958, plunging Thailand into a decade of military dictatorship, civic nationalism was completely wiped from public culture (Baker and Pasuk, 2005); its end was symbolically marked by the junta's decision to change National Day from 24th June to 5th December which is the king's birthday (Somsak, 2004). The detailed discussion of these events is, unfortunately, out of scope of this dissertation.

Consequently, it is clear that the ethnic-civic nationalism dichotomy in Thai/Siamese history of 1932 and beyond was, like other cases around the world, indeed observable but it moved in different, recurrent waves – sometimes with even mixed appearance –rather than static. Ethnic-civic spectrum is useful, at least in Thailand case, to detect the shift of political power, national sentiment,

and cultural hegemony in certain periods.

Since the waves are recurrent, such disappearance did not signal an eternal death. Student uprising in October 1973 against the military oligarchy relied on some symbols of 1932 civic nationalism – the Constitution (Somsak, 2001). The Redshirts movement⁷ provided contemporary examples of this position. They often referenced to the 24th Revolution in their activism, such as conducting rallies at Monument of Constitution Defenders and commemoration ceremony on 24th June each year. Some Redshirts also launched a campaign to restore 24th June as National Day of Thailand instead of December 5th – this situation clearly indicated a contest of two nationalist camps, each drawing from their own ethnic and civic resource in history (Smith, 1983).

The Redshirts' display of civic nationalism could be a bid to oppose the prevailing hegemony of royalist nationalism, thus highlighting the “recurrent waves” thesis of ethnic-civic nationalisms: as civic-electoral power clashed with the ethnic-royal one in search of legitimacy in Thailand's political crisis that has been prolonged since 2005 (Somsak, 2011), the dichotomy of ethnic-civic nationalisms had perhaps returned to the scene once again.

⁷ 'the Redshirts' (formally known as 'National United Democratic Front Against Dictatorship' or UDD) is a term mostly refers to a network of supporters of former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who was ousted by 2006 military coup, and other affiliated pro-democracy activists.

Appendices

Manifesto of the People's Party

Note: Landon (1939: 10-11) also provided partially inaccurate translation of the Manifesto. Baker and Pasuk published another translation in their book Pridi by Pridi, but some portions of the text are still imprecise. Junya Yimprasert has corrected the Baker and Pasuk version. It is Junya's translation that appears here in this dissertation. Nonetheless, Junya's "democratic form of government" is replaced here with my own "republican form of government (which is also used by Baker and Pasuk) as I deem the latter to be more accurate.

All the people,

When this king succeeded his elder brother, people at first hoped that his government would bring peace and security, but matters have not turned out as they hoped. The king maintains his power above the law as before. He appoints court relatives and toadies without merit or knowledge to important positions, without listening to the voice of the people. He allows officials to use the power of their office dishonestly, to take bribes in public construction and procurement, and seek profit from changes in the prices of money, which squanders the wealth of the country. He elevates those of royal blood to have more privileged rights than the people. He governs without principle. The country's affairs are left to the mercy of fate, as can be seen from the depression of the economy and the hardships of making a living – something the people know all about already.

The government of the king above the law is unable to bring about recovery. This inability to find solutions is because the government of the king has not governed the country for the people, as other governments have done. The government of the king has treated the people as slaves, as animals not as human beings. Therefore, instead of helping the people, it plants rice on the backs of the people.

It can be seen that from the taxes that are squeezed from the people that the King is deducting many millions of Baht per year for his own expenses, while the people must sweat blood in order to find just a little money. At the time for paying government tax or personal tax, if they have no money the government seizes their property or forces them into public works, while those of royal blood are sleeping and eating happily. No country in the world gave its royalty so much money as this, except the Tsar and the German Kaiser, whose nations have already overthrown their thrones.

The King's government has governed by deceiving and not being straightforward with the people. For example, by saying the King's government would improve livelihood in this way and that, but time has passed, people have waited, and nothing has happened, nothing has been done seriously. Furthermore the people who should be shown gratitude for paying the taxes that royalty eats have been told they cannot yet have a voice in politics because they are ignorant. Such words from government are unacceptable. If the people are ignorant, the King is ignorant too, as we are all from the same nation. That people do not know what royalty knows is because royalty blocks them from full education in fear that if the people have education they will know the evil of royalty and not allow them to plant rice on their backs.

Let all people know that our country belongs to the people – not to the king, as has been deceitfully claimed. It was the ancestors of the people who returned the independence of the country from the hands of the enemy. Those of royal blood just reap where they have not sown and sweep up wealth and property worth many hundred millions. Where did all these monies come from? From the method of farming rice on the backs of the people!

The country is facing hardship. Farmers and soldier's parents have to give up their paddy fields because cultivating brings no benefit. The government does not help. Everywhere the government lays off workers. Students who have

completed their studies and soldiers released from the reserves have no employment, and go hungry according to fate. These things are the result of the government of the king above the law that oppresses minor civil servants, ordinary soldiers and clerks. They are not given pensions when discharged from service. In truth the monies that have been amassed by the government should be used to run the country by providing work. This would be a fitting way to pay back the people who have been paying taxes for a long time to make royalty rich. But those of royal blood do nothing, just go on sucking blood. Whatever money they have they deposit overseas and prepare to flee leaving the people hungry while the country decays. All this is certainly evil.

Therefore the people, government officials, soldiers, and citizens who know about these evil actions of the government have joined together to establish the People's Party and have already seized power from the government of the king. The People's Party sees that to correct this evil it must establish government by assembly, so that many minds can debate and contribute, which is better than just one mind. As for the Head of State of the country, the People's Party has no wish to snatch the throne. Hence it invites this king to retain the position. But he must be under the law of the constitution for governing the country, and cannot do anything independently without the approval of the assembly of people's representatives. The People's Party has already informed the king of this view and at the present time is waiting for a response. If the king replies with a refusal or does not reply within the time set, for the selfish reason that his power will be reduced, it will be regarded as treason to the nation, and it will be necessary for the country to have a republican form of government, that is, the Head of State will be an ordinary person appointed by Parliament to hold the position for a fixed term. By this method the people can hope to be looked after in the best way, everyone will have employment because our country is a country of natural abundance. When we have seized the money which those of royal blood have amassed from planting rice on the backs of the people, and use these many hundreds of millions for nurturing the country, the country will certainly flourish. The People's Party will govern and implement projects based on knowledge, not

act like a blind man as the government of the king above the law has done. The People's Party will:

1. maintain securely the independence of the country in all forms including political, judicial, and economic etc.;
2. maintain public safety within the country and greatly reduce crime;
3. improve the economic well-being of the people by the new government finding employment for all, and drawing up a national economic plan, not leaving the people to go hungry;
4. provide the people with equal rights (so that those of royal blood do not have more rights than the people as at present);
5. provide the people with liberty and freedom, as far as this does not conflict with the above four principles;
6. provide the people with full education.

All the people should be ready to help the People's Party successfully to carry out its work which will be for eternity. The People's Party asks everyone who did not participate in seizing power from the government of the king above the law to remain peaceful and keep working for their living. Do not do anything to obstruct the People's Party. By doing thus, the people will help the country, the people, and their own children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. The country will have complete independence. People will have safety. Everyone must have employment and need not starve. Everyone will have equal rights and freedom from being serfs, servants, and slaves of royalty. The time has ended when those of royal blood can plant rice on the backs of the people. The things which everyone desires, the greatest happiness and progress which can be called Sri Ariya, will arise for everyone.

The People's Party
24 June 1932

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