

Sick Kingdom:  
The Role and Politics of Thai Health Care in  
the Domination of Bhumibol's Narrative

病める王国

—タイ王党派の物語りの政治—

Kritdikorn Wongswangpanich

Doctor of Area Studies

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor**  
**of Area Studies**

Sick Kingdom:  
The Role and Politics of Thai Health Care in  
the Domination of Bhumibol's Narrative

病める王国

—タイ王党派の物語りの政治—

Kritdikorn Wongswangpanich

(กฤตดิกร วงศ์สว่างพานิช)

Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies  
Kyoto University

2022



## Abstract

The main question of the work is why Thai people could blindly follow such counter-progressive reasoning for decades. Answering this question led to the conceptual frameworks aiming to encapsulate the rational structure and transformation that have been bound by Bhumibol's narrative, which was built upon Buddhist teachings and narrated by the network monarchy, including the health service. The work focuses on a single agency—the medical network—because it was this narrative that has imposed "Thainess" or "Salim" rationality on the people, which became their cultural and institutional shield.

This dissertation explores Bhumibol's narrative as well as how the changing concept of time affects the production and preservation of his narrative. I took on Anthony D. Smith's concept of "ethnie", or pre-national history, and divided it into 4 phases: ethnie construction, implementation, dominance, and replacement. The work also explores the temporal origins of modernity, focusing on how the concepts of time and space affect our understanding of political structures.

The first phase is the "ethnie construction". It was when the Chaofah Mongkut (later King Rama IV) (reigned 1851-1868) had successfully incorporated and institutionalized the Buddhist narrative with the scientific frame of rationality (narration). This phase had two main significances. Firstly, it created the Thai storytelling structure that linked the monarchy, Buddhism, and scientific narration together. Secondly, it happened when Siam (later Thailand) had no institutionalized narrative. Its emergence became the common symbol of Thainess.

The second phase is the "ethnie implementation," which can be divided into two sub-phases: "From Dad" and "(Be) Like Dad". My claim that Bhumibol's camp implemented narratives based on Chaofah Mongkut's ethnie led to the name. From 1959 to 1963, King Bhumibol (1946–2016) worked with Sarit Thanarat, the Thai army commander who overthrew the People's Party camp in 1957. The materialistic policies

including the royal medical units were used to tell Bhumibol's story. The (royal) material benevolence concept was attached. Indulging the king made people feel indebted to him and personified him as the embodiment of benevolence. It was King Bhumibol, Sarit, and the US who created the "From Dad" storyline which resulted in the rise of "Salim Fundamentalism" category.

The second sub-phase began in the 1970s, during a major revision of Bhumibol's narrative. The main contributors were Buddhadasa, a revered Thai monk, and Prawase Wasi, the Thai medical network's figurehead. Buddhadasa had re-synthesized Buddhism, and Prawase had put it into a modern scientific context and then spread it via his nationwide network. The process also hijacked liberal democracy and scientific knowledge to match Buddhism's essence. It alternated the modern regime of truth from science to Buddhist values. This marked the beginning of "Khon Dee politics" (politics of the moral man), with King Bhumibol as a model. The new storyline "(Be) Like Dad" arose. Unlike the previous storyline, this one is about dogmatic politics. It instructs the people on how to follow the king's example. As a result, a new Salim type emerged: the "Progressive Salim." So, I call Salim Fundamentalism a "cult of persona" and Progressive Salim a "cult of dogma".

The "ethnie domination" or "For Dad" storyline was introduced in the third phase. From the 1990s until 2010, the entire institutional and cultural structure autonomously produced the narrative for the royal family. Bhumibol's narrative had united the nation, and the people had become his domain of influence. This status replaced the sovereign's "geo-body" with his "dominium of influence", a context I call "modern mandala."<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> I use the term "mandala" in quite a commonly used fashion that is "the sphere of governing power or influence, in this case it mainly focuses on the domain of the king's influence or authority (kingdom/king's domain)."

In the 2000s, Bhumibol faced a new narrative obstacle from Thaksin Shinawatra and TRT. While the 1997 economic crisis and the 1997 constitution aided Thaksin's rise to power, his electoral policies, particularly the universal health coverage campaign, changed society. This work argues that King Bhumibol's materialistic benevolence narrative was challenged. The new systematic way of distributing materialistic benefits broadens the frame of possibility for the people, causing a "crack" in Bhumibol's narrative. The 2006 coup deposed Thaksin and TRT, proving the royals still controlled the political institutions. The "Red-Yellow conflict" arose with the Red (shirt) movement supporting Thaksin.

Despite several undemocratic attempts to remove Thaksin, he prevailed. This is when the fourth phase, "ethnie replacement", begins and continues to fix the ongoing narrative problem, "Replacing Dad." To replace the deceased king, the royal faction devised the "Pracharat Policy", initiated by Prawase. This policy is used by the royal faction to re-orient the narrative of materialistic benefits. The royal faction's political party, Palang Pracharat, has benefited from the policy, but not everything went smoothly. In order to suppress Thaksin, the new conditions created the Future Forward Party (FFP). I argued that FFP is a new crack in the ideological battle against the dogmatic storyline. The unanticipated challenger was then undemocratically dissolved. It triggered a new political turmoil, the 2020–2021 People's Demonstration. The movement that most critically questions Bhumibol's narrative and royal status.

Keywords: *Bhumibol, Narrative Politics, Thainess, Salim, Health Care*

## 病める王国—タイ王党派の物語りの政治—

タイの現代政治は国王を中心として展開してきた。この政治体制を支える要因として重要なのは、プーミポン国王(在位 1946～2016 年)をめぐる物語りであった。この物語りに感化・教化されて、体制を支える大衆基盤となってきた人々がいる。彼らは、2005

年以後、政治道徳や汚職撲滅のためであれば、代議制民主主義を否定してもよいと主張するようになって、民主政治支持者からサリム(salim)と揶揄されるようになった。本学位論文は、サリムを生み出した物語りの歴史と特色を解明することを目的としている。

本論文は、タイとは何かをめぐる物語りの移り変わりを、建設、実施、支配、代替の4つの時期に分けて考察した。第一の建設期には、ラーマ4世（在位1851-1868）が即位前のモンクット親王時代に仏教を科学的合理的な宗教と位置づけることに成功した。タイとは何かという発想がまだ稀薄な時代に起きたことであった。これにより、君主制、仏教、科学的な合理性が三位一体となってタイらしさとは何かを説明するタイの物語り構造が生まれた。

この物語りは、プーミポン国王（1946-2016）治世に改編され、同王を「お父さん」と敬愛する人々を生み出すことに寄与した。第二の実施期は2つに分かれる。まずは「お父さんから」の時期である。同王は1959年から1963年にかけて、人民党政権を1957年に打倒したタイ陸軍司令官のサリット・タナラットと協力した。王室の医療団を僻地に派遣して住民の治療に当たらせるなどして物質的な利益の提供が行われ、人々に国王への恩義を感じさせ、国王を慈愛の権化と受け止めさせた。こうした冷戦下でのプーミポン国王、サリット、そしてアメリカの協調関係が、「お父さんから」という物語りと「サリム原理主義」を生み出した。

1970年代に、「お父さんのように」という新しい筋立てが生まれ、第二期の後半が始まった。この変化に、尊敬を集める僧侶プッタタートと、タイの医療ネットワークの中心人物プラウエート・ワシーが関わった。プッタタートはモンクット親王による仏教綜合をやり直した。プラウエートはそれを近代科学の文脈に位置づけ、自身の全国的なネットワークを通じて広めた。プラウエートは改訂過程で、自由民主主義や科学的知識を取り込み、近代的な真理を科学から仏教的な価値へと読み替えた。これはプーミポン国王をモデルとした「善人政治」（道徳的な人間による政治）の始まりであり、国王の手本に習うよう国民に指南した。その結果、「進歩的サリム」という新しいタイプのサリ

ムが生まれた。サリム原理主義が「人物崇拜」ならば、進歩的サリムは「教義崇拜」ということになる。

「お父さんのため」という筋立てが第三の支配期には導入された。1990年代から2010年まで、プーミポン国王は物語りで国民を統合し、国民を自らの勢力圏に取り込んだ。その結果、制度的・文化的構造全体が自律的に機能し、国王のために物語りを作り出すようになった。人々は「お父さんのために」何かをしたいと考えるようになった。

2000年代に入ると、タックシン・チナワットとタイラックタイ党(TRT)というプーミポンの物語りへの挑戦に直面した。タックシンは1997年の経済危機と新憲法に助けられて政権を獲得した。彼が実行した政策は社会を変えた。とりわけ選挙で目玉政策に掲げた国民皆保険制度導入は衝撃が大きかった。彼の政策は、プーミポン国王の物質的な施しの物語りへの挑戦と受け止められた。タックシンは新しい方法で、物質的な利益を体系的に分配することで、国民の選択肢を広げ、プーミポンの物語りに「ひび割れ」を生じさせることになった。2006年のクーデタはタックシンとTRTを失脚させ、国王が統治機構を依然として支配していることを証明した。「赤色と黄色の対立」が、タックシンを支持する赤シャツ運動から生まれた。

タックシンは、彼を排除しようとする何度かの非民主的な試みを乗り越えて、国政選挙での勝利を続けた。そこで第4の代替期が始まった。物語りが直面する問題を解決するために「お父さんの代替」を試みた。2016年に亡くなったプーミポン国王に替わるものとして、王党派はプラウエートが発案した「プラチャーラット政策」を採用した。この政策は、王党派が物質的な利益をめぐる物語りを再構成するために用いられた。王党派の政党パラン・プラチャーラット党は2019年の総選挙でこの政策の恩恵に浴したけれども、すべてが順調に進んだわけではない。タックシンを封じ込めようとする方策は、新未来党(FFP)を誕生させた。FFPは、イデオロギー闘争において、教義重視の筋立てに新しいひび割れを生じさせた。FFPという想定外の挑戦者は2020年に強引に解党判決を下された。この処分は、新たな政治的混乱、つまり2020年から2021年に



かけでの民衆デモを引き起こした。この運動は、プーミポンの物語りと君主制のあり方を手厳しく問うている。

## Acknowledgement

Needless to say, finishing a doctoral degree of any kind is long and arduous work. On the surface, it might seem like the fruit of endeavor that a single individual has achieved, however, such a statement cannot be more wrong. It has never been an individual's job. It builds and lives on a multitude of collaborations, persistence, assistance, and sacrifice. It is more of an impossible job to name all the helps I have received during these 4.5 years of the doctoral dissertation writing process than to write the dissertation itself. So, I would like to do it the simplest way here and now.

“To anyone who, however distant and indirect, related in the completion of this work, please know that I thank you dearly and wholeheartedly.”

This work would never be as it is now without the accumulation of conditions and attempts of many people that might not even know the existence of this work or me like the inventor of the internet or the information database that the internet has created. Some like The MATTER, an online news agency I wrote for during this process, created an opportunity for me to write things that at first glance seemed so remote from my work but could eventually find its way here.

Anyhow, there are people who I would like to especially give my thank by their names and put a literal record as a part of this work since this is the bare minimum of gratitude I could offer them for their endless help and support. First and foremost, though might sound a bit cliché, is my family and my main supervisor.

First, I dare say that this work would never come to fruition without the sacrifice and endless support of my parents, Nivat and Niramol. They had given me more than I ever deserve. Great and Wan, my lovely brother and sister-in-law, I thank

you so much for your unending care and also for bearing some burdens and works I had shamelessly placed on you guys. Fluke and Fern, I know you might not say anything much but simply having you guys around is a privilege in and of itself. Anyhow, if there is anything I would wish for is to have both of my grandmothers involved in this blissful party as well, sadly I failed on this part. They both passed away during the process of writing this dissertation and I could never share this experience with them. For me who personally do not believe in the afterlife narrative of any kind, I simply would like to bare their names, Gui Huang and Cheow Kiao, as an honorary mention to and somewhat like a record that marks my gratitude for them. Grandma, you girls were wonderful. Also, Bim, my dear cousin, thank you so much for helping me with the illustrations and figures.

Secondly, my very dear supervisor, Yoshifumi Tamada. It is difficult to summarize an almost 5 years academic journey under his supervision in one paragraph, yet if I have to try, I would say “indirect but impactful.” Tamada-sensei rarely, if ever, forced his opinion on me as a student, and frankly, we normally have long and fun conversations on most of the things but the work itself. Of course, as an advisee, I had informed him and discussed my work from time to time, however, this kind of conversation is usually brief. Then, we normally went on discussing other topics, particularly on the current Thai politics which sometimes lasted for hours. It usually began with Tamada-sensei asking me about something and I responded, he asked back and I replied. It was during this repetition of a process that seems unrelated to the work itself that cast a huge impact on me and the thesis. At first, I thought it was simply a happy accident that after a long conversation with him, I usually came up with a new perspective or understanding towards my own work, especially if I really try to crystalize and conceptualize the seemed-to-be unrelated conversation. However, after almost 5 years, I know that I was wrong. It was not a happy accident but rather Tamada-sensei’s way of mentoring, “indirect but impactful.” I do not know

how could I honor him more but it was truly a great experience being apprenticed under him.

I would also like to thank my other 2 examiners, Kataoka-sensei and Decha-sensei, as well. Without their comments and opinions, I would never have my work done. I thank Decha-sensei in particular for the great efforts he had spent on reviewing my work. Honestly, it really boosts my confidence academically.

Thirdly, I am dying to thank my friends and colleagues. As an Asian who has been socialized by seniority tradition since birth, although I do not adore it since it is a part of me, let me begin with the senior category first, although many of them might have fiery eyes on the word “senior.” LOL. I thank Ajarn Chanvit, Ajarn Thongchai, Ajarn Thanee Apornsuwan, Ajarn Thanee Wongyannawa and his wife, Ajarn Nuttapol (P’Pok), Ajarn Soravis, Ajarn Kengkij, Ajarn Patrick, and Ajarn Illan for their help and/or discussion that paved the way to this dissertation. Also, the group of “Aunties”, or Pah (ป้าๆ) in Thai, that includes Ajarn Viengrat Nethipo (Pah Nongnang), Ajarn Puangthong Pawakapan (Pah Lek), Ajarn Siripan Noksuan Sawasdee (Pah Si), P’Pakkawadee (Pah Pak), and P’Lakkana Panwichai (Pah Kaek). Without the help and academic grooming of you guys, regardless of your political stances, I would never achieve what I did today, and I love you all always.

My friends in Thailand always help me a lot. My Triam Udom friends—Roong, Chit, Gof, Pare, Preaw, Ter, Por, Be, and so on—you guys had always been provided me tremendous mental support and strength (and sometimes headaches). Cheers to you. My Chula and other university friends—Bank, Tid, P’Pas, P’Kul, Pran, Jay, Motoki, P’Sorn, Fae, Kai, Ying, Tee, Ning, Nan, Mook, Chor and so on—thank you for your support as well especially in terms of academic, argumentation, and information.

My Kyoto friends; my oh my, where should I begin. Let me name you guys first. P’Kae, P’Mig, P’Ta, P’Tai, P’Fon, Tang, Ploy, Edo (Edoardo Siani), P’Pueng, Jia, P’Tom, Beer, Paul, and Waan, thank you all for always been the army of *Khon Hia* I could

ever dream of and wish for (except for P'Tai who remains a kind and pure girl through these darkest days.) Some of you are the *Khon Hia* veterans, whilst some were colored here, anyhow, you guys are a seasoned group of *Khon Hia* now, and I could not be prouder. As you enslaved me with cooking, driving, talking, guiding, and many other tasks you bring me a never-ending laugh and joy; the thing one rarely finds during their doctoral year particularly in a very pure, stupid, and immature way. You guys really give me genuine joy during the terror of the dissertation writing process; although for now, I would have to say that my hemorrhoid is a bit more fearsome, so I shouldn't write this acknowledgement on a donut cushion any longer.

I would, lastly, thank all the freedom and democratic fighters in Thailand. I admire and am in debt to you all both ideologically and spiritually. You guys have given me hope in politics after years I have kept denying it. I have the freedom to write and pursue my academic dream whilst you guys were risking your lives fighting against the dictator until now some of you are still unjustly imprisoned. This is the moral debt I would forever hold.

**Kritdikorn Wongswangpanich**

On a donut cushion during rainy day of the late winter in Ichijoji, Kyoto.

## Contents

Content	Page
Abstract	A
Acknowledgement	I
List of Figures	ix
List of Tables	xii
Notes on Translation and Abbreviation	xiii
<b>Chapter 0 Introduction: Allegorizing the Real, Reordering the Known</b>	<b>1</b>
Literature Review: What They Lack and the Aim of This Work	14
Methodology	21
Main Contributions and Limitations of the Work	27
Contributions	27
Limitations	29
<b>Chapter 1 The Cauldron of Fables: Brewing the Tailor-Made “Modernity”</b>	<b>31</b>
Nation and Narrative, Setting and Simulations	31
The ‘In-Between’ and Stairway to Heaven	38
Science as the Sanctuary of Reason: The Permanence of the Politics of Impermanence	41
State as the New God and Health Security	45
Longevity and the Logic of Capitalism	50
Spiritual Materialism: Thailand’s Import and Selection of Reason	53
Disciplining with Logic, Governing with Parami	60

	Time, History, and Narration: The Temporal Origin of Siam Modernity	66
	Summary on the concepts	85
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>Royal Envoys and the Cold War Renaissance, Establishing the New World with an Old Tale</b>	<b>88</b>
	Voyage of the Modern Royal Fable	92
	The Cold War King and The Construction of Modern Mandala	102
	The Cold War as the Emerging Global Structure	102
	The Brief Picture of Siam/Thai Medical Service Sector	107
	Ethnic Implementation and the Construction of Modern Mandala	109
	The Royal Envoys and the Blessing of Benevolent Love	122
	Between the King and the People: Space, Distance, and Relation created by PMMV	133
	“From Dad” Story Line and Salim Fundamentalism: Eternal Love, Loyalty, and Debt	137
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>Dogmatizing the Nation: The Rise of the Thai Health Don</b>	<b>140</b>
	The Network	142
	The Formative Years	142
	Siriraj Network	147
	Connection with Royal Family	149
	Rural Doctors and the Nationwide Health Care Network	153
	Centralized and Administrative Body of the Health Institutions	156

	Connection with Civil Society, Social Science, and Religion Networks	160
	The Conflict and Changes	163
	The Teaching	168
	Thai Style Democracy	175
	Organic Nation	177
	(Be) Like Dad	181
	Self-Sufficient Economy	185
	Progressive Salim and the New Categorical Successor of Bhumibol	189
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>The Universal Health Care: Bringing in the Everlasting Specter</b>	<b>194</b>
	Simulacra and Securitization of Bhumibol's Narrative	194
	The Crack: Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and the Everlasting Specter to the Royal Narrative	216
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Pracharat, Love Performance, and the Royal Necromancy: Forging the Dying Narrative</b>	<b>239</b>
	The 3 Ps: Prayuth's Pracharat, Prawase, and the (Guided) Perfection	240
	Killing the Unkillable Spectre: The Attempt to Constrict the Policy-Oriented Electoral Politics	247
	Remodeling the Crack: Reversing the Function of the Universal Health Coverage	255
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>Fleeing from the Sickness: Internet, Reality, and the Transition of Sense-Perception</b>	<b>258</b>



	The Second Crack: An Ideological and Dogmatic War	259
	New Material, New Reign, and New Reality: The Waves of Resistance	263
	Summarizing: Recapturing the Essence of the Work	277
Appendix I	Badiou's Set Theory: The Void, Singleton, and Infinite Successors	290
Appendix II	The Interviews' Details	296
Appendix III	The Thai Path and Its Alternative Modernity: Angst and Solace	304
Appendix IV	Mapping the Transformation of the Structural and Conceptual Conditions	308
	Bibliography	309

## List of Figures

Figure's name/detail	Page
Figure 1: The Aim and Position of This Work in the Scope of Studies of Thainess	28
Figure 2: The Rise of Life Expectancy	52
Figure 3: The Grade 8 Science Textbook	59
Figure 4: Historical Routes to Modernity	60
Figure 5: Parami Building and the Trinity of Thailand's Storytelling	64
Figure 6: Common Perception of Time (Infinite Linear)	70
Figure 7: Buddhist Cyclical Time (as normally perceived)	74
Figure 8: Chaofah Mongkut's Buddhist Modern Time (Wave-Patterned Time)	75
Figure 9: Wave-Patterned Time (Simplified Version)	75
Figure 10: Buddhist Cyclical Logic in Effect	79
Figure 11: Perceptual Difference of Causal Effect (Rationalization) between Infinite Linear and Cyclical (Wave-Patterned) Times	81
Figure 12: The Spiritual Materialism Movement of the Palace in the late 1950s – 1970s	111
Figure 13: King Rama IX personally visited Sarit during his hospitalized time.	115
Figure 14: The letter from King Bhumibol to Lady Vijitra (Sarit's wife)	117

Figure 15: Pictures of the “Royal Dental Unit”	123
Figure 16: Prawase Wasi	144
Figure 17: As Minister of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, Anek Laothamatas stated that Thailand should develop its own set of social science concepts rather than importing them from the west.	176
Figure 18: Conceptualizing “Self-Sufficient Economy”	186
Figure 19: Prawase’s Teaching and Simulation Platform	196
Figure 20: The Thai Health Promotion Foundation’s director affirmed Prawase’s teachings not only in theory but also in how he sees society as sick for consuming alcoholic beverages and needing social vaccination.	198
Figure 21: The illustration by Aroon Watcharasawat in Matichon Weekly, crisply captured the concept of simulations and simulacra.	201
Figure 22: The Modern Mandala and the 2 Salims’ Temporal Perceptions	204
Figure 23: The campaign to ‘eradicate the mosquito’ for dad (the king)	208
Figure 24: The university’s training program to follow the doctrine of a self-sufficient economy in order to overcome the hardship of the Covid-19 economic situation.	208
Figure 25: The official Ministry of Health spokesperson stated that the duration of the Covid-19 virus is dependent on how much we	209

love the king, and that committing to a self-sufficient economy is better than any vaccination.	
Figure 26: Mon Rak Dok Kayang	209
Figure 27: Optical Illusion 1	211
Figure 28: Optical Illusion 2	211
Figure 29: Optical Illusion 3	212
Figure 30: Optical Illusion 4	212
Figure 31: Percentage of people in each economic class in each type of health coverage program	229
Figure 32: Average Household Expenditure on Health Care	230
Figure 33: The Root Concept of Pracharat; deriving from “Law of Physics”	243
Figure 34: The approach to strengthening the ‘society’; deriving from the knowledge in biology	244
Figure 35: The formation of Pracharat; dismissing unrealistic ideology and pursuing the approach aims at achievement at its core	246
Figure 36: The government-organized ‘Live-broadcasting event’ of National Collective Buddhist Prayers against Covid-19	256
Figure 37: Waves of Resistance to Bhumibol’s Narrative	264
Figure 38: Summary timeline of this work	279
Figure 39: Conclusion on the route to modernity, Angst and Solace Routes	305

## List of Tables

Table's name/detail	Page
Table 1: Coups and Excuses	238
Table 2: List of Interviewees	351

## Notes on Translation and Abbreviations

All Thai words in this dissertation are rendered according to the Royal Thai General System of Transcription produced by the Royal Institution of Thailand. For personal names or other specific names, the transliteration is adopted as the general usage.

### Abbreviations

FFP	Future Forward Party
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHSO	National Health Security Office
OPD	Out-Patient Department
PAD	People's Alliance for Democracy
PDRC	People's Democratic Reform Committee
PMMV	The Princess Mother's Medical Volunteer Foundation
PPP	Palang Pracharat Party
PT	Pue Thai Party
TRC	Thai Raksa Chart Party
TRT	Thai Rak Thai Party
UDD	United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship
UHC	Universal Health Coverage
VHV	Village Health Volunteer

## Chapter O

### Introduction: Allegorizing the Real, Reordering the Known

“*Khun Best*<sup>2</sup>, why are Thai people so stupid?”

During my first visit to his office around five years ago, a person I respect asked me—as a member of the said nation. Honestly, I was taken aback by the question at first, but knowing that the person asking was not being rude or joking, I tried to reflect on it and realized that it was a great question. Simple but hard to answer. The question he was asking was why Thai people could act as if nothing had happened, despite the fact that something so abnormal, judging by the universal standard<sup>3</sup>, had happened right in front of their eyes. Some of them even praised the normally unacceptable act in ways they would not normally do. Indeed, I am talking about the royal family in Thailand—under King Rama IX, or Bhumibol, in particular—and the reception they

---

<sup>2</sup> *Khun* is the title in Thai to call a person, regardless of gender; and *Best* is my nickname in Thai.

<sup>3</sup> I am aware that the debate between “universalism” and “(cultural) relativism” particularly in the human rights and liberal democracy topics has been ongoing for decades (if counting from the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948) or even centuries (if counting from the French Revolution or even Ancient Greek). What this work has taken as the main frame of reference for the “universal logic and regime of truth” is mainly stemmed from the French Revolution, the Cold War’s Liberal Hegemony (as it will explain later in Chapter 2), and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In a nutshell, this work refers this term on the “spectrum of rights” that is considered as “acceptable” for the modern-day world. This spectrum usually known as “negative rights” and “positive rights.” Negative rights are normally considered as the “right end” of the liberal spectrum as it underlines the individual’s rights, freedom, and self-ownership (possession). It mostly denies state intervention. On the contrary, positive rights focuses more on human security and attempting to guarantee the accessibility to basic rights by all humans. Hence, it requires state’s intervention to secure such rights and conditions and are normally considered as the “left end” of the liberal spectrum. These two ends are the frame of reference of what this work considered as the ground of “universality”, “universally accepted logic/rationality”, and so on.

received. This question touches the essence of Thai politics and how to understand it. Why is this simple question so difficult to answer? Because it defies "standard" logic. It would be straightforwardly comprehensible if the wrongdoings had been done discreetly and, therefore, people had struggled to notice them. This type of occurrence is logical and understandable. It is difficult to answer because many of Thai people tend to believe that what they believe is "logical," while the universally accepted logical notion has been rendered "invalid or immature opinion." That's how I see this question.

The explanation that Thai people have their own unique "set of logic" that differs from the universally accepted one is not new or original, as many people have used this explanation for decades. Many royalists use it as an excuse or even as a shield to avoid understanding more widely accepted logic, while the opposing faction finds this mode of explanation as a whole illogical. In recent years, the word "Salim" (สลิม) has become popular for describing people who possess these qualities (the unique stupidity). The shared quality that underlines the notion of Salim is mainly the low comprehensive ability of the universally accepted logic and rationality—some even defy the universal logic itself—and insist persistently on living in their own rationalized world. They also aim to dominate the public sphere and the opinion of their respected community with their logic. Therefore, Salim is not restricted to Thailand, for instance; the flat-earther in the United States could be considered the Salim if they try to force their logic on to others. On the other hand, not all religious or superstitious believers could be called Salim if they keep their belief in their private sphere and operate it as their private agenda.<sup>4</sup> Essentially, Salim is synonymous with "Thainess" and can be

---

<sup>4</sup> It could be said that "stupidity" itself is not a rare phenomenon. The general perception of "stupidity" where a certain individual's thought process and rationality go against the universally accepted standard that is scientific causal-effect and tries to enforce it onto others like the case of "Flat-earthers" in America is known as the "Dunning-Kruger Effect." However, they are the minority of society.



used interchangeably. However, if I have to be nitpicking, Thainess implies more on the culture and represents the “unique character of Thailand”. On the other hand, Salim mainly implies the people who have the counter-universal rationality and try to force it into the community as explained. Thus, Salim<sup>5</sup> is a character that can be portrayed by anyone, Thai or not. However, even if the claim “unique set of logic” has been used quite thoroughly already, the root, function, and structural narrator of this counter-universal mode of logic has yet to be examined, and I believe it is the Gordian knot of Thai political complications. In short, I wanted to find out the answers to these questions: What does the Salim’s rationality constitute? How does it work? How was

---

The case of the majority of the population believing in rationality that goes against universally accepted one like the case of China, North Korea, or some Amazonian tribes occurs under a comprehensible condition. They are confined and restricted to free access with global values and standards. They lived in an enclosed space, information-wise. Hence, the unique rationality has befallen them.

Nevertheless, the case of Thailand is far more peculiar in the sense that Thai people are relatively far more unrestricted to access and interchange with universal (western) values and standards, yet, the majority of Thais still choose to remain ignorant to the accepted standard. In a nutshell, I argue that in order to establish such a condition—maintaining a unique way of thinking while opening to the global market and values—Thailand has to come up with a rational mechanism that does not seem to be alienated to the universally accepted values or modern rationality and even goes further as to make it look or being perceived as superior compare to the universally accepted one. Therefore, Thai people won’t budge or change the way they thought even if they come into contact with the free world; believing wholeheartedly that the rationality they are holding is better or more advanced. The rest of the work will display how this kind of narrative has been formed, functioned, and penetrated the minds of millions of Thai.

<sup>5</sup> I prefer to use the word “Salim” in the meaning of “believers and enforcers of narrative and rationality that opposes the universally accepted values, believing it to be superior”, rather than Thainess. That is because Thainess is more of a concept, mindset, or culture, while Salim is more of the people who hold such concept. Since this work focuses on “the nation” which is essentially “the people” that uphold such mentality, I, therefore, believe that it is more accurate to use the term “Salim” here. All in all, it could be summed up that this work aims to understand how “the nation of Salim” occurred and operates its logical mechanisms.

it created and protected? How many categories of Salim are there? And it all started with one simple question.

In fact, I realized that what occupied Thailand was not simply a unique set of logic in the sense of a means used for discussing or exploring arguments and phenomena rationally since that is what "logic" is generally designed for. It seems that this unique set of logic is meant to silence other kinds of logic or stories. "Silence" means shutting down the chance of offering or speaking differently. This kind of silence is common in a "sickness" like mental illness. This is a situation where words and logic are useless. We don't talk to the diseases or the patients with severe mental disorders. We simply try to alienate, confine, or eliminate them.<sup>6</sup> This unique set of logic seems to be designed to "stop" rather than "start" a conversation. It is the logic that seeks to impose sickness on those who think or speak differently. As a result, this thesis is titled "Sick Kingdom."

The idea of using "sickness" to describe compliance with western values, materialistic logic, and lifestyle is well-presented in the work of Prawase Wasi, one of the prominent members of Bhumibol's network monarchy. He had deliberately stated that "[Thailand] has been in the depth of agony. We are not working with conformity, but rather for our own survival. This is obviously a symptom of sickness in society." (Wasi 1974, 59) This is the quality that he called "sickness." He then further elaborated on its cause as follows:

*The reason that Thai society has been in severe sickness like this is the clash between western materialistic culture and the traditional local culture of our own. It brings so much chaos that we are unable to prepare. The attempt to fix*

---

<sup>6</sup> To be extremely clear, I do not support this line of thought myself, both seeing human in the same way as diseases or going for eradication. Personally, I condemn such perspective. However, this sort of reasoning exists is a fact and it needs to be presented and investigated. That is partially how this work started.

*or cure the sickness is prescribed with the wrong medicine, using an approach that gives a reversal result and makes things even worse. Therefore, the sickness of Thai society has reached a hellish level (เข้าขั้นตรึงทุต.)*

*Prior to that, Thai society had been blessed with fertility, with fish in the water, rice in the field, and all the food to enjoy. Hence, we did not seek much more—materialistically. Therefore, we did not need a complex social mechanism and political regime. But when we encounter a foreign culture that is materialistically based, it makes us yearn for more materials. The yearning could easily be allured for one to be baited, and so much more greed has invaded the Thai people. (Wasi 1974, 60)*

This line of thought has held Thailand firmly. Self-separation from Western cultural values has been deemed sophisticated by many like Prawase Wasi, Anek Laothammatat, and many conservative scholars in Thailand. Once established and sold, this noble quality has been revered as the dominant or official culture that a proper or well-educated man should possess. Regardless, the fact that this is a dominant culture does not mean that other cultures do not exist in Thailand; they simply are not perceived as the official or proper ones. So, I believe it is appropriate to limit this work to the "noble official version" of culture or narrative. It is the epicenter of what makes Thailand a "sick nation" and why foreigners find such strange social phenomena "stupid" because they defy universally accepted logic and rationality.

This question fascinated me, and I set out to find an explanation for this inexplicable phenomenon. In other words, this work seeks to find a new perspective or theoretical framework to understand Thai politics based on existing and known information. In this regard, it also implies that the information about the absurd events has long outlived its usefulness, but it lacks an explanation or perspective that could make sense of it. To achieve this goal, I try to understand the already known set of

information in as many different ways as I can. This process took me a long time to realize that I could start by re-evaluating my perception of Thai politics. This means that everything about this world, and Thailand in particular, has been considered “real” to me from the start. By considering them real, I implied that whatever happens in this perceived real world will be observed and judged by the referred reality's accepted logic or the universally standardized rationality. As mentioned previously, this created a contradiction in Thailand, an incomprehensible reality. While this so-called “unique set of logic” is true in Thailand, it is also true in many other cases that we may have personally experienced and accepted. That is, the fictional cosmology's logic. The term “fictional cosmology” refers to any fictional cosmology that is based on mythology or fiction. Those that are “allegoric”. We can accept the use of fire magic in *The Lord of the Rings* or *The Force* in *Star Wars* even though they defy the logic of the real world because their cosmology externalizes itself from our own reality and is built upon its own set of perceptions and rationality. In this way, applying the allegory function to our own reality could give us a new perspective: allegorizing the real. In this sense, the setting<sup>7</sup> that frames and constitutes the set of logic may be more significant than the logic itself.

To put it another way, allegory is a thought experiment—an unreal world—created by a thinker or philosopher to comprehend the world according to a predetermined condition. In this fictitious world, the character acts or behaves according to a predetermined logic. Consider Plato's Allegory of the Cave. The men lived in a dark cave, facing the cave wall in front of them, with the only source of light being the fire behind them, projecting the shadow of the object between the men and

---

<sup>7</sup> I used the term “setting” in quite a broad but specific sense. “Setting” for me and this work is the sense-perceptual realm, space, and/or entity that encapsulate the given being(s) or community. Therefore, setting could be materialistic (like infrastructural developments), services, culture, education, mass media, and various form of simulations. And my take of the setting is that it affect us and formulate the way we thought, behave, and perceive truth, reality, or normalcy.

the fire onto the cave wall. Plato's logical explanation describes how the characters would behave in the unreal world under these conditions. We, the readers, could understand and accept the explanation even though we know that the characters' actions in this allegory would be illogical in the real world. With "that conditional setting," we accept this logic. Similarly, other forms of stories, fables, and fictional literature have their own sets of conditions for their own worlds—the settings—resulting in new sets of logic specifically crafted for them. The characters in each story would act according to their own logic, while the readers would judge them according to their own logic and reasoning, whether it be a superhero movie, a manga, or even a realistic novel. We always do this in the fictional world, but rarely in what we have always perceived as reality—in my case, Thailand. So, I wonder, "What if I allegorized reality? What if I tried to understand Thailand as another allegory or fantasy fable (that is happens to be the reality)?"

Allegorizing reality has made previously unintelligible logic more understandable and logical. Allegorizing the real means distancing oneself from the reality itself and taking on the role of an observer rather than a participant. In this way, reality is observed objectively but perceived subjectively, as everyone's perception of reality differs. Distancing oneself from the outcome makes the observation more accurate and less sentimental.<sup>8</sup> I tried to understand cosmology and the logic that runs parallel to it by imagining myself as an observer of my own reality. How did it begin to deviate from the universally accepted one? How was it popularized and recognized within the cosmology community? How did it deter or even defeat the

---

<sup>8</sup> Obviously, "objectivity" is not everything and "being sentimental" is not wrong in itself. However, it is the aim of this work, or to be more precise "me," to encounter this topic on this ground in order to see a new light because, as I mentioned, I had been seeing the same perspective almost since birth or at least from the same foundation of thought as someone who was born in Thai and sentimentally involved. As I aim to see some new perspective on the already known information, this would be my take to proceed this work.

universally perceived logic and considered nobler? Externalizing oneself from the production of reality has also increased the importance of the setting that influences reality. Since these fields of study concentrate on the environment and setting itself (as opposed to the human turn or anti-anthropocentrism), it also brought my interest onto the nonhuman turn, symmetrical ontology, new materialism, and science and technology studies (STS)<sup>9</sup>. This work focuses on the interplay between the base structure (tools, machines, buildings, factories, tangible or materialistic means of

---

<sup>9</sup> Nonhuman turn, anti-anthropocentrism, systematical ontology, new materialism, and STS could loosely be grouped into the schools or fields of social study that do not solely focus on “human” as the central agency of the phenomena which is normally known as “human-centric” or “anthropocentrism”. The approaches, main focuses, or aims of these schools or fields may differ but their core essence is similar that is the nonhuman factors are equally important to their human counterpart in the production of the world we have been living in; hence the names such as nonhuman turn or anti-anthropocentrism. These schools first emerged in the 1970s and 1980s but have been widely popularized in the social science field from the 2000s onwards. Generally, new materialism sees itself as a distinction or discontinuity from Marx’s materialism, which focuses on the power of the working class, structural politics, or even Foucault’s biopolitics. But this concept concentrates on the plurality, the multitudes, and the uneven and complex sphere of contingent and collaborative work. In short, it moves away from the human-centric approach (anthropocentrism) and views humans as a part of the whole array of agents of power, both living and non-living. In this sense, it could be considered a branch of anti-anthropocentrism or ecocentrism. In this regard, the power of the “setting,” as earlier mentioned in the notion of allegorizing the real, would unleash its full potential since the tools, buildings, devices, technology, and so on that are outside the control of human intention are also accounted for in the whole structural condition of power as well as humans. (See also: Bennett 2010; Chen 2012; Sundberg 2014; Tomkins 2016; and Todd 2016) Likewise, symmetrical ontology and STS are closely related to each other since STS is one of the important forces that pave the way for the expansion of symmetrical ontology. In recent decades, STS has made an attempt to underline the significance of science and technology as equally important agents in the study of social science; in other words, to stand against asymmetrical research and examination conducted differently towards technology and science. This gives the condition of possibility to the new array of agencies to be examined. It seems to impact the anthropology field considerably more than other social science fields, to the point that anthropologists in recent years called it an “ontological turn”. Holbraad and Pedersen (2017) To sum things up, STS and symmetrical ontology share a lot of their likeliness with new materialism and anti-anthropocentrism because they count every existing entity as an actor, both tangible and intangible, spiritual and non-spiritual alike.

production) and the superstructure (culture, religion, ideology, and any intangible entities that influence the base but do not directly produce it). The interest in the setting itself suggests a new way to understand Thai politics. Simply put, logic and rationality are dictated by the "setting" rather than being pure and objective as many people believe. Under the mentioned scheme, I took on Anthony D. Smith's concept of "ethnie", or pre-national history, and divided the work into 4 large sections: "ethnie construction", "ethnie implementation", "ethnie domination" (homogeneous, empty time), and "ethnie replacement". The ethnie construction mainly focuses on how Chaofah Mongkut (later King Rama IV) initiated the official version of Siam identity, which will act as the foundational narrative for all the other narratives that represent Siam or Thailand to build upon. The ethnie implementation is the phase of King Bhumibol, who took on the ethnie left behind by Chaofah Mongkut and built his narrative around it. During this phase, two main storylines of Bhumibol's narrative surfaced: the "From Dad" and "(Be) Like Dad" storylines. Next came the ethnie domination period. It was when Bhumibol's narrative had gained its unprecedented dominance over the nation and could autonomously reproduce itself without the guidance of the royal faction. It had become an ecosystem of its own, with King Bhumibol at the center, tying everything and everyone together. I see this phase as also comparable to Benedict Anderson's homogeneous, empty time, as King Bhumibol acted as the central imagined entity that linked the whole community together under a similar time frame. The result of this fruition was what I call a "modern mandala" and the new storyline of Bhumibol's narrative, "For Dad." Lastly, the ethnie replacement, was the time of the declination of Bhumibol's narrative, running from his hospitalization to the reign change. During this time, the royal faction is attempting to revitalize the dying narrative by proposing a systematic way to replace the deceased king. The new storyline emerged, and I named it "Replacing Dad".

The chapters were narrated on the mentioned framework. The first chapter is probably the most vital, as it will illustrate the main theoretical foundation and

concept for the rest of the work. It was themed “2 categories” and featured two main pictures. First, it will discuss the concept of “nation”, which underpins all other concepts and arguments in this work. The chapter then examines the role of medical doctors as narrators in the community from the past to the present. Then it depicts two types of medical doctors, one with universal influence and the other with a Thai-specific role. However, with Thai political roots and dominant storytelling structures, the narrative power of Thai medical doctors has been further strengthened to another level. In a nutshell, the chapter discusses Thai politics and storytelling structures in comparison to the universal version.

Chapter 2 – 5 will elaborate on the royal storytelling construction via the medical services. Each chapter depicts the chronological construction of one main royal narrative that is both influential in its own right and important to the overall structure of the storytelling campaign. They coordinated the superstructure and the base structure. Also, when one story followed another, it didn't erase the previous one(s). They all still remain exist and have distinct functions. In Chapter 2, the royal medical units, royal projects, materialistic infrastructure during the Cold War program, and US assistance all play a role in the emergence of the “From Dad” narrative. This work will present the first major Salim category, “Salim Fundamentalism” here. Prawase Wasi and the rural doctor network will be the main contributors to the “(Be) Like Dad” narrative in Chapter 3. Unlike the previous narrative, it rejected foreign influence, even calling it “sickness,” and insisted on restoring our own unique way of life and political system. This period provided the populace with its own dogma or practice, which was very important in the construction of the royal narrative. In this chapter, the “Progressive Salim” emerges. Chapter 4 will introduce the birth of the “For Dad” narrative, which signifies the completion of what this work called the modern mandala (discussed in chapter 2). In this sense, this chapter displays the dominance of the royal narrative over other stories, particularly the story of the modern border and liberal democratic value—in short, standardized reality. It also won



over itself, becoming the story that could reproduce itself without “the narrative production agency.” The Salim of the two categories blended and collaborated in representing the king’s power. They were the “self-running system” which I call “For Dad” storyline. However, the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) shattered Bhumibol’s golden age. UHC has given the royal storytelling a public contest of narrating power, which I would call “the everlasting specter.” Bhumibol died, and the new reign begins. Chapter 5 will discuss events and narrative campaigns from Bhumibol’s death to the new reign’s rise. Since the birth of “For Dad,” Thailand has also encountered one of the most extreme politically polarized confrontations in history, leading to the Red Shirt movement which ended as a massacre in May 2010 and the weakened royal narrative; hence, the need to replace the deceased dad. The main engine of this “Replacing Dad” is Prayuth Chan-o-cha’s key policy called “Pracharat”. The policy’s initiator, Prawase Wasi, is considered the don of Thai health care, and his network is heavily connected to medical units and foundations.

The final chapter will be Chapter 6. In this chapter, I argue that decades of Bhumibol’s storytelling–dominance caused fundamental changes on both tangible and intangible fronts. It established a new setting, cosmology, and materialistic environment: a political ecosystem. The work will investigate the condition of possibility to disengage from the said structure and setting in light of recent anti-monarchical demonstrations. It shows how the new reign, around half a decade old, has lost the Bhumibol’s engineered storytelling charm and credibility. So, with the data from the demonstrators’ interviews, I plan to conclude on the structural condition that encourages this possibility.

Fundamentally, if I were to put on the basic philosophical categorization, this work tries to evaluate and examine the dominant power of Thai politics during King Bhumibol’s reign on the epistemological ground. There are 3 main branches of philosophy: metaphysics—the study of what the world or reality is; epistemology—the

study of knowledge, or how we think or know in the way that we do; and value theory—the essence of value we use and apply in practice, or the way in which our moral code comes into term with our conduct. The dominant political power of King Bhumibol that stemmed from his teaching and propaganda was usually recited as the form of value theory in Thailand; the essence that Thai people ought to follow or revere. It also claims supremacy over other kinds of narrative and elaborates on the true worth of the world. Hence, it depicts some metaphysical dimension. Similarly, critical studies on Thai politics, which typically center on the concept of "Thainess or Thai-style," primarily operate on a certain kind of metaphysical and value theory grounds. They are either demonstrating the abnormal "value theory" that Thainess upholds or contrasting the metaphysical claim of Thai-style with the reality of the world.<sup>10</sup> However, I believe the field lacks the epistemological examination that investigates how Thai society comes to think or accepts reality as it is. This work departs on the epistemological front by allegorizing myself from my own perception of reality, and thus looks back on how the majority of the Thais—including myself—see things the way we do.

Ultimately, this work seeks to understand how the politics of Thai monarchical storytelling has been narrated, developed, functioned, achieved, secured, and maintained via medical services. So, it doesn't try to make new historical discoveries, as the data collected by many scholars prior to this work's publication was excellent and more than sufficient. In addition to interviews with current dominant figures in the health care community, this work's interviews were conducted to confirm the

---

<sup>10</sup> The notion of "reality" can be diverse and reality itself can be various, to say the least. For instance, a perception of one event or incident from different person could be interpreted differently, and hence, different realities. However, I use the term "reality of the world" here as a "category of credible or acceptable set of realities" which is based on the scientific regime of truth. And in this specific sense, I argue that there is only one form of universally accepted reality, one that conforms with scientific rationality and infinite time causal-effect. This point will be further discussed later on.

continuity of the influences displayed by the existing information or to fill in a gap with some missing link necessary to understand how the monarchical storytelling has been recited. This work has the same goal as my master's dissertation on terrorism: to understand the logic and rationality that eventually become the society's dominant mindset. During my master's degree, I looked into the structural rationality of terrorists and the counter-terrorism mindset in the West. Similarly, for my Ph.D. thesis, I examined the structure of Thai rationality and its evolution. It is impossible for a single piece of work to touch upon every aspect that contributes to the construction of a narrative at such a level. So, I simply focus on the medical services as the structural agency because I believe they have immense narrative power, especially in today's world.<sup>11</sup> The work will be submitted to the school of area studies, but I never agree with such disciplinary categorization. The studied area is simply a vehicle for the author's argument. With the aim of decrypting the socio-political structure and rearranging the structural phenomena into layers of models for more universal application, I would say this work is leaning toward the field of political science. In this regard, I examine the uniqueness of the Thai political scene to universalize the particularity and reveal it to be more applicable to any phenomenon that shares structural compatibility with it. In short, this work sees itself as a member of a multidisciplinary origin, and in this regard, it may appear to be "anti-rigidity." To put it mildly, the work does not favor a universal principle of anti-ethnocentrism. This work, however, believes that in order to fully support the rigid principle's stance, one must first fully capture both its positive and negative sides, as well as its supporters and challengers. This work, in this regard, presents the challenger to the ought-to-be universal principle. If we comprehend it thoroughly in order to find a way to erode it or redirect it into the shape of the universally accepted version. While I agree with Foucault's interpretation of power that everything has power in relation to its

---

<sup>11</sup> The conceptual reasoning behind this claim will be discussed in detail in Chapter 1.

counterpart, as a modernist, I believe that some power or essence matters more to society as a whole. Rather than claiming that all powers or narratives are equal, this work examines what it perceives as the dominant power and what contributes to it. In short, I agree with Foucault's analysis of power, but I also believe that the (scientific and democratic) metanarrative must win.

### **Literature Review: What They Lack and the Aim of This Work**

Although relatively small in comparison to those that glorify the monarchy, academic works on Thai studies that focus on monarchical politics, particularly critical stances, have been flourishing for decades, particularly in the last 20 years. Several topics have been discussed and covered. I would like to categorize the works with critical views on the Thai monarchy into 2 main groups: structural and specific issues. The works before the 2000s were mainly the structural ones, counting from Benedict Anderson's (1978) *Studies of the Thai States and the State of Thai Studies*, which discussed the monarchical power against the Siamese as a nation, to Nidhi Eoseewong's (1995) *Thai Absolute Monarchic Regime*, which displayed a brief history of Thai monarchical institutions in politics and also its mistakes. (See also: Chaloeontiarana 1979; Eoseewong 1984 (2005); Prasertkul 1989; Winichakul 1994; and Rajchagool 1994) Probably only Katherine Bowie's (1997) *Rituals of National Loyalty*, which studied the movement and motives of the Thai village scout, could be counted as the work on the specific issue. Many of the works produced during this time period have served as foundational arguments for the study of Thai studies. The most notable ones include Thak's (1979) *Thailand: The Politics of Despotic Paternalism*, Nidhi's (1984, 2005) *Pen and Sail*, and Thongchai Winichakul's (1994) *Siam Mapped*. Thak's work explored the legitimizing process of Bhumibol and also his network construction, particularly during Sarit's administration. Nidhi's work focuses more on the cultural politics of the early Chakri dynasty. His work explains the interplay between the

bourgeoisie and monarchic culture. Lastly, Thongchai's work—the one that I believe to ground the most influential and revolutionary argument of the pack—explains the establishment of the "geo-body" via the construction of the modern border and map. It granted the populace the imaginable outline or picture of the nation and, hence, caused a paradigm shift within the country. As a result, the proper separation of "self and other" under the notion of "Thainess" arises.

The critical works on Thailand's monarchy began to explode in the 2000s. Work on specific issues began to appear more specifically on the Crown Property Bureau or CPB (See: Jangraew 2002; Jeamteerasakul 2006; and Ouyyanont 2007). Work of a similar nature but focused on different issues, such as Chitbandit's (2007) work on *Royally-Initiated Projects*, could also be found. I would loosely call this sort of work "work that aims at its own end," meaning that it studies what it focuses on for the sake of understanding such an issue in itself. However, another type of specific-issued work appeared during this similar period, but the works themselves did not have the objective of studying the focal issue for its own end. Rather, they used the said issue as the vessel to encrypt the politics on the structural level. Some of them did not concentrate on the specific issue but pondered on a certain aspect of the monarchical involvement in Thai politics. The work of Mark Taamtai (2001), titled "*The Democratic Form of Government with the King as the Head of the State*," which examined the conceptual value and the placement of the monarchy in a democratic regime, in particular, kicked off this trend. Some examples of the work of this sort are Prajak Kongkeerati's (2005) work that studied the student movement to unveil the royal discourse in Thai politics or Kobkua Suwannathat-Pian's (2003) work that examined the Thai Constitutional Court to reveal the royal influence in the court. I see my work as a member of this category as uses what appears to be a specific issue, medical service, as a means to reveal the structural problem.

Anyhow, during the 2000s, the most notable work, arguably, was *Network Monarchy* by Duncan McCargo (2005). The inner circle of the king, or in this case, Bhumibol, was essentially what Duncan referred to as "network monarchy." The network performed the function of manipulating the politics behind the curtain, mainly by means of lobbying. The work underlined the intervention of Prem Trinnsulanont, the president of the Privy Council, the most, and elaborated on how he managed the network and also lobbied with those of political-administrative power. The finding in itself was impactful, resulting in the fact that the concept of network monarchy or network politics is still being used until now (See: Kumpha 2019). However, in terms of the newness of the argument, it was, diplomatically speaking, not at all cutting-edged. The monarchy forming his or her inner circle and attempting to intervene with the political body itself was neither novel nor groundbreaking, both historically and geographically. Historically, in a sense that every monarch in Siam or Thai history had an inner circle, or at least an attempt to form one and involve or even compete on the political stage. Geographically, in a sense that even in the present day, every living monarchy does have their close retainers, at least those doing the communicating job for them. In short, the central argument in itself could even be called "normalcy." So, what it had done was confirming the well-known speculation and also depicting the intensity of the political involvement of Bhumibol and his network, which might have been more than normally anticipated during the time the work was published. In short, the most impactful part that the work presented was its factual findings, not its argumentative front. In this regard, the work of Asa Kumpha (2019), which could be described as the lengthy extension of McCargo's network monarchy, though presenting some similarities with my work in terms of royal network examination, has a completely different structure and goal compared to my work. While Asa's work locates itself as the study of network politics, this work sees itself more as a structural and conceptual, only that during the establishing state

of royal domination, the personal network politics and the structure itself were almost the same thing and exchangeable. Hence, the similarity appeared during these parts.

Later, in the 2010s, critical works on the Thai monarchy surpassed the total amount of previous works combined. At least 29 pieces of works have been published. Many notable academic proposals have emerged, like Jeamteerasakul's (2012) *Mass Monarchy*, Chaiching's (2013) *Kor-Fan-Fai-Nai-Fan-Un-Luer-Chuer*, Thongchai Winichakul's (2016) *royal nationalism* and (2019a) *hyper-royalism*<sup>12</sup>, or Tejapeera's (2017) *Bhumibol's Consensus*.<sup>13</sup> Many works that could be classified as specific issues bloomed as well. The ones that are closely related to this work were Sing Suwannakij's (2013) *King and Eye*, Saichol Sattayanurak's (2014) *10 Scholars of Siam*, and Serhat Unaldi's (2016) *Working towards the Monarchy*. Saichol's work encountered the influential conservative scholars of Siam and Thailand. In a sense, her work explains the intellectual formation of Thai society through the influence of human agents. Serhat's work was based on the anthropologic methodology that studied a certain space in downtown Bangkok and comprehended the adoration towards the monarchy through the relations between the community, its materialistic environment, and the political condition. Sing's work was probably closest to my work as he framed his work

---

<sup>12</sup> The concept of hyper-royalism was used by Thongchai Winichakul at least since 2011, but officially written in English academic paper on 2019. (Please see: Winichakul 2011)

<sup>13</sup> In a nutshell, I would say that this work itself is an attempt to find the marriage proposal among the three prominent concepts that explain Thai politics – Tejapeera's Bhumibol's consensus, Winichakul's royal-nationalism, and Jeamteerasakul's mass monarchy – and see how things get to the point of their respective proposals via the operation of the health care network. Anyhow, if I have to pinpoint on the exact concept among the three, I would say that this work align itself with Tejapeera's concept the most; seeing it as the one which illustrates the overall picture the best. I see Winichakul's and Jeamteerasakul's proposals as the reasons in which Thailand had reached the stage of Bhumibol's consensus that Tejapeera offered. At the same time, Winichakul's argument might be the most crucial and fundamental of the three as this work sees it as the basis for the rest as well. Nonetheless, the three concepts or frameworks share a huge similarity in my opinion and they function together very well.

on visual politics and its relationship with the royal influence on public perception. In short, his work explored/explained the relationship between materialistic means and royal-cultural power. Sing showed that visual objects and technology had created the influence of the Siamese king in the public eyes.

By far the most influential work during this time period was, without a doubt, Eugénie Mérieau's (2016) *Thailand's Deep State*. Mérieau's work talks about the sources of political-administrative power in Thai politics via her studies on the constitutional court from 1997–2015. Ultimately, she concluded that there were at least two main sources of power in Thai politics that had the capability of managing and manipulating the judicial and administrative bodies; one that came from legitimate means and appeared in the limelight, whilst the other emerged from an illegitimate means but stayed hidden and expanded its sphere of influence in the dark for decades. It had long been enrooted in society to the point that it could overpower the legitimate one yet still maintain its confidentiality. *Deep State* portrays a broader structural viewpoint of the Thai political landscape compares to the *Network Monarchy* which is based on the human agencies of the system, so I would say Mérieau's is more groundbreaking - argumentative-wise, as well. Even so, what Mérieau's explained was still in the realm of universal rationality. It was hidden; therefore, people could not see it. However, "unconventional" cases that occurred in the Thai political scene were not at all "hidden," and people still act as if they never happened, or even celebrate them. Take the case of Thanin Kraiwichien, who was autocratically selected as the prime minister after the sinister massacre on the October 6th incident as an example. After the tragedy commenced, Thanin, as the prime minister, issued a series of extreme autocratic and violent eradications of the state-recognized left-wing activists and members of the communist party of Thailand. However, after he had left the Prime Minister position, he was devoid of any juridical accusation for his deed, and more importantly, he got promoted to the position of the king's Privy Council member. His case was a tiny speck in the multitude of events of similar proportions, like the events



of almost twenty successful military coups, the relationship the king had pronounced during the Sarit and Tanom administrations, and so on. (See also Haberkorn (2018), which goes into detail about the impunity and violations of human rights that occurred in Thailand.) In this regard, Mérieau's work does not fulfill the void of "universal irrationality" yet widely accepted in the Thai political landscape, and ultimately, this void was the central query behind the simple question of the stupidity of Thai people mentioned earlier. Hence, this work intends to fill this void, but not by rejecting its rationality but by attempting to comprehend the rationality that seems irrational by the universal standard, and seeing how this set of rationality and logic has been cooked into Thai politics.

As earlier disclaimed, it is impossible to cover all aspects that construct the "irrational rationality" that is born from Bhumibol's storytelling. Therefore, this work will highlight the production of the said narrative through the labor of the medical services. Many academic works on medical services have been published, especially after the rise of Thailand's universal health coverage program during the Thaksin administration. Among them, the most prominent ones, at least in my humble opinion, are Sukij Darnyuttasil's (1991) *The Modern Health Care in King Mongkut Reign (1910-1925)* and Taweesak Pueksom's (2007) *Germ, Body, and Medicine State*. Sukij's work studied the rise of modern medicine and its expansion during the King Mongkut (Vajiravudh) or Rama VI era, from the educational courses to the materialistic dimension like the spread of hospitals. Likewise, Taweesak's work displayed a longer period of medicine, starting from the first import of western medical knowledge in the Ayudhaya era until the present age. Also, Taweesak's work paid much more attention to the politics of and around the health sector. These two pieces have done their jobs exceedingly well and are very detailed in their own right. Nevertheless, these two prominent works are essentially medical history works that aim to understand what is going on in medicine and the health system itself. Illan Nam's (2015) *Democratizing Health Care: Welfare State Building in Korea and Thailand* is the most promising work

in recent years that studies Thai health care in order to understand the formation of the larger structural engineering of Thai politics. As the name suggests, her work studied the health care system in order to understand the formation of the welfare state, and it is a comparative political work, comparing South Korea and Thailand, as the title conveys. Nam's work is mainly based on health policies and her interviews with various dominant agencies behind the policies to comprehend the structural intention the policies are intended to contribute to. Again, because her work focuses on policies and comparative politics, and in a rather "institutionalized fashion," it does not emphasize narrative analysis as much. And that is the space where I see my work making some contribution. In this regard, Michel Foucault's (2003) *The Birth of the Clinic* in 1973, which studied and discussed the power and politics of modern medicine as a form of modern political power, is the closest work that I see as the model. Another work worthy of note in terms of the direction and argument presented is Khemthong Tonsakulrungruang's (2019) *Toward a New Buddhist Constitutionalism*, which examines the Theravada Buddhist influence in the constitution of the concept of constitutionalism.

To sum things up, my work does not aim to reject the claims that came before or even encounter them, but rather to fill in the void that I believe still lacks an answer. It does not position itself as a historical work, as Sukij and Taweesak's great works do, nor as purely political science, as Nam's work does. It is, perhaps, somewhere in the middle. The work aspires to be like Bernard of Chartres' famous words: "*If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.*" The works that came before mine were like giants' shoulders, and I simply used my position as someone who came later to study from their efforts in order to see a little further into the darkness of unknowingness. The land yet to be comprehended that I choose to focus on is the construction of the body of rationality in the Thai political landscape, which is hardly comprehensible by the universal standard. And in the case of Thailand, this irregular set of logic attached itself inseparably to Bhumibol's overwhelming narrative power.

So, to understand how the irregular rationality had been constructed to be perceived as rational and why it needed to be so, one needs to examine the relation of these two entities: Bhumibol's narrative and the so-called unique set of logic. I used the knowledge that had been tirelessly attained, like Sukij and Taweesak, to formulate my own argument and rearrange the new order on the known information to steer out a new perspective. In the regard, this work does not target at offering the brand-new information, but a new perspective of the Thai narrative politics.

## **Methodology**

Although I am hesitant to categorize this work, it has been designed to provide theoretical—not philosophical—arguments, models, and frameworks for alternative modernization routes for the nation. That is why this work uses textual and contextual analysis. While it does provide historical evidence or conduct interviews, it does so to support, initiate, confirm, or construct the argument, not the other way around. The reader should not expect unfounded information from this work, as one might assume from a thesis in area studies. Also, as a conceptual, or theoretical work, I disclaim that the work will use the concept or argument as a “text-as-text”, or use them regardless of their owner's political or philosophical project. Thus, scholars with opposing political or philosophical projects could use each other's work to support each other if it is logical. For example, the offensive structural realist work of John Mearsheimer, a right-wing scholar, could be used in conjunction with the Marxist fundamental framework of historical materialism.

This work could be divided into two parts: conceptual frameworks and arguments, and supporting data. The framework and foundational arguments were

heavily Marxian (not necessarily Marxist).<sup>14</sup> It is based on two fundamental Marxian concepts: historical materialism and the base structure and superstructure. They have been well established in academic circles for decades and have proven their worth, whether one agrees or not. Using these foundation concepts as a framework for my textual and contextual analysis, I developed two main conceptual arguments. The first is the "politics of permanence and impermanence". I used the terms to show the structure's aim/goal rather than its durability. The idea of absolute truth, as shown in religious teaching and autocratic regimes aiming for "permanent domination" in politics, I call the narrative with such structural function the "politics of permanence". Contradictorily to its name, its function which is static or absolute leads to the structure that does not allow them to be so. It leads them to the end of their dominance (hence, impermanent) once it clashes with the inevitable changes. The narrative's structural function that is not fixated or static but allows changes to occur and constantly restructures itself is much like science, which is, on the contrary, more permanent—even though it does not aim for its teaching to be permanent. Similarly, I refer to this type of narrative as "the politics of impermanence." In this case, the absolute narrative's permanent goal leads to a permanent structure that prevents them from living permanently; thus, the "politics of permanence" is ironically impermanent. Similarly, the impermanent goal of science leads to the narrative structure that allows them to live (relatively more) permanently, thus concluding that the "politics of impermanence" is more permanent than the other. The politics of permanence and impermanence play a huge role in the comparison between the

---

<sup>14</sup> Marxist is generally the school of thought that takes on the work of Karl Marx, while Marxian is generally based on the left-wing thinkers who were influenced by Karl Marx but not necessarily need to be the work of Marx himself. In short, Marxian is a little bit less strict or precise to the work of Karl Marx himself.

Western world—the reference point of the universal standard route of modernity<sup>15</sup>—and Thailand. Also, the work depicts how western cosmology was built on the politics of impermanence (science/scientific regime of truth<sup>16</sup>), which eventually became a global, universalized form of perception and logic. The politics of impermanence stems from the scientific revolution's political positioning. To overcome the Catholic Church and become the dominant narrative power, it has grounded its evaluation system in hypothetical deductivism<sup>17</sup> rather than absolute truth. However, Thailand's perceptual and rational conditions are based on the politics of permanence. The narrative structure remained fixed at the superstructure level, but the base structure was allowed to change selectively, according to the superstructure's will. That is because the base structure (material, technology, tangible or consumable environment) contributes more to shaping and transforming change in society than the superstructure (culture, tradition, general belief, narrative, ideology), hence the base structure needed to be dictated since the stage of pre-materialized society. The

---

<sup>15</sup> There are many criteria to judge the notion of modernity, or even denying its existence as such. In this work, I judged it by 2 main criteria (1) having scientific rationality as the basis, and (2) thinking or behaving on the framework of infinite linear time. These points will be discussed later on in details.

<sup>16</sup> I used the term "regime of truth" which is coined by Michel Foucault. However, this work is not written on the post-structuralism's tradition, hence, it will not proceed with the Foucauldian language. I used the term in the following sense: "the narrative or rationality that is considered the normality or basis of the society where one(s) autonomously thinks or behaves upon."

<sup>17</sup> Hypothetical deductivism and hypothetical imperative are parts of the causal-effect rationality; "If X, then Y" on the basis of infinite linear time. In a less specific sense, they could even be used interchangeably. However, since this work places a huge focus on the comparison between "pre-scientific rationality" and "modern scientific rationality" (the universal standardized version), it therefore chooses to use the terms "hypothetical deductivism" or "hypothetical imperative" specifically to underpin the "causal-effect rationality that emerges from scientific method". This seemingly excessive use of jargon is somewhat necessary since the pre-scientific cosmologies also have their own sets of "causal-effect rationality" and I intend to make a separation here. The work will use these terms quite strictly and essentially in the early chapters where pre-scientific and modern scientific rationality are heavily discussed, but once this point is covered, the work will use the term "causal-effect" in place of these jargons to make the work more understandable for the readers.

Thai structural condition had advanced to modernity by retaining autocratic power that belonged to the realm of permanence politics and guiding the impermanent base structure to function in a way that benefited the permanent overrule.<sup>18</sup>

The second foundational concept is the establishment of the modern mandala. This concept is, as well, influenced by historical materialism but also has some additional inspiration from some newer concepts, notably the concept of simulations and simulacra<sup>19</sup>. Since this work examined the political structure as a narrative production during the reign of Bhumibol or King Rama IX, it means that the setting in which the cognitive understanding of the image of the nation as a whole (geo-body) had already been structurally transformed by the establishment of the modern border during the reign of King Rama V. The modern border played a huge role in the way that the royal narrative needed to be readjusted since it cut down the tie between the monarch and the land. The rise of the modern border has become the narrative in itself, a narrative of fixed domain of influence. Also in 1932, the People's Party

---

<sup>18</sup> In a nutshell, this is my attempt to conceptually cooperate the 3 concepts of the different origins together that are materialistic affects (as a part of setting—as in STS), regime of truth, and simulacra. This attempt operates with the help of Marx's superstructure and base structure—in a way, they act as the conceptual linkage. A short conceptual explanation here is that the royal network (superstructure) produced narratives continuously to the society that was yet to be materialized. The narratives had been produced both as "material and non-material" operations which resulted into the new setting of the given society (Thailand). Anyhow, for Marx's notion of base structure—which I agreed with—suggests that base structure is more influential in steering the society more than superstructure. However, this is the case for fully materialized society, but what about the society that the majority of base structure (the setting) had been produced to serve a certain narrative since the time the society was not yet fully materialized? My argument here is that the setting or base structure will perform as the simulations of the superstructure instead since the setting had been preoccupied by this superstructure's narrative from the beginning. As the society raced towards the full-blown materialized society, it also means a race to a full-fledged simulacrum of the narrative that these setting (base structure) had been carrying as well. Once the society had reached its fully materialized stage, a new regime of truth that stemmed from the narrative and this base structure (setting) also occurred.

<sup>19</sup> This is the term coined by Jean Baudrillard. It will be discussed extensively later on.

succeeded in turning Siam's absolutist state into a democratic constitutional monarchy state and also producing its own narrative. These two narratives that stemmed from the rise of the modern border and the 1932 democratization become the pre-dominant narrative that Bhumibol's story must confront. However, in the case of this modern mandala, I place far more emphasis on the influence cast by the modern border. In short, for Bhumibol and his faction to gain domination over the nation, they had to contend with these existing narratives that were already operating on the field and, to some extent, had already become the setting of the nation. To reconnect with the "nation" again and become the representation of it, the king needed to reconstruct the mandala—his sphere of influence—back again after being replaced by the modern border, and fed them enough narrative to gain the capability to overtake the reason of existence of the modern border itself. If I had to apply Jean Baudrillard's words here, I would conclude that the palace needs to produce enough simulations in order to fruitfully create the simulacra of the royal sphere of influence, in this case, the modern mandala. Therefore, during the formative years of Bhumibol's narrative's building, this work illustrates the initial stage of Thai modern society that had not yet become an "industrialized or materialized society," so the superstructure still played a somewhat more vital role compared to the base structure. A narrative war of the agents of the superstructures to gain control of the base structure during its hatching phase, so to speak. However, once the society has been fully materialized or materially-driven, the base structure would gain a more pivotal role in steering the course of the society, hence it was gravely important for the agent of the superstructure to largely control the predetermined direction of the accumulated base structure that would soon turn into the setting of the whole nation. It was Bhumibol and his circle who emerged victorious in this narrative war, and once the technological advancement had widely reached the whole nation and quite easily assessable by all—a materialized society, as Marxian would claim—the predetermined direction that the base structure was accumulated and designed for was already benefiting the Bhumibol's narrative,

giving birth to the setting or base structure that autonomously reproduced this narrative or a simulacra—or “modern mandala” for the case of this work. Anyhow, even with such dominance in the political structure and the deeply engraved predetermined direction carved on the accumulated base structure, Bhumibol’s narrative still weakened once it was faced with the new system or narrative that offers a new possibility or better outcome for the people (the recipient of the narratives) or once the new and unaffected base structure like the internet and digital world came into play. These cases proved that base structure plays such a tremendous role in shaping the society, particularly on the narrative front, to the point that the superstructure with the help of their own set of base structure might not be able to withstand.

The second part is the supporting information derived mainly from two approaches: textual and contextual analysis, and qualitative interviews. This part that portrays the information to support the conceptual arguments was largely divided into 4 parts or stages of the royal narrative: From Dad, Like Dad, For Dad, and Replacing Dad. During the first two stages, I heavily worked upon the textual analysis, particularly of the autobiography of the important actor that contributed to the construction of the narrative, the human agent network construction, and the interviews with the influential figures related to the narrative. Although this work aims at the structural understanding of the narrative impact in Thai politics and its approach to modernity, unfortunately, the Thai political structure itself could hardly detach from human agencies since it spent a huge load of time under the direct command of autocracy. In a way, during this stage, the human agencies were somewhat representing the dominant structure of the nation as well, particularly in their command over the official narrative of the nation and, consequently, the materialistic entities that were influenced by it. The third part was where the new materialism had firmly taken its place in the work since the setting had been settled. In this part, the contextual and the setting’s influence would be illustrated more.



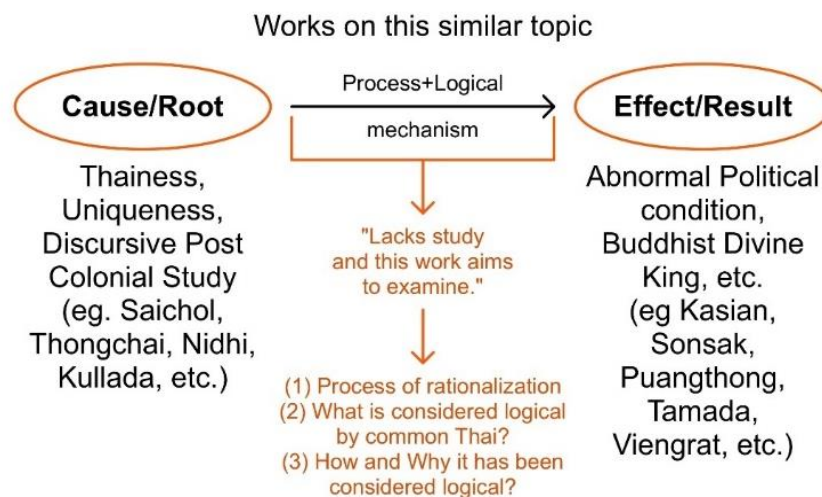
Likewise, the last part not only displays the broken pieces of the narrative, but also portrays symmetrically both human and non-human factors that contributed to the downfall of fables and the need to recite the greatness of the old days.

## **Main Contributions and Limitations of the Work**

### *Contributions*

I would assess that this work has contributed on 2 levels, which I would call the categorical contribution and the argumentative contribution. The categorical contribution is based on the intentional nature of the studies of Thai politics that tends to either present the "uniqueness" of this nation or illustrate the regionally shared experience among the nations of Southeast Asia. This sort of nature, which certainly has merit in and of itself, is mainly a spatial-based analysis of the national culture. In short, the shared cultural roots, environmental similarities, and so on are accounted for by the existing structure, which consequently identifies each nation's (shared) identity. Under this goal, it is therefore understandable the reason why the works mainly produced are spatial-based; hence, Thai studies have mainly been categorized as a part of Southeast Asian Studies. Of course, "cross-spatial" structural studies or comparative studies do appear from time to time, but they are usually focused on a certain specific issue rather than the grand design of the state political structure. In this regard, I see this work offers contribution in terms of excavating and rendering the structural framework and model of Thai politics out, so that it wouldn't remain "unique" but could be taken as the comparison model for any other political contexts that share similar socio-political conditions and without the spatial constriction as well. In short, it is that can be used to compare with the political structure across the globe—not restricted to Southeast Asia—as long as the conditions of similarity are met.

In terms of argumentative contribution, most critical works point to "culture," and I agree, but am not convinced that pointing to culture alone is sufficient. So, what this work offers in this part is that it conceptually depicts the consequential structure of Thailand's modernization routes, one with a culture that is detached from the political landscape (the western or universal route), and one with a culture strongly attached to the political landscape (the Thai case). The work also shows that Thailand's culture has a "political project for its own end," which means it has state-sponsored dogma and the power to directly influence the state's political body. Due to its own political project, the work provides a structural image of the culture's transformations via the politics of storytelling. It depicts the evolution of the royal narrative. Finally, by demonstrating this dynamic change, it demonstrates the culture's ability to seamlessly blend with the waves of progressive values and universal modernization that inevitably reach the Thai social and political body. This work shows how the politics of storytelling created these conditions, and how material and tangible entities help construct such phenomena. Ultimately, it comes down to the first question posed: "Why are Thai people so stupid?"



*Figure 1: The Aim and Position of This Work in the Scope of Studies of Thainess*

## *Limitations*

So far, I have made several disclaimers, and those in themselves are the limitations this work has to yield. Since a lot has already been mentioned, I will make this part as brief as possible. First, this work aims to be a conceptual or theoretical work that looks at the structural foundation and change in politics, in short, the dominating and official political body. Therefore, it would certainly lack the aspects of less generic or dominated politics in the process, and I will not even attempt to cover them. Second, this work chiefly studies and illustrates the said dominating structure as influenced, fueled, or caused by the power that this work called “narrative or storytelling (interchangeably)” which, in itself, covers a wide range of possibilities such as belief, culture, religion, ideology, and so on, and this work uses the term “narrative” or “story” to represent this array of notions. Nonetheless, as widely related as it is, it does not cover everything. The structure was constructed and influenced by other means and mechanisms outside of the storytelling as well, and perhaps equally important, but this work limits itself only at this point. It will not create an impossible dream and aim to cover everything. So, it will not touch upon the financial need, the fiscal policy, the army movement, and so on. Countless causal factors are outside the limit of this work. Third, even for the “storytelling” alone, its production comes from countless sources as well, hence, this work has to limit itself to a singular source which is the health sector, particularly the very central core of this sector. However, it is by no mean implies that other sources that it chose to leave outside of its examination are not or less important. Lastly, since this work sees itself as the conceptual or theoretical work, it gears to offer a new perspective on the structural level with existing or known information. Hence, please do not steer your expectation to find newly discovered information or a never-before-seen data. None of those is here.

These are the limitations that this work has to draw the line for itself, and if anything, other than the disclaimed limitation is found to be incorrect, particularly "logically," the fault is entirely mine as the author.

## Chapter 1

### The Cauldron of Fables: Brewing the Tailor-Made “Modernity”

With the study of the medical doctor and health care network in Thailand, this work proposes a theoretical framework on structural level, which is further divided into two groups: emerging and background structures. The Cold War, the rise of mass media, or the popularization of a certain ideological concept are, for example, the illustrations of emerging structures. Compared to the first category, the background structure is more static and passive. The role of a doctor in society, capitalism's influence, globalization's unavoidable effect of advancing knowledge and technology, and so on could be considered the background structure. Although not explicitly stated, this background structure has always been passively present throughout this work. The background structure will mainly be discussed in this chapter whilst the emerging structures will be discussed in all other chapters according to its given timeframe with the only exception of “the temporal origin and narration of Thai modernity” which could be regarded as the emerging structure and it will be discussed in this chapter. I'd like to start with the work's most basic and fundamental concept, the “nation,” which underpins all other concepts and narratives.

#### Nation and Narrative, Setting and Simulations

Since its inception, the concept of “nation” has been the subject of academic and non-academic debates. In general, this term refers to “the people” because its Latin root *natio* means “to birth” and was used to refer to children and humans of the same origin (Le Petit Robert 2002). Modern usage has reengineered the definition of the word but still rides on the original usage. The modern definition of nation is therefore usually defined as the group or community of people who share commonness or

collective identity among their members. The said commonness could appear in many forms, like ethnicity, language, history, culture, or territory. Paul James (1996, 34) had defined the term as followed: *“A nation is at once an objectively abstract society of strangers, usually connected by a state, and a subjectively embodied community whose members experience themselves as an integrated group of compatriots.”* In short, members of the nation do not need to know, experience, or interact with one another. They could be complete strangers who only share a set of commonness that links what they identify themselves with together and somewhat ready to defend and cherish it.

Regardless, a broad definition of the term “nation” invites debate about what a nation is and how it differs from other human community concepts like ethnic group, cultural community, country, or state. This ambiguity gives rise to terms like ethnic nationalism, cultural nationalism, civic nationalism, and nation-state. To limit the confusion of the term, this work would stick its usage in the boundary of civic nationalism or the community of people who share a certain commonness and are recognized by the majority set of social members and/or political constitution(s) of the said community. Since the official recognition requires the authoritative or legislative power of the state that functions within the given territory, the term “nation” used here is inevitably territorial, as also used in the term “nation-state.” This is owing to the fact that the recognition of the social and political constitution(s) requires the authoritative power of the state, which can only be exercised legitimately within a given territory. In a nutshell, I use the term “nation” where territory is one of the main ties that bind the community. In this sense, no land equals no nation. At the same time, the term is broad enough to host both the “nation” with democracy, secularization, legalism, homogeneity, or the non-democratic, heterogeneity with deeply shared value(s), and unsecularization. People without recognized territory could be considered a nation under some other frameworks like ethnic nationalism or cultural nationalism, but in the context of this work, they would be categorized as the

patriotic ethnic group whose aim is their collective emancipation. This framework also implies that the change or transformation at a national level is a form of official regime change or a transformation of majority perception rather than the literal meaning that every individual member at all edges of the community has engraved with a similar identity.<sup>20</sup>

As stated, the collective identity is diverse. It can be found in countless forms of cultures, histories, and territories. This work sees these numerous features of commonness a form of "narrative" or "story"—a set of words or shared imaginable picture that formulate a common trait or behavior of the community. So, a story is needed to birth a nation and a nation-state as one identifiable group of rooted humans. In this regard, the specific concept of narrative or story that is used as the foundation for the commonness which links people together and later become a nation—sometimes known as "pre-national history"—will be used extensively in this work. The mentioned specific kind of story is called *ethnie*, coined by Anthony D. Smith (1991), an important figure in the school of Ethnocybolicism which sees the symbols, myths, fables, traditions, or values as the main significance in the rise of the modern nation. There are 6 main components that composes into *ethnie*: (1) a collective name, (2) a common ancestral myth, (3) shared historical memories, (4) group's specific or identifiable feature(s), (5) a linkage with a certain land or territory, and (6) a sense of solidarity among the members.<sup>21</sup> In Thailand (or Siam), this work builds upon two major regime changes or national transformations that occurred prior to Bhumibol's hegemony. In the reign of King Rama IV–V, the modern border rose, as did the

---

<sup>20</sup> Obviously, there are definitions that counted the community without state as a nation, under some certain conditions. However, as this work applies on the definition of "civic nationalism", it will not count the community without a state as a nation. It would be "a-nation-to-be" at most.

<sup>21</sup> This work uses the term "ethnie" a bit more loosely compared to Anthony D. Smith himself, involving more variety of narratives. However, the term used in this work fits with the "criteria and condition" – the 6 components – set by Smith. Therefore, it is still within the definitional scope of this term.

democratic revolution of 1932. The first event results in the geo-body, or the collective imaginable body of the nation, which connects the people from their previously fragmented and unlinked spaces (Winichakul 1994). The latter event resulted in a shift in the political value of the community, from collective subjects of the king to individuals with political rights. Building on these two changes as the narrative setting of Thai society, this work elaborates on what it sees as the third change which is the modern mandala constructed via Bhumibol's narrative. This third major wave of national change, which opposes the first two dominant common values, was constructed and achieved during the reign of King Bhumibol (Rama IX). And, since this work focuses on the nation that emerges out of this third wave of national transformation, I used the term "ethnie," or "pre-national history," in this specific sense: *the pre-Bhumibol's-national history*. In this regard, the work uses the terms "ethnie," "narrative, and "story" interchangeably during the pre-Bhumibol's domination stage, referring to the nation-building process based on Bhumibol's narrative and opposing the other two. This chapter will focus on this phase.

A nation's members must share a narrative. Similarly, the narrative requires a way to share its content and value with the community in order to become common. To transmit a story, the medium can be tangible or intangible, living or non-living, materialistic or non-materialistic. This is where Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (2016) shines. Anderson tried to explain the strange phenomenon of the rise of nationalism that happened in a similar time frame. The phenomenon should have occurred long ago if pre-national values and cultures were the significant brew of nationalism, and it should have occurred in different timeframes depending on the cultural roots each pre-national community upheld. Anderson concluded that the rise of technology, in conjunction with capitalism's dominance, particularly print capitalism, allowed for the rise of nationalism. When a narrative is shared among community members in a similar time frame, it causes a regime or collective perceptual change, and is referred to as *homogenous, empty time*. Nationalism is



one possible outcome of this social operation of narrative. In this account, people tend to see Anthony D. Smith and Benedict Anderson as academic rivals. This work, on the contrary, sees their works function in perfect harmony, fulfilling what each other lacks. If Smith's *ethnie* is the nation's fuel, Anderson's proposal on materialistic operation is the ignitor. Neither the fuel nor the ignitor would inflame without the other. This claim is best illustrated by the EU integration case. Compared to hundreds of years ago, the EU has far more resources to achieve homogenous, empty time and successfully integrate as one nation under one constitution. However, it failed amidst all the sufficient tools. This indicates the lack of sufficient narrative to become the commonness that chained the people together. If I were to summarize this work's conceptual argument in this part, it would be that materialistic advancement could bring about the homogenous perception of common stories within a given community and give birth to Anderson's imagined communities. However, not all of the imagined communities could be considered a nation. For example, a community sharing the story of Harry Potter would not be counted as a nation. To become a nation, such imagined community must possess the "ethnie" that tie them strong enough to have a collective purpose of living and governing together as one. An imagined community without *ethnie* would remain a simple community with a similar collection of similarities or identity, not a nation as most people know it. As in Jean Baudrillard's concept of *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994), this work calls these various means of disseminating the narrative "simulations." To me, simulation encompasses a wide range of elements, from human agents like doctors and monks to non-living infrastructure like dams and palaces. As the title implies, the main focus of this work is on the medical service and its network. The phase that the simulations had been functioned extensively to carry out the Bhumibol's narrative and re-oriented people's commonness is called "ethnie implementation.". This phase is mainly covered in Chapters 2 and 3.

As simulations are used, their influence on people's perceptions collectively grows and becomes what Michel Foucault called the "regime of truth," or the abstract confinement of what we consider as true, sensible, possible, rational and such. Many times, it defines what society could and could not think. It's the realm of thinkability. This dominance of simulation—once grown—had become the community's unique setting. Likewise, in the case of Thailand, simulations like various accounts of human agents and materialistic means (i.e., infrastructural projects, royal patronage foundations, endless streams of mass media propaganda, legislative and institutional policies, and so on) have been used to underline King Bhumibol's supremacy. It eventually became both the regime of truth in society and the setting for the story that unified the community as one. The simulations have initially been designed to represent a certain narrative, and they have accumulated their presence and influence as time goes by. Once the certain narrative gains the dominant position that defines what the community or the nation is (become the "national identity"), the simulations that once act as the medium of story do not cease to exist simply because their initial job was done. They, on the contrary, continue to exist and live on as a part of the newly emerged collective identity. *"Because this is our way of life, this is how we do, see, and perceive things. Please don't judge us by your usual standards. We are not culturally similar."* This is a common line of thought once a narrative has become the dominant collective identity or commonness in a community, and dictates their code of conduct. It is perceived as the collective normality (regime of truth) and eventually becoming a tradition. As with society's normality and tradition, the narrative is self-replicating and self-reproducing. This is because the members of the given community will continue to repeat the behaviors that host the story or influence of the dominant story autonomously in the name of tradition or their way of life (normality). In this phase, the work uses the terms "setting" and "political or social" ecology interchangeably, as it has become its own system. The simulations (base structure) that once served the agent of the story (superstructure) would become the source that

keeps and runs the story by itself, a base-structure-driven society. In the Western context, the base structure was originally designed to serve capitalism and the industrial mentality—benefiting capitalists, elites, and the bourgeois. That is why Marx emphasized on a society that had already fully capitalized and industrialized. In this sense, the base structure does not always direct the social structure. It will only happen when society is fully capitalized or materialized. So, Marx urged the masses to redesign the social structure to eliminate inequality, which is basically using a superstructure, namely Marxism, to steer the base structure in a new direction. In the Thai context, precisely for the Bhumibol's narrative, the simulations or setting was firstly devised to serve and construct the autonomously functioned structure or ecology befitting the narrative's content and value. Once achieved, the guided simulation became the backbone of Bhumibol's political ecology. The new normality is not only limiting the community's way of life and perception but it also frames what is thinkable and unthinkable—thinkability—of that community. As long as we are not questioning the normality, it would not be deemed abnormal. This structure dictates what members of the community can think, act, or perceive, so their reality is built around this setting or ecology. This will be discussed in Chapters 4 to 6.

Since this work upholds the modern essentialist's viewpoint, it believes in the categorical values—i.e., universal basic human rights—and they must be defended firmly regardless of the accusation of uniqueness—like Thainess, Thai-style, and so on. This work sees these accusations as a false reality for the modern democratic nation-state. It is at best a hijacked or disguised modern democratic nation. The term simulacra, coined by Jean Baudrillard (1994), will be used to describe the achieved stage of Bhumibol's autonomous setting (ecology), and to emphasize the work's perspective on the hijacked reality which, many times, has been protected by the notion of hyper-multiculturalism, blindly supporting the idea of uniqueness more than the categorical value of basic rights. This is how this work connects the four notions of nation, narrative, simulation, and setting together. The next section would therefore

elaborate on the main simulation in this work, the medical doctor, and their structural influence in shaping or transforming society's perception and rationality.

Ancient Greek (philosophy), Christianity, and the scientific revolution are usually mentioned when discussing the transformative change of perception and rationality. These shifts have reshaped how we perceive, react, and construct reality and cosmology. The scientific revolution was largely responsible for today's "universal cosmology" (see Canguilhem 1991). Thus, enlightened rationality, infinite linear time perception, democracy, and human rights changed the way we interpret "life, state, and their relations." Also, the uprooted transformation of the political regime, particularly during the late 18th century, which had changed the reason for the existence of the state and the perception of "life" itself, had also directed the new mode of security as well, like the emergence of health security or human security. Furthermore, the historical events and discoveries that transpired within the passage of time that led to the result as grand as the regime change also played a significant part in making health policy take the leading role in modern-day security politics. This part, therefore, will portray the unique role of the agency of health and medicine in the politics of storytelling that orchestrates the survivability or security of our social (and probably non-social) life.

### **The 'In-Between' and Stairway to Heaven**

Health, life, and medicine are not new concepts when it comes to politics. In fact, they have been intertwined for centuries. The story of a higher existence controlling life and death has been told countless times. Homo Sapiens, around 70,000 years ago, was the first and only specie capable of narrating the non-existence content. The narration is part of the "Cognitive Revolution" described by Yuval Harari (2014), which allowed Homo sapiens to dominate other humans because they could collaborate with a larger group of people when compared to other species of human

that only communicate about existence content. One of the oldest non-existence contents narrated by human (Sapien) was the notion of “higher knowledge in regard of life.” The shaman, witch doctor, or spiritual healer performing treatment and directing the community is one of the oldest stories about the political power of life and medicine. They were held in sacred. The word “shaman” itself seems to derive from *šaman* in Manchu-Tungus, which means “one who knows” (see Hutton 2017, vii-viii; and 2011). Such content has been narrated until the present day—albeit with different forms, contents, or contexts—which signifies that this sort of story could be considered the innate universal character of humans as well.

The “sacred treatments” aren’t just for the ancients or remote communities. Even modern medical doctors share and experience these “sacred treatments.” We go to a doctor when we are sick or in a life-threatening situation (disease, accident, etc.) because we lack “the knowledge capable of treating our own life.” The doctor would examine and treat us using modern medical knowledge (higher knowledge) that we did not have and that only a medical doctor had access to. Or, during a pandemic like the Coronavirus in 2020, the medical doctor’s advice to society was as sacred and grave as martial law—if not more. This shared political function between the shaman and the modern medical doctor seems to place them in a special (narrative) position. While life is the closest entity to each individual, its mystery remains enclosed, even for eons. How to prolong life? How to stop pain? Or even the entire reason behind obesity is still unknown. The higher existence always holds the key to these questions and communicates with us via an envoy, like a medical doctor. In short, it is sacredness that originated from unknowingness or sometimes even ignorance. The sacred natural spirit that represented men’s “unknowingness” became the story of gods and goddesses in many civilizations around the world. While the names of the gods and their powers or functions vary between civilizations, one thing that they all have in common is the story of their life or health. In fact, one of the main characteristics that separate humans and gods is “mortality.” Men called themselves “mortal” while God

was called "immortal." The gods and goddesses' immortality may be innate, the result of living in a world of immortality, or the result of using or consuming an external object. Since then, immortality has been seen as the main barrier between humans and the god realm.

Increasing human longevity has been the key to seducing humans under one grand dream and making them obedient. From shamans to alchemists to priests, the knowledge they held was only theirs and was craved by everyone—commoners and royalty alike. This unique condition gave these practitioners a unique social position. They were at least a step above ordinary people because they had access to the segregated "higher knowledge" that the majority of the population longed for, while even the rich, lords, and royalties who had a higher social or political status than them were still dependent on the knowledge they held. The modern medical doctor who inherits their social function has a very similar trait. It is a position of virtue for those who have achieved a monopoly on knowledge despite being born commoners. Medical doctors are among the most respected and revered professions worldwide, with many generations aspiring to become one in order to improve their living standards or social status.

Since reaching heaven meant gaining immortality for millennia, the life-prolonging practitioners' function was to build the stairways. It's a stairway to heaven. They bridge the gap between humans and gods by extending their kind's lifespan to face countless moons. Because of the story of eternal life, which inspires humans to seek out the path of longevity, and the folklore around the world make believers of this dream believe it is achievable. These practitioners play an important role in the politics of the "in-between." They are "in-between" humans and God as the bearers of higher knowledge. In terms of class and social standing, they are "in-between" commoners and royalty. They live "in-between" the old practice and the new, mundane understanding of the world. Finally, they are someone "in-between" life and death.

Being someone who lives in the “in-between” could be described as the differentia specifica—the distinct character that differs one entity from everything else—of this profession. This function of the one closer to the higher knowledge offers them an unordinary status, the orchestrator of the (more credible or more believable) story, so to speak. They, as the “monopolized knowledge medium,” become the significant storytellers who direct the political community. In short, they could decide what is believable and what is not.

The role of society's main storyteller—one that maintains and prolongs life, in particular—has changed many times throughout history. However, it is only the agent representing such role that has changed. The structural function remains the same. In other words, it is a race to be the best at this “in-between” role. Similarly, modern medicine fought and defeated the previous dominant player in this role—the church—to gain its current position in society. A new narrative challenger aiming to replace an older one that has been lived in a society does not automatically win the leading role. It was made possible by a structural change in the perception of society. When the condition changes structurally, a new agent that fits the role in the new context emerges.

### **Science as the Sanctuary of Reason: The Permanence of the Politics of Impermanence**

The rise of modern medicine usually begins with the 19th century discovery—or recognition—of microorganisms. However, it would be more accurate to start in the 16th century, when Nicholas Copernicus coined a very challenging explanation about the universe that sparked a movement to revisit existing knowledge and question its accuracy. In the early to mid-1500s, Copernicus' “*On the Revolution of the Heavenly Spheres*” (ORHS) (1543) challenged the Catholic Church's established knowledge about the universe. Although ORHS was not a work on medicine, it was widely accepted as the beginning of the scientific revolution which—as a historical movement—is critical

for understanding modern medicine in the Western world. The decline of the church as the main storyteller in Europe proved this function first-handedly through Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton's works, despite their initial intention to update the church teaching by proposing to incorporate the newly discovered knowledge with the old tales but the church rejected. The dominant role as the narrator of the church declined since then.

The origin of the scientific method, apart from ORHS, could at least be traced back to the rationalism debate during the Age of Enlightenment, particularly between René Descartes' advocacies on rationalism and Francis Bacon, who argued for inductivism and empiricism. Later on, Isaac Newton and his colleagues also came into play, and the scientific method—though not yet properly named—has been firmly established since the 17th century. In the early 19th century, a new standard method of studying and understanding the world—*hypothetical-deductivism*—was devised, named, and popularized. Hypothetical-deductivism is the method that begins with the scientific inquiry that will later be formed into the hypothesis. The hypothesis must be falsifiable and universally reproducible. In short, it must be questioned, proven, and tested again. It can no longer be considered true or accurate if it is proven false. Hence, the politics of impermanence arises. Since then, it had been a challenge against untested established notions. Concerning the rise of hypothetical-deductivism, the term "scientific method" emerged afterward in the 19th century, and it has been widely accepted across society in the early 20th century. The method and ability to perform such a method have been applied to distinguish "scientists" from other fake ones like pseudoscience (Thurs 2011, 307 - 336). This distinction solidified the role of "scientists or those who practice science" as the main storytellers. They are the ones who retain the truth—or at least what meets the criteria of truth—thus dictating the scope of plausible or rational possibilities. As a result of this function, the prior untested notions, particularly those regarded as absolute truths, such as the church or the monarch's divine rights, are further obscured. Scientific practitioners, then,



become the dominant mechanism of social structure, and they produce the condition of disregarding permanent knowledge or absolute truth.

The phrase “*Nullius in Verba*” (take no one's word for it) by Christopher Wren in 1660, which later became a widely accepted motto among scientists—starting with The Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge (1663)—was one of the great examples of this “universalistic function” of the method as it asks for the result to be universally reproduced by anyone and anywhere. The proclamation of this phrase was generally marked as the starting point of the modern day's “learned society,” which paired well with the “one who knows more” that belongs to the shaman. Also, this scientific society wasn't the first to say this; the alchemists who called themselves natural philosophers also made a similar claim. So, this modern scientist's code of conduct represents both the structural legacy of the narrator who knows more and the universalistic nature of the newly discovered method of discovering truth.

Note and clarify that whenever the premise of “change” occurs in this work, it does not mean the change in a total or perfect completion sense, because there is no such thing. The premise of change indicates a regime shift on a given issue or a shift in the hierarchy's valued order. That means the church or other religious beliefs have not vanished completely, as the scientists have assumed the role of main storyteller in Western cosmology. They still exist but are demoted in terms of narrative influence. Not to mention that humans have never been a stable living organism capable of maintaining and purely living on logical reasoning at all time. Our brains work and the neuron network formed are constructed based on many things other than the reasons we believe in or the ideology we adore. This is confirmed by a leading neuroscientist Robert Sapolsky in his book “*Behave: The Biology of Humans at Our Best and Worst*” (2017) (see also: Mercier & Sperber 2018). The causes for one's actions can be traced back millions of years and sometimes even milliseconds. So, it's perfectly normal for someone who values science and reason to seek guidance from the church, since the

two can coexist in the same brain and potentially influence decision-making. Ultimately, the premise of change is a new set of normality. In terms of modernization, storytelling is now based on scientific reasoning. So, to gain adequate credibility, especially scholarly, one must follow this trend. This work here—just now—is the perfect example of the claim as it chose the "biology" text that studies and reasons the work of the human brain in order to justify the claim that our brains do not function rationally. In short, what this work attempts to do is rationalizing what has universally been considered "irrational."

As a scientific practitioner, a medical doctor is positioned as both the new storyteller and the "in-between" of the old days, which gives the medical doctor and modern medicine an even more idiosyncratic quality. The in-between role allows modern medicine to retain its old function as the entity that stands between life and death, but with a new tool from the politics of impermanence paved by the scientific revolution. The impermanent narrative structure makes science and its agents fluid, hence capable of adapting to changes and could last (relatively) permanently. The teaching of divine rights or religions, on the contrary, was abrogated because they were not challenged, falsifiable, or even allowed to be questioned. This rigidity that produced the permanent narrative structure was the cause that made them impermanent. The new narrative function, namely scientific method, makes science much more fluid compared to the autocratic storyline, which was fixated. Because it is based on logic and testing, the knowledge can be updated, subtracted, or added at any time. As a result, no one can claim to have an absolute understanding or interpretation of it. That is, no one could claim to be the authority on science. There is no pope, messiah, or God of science. The unending nature of scientific knowledge and modern medicine makes them unreachable. Despite the fact that science or modern medicine does not have a singular authority, it creates a new hierarchical structure of interpretative power centered on itself. A more credible interpreter of the story obviously has a superior position in society compared to those who lack reasons or

scientific foundations. Structurally speaking, scientists and modern medical doctors do share the same political power and function as the shamans of the old days, yet in a far more secure position. Their position is secure due to science's politics of impermanence, which denies absolute and static truth.

### **State as the New God, and Health Security**

The scientific revolution helped shape the political regime of modern democracy and human rights. For example, Jeremy Bentham, one of the great minds of the democratic revolution, were influenced by Isaac Newton's works. The Age of Enlightenment, as a product of the scientific revolution, gradually dismantled the established powers, such as the church or monarchy. As the methodology of the politics of impermanence was developed, it resulted in a change in the structure of storytelling itself. The scientific revolution did not only pulverize the firm beliefs of the prior establishment and replace them, but it also constantly devalued or reduced the importance and acceptability of absolute beliefs. This work sees this production of the scientific method as "the singular history of modern rationalization," which acts as the curator of the historical narrative, meaning only one kind of history that is considered credible—one that fits the scientific regime of truth. As a result of the scientific revolution and the modernization of history, the old regime's power was weakened. The emergence of modern liberal democracy and human rights were born as the fruits that could be considered the two most important political innovations of the modern era. The concept of "individual self-ownership"—particularly the right to life—has also emerged, as it is directly derived from the establishment of human rights.

The two fruits of the first wave of democratization ignited many more political innovations, and that was where the real structural change began to take shape, and these changes could remain impactful until the present day. The "right to life" stems from individual self-ownership and the "fear of death" (Wongswangpanich 2016). In

spite of the fact that humans and other mammals have a natural fear of death and some survival skills (Castano et al. 2011, 601-621), the supreme fear of death has only recently emerged ideologically and socio-structurally after the establishment of human rights and the right to life. This supreme fear of death could be traced back to the French Revolution and its *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* in 1789. Although not yet “universal” until the emergence of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948 and only limited to the citizens not human beings, it is certainly the origin of this trend. Also since the definition of “nation” this work has taken on which is of the civic nationalism root, the restriction of rights over the citizens by the French was rightly fit. For many periods in history, ordinary humans feared not dying in the correct or virtuous way. For many millennia, the social story of virtue that had been ideologically constructed to subdue the fear of death for the majority of the population had been dominated. Take the Vikings, for instance. These folks from the northern European sea fought fearlessly in their battles as if they would leisurely forsake their lives. The belief in the virtue of death on the battlefield had long been instilled into the Vikings’ minds that those who fought without fear and ceased their lives would be rewarded with their next life in Valhalla—the eternal land of the Norse mythological god. The story of virtue’s death has been retold in the form of a life’s goal and masked the instinctual fear. This sort of narrative made the population easier to govern. By rendering them off the fear of their bodily death, the sovereign like the absolute monarch or the pope could own their lives and bestow whatever task—regardless of how risky it was—for them to do. In this way, a pre-liberal democratic life was a life of human subjects, not human being, a true political livestock or a living mass.

However, with the rise of individual self-ownership, a man’s physical body no longer belongs to the sovereign, but to himself. In other words, the king could no longer force their subjects to die in agony just to satisfy their whims. The right to life has become the most fundamental right, superseding all others. As life is held the

dearest, the fear of death or losing such endeared value arises as well.<sup>22</sup> In this way, the fear of death as the supreme fear should be regarded as the political innovation of liberal modernity. The value of life, hence, is skyrocketing in the liberal modernity mentality. This remark on the fear of death was systematically observed by Thomas Hobbes, as he claimed that the systematic and institutionalization of fear led society to modernity (Campbell 1998).

Hobbes' observation declares the importance of life over the narrative of the non-existence that Christianity usually narrates. Hobbes, in this sense, was a true modernist as he valued "life" above all else. It was only that his proposal to achieve a society with a risk-free life that wasn't so liberal. In his allegory of "human state of nature," he concluded that in such chaos, everyone would be equally at risk of death and murder. So, he argued, society needed a strong ruler or "Leviathan" that no one could oppose or deny. This leviathan was the allegory of the modern state. This conclusion could be thought of as both the foundation of absolutist state or modern liberal Weberian state—the monopoly of the legitimated use of physical force in a given territory. On this note, Hobbes suggested that if one was put in danger of losing one's life, it was virtuous to flee rather than face death. It is the modern virtue of cowardice that tends to prolong life in any way possible, not the other way around (Gillespie 2009). The new story takes humanity in the opposite direction. This new direction that the modern story rewrote its population has also changed the landscape of power and relation of the life-prolonging practitioners as well, from the selected

---

<sup>22</sup> It is clear that "liberal state and liberal democracy" have more focuses than the mentioned feature. Debates occurred for centuries counting from its classical definition by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Rousseau. Although, I do agree with the notions of them all as one could see from the usage of the term "possession" (Locke) in the main text or "freedom" (Rousseau) when discussing the negative rights, I am largely a Hobbesian. In this regard, I see the core essence of liberal democracy (and state) on the security ground and that this the mechanism to prevent us from the death we fear and prolong our life as much as possible, an act of the new god.

few experts treasured by the selected few elites to the selected few experts treasured by all, ideologically. Modernity increases the value of life, in short.

According to David Campbell (1998), the rise of the modern liberal state has also reformed the state's social function. As a result of democracy, every citizen owns the state equally, and since everyone owns the state, it has to serve everyone instead of only serving the king like the old regime. Because the state now performs all of the socially constructed functions for everyone, it somewhat replaces the God. Instead of praying to the God for a better life, ones turn their heads and ask from the state's welfare policies. People want a functioning law and order to feel safe. People want a good irrigation system for their fields. People want a good public hospital to save their lives—especially when cowardice and fear of death have replaced heroic virtue. People want good schools to ensure their future. These are the duties of the state that replaces the God. Campbell correctly claims that "the state has emerged as the new God." As a result of this change, people look to the state for their needs, leaving the old God as a mental refuge. In this way, the first political innovation—the fear of death—was combined with the state as the new God to create the new role of "health" and life-prolonging practitioners like doctors. Thus, the age of "health security" begins.

Although the term "health security" emerged around the verge of the modernity turn in the 14th century to urge for the promotion of a campaign against foreign diseases like plague (WHO 2007), it was hardly be considered a flourishing concept until the 1700s when the first public hospital to shelter and treat the poor was established in the United States (Hall 2012). The concept of health security, in turn, has improved sanitation to prevent cholera outbreaks in the 19th century and introduced vaccination in the 20th century (WHO 2007). Because of the increased acceptance and distribution of health care in the name of people's safety, it shows that liberal democracy causes the fear of death (an increase in the value of life) which leads to the demand for health security. Moreover, the shift from an absolutist modern

state to a liberal modern state forces the state to care for its citizens equally. The rise of public health security is also due to the microorganism's discovery and subsequent vaccination. The new discovery has strengthened the credibility of science in society to a new height. From the 1800s onwards, the number of public hospitals and health services has increased in the USA and Western Hemisphere (Simmons 2006). This trend is global due to universality of science that frames the direction of the world into narrating a similar story: a singular history. As "a method of finding truth rationally" without any political goals, science could be adapted to any existing beliefs. If done correctly, it is less likely to disrupt other narratives. So, it could universalize itself far more easily than religions which tend to clash or collapse since they had their own political or ideological goals: a jihad or crusade wars, for instance.

Additionally, after the end of the cold war where the United States has become the single superpower in the world but cannot deliberately start the great war easily due to the possession of nuclear weapons by major powers around the globe that makes the cost and benefits of a great war deficient— "balance of terror"—the mortality rate caused by conflict decreases dramatically. Natural diseases, accidents, and an unhealthy lifestyle are now the main causes of death. Therefore, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, the main body of national security has shifted from the declining military operation to the growing army of doctors and scientists. The universality of scientific methods allows them to be mass-produced. They are held sacred as a modern narrator owing to the singular history of modern rationalization, which denies other sorts of stories. They are permanent storytellers due to the politics of impermanence that structurally adapts to changes. They have accumulated historical context that overrides pre-modern rhetoric of the Catholic Church that was too rigid and caused narrative discords. Their universalistic nature allows them to adapt to any culture or pre-existing narrative. Their role that exists in order to prevent life from dying matches with the increased value of life that liberal modernity suggests, hence an even more powerful position as a narrator. And by securing modern

society's luxury and comfort, they gain authority. They live in the scientific sanctuary of reason able to dictate what is right or wrong and people will tend to their orders. Because they are elevated to the New God's function, as David Campbell put it, and able to communicate with society with gravitated influence, in this regard, medical doctors could be considered the modern (mass-produced) saints or orators.

### **Longevity and the Logic of Capitalism**

The success and expansion of the medical doctor army is due not only to the regime change and new discoveries, but also to their ability to work in harmony with capitalism's engine. The first industrial revolution of the western hemisphere began around 1740s. The manufacturing process changed dramatically from handcrafted to machine-made. The steam and water machines that became petrol engines and electrical devices made life much easier for humanity. Many scholars, especially left-wing and English School scholars like Barry Buzan, consider this change a major shift in human history (Buzan & Lawson 2015). This scale of change occurred twice, once during the agricultural revolution and again during the industrial revolution. The state would gain a new status as the leader of the (new) world if it adopted the industrial mode of production. This strengthens the perception of modern science in society. Contrary to popular belief, human labor was in high demand due to the rise of machines because the industrial revolution accelerated population growth. The cities, markets, and trade routes grew rapidly. Colonialism arose from the need to feed newborns and the market. In short, the high consumption rate and unmatched an appetite for trade and employment anchored and resulted in the firm root of capitalism in modern society.

Since this work does not intend to go in-depth with the capitalist empire, it may be valid enough to simply summarize the logic of capitalism as an economic function that aims to maximize profits by any means possible—including the minimization of



cost, with a tendency for unfairness, mistreatment, and abuse. After that, the health sector bloomed in tune with the intriguing capitalism. The increasing price for the swift and comfortable service to treat and end the suffering and pain has given the option of gaining a huge income for medical doctors. It is possible that this unique demand that stems from modern liberal capitalism and scientific regime of truth will further elevate the position of medical doctor as a job desired by many. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, medical doctors from the former USSR and Eastern Europe migrated to the liberal capitalist states in the west to enjoy better pay and financial advantages, joining their peers in the liberal world who had long enjoyed such privileges. Because of this option provided by the health industry and capitalism to doctors in the 18th century, they did not choose to promote universal health care as much as the current trend. Instead, treating the poor was considered a "benevolent" act (Foucault 2006). The benevolence of those in higher positions who could treat or not treat the deprived. This was simply because treating a poor man and a wealthy tycoon led to the same result of saving "one" life and probably the same amount of energy spent, yet the amount of money earned from each was vastly different. Therefore, when doctors chose to help the poor, especially in 18th and 19th century Europe, it was considered an act of benevolence rather than an act of obligation.

Another benefit of modern medicine is the unprecedented increase in life expectancy. Capitalism needs workers and labors, and modern medicine works in its favor. The medical industry has become an indispensable part of capitalism's logic by increasing labor supply and extending the lives of the skilled workers.

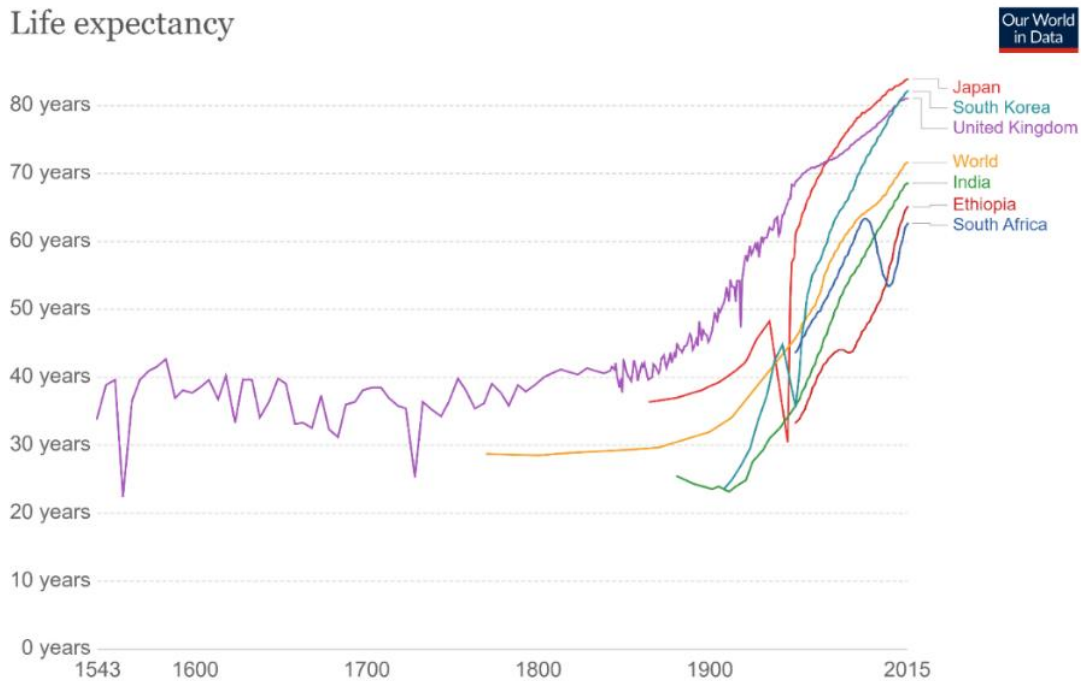


Figure 2: *The Rise of Life Expectancy* (Roser, Ortiz-Ospina, and Ritchie 2019).

Except during wars, life expectancy has risen steadily since the 19th century. Life expectancy, which has been around 30-40 years for over 4 centuries, has doubled in a century. Figure 2 depicts how modern medicine has changed the face of national and global security, where lives are at stake. No wonder, modern medicine is the main cause of population growth, as it makes humans less likely to die in infancy. The rapid population growth necessitates the advancement of capitalism and the industrial revolution. Capitalism creates almost limitless sources of competitions and infinite demands for manufacturing machines, but with limited resources and job vacancies. By prolonging life and supporting capitalism's wheel, modern medicine has paradoxically become the main reason for "leaving so many lives behind" under the suppression of capitalist society.

According to Marxian's claim, this is the birth of a materialistic or industrialized society where the secular world stands apart from the religious world and is shaped

by the materialistic transformation. As materials change, so does society. Marx called this "historical materialism." Such a claim requires a certain level of materialistic development. Society must be attached to the material and be a full-fledged capitalist society like the West. The rise of materialism and consumerism could be attributed to modern medicine, which is considered a material that shapes the direction of the world.

### **Spiritual Materialism: Thailand's Import and Selection of Reason**

The explanation thus far has attempted to answer two simple questions: (1) "Why do doctors have such influence in today's society?" and (2) "How do they support the narrative structure mentioned in the previous parts?" It also portrays the universal scenario that performs as the reference point that Thailand differs from which will be discussed for the rest of the work. Thai medical doctors, likewise, have the power to influence history and politics, but in a very different way than western doctors. However, what distinguishes Thailand from the Western hemisphere is the story in which the power of modern medical doctors is served. The struggle and fight of medical doctors for social placement in the western society has been discussed earlier, not only to answer the two questions but also to present the story of who and why this power was served. On the other hand, Thailand—or to be more precise the royal faction—used power in a different direction and purpose. Even though Western medicine had reached what would later be known as Siam since Ayutthaya (Pueksom 2007), it could hardly be considered "modern medicine" by today's standards. And, due to its "universal characteristic," this work calls the medical knowledge after the recognition of microorganism "modern medicine" rather than Western medicine.

Thongchai Winichakul (2019b, chapter 2, esp. 29–43) has argued this point thoughtfully, and this work agrees with most of his explanation but differs in conclusion. According to Kirsch in 1977 and 1978 (as cited in Winichakul 2019b),

during King Rama III's reign, Chaofah Mongkut (the crown prince) or the future King Rama IV, started the first movement of "modernizing" Siam. In 1833, Chaofah Mongkut founded the Dhammayuttika Nikaya, which Kirsch called "modern Buddhism." Dhammayuttika Nikaya was a Theravada Buddhist branch that claimed to be closer to the Buddha's original teachings. The movement began to concentrate on Buddhism by removing Hinduism and other local beliefs. The movement was considered the beginning of the modernization of Buddhism because it was the first attempt in Thai history to rationalize Buddhism. Due to this achievement, the general public regarded Chaofah Mongkut as a Buddhist fundamentalist or conservative. But on this note, I disagree. If fundamentalism means returning to the original form, then his act was neither fundamentalist nor purification, but rather synthesis. Since the earliest record of the Buddhist teachings, it could barely separate itself from the Hindu or Jainism traditions, not to mention countless supernatural tales involved. Thus, disowning these fables as a part of Buddhism and producing the "purer" version of the text was more of a synthesis. Anyhow, the result is the authenticated version of Buddhist teaching and scripture that would constantly be centralized and institutionalized in Siam's main narratives.

Also, the Siamese elites knew they couldn't ignore the western modern influence anymore. While Chaofah Mongkut (later King Rama IV) did not have absolute power over the royal court, especially the Bunnag family, he was still the monarch and held a certain amount of power in his hands.<sup>23</sup> Winichakul (2019b) claims

---

<sup>23</sup> The fact that this work suggests that Chaofah Mongkut or whoever succeeded in establishing the conceptual change or regime change—a fundamental change in how people collectively perceive or interpret things—in politics does not and will never mean that such concept or change belongs or is solely responsible to that single individual, in this case Chaofah Mongkut. One may have initiated and benefited from the change, but not own it, because a national conceptual change could never be orchestrated by a single individual or institution. The concept's production machine is society. The press, the public, and the concept's creator are all actors, both producing and receiving. In short, the king may have initiated the concept, but he may also be a victim of it.

that Dhammayuttika Nikaya created two distinct realms, one materialistic and the other spiritual. This intention can also be proven in *Nangsue Sadaeng Kitchanukij* (หนังสือแสดงกิจจานุกิจ)—also known as “*Modern Buddhist*” in English—written by Chaopraya Thiphakorawong or Kham Bunnag (2016), one of the most trusted senior bureaucrats of King Rama IV, in 1858. He elaborated in the first part of his work that the modern scientific knowledge from the missionary of the western land should be accepted since it was more valid than the cosmology believed in Siam at the time. However, the latter part of his work claimed the superiority of Buddhism over Christianity or other beliefs in a way of guiding one’s spiritual path. His work clearly separated the world into the material and spiritual spheres. Accepting their modern material knowledge while remaining true to Siam/Buddhist own superior spiritual path is key. Cherdkiat Attakorn (2021) had even called this so-called *Modern Buddhist* text as the “first science textbook of Thailand.” It clearly displays how inseparable the notions of science and Buddhism was in Siam.

The same thought appears later in Thai history.<sup>24</sup> The same thing was illustrated in *Muang Thai Joang Tuen Terd* (เมืองไทยงตั้งนเกิด) (1970) written by

---

<sup>24</sup> There is a famous idiom in Japan saying: “Japanese spirit, Western wisdom.” “Wisdom” here means “scientific knowledge” in general. In this sense, Japan and Thailand have a similar “core narrative,” but things progress differently due to the different “settings or structures” the two countries have. While Japan was initially aimed for expansionism, Thailand’s (Siam) main policy was inclusivism – remaining in its own sphere of influence, not risking to lose its power. Later on, after World War II, Japan has been directed into the path of full-fledged democracy ever since while Thailand maintains its autocratic tradition quite functionally. These differences lead to the contrasted political and social settings of the two countries. Hence, the similar “core narrative” progressed and developed differently and bear the different fruits. Japan could be considered a fully secularized path. Hence, radically criticizing religions is doable and hardly restricted as the social taboo. In fact, many popular culture platforms are doing so or the LGBTQ popular Buddhist monk could have a proper place in the society. On the contrary, Thailand sticks to the unsecularized path and considered criticism on Buddhism as severely offensive to the public. It is, hence, considered a social taboo and could even be led to witch hunting. This difference also shows the significance of structures and settings in the construction of the dominant narrative or regime of truth in a given community.

Assawapahu (อัครพาทู), King Rama VI's penname, in 1938. Claiming the west lacked spiritual guidance, and it was modern western knowledge that led them into a great war. The rest of the work focused on unity and a more intense nationalist sense. In the present, the teachings from Prayudh Payutto (ป.อ. ปยุตฺโต หรือพระธรรมปิฎก) to Vutthichai Vachiramedhi (ว. วชิรเมธี หรือ พระเมธีวชิโรดม) shows that the separation of the two realms are still intact. These teachings resemble those proposed by Thiphakorawong over 160 years ago. Thongchai concludes that Siam coped with the coming wave of modern scientific knowledge by creating these two distinct spheres and letting them function independently. Thongchai acknowledges that this separation was not perfect or even stable—given that Buddhism must still reform and modernize—and that the "outer-inner" realm cannot be separated in practice.

Under this context, Winichakul (2019b) claims the separation of the two realms was only perceived by the public and probably the narrators, but I would argue otherwise. On the surface, this dichotomy—material/science and spiritual/religion—appears "separated," but I contend it is "one singular entity," not separable. It has religious content but narrating or functioning with scientific rationality. This dualistic dichotomy pervades Siamese modernization and cosmology. From an exterior perspective, it might appear to be divided but is actually combined and formed as a single entity. It is a true fruit of Chaofah Mongkut's labor. Before modernization, Buddhism in Siam had multiple teaching origins. During this stage, there was no single institutionalized representation of Buddhism as a whole. The teaching was mainly the continuation of each school's master monks. Although they shared a common language, they did not share common cultures, practices, and interpretations (Tiyavanich 1997, 3-7). The centralized and administrative body of Buddhism, later known as Sangha, was established later on. But it was this Dhammayuttika Nikaya that became the sole depiction of what many people perceived Theravada Buddhism to be in Thailand. In short, the Buddhism known to the Siam peninsula long before the time of Chaofah Mongkut—like the Buddhist Cosmology introduced in the time of

King Maha Thammaracha (1347-1368) of Sukhothai—lacked the condition to be considered “the ethnies” since it was not institutionalized or performed as the official narrative that represented the members of the community as one. Instead, Buddhism before Chaofah Mongkut displayed variations and non-dominant characters because it was scattered all over the land and mainly performed regionally.

This notable distinction of Buddhism, or religion in general, that had never been institutionalized in Siam contributed to a situation that was unlike the western political landscape. The Catholic Church has been solidly formulated and institutionalized in the Western world since the Middle Ages—long before the rise of modern science. For centuries, it was one of the most important players on the political stage. But this had never happened in Siam. The institutionalized religion, Dhammayuttika-Sangha Buddhism, was formulated around the same time as modern science was introduced to the country, and by the same person, Chaofah Mongkut. So, they couldn’t bloom into a conflict like the one in Europe, where modern knowledge was born and exported. This condition aided the peaceful union of the two realms. This result represents the first wave of modern Buddhist synthesis in Siam. This context that Chaofah Mongkut could start the foundational official narrative of a nation (ethnies) from nothingness<sup>25</sup> is very important because it gave the narrative the possibility to establish itself as the “commonness”—or “Thainess” in the case of Thailand—which ties the people together and all other following narratives have to be built on it.

This blending of the two realms was entirely different from the materialistic world that had swept Europe with secularization and the industrial revolution. This

---

<sup>25</sup> This condition of “nothingness” could be seen as “the void,” a concept proposed by Alain Badiou, a modern French Marxist philosopher. Badiou takes on “mathematical set theory” and elaborates the possibility in creating “commonness or somethingness” (Singleton or the successor of the void) out of “nothingness” (the void). If interested, please see Appendix I for further explanation.

result in Siam was probably what Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, and many other scientists of the European transitional era would desire as the faithful believers of Christianity and had proposed new knowledge to incorporate with religious teaching. The Catholic Church rejected their proposals and drew a line between old and new knowledge. By establishing a parallel historical route to modernity, Chaofah Mongkut had succeeded where the great Catholic scientists had failed. If the Church accepted ORHS, this scenario would become a historical model of modernization. The birth of modern Buddhism—blended with scientific narration—has further strengthened its power of conversion since it is perceived as the religion that fits with the universal rule of science.

The condition of possibilities enables the new route of modernity that I would call “spiritual materialism”<sup>26</sup> by embracing modern materialistic knowledge and the singular history of modern rationalization. The sacred Buddhism had become indistinguishable from modern scientific knowledge—dualistic dichotomy, in my own term. The materialistic knowledge that the Siamese population would later experience was already linked to the spiritual influence of Buddhism. Even today, the idea of secularization or separating state affairs from Buddhism would cause a stir in Thailand. Until now, books like *Einstein had found, the Buddha had discovered* (ไอน์สไตน์พบ พระพุทธเจ้าเห็น) by Som Suchira (2007) are still popular among the Thais. This one in particular was so popular that it has been reprinted 40 times and sold over 100,000 copies. It was even written by a dentist—not a monk.

---

<sup>26</sup> The term “Spiritual Materialism” was, actually, first coined by a Tibetan Buddhist practitioner named Chögyam Trungpa in his book *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* (2002). However, the definition he referred to was entirely different from the “Spiritual Materialism” in this work. What Trungpa claimed to be spiritual materialism in his book was the pitfalls of self-deception during the progress of seeking Buddhist spirituality or enlightenment, although this work tends to use it as the historical route to modernity as opposed to the main “historical materialism” route.





Figure 3: The Grade 8 Science Textbook (1960).<sup>27</sup>

To conclude, Chaofah Mongkut's narrative offered a political ecology distinct from that of the west. His success mainly came from the structural condition that he could begin from nothingness since Siam during his time did not have an established religious institution yet. This unconventional path to modernity secured Thailand's mythological cosmology and narrated it differently with modern rationalization (see Figure 4).

<sup>27</sup>The science textbook was written by Prayong Pongtongchareon and Boontin Attakorn in 1960 and was authorized by the Ministry of Education in Thailand to be used as a public-school textbook.

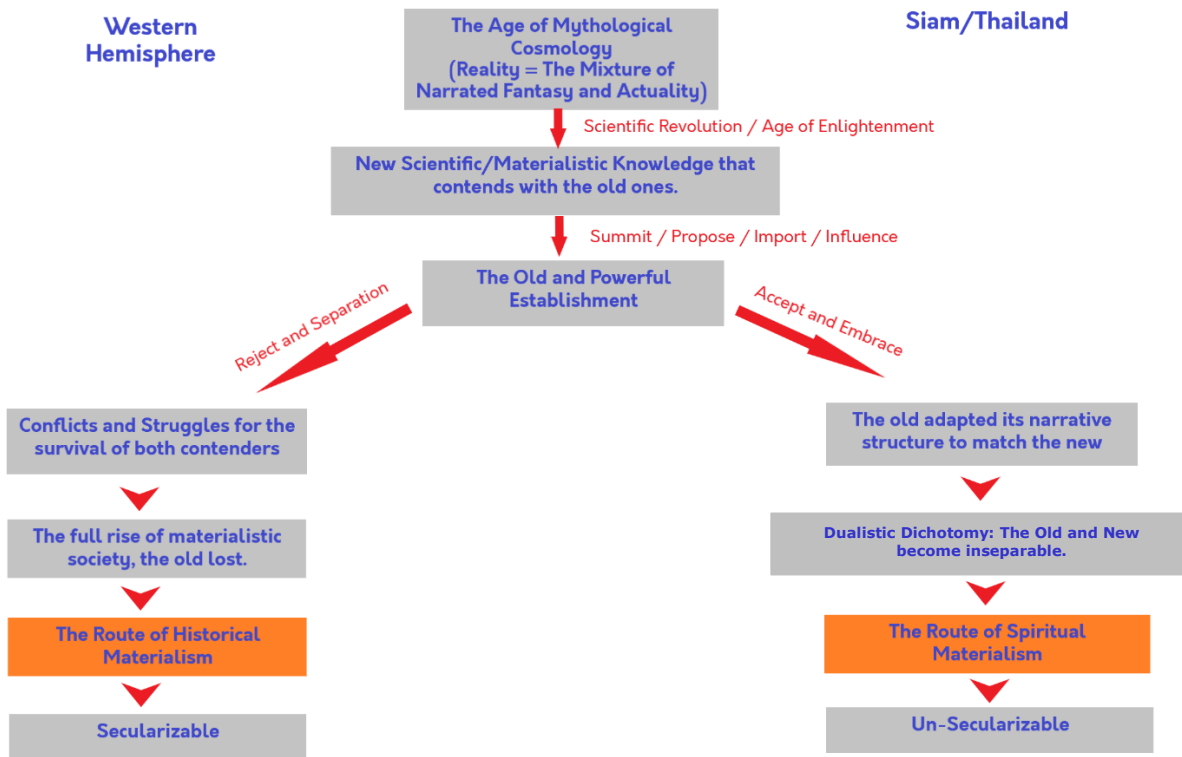


Figure 4: Historical Routes to Modernity.<sup>28</sup>

### Disciplining with Logic, Governing with Parami

Although this work argues that the old establishment purposefully attached itself to the newly discovered materialistic scientific knowledge, it does not imply that this attachment was perfect and could include every materialistically progressive agenda, if that was even possible. Chaofah Mongkut was structurally forced to accept the western world's influence, hence inevitably accepted the importance of modern materialistic knowledge into Thai politics and cosmology. During King Rama V's reign, the factor of western influences was even more prominent, resulting in the need for

---

<sup>28</sup> See also: "Appendix III: Angst and Solace," if interested in how this alternative route to modernity could be interpreted and unfolded.

modernization, at least for infrastructure and political institutions. In fact Dhammayuttika Nikaya—though founded by King Rama IV—was legally institutionalized in his reign. During his early reign, he was far from in charge of power and politics. The royal court was controlled by the senior bureaucrats, especially the Bunnag family. He had to fight for the position and use various means to gain control of the sovereign power. Modernization and newly acquired materialistic knowledge had become important weapons in the king's arsenal to regain sovereign authority (Kesboonchoo Mead 2004). In short, although modern materialism was a calculated choice, it was a conditional option.

If so, did King Bhumibol (Rama IX), also known as “The King of Development” (กษัตริย์นักพัฒนา), choose this path conditionally? This work says he did. The establishment of a democratic regime in Thailand in 1932 forced him to choose. The establishment of Thai democracy was, and is, far from perfect, but it has left a new political landmark in modern Thai history that cannot be reversed. Whatever coups Thailand has faced, it must return to democracy and electoral politics, regardless of how filtered and filthy the democracy and elections are. Since then, democracy has conditioned the king to stay away from politics, at least, for the “direct and public” involvement—of course the discrete ones were in operation. It was until 1992 that the king displayed his political power publicly as he asked Suchinda Kraprayoon to cease his authoritarian government. King Bhumibol's options for public action before then had been severely limited by the condition that made him lack direct involvement in politics. Also, he had almost no practical power early in his reign. He was quite like King Rama V, a weak king conjuring his own supremacy.

The idea of the supremacy of governing power which defines the sovereign in the western hemisphere does share some certain aspects with the Buddhism concept of “Parami” (in Pali) or “Paramita” (in Sanskrit). It is the concept that has long been used to define the construction of Siamese/Thai divine king. The Buddha is the most

fundamental example of someone who has attained the position of Parami. In other words, Parami is the purest form of "goodness or virtue" in Buddhist-Hinduism, urging and attracting its followers to respect and follow it. This could even be further argued that the notion of "Eradication of Hinduism (and local beliefs)" as proposed by the Dhammayuttika Nikaya was not actually an eradication but simply the reconstruction of Hinduism within Thai Buddhism to make it appear in a more scientifically logical fashion. In short, the so-called godhood and superstition that had been claimed to be renounced in Buddhism were actually a transformation. The new gods, or those who acquire godhood, therefore, are those who could achieve the perfect Buddhist Parami instead of the naturally or innately born gods. The godhood is acquirable in this regard. The king, who has the power to influence all, is the frontrunner to gain this status since he could perform a huge quantity of meritorious deeds on his order. There is even a Buddhist manual of what a good king ought to do in order to perfectly collect his Parami, or influence, and achieve a revered status as the Buddhist king. Although the idea of approaching "godhood" appears in western cosmology as well, the practice is not entirely similar. Tossa-Parami, or Parami 10 is required to gain Parami, which influences the subjects. These traits include generosity, normality, asexuality, wisdom, diligence, endurance, truthfulness, consistency, benevolence, and equanimity. However, if the king was constrained by law and prohibited from participating in politics, as was the case during King Bhumibol's early reign, then portraying these traits and gaining popularity through the construction of Parami were quite impossible.

In this case, the dichotomy that created spiritual materialism came in handy. The link between the monarchy and materialistic knowledge or development was not new. Since science is merely an approach to making sense of the world or a tool for innovating new possibilities, it is a perfect vessel for Parami building. Unlike in the Western world, where the scientific revolution began, Thailand had omitted its history of struggle against dominant stories like the Catholic Church. Therefore, for many

Thais, the scientific method has become merely an empty tool, “apolitical,” and is perceived as a pure body of knowledge. The combination of scientific-materialistic knowledge, Buddhist teaching, and the monarchy which has more than a century-long relationship could form the narrative structure for King Bhumibol to gain Parami in the way that seemed apolitical for the Thais. This work would henceforth call them the *Trinity of Thailand’s storytelling*, or the “trinity” in short. Since the start of a democratic regime, the monarchy has been legally connected to Buddhism under the command of every constitution to adopt and protect it. Thanks to the endeavors of Thai elites since the time of King Rama IV, Buddhism has proclaimed its status as the religion of science and reason. In the eyes of most Thais, the monarchy can display its 10 Parami labors without conflicting with democratic constraint by exercising them on the scientific and materialistic fronts. Also, the control of Buddhism in Thailand has always been in the hand of the king as he is the one who approves and appoints the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand (พระสังฆราช สกลมหาสังฆปริณายก)—the overseer of all Buddhist administrative body and schools of belief (Theravada, Maha Nikkaya<sup>29</sup>,

---

<sup>29</sup> Maha Nikaya (มหานิกาย) is the largest monastic order or fraternity in Thailand. Although it was known as the largest nikaya (Buddhist order), it was not really an order in a strict sense. The name “Maha Nikaya” mainly functions as the category of the Theravada monks who is not (or not yet) a part of Dhammayutikka Nikkaya. In short, it exists after the emergence of Dhammayuttika Nikkaya and only functions to indicate “who is not Dhammayuttika Nikkaya” rather than identifying its own character. Therefore, Maha Nikaya is like a default mode of category for calling the Theravada monks in Thailand. For this reason, it hosts a huge variation of Buddhist schools and beliefs within. It could be said that this lump of Buddhist monks exists for Dhammayutikka Nikkaya to illustrate its superiority in comparison, a more sophisticated branch, so to speak. The categorization of the Buddhist schools that pre-date or post-date Dhammayutikka Nikkaya is then also a part of the “narrative” that builds upon the nation’s foundational narrative (ethnie) Chaofah Mongkut had settled. In a way, this operation of narrative could be similarly thought of as the word “Pagan” which has been used to call the sum of various religions and beliefs that pre-exists Christianity, or the word “curry” that the British empire used to sum up all the stew-like food in India that they had never encountered before. The word was, hence, used to describe the food that predated their arrival or emergence as one. This shows that the “majority and the pre-existing status” (like the case of Maha Nikaya, Paganism in early Christianity stage, or curry) are not the prime criteria to become the foundational narrative. It must be the first to be

Dhammayuttika Nikaya, Mahayana). This further strengthens the tie of the king and Buddhism even more since he is the true ruler of the religion in this sense, a stark contrast compared to Europe where the pope used to crown the kings. Thus, a cycle of "modern Parami building" appears. A unique perception of King Bhumibol, a perfect combination of the seemingly contradictory dichotomy of the old Buddhist divine king and the modern materialistic scientist, is shown in Figure 5.

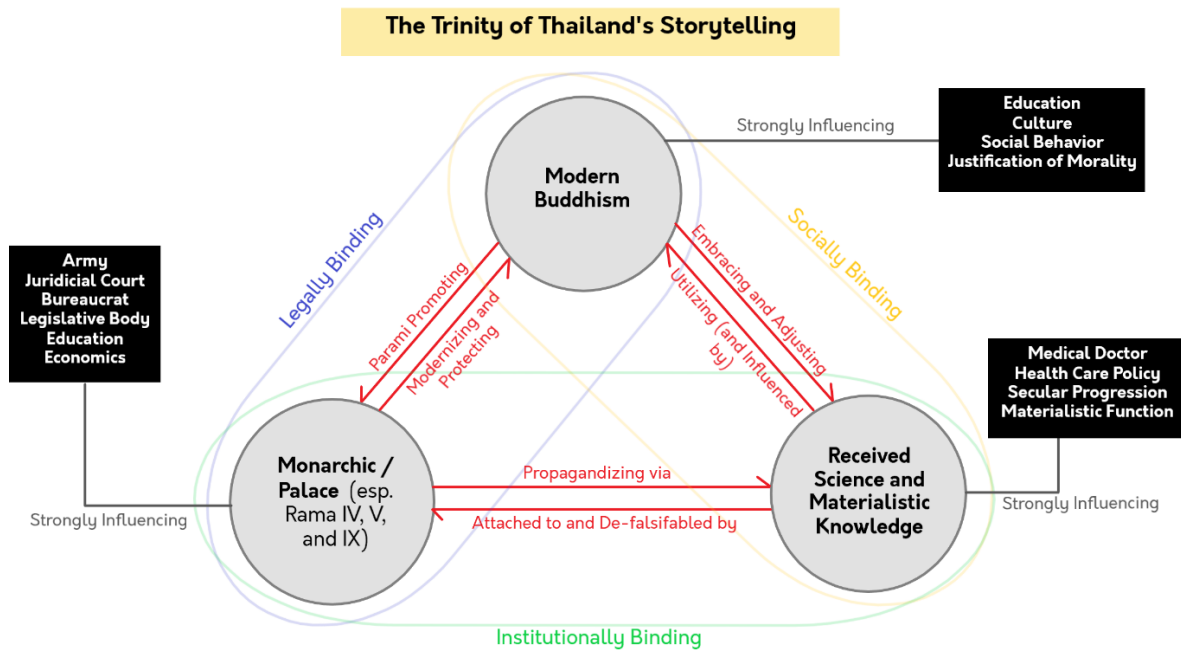


Figure 5: Parami Building and the Trinity of Thailand's Storytelling.

---

institutionalized and perform the function of "essence of the given community" such that it dictates, judges, or appoints the qualification of other narratives. In this case, Dhammayuttika Nikaya was the first to achieve such a feat in Thailand. Although its number of members is lower than Maha Nikaya's, its narrative dominance is the opposite. Obviously, the foundational narrative must carry the elements of its pre-existing narratives which it usually deems inferior. Dhammayuttika Nikaya carries many of Maha Nikaya's creeds on. Likewise, the Christianity takes some of the Pagan's conduct, and the British takes on some element of Indian curry and popularizes it in their own way, most-well known as "curry powder."

The trinity works well together. Science and Buddhism were socially bound, and the monarchy and Buddhism were legally bound. But the link King Bhumibol established between the monarchy and science is fascinating. King Rama VII abdicated his royal throne, and King Rama VIII's reign was simply too short to account for, so the condition for using science and materialistic knowledge in this particular way—under democratic restriction—had just been inaugurated.<sup>30</sup> Although the king was not required by law to support and promote science and modern knowledge, he chose to institutionalize it and make the relationship more tangible. Materialistic projects and science-oriented institutions under the royal influence vigorously bloomed all over the country. The royal dams were named after them. The royal initiative projects has literally been spreading across the country. The royally supervised medical hospitals and services appear in every region. The king had established them all, and because they are institutionalized, they—like the king—enjoy a certain degree of legal and cultural protection. The royal projects are not subject to criticism and have hardly been examined. They are practically impossible to falsify. This trait has distorted modern science in Thailand from proof-seeking science to unfalsifiable science. No wonder so many Thai scientists lean conservative side.

The king's teaching reflects this relationship. His teachings were praised not for their reverence or supernatural phenomena like the god's stories, but for their profundity, sophistication, and rationality. His subjects' acceptance of his teachings was based on his understanding of modern logic and reasoning, an unfalsifiable one

---

<sup>30</sup> This work, by no means, implied to suggest that "all and any kind" of materialistic or scientific knowledge that existed in Thailand cannot be falsifiable, but only restricted to the portions that had an attachment to the royal influence. Although this certain portion cannot represent all of the existing modern knowledge in Thailand, it also plays a dominant role in the field and nation. Therefore, this work simply uses the term "modern materialistic/scientific knowledge" to imply this certain dominant portion.

though. In this way, unfalsifiable royal logic was used to both discipline and propagandize his loyal subjects. This collaboration allows spiritual materialism to flourish. The trinity works by using the king as a medium to allow the majority of the population to appreciate modern materialistic innovations without questioning the king's teachings and other pre-modern narratives working under his wings. This work will demonstrate the function of structure and answer the questions "Why cannot Thailand follow the Western world's path?" and "What makes Thai people so stupid when ignorance is already an option?" in the following chapters. The study of health policy, modern medicine, and universal health campaigns will prove these points because—as stated above—democracy and human rights make "life" the highest value in modern society, and modern medicine is arguably the most important aspect of science concerning life. Since modern science is the foundation of modern sovereign power, health policy will play a significant role in securitizing King Bhumibol and his Parami's self-constructed reign.

### **Time, History, and Narration: The Temporal Origin of Siam Modernity**

So far, I have mentioned the word "modernity" or modern liberal state many times and it will be so for the rest of the work. But what is modernity I have been and will be talking about? It also strongly relates to the notion of universal or standardized version of rationality whence I pondered upon the notion of "stupidity" since the very first pages. For me, the defining character of modernity is found in two main pillars: modern temporal perception and the scientific regime of truth. Although many people might not think of these two as connected, I argue that they are in fact inseparable. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, one of the three main turning points in human perception is the scientific revolution. It also brought us to these defining qualities of modernity. Modernity is not defined by its political system or social structure—though there is an "ought to be" or preferred version of them that has become the standard



goal for almost every nation-state on the planet for decades. Therefore, autocracy, absolute monarchy, fascism, communism, neo-liberalism, or progressive liberalism could all be counted as the modern state or reaching modernity once it has achieved the said two pillars. The temporal perception that defines modernity is "infinite linear time" and usually it wasn't the standard version of time in most civilizations, hence the temporal transformation to align one's community with modern time typically occurs. The infinite linear time was the basis for scientific causal-effect rationality which is known as *hypothetical-deductivism* and *hypothetical-imperative* ("if X, then Y" that operates on this infinite linear time). This scientific reasoning, then, performs as the "regime of truth", or the frame of judgement on what is true or not, credible or not, rational or not for the modern community. This scientific regime of truth that functions under this modern time will dictate us what is "thinkable or not" as a modern man. For example, if I say I have eaten such spicy food that I could breathe fire. Any modern man would autonomously understand that it was simply a joke or a metaphor regardless of their political ideology because it could not be "real" under scientific regime of truth. If I insist that what I have mentioned is literally real, then under this scientific regime of truth, I would be considered irrational or mad. Scientific possibility defines how we think in this way. Therefore, in order for a society to have this form of modern reasoning, the given society must first have this new perception of time. However, the necessity for one society to change its perception of time is rightly to become a modern nation. So, that is why these two pillars are inseparable. Regardless of the political regimes, if it achieves these two feats, it is counted as a modern state. Siam was no exception in this regard. In order to become a modernized nation-state, Chaofah Mongkut had to transform many things, including this perception of time. Hence, the "temporal origin of Siam modernity."

Michael Gillespie (2008) elaborated on this point beautifully. One of the major shifts that society had to make to reach modernity was in how it perceived time. It is clear that the current perception of time is of an infinite linear type, with the infinite

past on one side and the infinite future on the other. This seems to be an ordinary perception that is wielded by the majority of the populace and does not need any further investigation. While I agree that the modern timeline has a universal and standardized perception, I would argue that this perception is not as universal as it seems, and that this would eventually cause some differences in how modernity was constructed. According to Gillespie (ibid.), the reason why the western hemisphere perceives time as infinitely linear has to do with Christianity. Loosely speaking, the structural perception of time in Christian cosmology is the “finite linear” type, where the thing in the past continues to the future, similar to the modern perception, only that it has an end. This chronological understanding ends with judgment day, Armageddon, and other stories. Thus, the standard modern era was built on this understanding. Buddhism<sup>31</sup> and Hinduism, for example, are known for their “cyclical” time perception. To escape the karmic cycle, one must attain Buddhist enlightenment and reach nirvana. In this regard, the western world and a Buddhist society like Thailand have different perceptions of time.

As previously explained, Chaofah Mongkut achieved Buddhism with scientific narration with its old content mostly kept. However, the content was created based on Hindu-Buddhist cyclical time. This contradicted with the infinite linear time which is undeniable if one wants to modernize. And the fact that Thailand (Siam) had to structurally transform the entire nation in a hurry is self-evident and self-explanatory. So, the cyclical perception had to be adjusted to fit the modern framework of

---

<sup>31</sup> This work is aware of the differences between the logic recited by different schools of Buddhism, particularly the Vajrayana and Mahayana, as opposed to the Theravada, which is the most common and official in Thailand. Anyhow, the concept of karmic cycle does share among these schools and, henceforth, in this work, if the mentioning of Buddhist concept occurred and such concept is interpreted differently among the Buddhist schools, then consider it to be Theravada’s interpretation, unless specifically stated otherwise.

narration. In fact, Attachak Sattayanurak (1995) has contributed greatly to the explanation of the transformation of the intellectual landscape from King Rama IV to the 1932 democratic revolution. Still, this work believes that more work needs to be done on conceptualizing this transformation and its effects on the people's rationalization into "conceptual models," so this subject can be comprehended in a more universalistic fashion—no longer claiming it to be the unique character of Thailand. This is what this part aims to do. The models will also portray the rationalization structure of the modernized Thai nation as well. But, first, "what is so important about this transformation of chronological perception?" Temporal perception impacts our understanding of logic and rationality. In short, logic and rationality are built on temporal perception. "If X then Y" or hypothetical imperative, this is the foundation of western rationalization from the age of enlightenment onwards, normally known as causal-effect reasoning. This causal effect is based on the linear timeline, occurring at one point in time and resulting at another point in time. Because everything has been narrated in the same way—limited by scientific possibilities—this work claims that it creates a "singular history" or the common history. So, the fables that represented the unique story of each culture or belief that made the "histories of the world" before the rise of science cannot be accounted in this "singular history." They usually do not align with the scientific possibilities which dictate the direction the modern history is narrated. Figure 6 depicts how singular history functions in relation to modern infinite linear time.

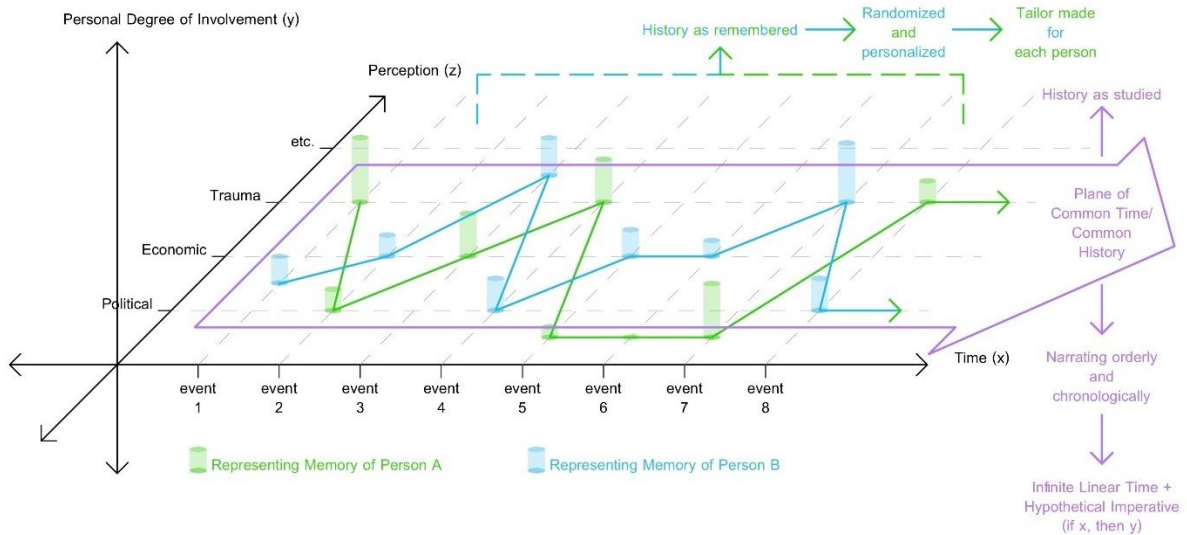


Figure 6: Common Perception of Time (Infinite Linear).

Figure 6 depicts the correlation of three main components: infinite linear time (axis X), personal degree of involvement in each event (axis Y), and the interpretation of each event (axis Z). The "Plane of Common Time," illustrated as the big purple arrow that runs along the surface of axis X and axis Z, depicts and narrates the "common or official history"—the singular history. It portrays the singular rational route of how the world has progressed to where it is today. At the same time, it also frames what is the possible narrative that could be accepted under the umbrella of "scientific rationality," like the events or perspective on axis Z. The narrative that is "inside" the scientific framework or possibility is judged as more credible. A story that does not align with this rationality is deemed "outside" of scientific possibility, thus less credible and reduced to a myth or a fable. For example, the historical narrative that is narrated superstitiously would not be accepted in the modern rationalized world. In this regard, the "Plane of Common Time" or singular history, is the pool of common knowledge regarding what has been recorded as the "credible events of the world," a set of correlative information between "event and time" or "event in time."

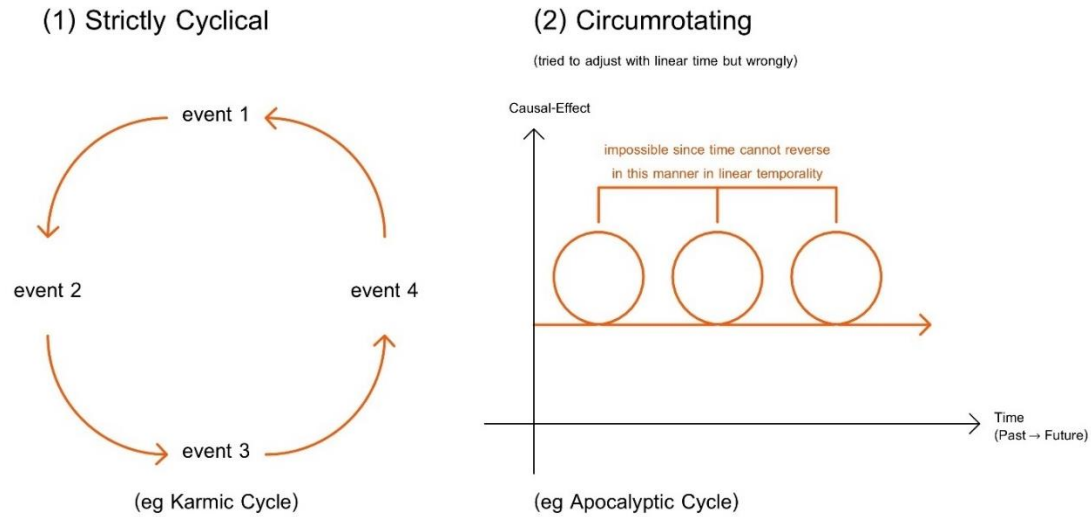
The correlation between axis X (events and time) and axis Z (perceptions) is usually presented objectively in academic work. But for individuals' and actual memories, this could be subjective. For example, economic history is a study of "common history" with economic perception. It is part of the "common perception of time," but it is not the history that people remember. It is merely history as recorded or as studied. Because people relate to events based on their "subjective degree of involvement" (axis Y). Thus, each person's memory of the history is unique, as shown by the smaller green and blue arrows that show the narration according to each person's (Green and Blue columns) involvement(s). Personal memories may sometimes be outside the accepted scientific framework, but in that case, they would be rendered as nonsense or self-delusion. Not to mention that since the influence of modern infinite linear time under the scientific framework is so prominent, people tend to perceive things under the scientific framework—hypothetical imperative or "if X, then Y"—and remember them under such rationality. Thus, the memory usually aligns with the singular history or the "Plane of Common Time" in the figure, only varying in intensity or perspective. In this way, the public's perception of time and history differs from that of an academic work. It is personalized depending on each individual's rational interpretation and degree of sentiment. It is the history that is written by oneself to suit oneself alone, only using the content and framework laid by the singular history. This is the "history as remembered." This illustrates the grave influence of the new temporal perception under the scientific framework that majorly frames the way we think and remember things, even the ones that are most personal to us. So, once the issue of "commonly perceived history" is of concern, I presented it in the form shown in the figure. Correlating both the common history and time together with the "history as remembered" helps us see the picture of how subjective sentiment of history works on the "official narrative framework of common infinite linear time." This is how I see the universally accepted version of "modernized mentality," and I believe it to be the essence of the modern rationality mindset. The mindset that

Thailand does not really have. Thailand handled the temporal transformation to modernity differently than Europe because it had taken a different path to modernity. But, as the essence of modernity, this influence of temporal transformation was unavoidable. Or else, Thailand (Siam) would not be considered modernized.

In conclusion, there are many forms of "reasoning and rationalization." Ones from the Ancient Greek era, when the great philosophers of the old days used to ignite their debates. One from the Catholic Church that gave the absolute direction to the society of what it was supposed to do. It means that reasonings have long been existed before the notion of "modernity" and these myriad types of reasoning perform diverse functions and aim for the different purposes. In a given community under a given period of time, there is usually a certain form of reasoning that dominates the society, and once there is a conceptual and structural change on a large or collective scale, the dominating form of reasoning tends to change as well. Just like how Ancient Greek philosophical reasoning turned into the Catholic Church's ethical reasoning when the social structure of the west was overturned. A certain form of reason arises and serves a specific narrative structure and concept. One of the important conceptual aspects that affects the rise of a certain dominant reasoning in the society, I argue, is "time or temporal perception" that aligns with the dominant narrative. A finite linear time that aligns with the Catholic Church's teaching was therefore applied and led to the Christian ethical reasoning that built upon the premise of the end of the world. Likewise, once the scientific revolution occurred and later gained its domination over the world, it brought about its preferred temporal perception—infinite linear time—that eventually bred its specific form of reasoning, namely hypothetical deductivism and imperative. This set of "temporal perception and reasoning" defines the characteristics of modernity. Thailand is no exception. In order for it to be considered as a modernized nation, it must display the official narrative that alignes with this structure; hence, the narrative was brewed by Chaofah Mongkut. The new official or dominant narrative that arose from Chaofah Mongkut's attempt to modernize must

lead to a form of “reasoning” that matched the narrative brewed from the old elite-oriented content however, at the same time, it could also disguise itself to get in line with the infinite linear time.

The integration of scientific narration with its infinite linear temporal framework and Buddhism, whose contents were built on its own temporal basis, produced a new system of time where the logic and rationality of the Thai would ride on. This, I believe, is the essence of “Thainess or Thai-style” logic in Thailand. Thus, the Thais perceive themselves as rational, despite their reasoning being contrary to universally accepted rationality. The “Salim” mentality also stems from here. Once the topic on the temporal perception in Thailand arises, some scholars may claim that it still functions in the cyclical manner as the Hindu-Buddhism’s tradition dictates, like the logic of the karmic cycle. Some offer a fresher comprehension like the time in the format of circumrotating, like the model sometimes appear for the apocalyptic cycle (see Figure 7). However, all of these suggestions fail to truly align themselves with the mechanism of infinite linear time such that “time cannot be reversed.” It flows in one direction only. But, the two temporal models mainly used to explain the framework of Buddhist narrative after being synthesized by Chaofah Mongkut have a point where time must be reversed, and that this is logically impossible under the framework of infinite linear time.



*Figure 7: Buddhist Cyclical Time (as normally perceived).*

In fact, the illustration of the “cyclical causal effect” is not a temporal quality that goes against the infinite linear logic, far from being so. The cycle of water reservoirs or the cycle of energy consumption and transformation can easily be found in scientific reasoning. Even though some illustrations of these cyclical causal-effect cycles are studied in science classes in primary schools, they are only “cyclical in disguise.” All of these cyclical causal effects—if illustrated correctly in the format of infinite linear time—actually operate in a wave pattern. Similarly, I firstly like to point out that the way in which the synthesized Buddhism narrated by Chaofah Mongkut had been formed was in the format of “wave-patterned time,” not cyclical like popularly understood since time cannot be reversed (see Figures 8 and 9 for details).



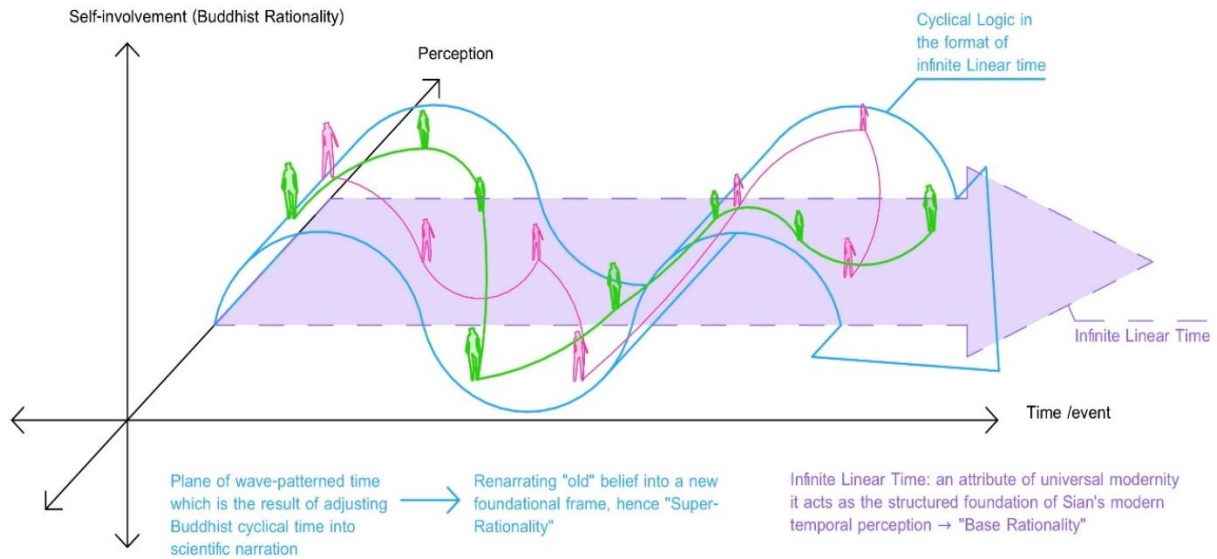


Figure 8: Chaofah Mongkut's Buddhist Modern Time (Wave-Patterned Time).

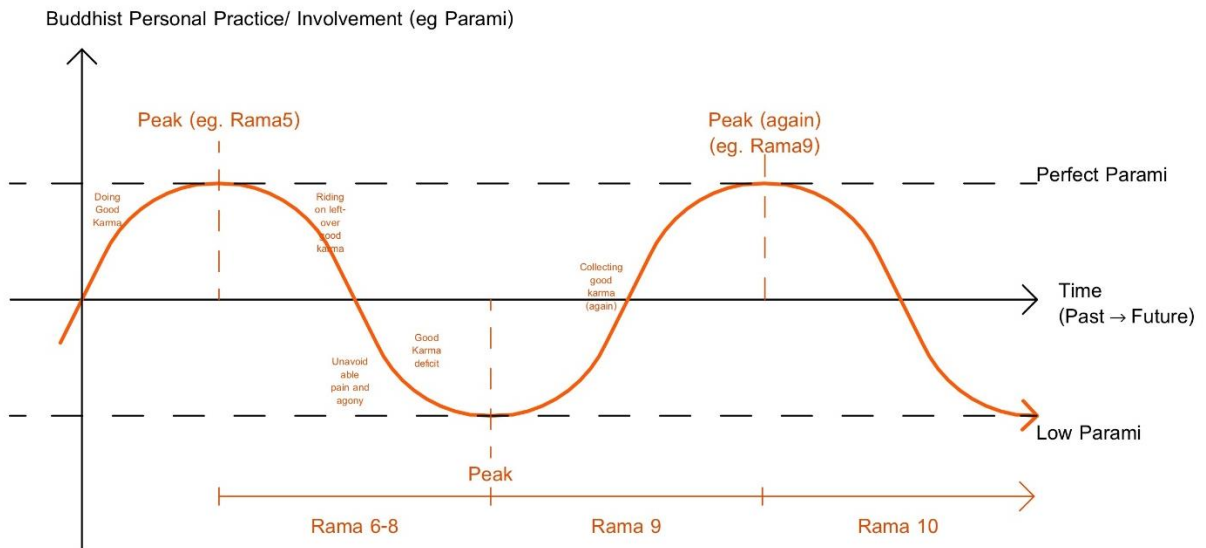


Figure 9: Wave-Patterned Time (Simplified Version).

The concept of Parami and other Buddhist contents were re-narrated under this frame of logic. For example, figure 8 depicts how subjective sentiment and

interpretation of events function in the new framework—derived from figure 6. Figure 9 is a simplified version of figure 8 that only shows correlated information between axis X and axis Z, making it 2-dimensional and easier to understand. However, the precise placement and illustration of the wave-patterned time is proof that cyclical time can really be framed within the context of modern infinite linear time. In short, Thailand (Siam) could force the way, narrative-wise, for its own content in the format that shares the temporal origin of modernity with the western framework but uses a totally different approach; that is, it embraces the new narrative rather than confronting it. In this work, the terms "cyclical" and "wave-patterned" from here on will be used interchangeably because they produce the same result, although the accurate form is "wave-patterned." The question that might spring up is: "What would this so-called 'wave-patterned time' lead to?" The short answer is that (1) it proves the possibility to put the narrative of cyclical-time basis into the modern time that fits scientific regime of truth, and (2) it leads to "fixed causal-effect" rationality, which is the foundation of a Salim group called "Salim Fundamentalism." This point will be elaborated on shortly.

In the beginning, this new temporal concept and the framework that narrated Chaofah Mongkut's synthesized Buddhism only influenced the palace and the central plain, but it became the foundation for the future of Bhumibol's narrative to take off.<sup>32</sup> This may be due to the oral tradition in Siam or Thailand as compared to its western

---

<sup>32</sup> The time between Chaofah Mongkut to King Bhumibol, around 1 century, was not so colorful for this foundational narrative (ethnie). King Rama V did the most job in this time period since he was the one who legally institutionalized Dhammayuttika Nikaya and later named all other Theravada Buddhism (which has always been the majority) as Maha Nikaya—meaning "those that are not Dhammayuttika Nikaya." King Rama VI and VII also portrayed some of this narrative in their writings like the case of *Muang Thai Jong Teun Terd*. However, nothing particularly significant occurred. It is safe to say that Dhammayuttika Nikaya, despite remaining the "foundation" since its birth, has not always experienced a flourishing trend. It simply keeps on gradually expanded its influence until the reign of King Bhumibol during the Cold War that it finally re-surfaced and see the limelight.

counterpart. The relationship between the materialistic image of the nation—by print capitalism, museums, maps, flags, etc.—and the populace can be seen if we take Benedict Anderson's (2016) concept of homogeneous, empty time as our starting point. One of the major contrasts between the two theological origins—Christianity and Buddhism—is their status as "text-focused societies." Christianity and Western civilization in general have long been text-based societies, and this tradition has endured despite social fluctuations and changes. The rise of Protestant Christianity that shook the foundation of the Catholic faith to its core also insisted on *Sola Scriptura*<sup>33</sup> (by the Scripture alone) as one of its most revered foundations. Likewise, scientific discoveries and enlightened philosophical texts built Western society. The rise of the nation by the materialistic development like the printing press and capitalism, therefore, was both the field of contestation among narratives as earlier explained and the catalyst for the ethnical or pre-existing history of the society to bloom.

On the contrary, Thai or Siamese society has long been an oral-based society. The ideas of the region were diverse, scattered, and localized. There was basically no uniformity or dominant ideas roaming the land prior to the modernization of Chaofah Mongkut. So, the changes he made had a multi-layered significance in this regard. With his *Dhammayuttika Nikaya*, he augmented the Thai religious tradition from oral to slightly more text-based since its core teaching tries to underline the original teaching of Buddha himself, creating Siam's primitive form of *Sola Scriptura*. Two, by combining pre-modern Buddhist teachings with modern scientific narration (hypothetical deductivism and hypothetical imperative), he created a common ethnical alongside the rise of print capitalism. Because there was no prior official or

---

<sup>33</sup> *Sola Scriptura* or "by the scripture alone" was one of the five main pillars in the teaching of the Protestant. It defies the authority of the Catholic Church in interpreting and giving meaning to the biblical texts and announces that anyone could connect to God as long as they stay true to the "text of the scripture" (the Bible) itself. Hence, an even more text-focused society kicked-off.

institutionalized narrative<sup>34</sup>, the Siamese elites controlled the construction of ethnies and had a huge advantage in shaping the materialistic development. This royal-designed ethnies could be thought of as “Thainess-to-be.”<sup>35</sup> This led to “guided ethnies,” which would eventually lead to “guided homogeneous, empty time.” If Chaofah Mongkut built the nation’s ethnies, then this work argues that Bhumibol built the homogeneous, empty time based on that ethnies, resulting in the simulacra based on his production imbued with his narrative. It was Bhumibol who rewrote and replaced the People’s Party’s unsettled narrative of a nation—a story that attempted to homogenize time and space but lacked sufficient foundation to steadily grow. Therefore, the theological-scientific origin timely created and left by Chaofah Mongkut for inheritance was a stroke of tremendous significance.

From February 2019 to September 2020, I conducted some interviews with 20 people,<sup>36</sup> most of whom economically successful and mainly aged 50 or more and resided in relatively peripheral areas. They used to identify themselves as royalists but, ultimately, changed and now hold a critical view towards the current monarchy, Vajiralongkorn. However, they tend to have intense reservations when touched upon

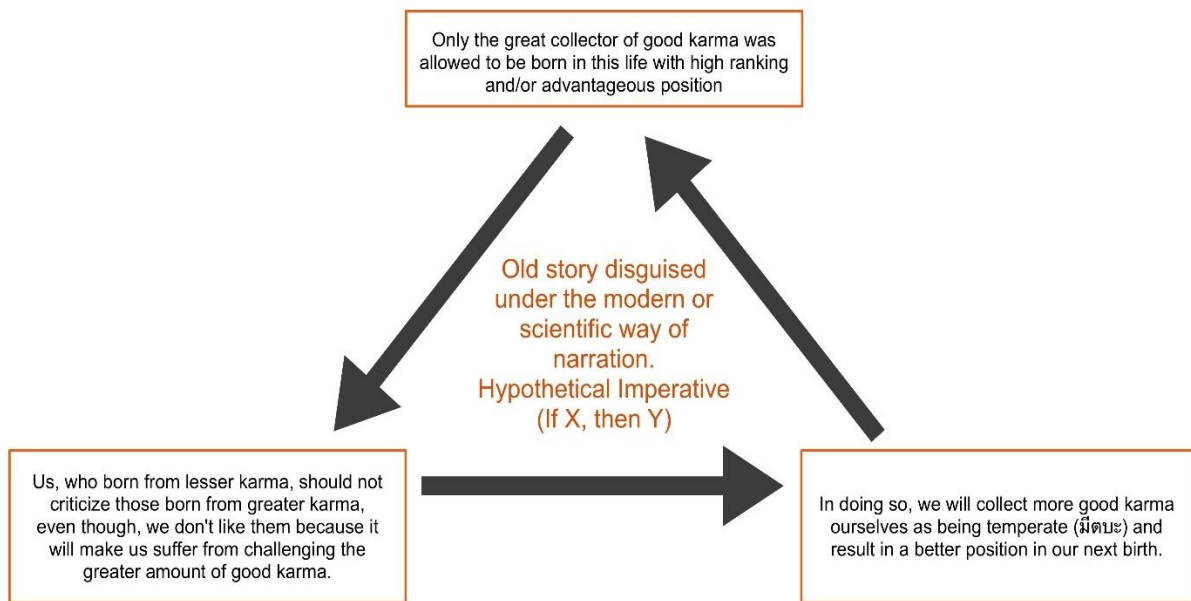
---

<sup>34</sup> It is the structural condition that matches Alain Badiou’s (2007) concept of “the void and successor”. This work might sometimes call this specific condition as “nothingness” for short. See Appendix I for further explanation.

<sup>35</sup> However, I have a personal stance that disagrees with the term “Thainess” which tends to underline the “uniqueness” of Thai politics. I see Thai political structure to be different from the western or universally accepted one, as I have lengthy discussed so far in this work, but at the same time I do not see such character unique to Thailand; hence, my stance. On the other hand, the purpose of this work and the illustration of many conceptual models it portrays is to organize the known but scattered understandings of Thai politics and conceptualize them into one, so they can easily be studied, matched, compared, or grouped with the politics of similar nature and stop claiming to be one unique entity anymore.

<sup>36</sup> Some of the interviews occurred as “group interviews” where many sources appeared at once and not all of them were involved verbally, or some were field interviews in quite impromptu situations, particularly ones during the 2020 people’s demonstration, where the number of sources was rather vague and I had to make notes afterwards.

the issue of royalty, even given their current political stance toward the monarchy. This self-censorship, as I observed, did not seem to be about the legal problem as well since they even refrain from talking to their most trusted or closest person privately on this particular topic. Therefore, instead of asking about their views on the monarchy, I asked them about the rationality they had for refraining from the said issue. The answer that almost all of them, 17 out of 20, had given somewhat showed a similar structure. On this note, their answers to my interview and their trains of thought clearly illustrate the influence of the cyclical (wave-patterned) that is the "fixed causal effect." The specific logic they used for this case was built upon the concept of Parami which had been augmented in the same way – under "wave-patterned time" framework - by Chaofah Mongkut. The logic flew, as Figure 10 shows.



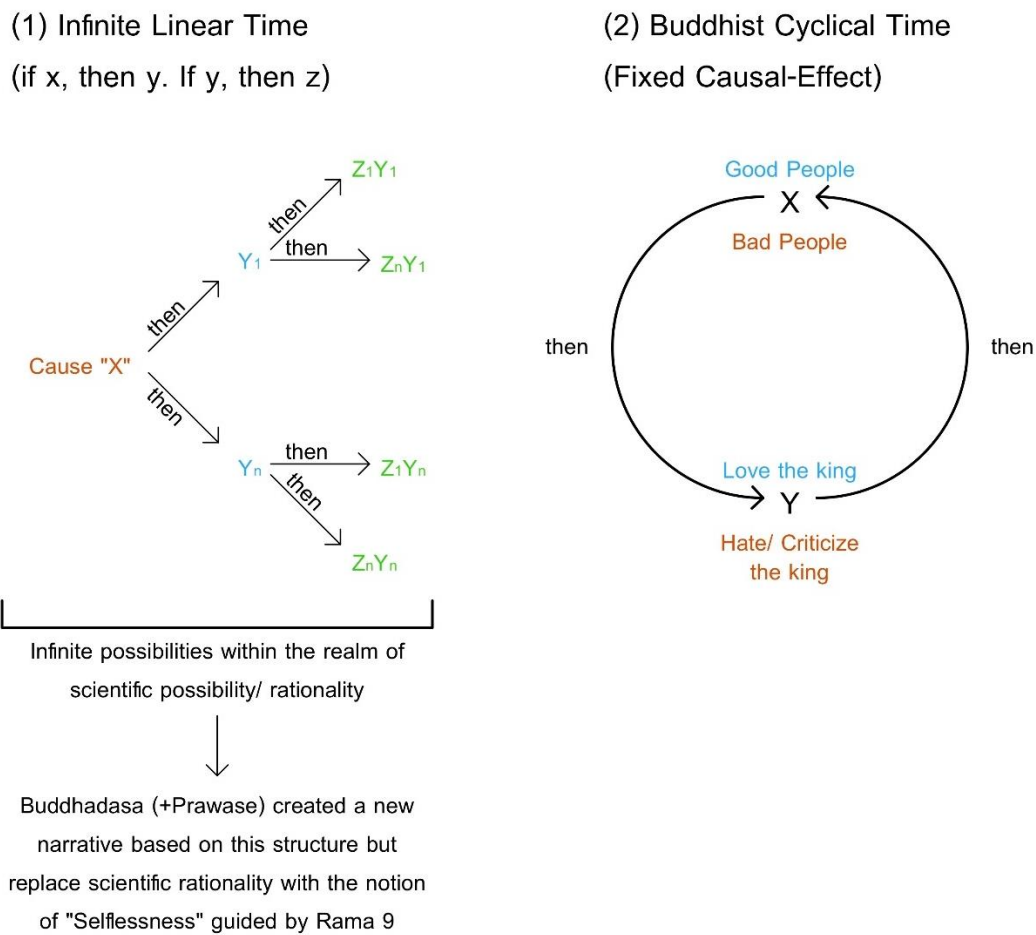
*Figure 10: Buddhist Cyclical Logic in Effect.*

Of course, not all of their logic or reasoning is based on this format. I would argue, judging from the interviews, that the functional reasoning is at least based on

the normal infinite linear reasoning. For example, “I am hungry, so I cook and eat to fill my need.” This is functional reasoning, or what they generally do, sometimes even without awareness. But once the reasoning that requires the judgement or decision with ethical values occurs, this Buddhist-influenced reasoning will surface. And it is this type of reasoning that supersedes other kinds or forms of reasoning. Under the domination of this reasoning, once one has to perform their moral calculation, all other deeds and decisions that might be based on the different types of reasoning would be clumped up and recalculated under this dominant reasoning anyway. The deeds and decisions that were not initially performed based on the Buddhist influence at the moment they were performing would eventually be counted as a form of karma whenever the people of this genre calculate or think carefully the sum of their Parami achieved. Therefore, I would use this reasoning as the main character for the people of this genre.

To put it simply, they don't discuss the monarchy because they believe their level of Parami is inferior to that of a king. Because of the huge disparity in Parami, criticizing the king would cause them to suffer and be a fight against their weight. So, they chose silence. Simply wait for better days. This resulted in what Thai people would simply call “ปลง” (letting go of what one cannot control), “ก้มหน้ารับกรรม” (accepting the karmic fate), “สู้ไปก็ไม่มีประโยชน์ เพราะเดี๋ยวสภาพเดิมๆ ก็วนมาใหม่” (no point in resisting since the same outcome will eventually return). This cultural DNA might also amount to the reason why Thai people are so highly tolerate with abnormality to the point that it turns into normalcy. In this line of reasoning, it can be seen that the dominance of the person that represents the position of Parami like the king is absolute and static, a logic that is based on the personification of Parami itself. The study and interviews show that the legacy and influence of this framework is so strong that even if an individual is skeptical of the monarchy, it can still silence them, normalize their suffering, and turn it into a hope for a better future.

From this cyclical logic shown in figure 10, it could be seen that the way the logical function works within this framework is still entirely different from the universal infinite linear reasoning and that is why the result is such a strange answer. The cyclical or wave-patterned rationality only produces the causal-effect in a "fixed format," while the infinite linear contains countless possible results for each cause, as long as it is within the scientific possibilities (see Figure 11 for the illustration).



*Figure 11: Perceptual Difference of Causal Effect (Rationalization) between Infinite Linear and Cyclical (Wave-Patterned) Times.*

In the infinite linear time logic or "if X, then Y," at the surfaced level it might seem to suggest that one cause (X) would lead to one result (Y) which is essentially

similar to that of the cyclical time and reasoning. It is, in fact, not. During the process from "cause X to effect Y" in the tradition of the hypothetical imperative, countless possible Ys (Y1 to Yn) could occur. So, for the same cause X, if it happens to one person, the result could be effect Y2, but if it occurs to another person, it could yield the result of Y13 instead, depending on the course of action chosen for that similar cause X. And the result Y (1-n) would eventually become the cause for the next effect to occur—in this case, effect Z (1-n), infinitely. In short, the causal effect is not fixed, but only restricted by the scope of scientific possibilities. Unlike cyclical or wave-patterned logic, the cause and effect are forever fixed in a similar format. The example of the fixed logic under this framework is like "The King is good. → So, good people love the king. → People love the king, meaning he is good. → The king is good, so good people must love the king." It is an endless loop of causal-effect with a fixed answer. This practice of rationality continues until the present days as one can see from the parliamentary debate of no-confidence on August 31st, 2021, when Prayuth Chan-ocha replied to the oppositional parties' accuses with his reason for not committing bad deeds by saying: "I pray to the Buddha every day; therefore, I would not commit any wrongdoings" (The MATTER, 2021a). A similar line of reasoning from Prayuth happened at least a few more times as he was giving interviews with the press on the crisis the whole nation was facing (The MATTER, 2021b).

The development of the Buddhist narrative in relation to King Bhumibol that adjusted itself to match with the modern temporal logic did not end here though. A new interpretation of modern Buddhism arose. Similar to how Protestants challenged the dominant and institutionalized narrative of the Catholic Church, the "Buddhist protestant movement in Thailand" could be counted from the rise of Buddhadasa (พุทธทาสภิกขุ), an extremely popular Sangha monk especially from the late 1960s onward. He was regarded as the new religious leader among urban and educated people. Buddhadasa's interpretation of Buddhism was considered more modern and scientific, reinforcing the idea that "Buddhism is the most scientific religion." In the 1930s,



Buddhadasa started to re-synthesize the Buddhist teachings. His main conceptual engineering is 2 folds. First, it fully bases Buddhism's "intelligible comprehension and enlightenment" on Theravada Buddhist scriptures. So, to prove or gain Parami, one does not need to go to a Buddhist monastery and listen to preaching or do Vipassana in solitude. To reach nirvana, or Buddhist enlightenment, one only needs oneself and the Buddhist scriptures. It is like Thai Buddhism's Sola Scriptura.

Second, he adapted the Buddhist narrative to modern linear time logic. While the former Chaofah Mongkut's narrative structure simply tried to twist the temporal perception to match the Buddhist teaching—resulting in the first synthesization of Buddhism and the wave-patterned time—Buddhadasa simply re-synthesized and re-narrated the Buddhist teaching to be "the same thing" as scientific knowledge. The book like *Einstein had found, the Buddha had discovered* that was mentioned earlier captures this mindset quite well. Hence, Buddhism could be rehearsed as if it were scientific knowledge. Buddhadasa's scientifically interchangeable interpretation of Buddhism—the second synthesization—defies the "wave-patterned rationality." It transformed and matched perfectly with the hypothetical imperative which built upon the infinite linear time. The hypothetical imperative works as follows: "one cause could offer countless results" as long as it remains within the scope of scientific possibility or the framework of the singular history (regime of truth). What Buddhadasa did to the narrative structure was on the scope of possibilities itself. He changed (or at least inseparably blended) the scope of possibilities from scientific to Buddhist logic by preaching that Buddhism is science and vice versa. In short, the scope that one uses to judge "what ought to be or to do" and "what could possibly be done" fits with the scope of Buddhist teaching similarly with one(s) from the scientific origin. The scope is changed or hijacked while the infinite linear reason, which is the essence of scientific narration, remains. By doing so, Buddhism could be narrated "rationally" in a similar way to science since—in Thailand's context—it has replaced science. Buddhadasa did not simply replace scientific possibility with Buddhism. It takes years

of slowly “hijacking the definition of democratic and modern scientific vocabulary” and redefining these terms with the Buddhist teaching or values. People may still believe they are rational and educated, believing they are thinking perfectly under scientific premises, unaware that those premises have been hijacked and redefined. Prawase Wasi, a leading figure in Thailand’s medical society, has helped hijack and modernize Buddhadasa’s teachings. His network stretches from the palace to the country’s most remote regions. With Prawase’s help, a more modernized Buddhadasa teaching that appealed to educated people spread quickly. It became the dominant political narrative in Thailand in the late 1980s or early 1990s. Keep in mind that this feat was attempted and achieved within the structural context of “the trinity” that already linked the king, Buddhism, and modern materialistic knowledge. This made anything related to them practically unfalsifiable or unquestionable. If one is risking challenging the king and his sphere of influence publicly, then getting arrested and imprisonment are usually the outcome. The hijacking of modern words and concepts was easy if done in the name of the king or to protect the king from a threat. No one was allowed to question their claim in this context. By changing the “main essence” of what is considered absolutely credible in all chains of logic, Buddhadasa changed “the host of what is considered high knowledge” from science to Buddhism or at least equalized these two terms. The educated people allured by this new narrative are what this work calls “Progressive Salim” as they tend to see themselves as more progressive compares to the “Salim Fundamentalist.”

These two sets of adjusted narrative frameworks—Chaofah Mongkut’s and Buddhadasa’s—tremendously contributed to the way Bhumibol’s narrative was constructed, how it grew, and secured its dominance in modern times as well as the populace who had fallen victims to such logic. The “Salim mentality” hence arose from this point.

## Summary on the concepts

As stated earlier in this chapter, this work divides structures into two categories: background and emerging. This chapter mainly focuses on the first type, with the only exception of the "temporal origin of modernity," which is categorized as the latter type. The background structure is long-lasting and passively influences society, whereas the emerging structure is more active and has a strong impact on the course of history. The emerging structure, therefore, will be discussed as the work progresses and matches with the timeframe of the given chapter.

This chapter's background structures can be divided into two parts: the medical doctor's narrative structure and the Thailand narrative structure. The medical doctor's narrative structure could be viewed as a structure specific to the group of human agencies that will be the main focus of this work. It began with the timeless function of the life-prolonging practitioner and the man who represented higher knowledge as the narrator in society. The doctor succeeds in this quality. The chapter then elaborates on the medical doctor's increased influence due to many historical events such as the scientific revolution, modern liberal democracy, and capitalism. The role of the medical doctor as a narrator has become even more secure and permanent thanks to the scientific method that gives birth to politics of impermanence. At the same time, the elaboration on the narrative structure of the medical doctor that took place in the western world—the universal standard version of modernity—acts as the reference frame for this work in comparing the different paths Thailand has taken in its process of modernization.

After the explanation of the narrative structure that the medical doctor would universally have, I took on the different conditions that occurred in Thailand (or Siam at the time). Starting from the point of departure, the syncretization of Buddhism by Chaofah Mongkut had made Thailand's political condition different from the west. Hence, its narrative structure was different as well. Chaofah Mongkut had achieved

the new narrative structure that Europe could only dream of: the integration of Buddhism and scientific narration. This feat was only possible because Siam at the time had no uniformed and institutionalized narrative that could represent the entire nation. So, Chaofah Mongkut could start anew. This seed of narrative structure, planted by Chaofah Mongkut, was later adopted, implanted, and cultivated by King Bhumibol in his quest for political dominance. King Bhumibol had constructed the narrative structure that links all three factions together—the monarchy, Buddhism, and scientific knowledge—as this work named it “the trinity of Thai storytelling.” The three factions benefit one another, and with the king at the center, the other related factions gain certain degree of protection—politically, legally, and culturally—as well, granting them the privilege of not being criticized or questioned as much. This pervasive structure allows the medical doctor, who is included in the trinity—under the umbrella of the science faction—to sail their story even more smoothly. They could enjoy the narrative power of both worlds: the narrative structure that a medical doctor has in a modernized context and the luxury of political protection. These are the background structures that play their roles passively throughout the whole process of this entire work, giving a special position to the medical doctor, who is the main human agency in this work, an exclusive role as a narrator.

Lastly, the chapter proposed on the temporal origin of Thai modernity stemmed from the said background structure. As an emerging structure, I chose to elaborate here because it could only emerge under the given background structure. It shows the vast difference in rationalization between Thailand and the universally accepted version. So, it answered how the Thais could be consistently stupid but still see themselves as rational. They have their own sets of logic, and such logics have their own way of functioning properly under the framework of modern rationalization. So, they would not feel awkward thinking the way they think. Thus arose the Salim mentality. As pointed out, the temporal origin of Thai modernity has two main sets of reasoning coming from their differences in interpreting and integrating the Buddhist

teachings with scientific narration. The different sets of logic gave birth to a different type of Salim, which will be discussed in the next chapters.

To sum things up, I propose that the occurrence of these structures had led Thailand into a different path of modernity, one that could be called “alternative modernity.” A new path of modernity that comes from the differences in the structural conditions of the given community compared to the standardized European model. Anyhow, in order to digest the work more easily, I have made the “road map” of conditional and structural transformations of the whole work in Appendix IV so the reader could use it as the conceptual guidepost while reading the whole text. The said road map only displays the structural changes and influences but not the actions or events caused by the main agency, in this case the medical network. In short, it is the guideline that shows the main structural condition that the main agency was operating in.

## *Chapter 2*

### Royal Envoys and the Cold War Renaissance, Establishing the New World with an Old Tale

*"Thailand maintains a strong traditional royal system...and yet has a market economy. I am also interested in the Thai model."*

Kim Jong-il (during the meeting with Madeleine Albright in 2000)<sup>37</sup>

During the reign of King Bhumibol or Rama IX, who was widely referred to as the “national father” or “Por Luang” (พ่อหลวง) by the Thais, the image of how much love Thai people have for the monarchy has become common both nationally and internationally. The story of the king’s dedication to the nation or how much he had to sacrifice the luxury of the monarchy lifestyle for the people usually begins with a touching story of love and loyalty. Not to mention how wise his every plan and motive was. This kind of story about the monarchy’s work and the result of an unprecedented level of Parami that attracts the people’s love has been so common and widely accepted for half a century. But with this “love and loyalty” comes the taboo of criticizing or questioning the beloved national father’s actions. This is a fact that is lesser known globally but is deeply ingrained in Thai culture. It is so naturally constructed and normalized that people of some generations do not even notice or are aware of it being a socially constructed cognizance.

The construction of the supreme king’s story began flourishing around 1957 (or 2500 B.E.) during Sarit Thanarat’s administration, and also brought about the People’s

---

<sup>37</sup> In Madeleine Albright (2003, 466).

Party's (คณะราษฎร) demise. The People's Party ended the centuries-long absolutism that had ruled Siam in 1932, despite opposition attempts to regain power for decades (see Chaiching, 2013). Obstacles and struggles raged in the People's Party, weakening it and causing internal strife. The People's Party's spring had ended, and winter had arrived. Sarit Thanarat, an army general, led the military coup d'état and gained victory for the monarchical conservative camp, bringing the democratic endeavors to an end. The military junta regime started to use the monarchic institution as its source of legitimacy, and – likewise – the palace which was still weak at the time also rode the wave of this fresh power to reach the new ground and see the light after long dismay. But the third power, the United States, played an important role in helping the first two factions establish themselves in the political landscape. The US involvement was due to the Cold War context and the US cabinet's strong belief in the domino theory. So, Thailand, which was not yet dyed red politically, was viewed as a friend of the "free world" and a base for US operations in the region (Kesboonchoo Mead 2007). The support from the US occurred by disregarding any prior dissimilarities the two nations had, be it the military junta or absolutism mindset, as long as they promised to stand against the red evil called "communism." Since then, the palace has accumulated power and support from many sectors of Thai politics, becoming what Duncan McCargo (2005) calls a "network monarchy"—a network in which the king and his trusted retainers planned and shaped Thai politics and lobbied relentlessly to make it happen. To demonstrate the subject's loyalty and submission to the throne, Asa Kumpha (2019) proposed that one of the main tangible symbols be the use of royal insignia. The insignia had become a symbol of trust and loyalty to the monarchy. So the king's services had become competitive, as had the insignia's value. The network monarchy grew in number of insignia receivers. Using the concept of "Deep State," Eugénie Mérieau (2016) offers a different explanation for the construction of the monarchical power sphere. If McCargo's work is "agency-based," Mérieau's "Deep State" is an "institutionalized" interpretation of how the palace built its power. Mérieau

uses legal politics and the drafting of the 1997 and 2007 constitutions to illustrate her work on monarchical hegemony. In summary, her works claim that there are two main powers in Thai politics: one legitimated by electoral politics and thus openly visible, and the other not legitimate and thus hidden as if there is another state within the Thai state. But, most of the time, the latter has even more authority than the “legitimate counterpart” and can override its decision.

Anyhow, a part of what appears to be the “nonsensical” area has been left untouched by these works, despite their own compelling arguments and valuable contributions to understanding the political climate in Thailand. Ironically, the problem with these stories is that they are all true. But they are also, to some extent, mostly the points that have long been speculated upon. To operate politics, the monarchy had created his close retainers or inner circle, for example, in works depicting the idea of network monarchy. This has long been speculated by Thai political critics, and the work simply proves it scholarly. The work concludes that “the king had an inner circle that operated discreetly in politics,” which is unquestionably true. What monarchy does not have an “inner circle” or intend to have one? The extent of achievement or involvement in politics varies from monarchy to monarchy, but this function exists in virtually every era and region. Did King Rama V have his inner circle? He did. Does Queen Elizabeth II have her own close retainers? She does. So, aside from the degree of political involvement (because every monarchy is different), what makes King Rama IX’s network monarchy unique, conceptually speaking? None.

Deep-state, likewise, provides a more unique perspective on Thai politics, but it ignores the “nonsensical” part. Many scholars on Thai politics have speculated that there is a hidden function within the Thai political and operational sphere, but Mériéau’s deep-state work has greatly contributed to confirming this assumption. The issue is that the concept of a “deep state” or “hidden function” can be easily rationalized or understood. We could not see it or figure it out because it was hidden. Solid



reasoning and easily understood. It is just that this rationalized explanation of reality has occurred in every state. "State and secrecy go together." Confidentiality for the state's security or intelligence units that operate outside the legal system or even extraterritorial is nothing new. They existed long before the modern state. So deep-state theory also doesn't explain the entirety of Thai politics, precisely the part that could not be rationalized by enlightenment or modern rational standards. If what is normally considered wrong but has the tendency to be concealed so it can continue its operation is rational, then what is normally considered wrong but could be witnessed publicly in plain sight yet could still be operated—and sometimes even yearn for—would be irrational and hardly incomprehensible. This latter case is the unsolved mystery of Thai politics. It has happened, and it is wrong by any modern (western) democratic standard, yet records of the yearning and support for all of it have been published for decades as a huge part of Thailand's political history, an official one. Why don't Thais think they are wrong? This question has been left unanswered for far too long, and this work has argued in Chapter 1 that it is owing to the different stance of its western counterpart. It is because the Thai monarchy during the absolutist period towards "modern science" that had created the new structure of storytelling. This turned out to be the ethnics of the current Thai political structure, and achieved the new route of "modernity" and its own logic and rationality as well. The one that is tailor-made for the nation.

As stated previously, this chapter will depict how this storytelling structure works and has even strengthened in recent years, particularly during King Bhumibol's reign. In a nutshell, this chapter intends to demonstrate three main points. The first point is on the formation and development of the pre-national history, or ethnics, by Chaofah Mongkut (King Rama IV) onwards. The second part is about the implementation of the ethnics under King Bhumibol (Bhumibol's narrative) via the use of royal medical units like PMMV and also other agencies to achieve the homogenous, empty time. The third part examines Salim's foundation and mechanism (or the

stupidity mentioned in the introduction). The ethnics is the basis of the storytelling used by King Bhumibol during his reign. If Chaofah Mongkut created the ethnics, King Bhumibol used it to its fullest potential, singularizing popular thought. Of course, he did not spread this pre-national history as Chaofah Mongkut, but as Bhumibol. Several means, especially materialistic ones, were implemented, including royal medical units, thus resembling Benedict Anderson's concept of homogenous, empty time. At least conceptually, the achievements of Bhumibol and Anderson and Smith, who were normally perceived as academic opposition, were in fact rather collaborative. As mentioned previously, this work utilizes Smith's ethnics to reach Anderson's homogenous, empty time through Bhumibol's use of royally branded materialistic benefits and projects. This royally branded projects or spiritual materialism would eventually form its own structural rationality, which this work called "Salim rationality." This is essentially what this chapter aims to elaborate on.

### **Voyage of the Modern Royal Fable**

Although this work proposes a new storytelling structure for modern Thai politics, namely "the trinity," this structure did not emerge simply from the incorporation of modern science into Buddhism by Chaofah Mongkut while he was a monk. It took years for the structure to become the main narrative that linked the nation together. One reason was the arrival of the "modernized western invasion" in Southeast Asia after King Rama IV (formerly King Chaofah Mongkut). The invasion accelerated the modernization of the region's kingdoms, including Siam. The acceptance of modern science into Buddhism was part of this process. The king's position helped institutionalize it within Siam's central administrative body. The modern border was one of the most significant changes. Winichakul (1994) argued in *Siam Mapped* that the newly drawn border changed Siam's geopolitical structure, eventually becoming the geo-body of the modern nation. The modern border has

arguably changed the domain of authoritative power. Before Siam drew its new border and became a modern nation-state, the concept of mandala was used to explain authoritative power. The word "kingdom" implies the king's domain of influence (mandala). The mandala changed with the reign because the power landscape and frontier changed with the king. Each king had a different level of influence, which could be replaced by the Buddhist concept of Parami, and thus the mandala. The mandala grew in size as influence and authority grew. The mandala's differences varied not only between reigns, but also within reigns, depending on the sovereign's influence at the time. In summary, a kingdom's geo-body is not static or "impermanent," whereas a modern state's geo-body is static and permanent (most of the time). The modern nation's new border and the old kingdom's mandala usually result in two distinct entities.

The modern frontier has severed the direct link between "kingship" and "governed land," necessitating this change. In contrast to the ancient mandala, the modern border defines the accepted imaginary line which fixes the given territory for the legitimate use of physical force and exercises state of exception as "the frame or limit of sovereign." So, the newly formed imaginary line has replaced the king's sphere of influence (Parami). Concerns about the loss of the king-nation bond surfaced in the latter half of King Rama V's reign, after he consolidated his power over the Bunnag family who ruled the court during his father's and early reigns. This concern was first discovered when King Rama V visited many provinces nationwide to start his intendancy system (ระบบเทศาภิบาล). However, the explanation for this part may be difficult because the word "kingdom" (ราชอาณาจักร) used in the past was not the same as the modern definition used today. The modern definition of "kingdom" is probably closer to the definition of "empire" (จักรวรรดิ) at the time of King Rama V. This claim comes from Prince Damrong's *Lectures on the Siam Chronicle* (1949). He was widely regarded as the father of modern Thai history. As a younger brother of King Rama V, Prince Damrong had termed the word "empire," as in "Siam Empire," as the territory

that tied or represented the authority of the king who had successfully and rightfully inherited it from his dynasty and dynasties that came before. It is easy to see how the word "empire" could refer to the king's sphere of influence. However, what King Rama V and Prince Damrong had the tendency to do was convincing the public or the students of Thai history at that time to use the word "Siam Kingdom" to name the country instead of "Siam Empire." Instead of just the royal lineages' power or the ruler's individual charismatic influence, as in the word "empire," the king and prince assumed the accumulating power and willingness of people from various origins. In short, they saw the word "kingdom" to have a tie with the people as well, and they attempted to accentuate this connection through the public use of this word, rejecting the word "empire," which did not have anything to do with the people, at least in their dictionary.

This work sees this noticeable change of the word as the reaction to the newly drawn modern border that cut down the royal tie with the land, therefore the palace needed to find a new tie which was the accumulated "willingness of the people" of the state; in other words, "the nation."<sup>38</sup> With the new claim under the royally defined "kingdom," the nation-king was born. The king acted and ruled as the people's representative, so the throne remained legitimate even though the land's direct connection was broken. During King Rama VI's reign, he announced the concept of "Presumed Elected King" (อเนกนิกรสโไมสรสมมติ), or the notion that the king was rightfully enthroned by actively presuming that all of the people or subjects wished or elected him to be the king. This premise has two components: (1) it was actively

---

<sup>38</sup> I use the word 'nation-king' in the similar sense as 'nation-state' which is the product of the western modernization. However, instead of the nation being purified and consolidated through and by the state, it was carried through and by the king.

assumed the claim of national consent by the palace itself, and (2) it must represent and connect with the people at least imaginarily.

The Franco-Siamese war was another main trigger point that caused King Rama V to realize the significance of the connection with the people once the modern boundary concept had become clear and unavoidable. After the war, bills and agreements were signed, and the borders of the modern state and concept greatly influenced King Rama V and his court (Kosri 2014). This also served as a direct message that the populace had taken over the placement of the symbol of power. The concept of “royal subject” or phrai luang (ไพร่หลวง) has changed conceptually over time. Koizumi Junko (2002) investigated what is commonly conceived as a fact nowadays: that all of the “able-bodied” men, from Ayutthaya until the early twentieth century, were royal subjects or commoners obliged to offer military service to the king. It was created by the Siamese elites, including Prince Damrong, during the court reformation, particularly during King Rama V’s reign, to legitimize their movement, and not all men were categorized as such. According to Junko, the intention of merging the people into the “royal body” was quite clear.

This progress can also be seen through the first royal command (พระปฐมบรมราชโองการ) of each reign in the Chakri dynasty as follows:

King Rama I, II, IV, and V(1)<sup>39</sup>’s first royal command (1785; 1809; 1851; 1868): <sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> King Rama V had two coronations, one during his early age, during which he had to hand the governing work to the regent, and the other was when he was coming of age and could properly administrate as the king all by himself. The first royal commands during these two periods were slightly different.

<sup>40</sup> The record of King Rama III’s first royal command cannot be found, only the “Royal Greeting” spoken during the Granting an Audience Ceremony was recorded. He said: “To Chao Phrayas and Phrayas, all the treasures presented in this ceremony, may you all look after them well in order to maintain our land.” However, since King Rama IV still had a similar ‘first royal command’ to King Rama I and II, then

“Plants and trees, streams and rivers, and various items scattered throughout the Kingdom, if they do not belong to anybody, then let all the monks, Brahmins and people decide what to do with them...”

King Rama V(2)’s first royal command (1873):

“Now that **all of you together grant me accession to the throne** and anoint me **to rule the Kingdom of Siam**, I give permission by the tradition of Dhamma, concerning all plants and trees, streams and rivers in the Kingdom of Siam, if they do not belong to anybody, let all the monks, Brahmins, and all people do what they wish with them...” (My emphasis)

King Rama VI’s first royal command (1910):

“Holy Brahmins, **we shall always rule with righteousness, for the benefit and happiness of all the people**. We will look after you and the heritage, be the refuge, protector, and ruler to all with virtuousness. Let all live with ease.” (My emphasis)

King Rama VII’s first royal command (1925):

“Holy Brahmins, **now we shall take full responsibility and rule the kingdom with righteousness, for the benefit and happiness of the people**. We will look after you and the heritage, be the refuge, protector, and ruler to all with virtuousness. Let all live with ease.” (My emphasis)

King Rama IX’s first royal command (1950): <sup>41</sup>

“We will **reign** with righteousness, **for the benefit and happiness of the Siamese people**.” (My emphasis)

---

it could be presumed that the first royal command during King Rama III’s coronation should be the same.

<sup>41</sup> King Rama VIII passed away before the coronation ceremony.

King Rama X's first royal command (2019):

"We shall sustain, preserve, and continue and shall **reign with righteousness for the benefit and happiness of the people forever.**" (My emphasis)

*\*The information on the first royal commands is from "The Information Committee for the Royal Coronation of Thailand" in their book namely "The Royal Coronation Ceremony" (Ministry of Culture, 2019). Only King Rama X's first royal command is referenced from "The Public Relation Committee of the Royal Coronation Ceremony" (2019).*

From King Rama I to V's first royal commands, it was clear that the land was the focus of the sovereign's first official promises. The link between land and resources and spiritual bodies like monks and Brahmins was also stated. King Rama V's second ascension was the first time the enthronement was announced as being granted by one party, and the first time the kingdom's name was used to specify. "The people's benefit and happiness" was stated for the first time during his coronation of King Rama VI and has been used ever since by the next kings in throne. King Rama VI's first royal command was the first to completely eliminate the notion of "the land" and focus on "the people." The first royal commands of King Rama VI and VII were specifically elaborated on what they would do "for their people" to gain "happiness" (i.e., be the refuge, protector, and ruler to all with virtuousness). The trend continues to the coronation of King Rama IX and X, with the last two monarchs using the word "reign" instead of "rule" for the first time. This practice reflected the change in political regimes. Although the first five royal commands could be considered merely a ritualized phrase said in the traditional fashion and contained no personal message from the monarchy, the differentiation in the small use of words reflects the consideration that has been put into the content of the command. Not only that, but the coronation of King Rama VI may have been the first in Siam's history to be

photographed. While not as widespread as King Rama IX and X's coronations, the message of the royal command and the depiction of the coronation were not restricted to the palace grounds anymore. This explains why the first royal commands from King Rama VI onwards had more customized characteristics than the previously universally ritualized ones.

The work concludes that, since King Rama V's reign, the monarchies have tried to connect with the people rather than the land in order to fill the power gap caused by the modern border. Ultimately, all of King Rama V's concentration was about consolidating power for his throne. The first half of his reign dealt with internal politics and consolidating power from the Bunnags, while his second half dealt with a different enemy, a more conceptual one. While King Rama VI and VII tried to maintain the royal father's consolidated power, they failed, and the regime changed in 1932. This observation echoes Tamada Yoshifumi's (2001) conclusion that the modern western state (and also Japan) chose the path of expansion, while Siam chose the path of seclusion and consolidation to keep its power from eroding further.

The power of this narrative—the king as the representative and essence of a nation—had fluctuated. It had its ups and downs, especially from King Rama VI to King Rama IX. Pattarat Phantprisit (2022) had investigated the notion of “the Thai army's (code of) honor” as their main narrative to uphold their status and arguably the essence of their existence. The Thai army's honor seemed to be tied to the monarchy, specifically the duty to protect the king. This exclusivity allowed them to be themselves and carry on their tasks, sometimes against the collective perception of society. Because King Rama VI chose to protect his chamberlains over the military officers, the relationship between the two institutions grew more distant and distrustful. Likewise, the narrative that linked the two had struggled to remain the dominant story among soldiers and society. The main competitor for this contestation of fables was the story of the army as the protector of the modern nation where



“nation,” in short, represents the people and the geographical boundary agreed upon by the international community rather than the sphere of monarchic influence. In 1941, during King Rama VIII’s reign (Pibunsongkram’s administration), the story that portrayed the king as the essence of the nation collapsed. On July 28th, for the first time, the Thai army proposed “the army day” to the government, and this date seemed to have no connection with the palace, as it was the celebrated date of the army’s victory in the Franco-Thai war at Pratabong province. Nonetheless, in 1951, the Thai army proposed changing the “army day” to January 25th to represent “King Naresuan’s” victory in defending against the invasion of the Burmese empire. Since then, the army day has been changed a few times, mostly to match the story of King Naresuan and his celebrated deed, and is now January 18<sup>th</sup> (Army News 2019; <sup>42</sup>see also Yimprasert 2007). This materialistic change indicates the unstable status of the powerful story that is contemporarily known to be revered and commanded obedience (at least legally) from all Thais for decades during the reign of King Bhumibol (Rama IX). In short, even the most dominant story had its own pilgrimage path. It cannot suddenly become the dominant story. Starting from the previous chapter, this work tries to elaborate on the lineage or root of this dominant story’s pilgrimage path, and later it will explore its establishment (via medical service) that contributed to the several-decade-long enthrone-ment of the dominant fable that makes Thailand a sick kingdom.

---

<sup>42</sup> I should point out here that the “subtitle” of the Army News is “For Country, Religions, Monarchy, and People” (เพื่อชาติ ศาสนา พระมหากษัตริย์ และประชาชน) which might not sound strange in English but the notable usage here is that they use the word “country” for “ชาติ” which literally means “nation.” This somewhat explains the placement of “nation”—at least in the understanding of the conservative camp, the army in particular—to be strongly connected with the “land or territory” itself. It is not fundamentally based on the people as they have separated the notion of people from “ชาติ” (nation) entirely here.

Regardless, two important figures in Thai Buddhism's modern history, Buddhadasa (พุทธทาสภิกขุ) and Prayudh Payutto (ประยูร ปยุตโต), reconstructed the fading narrative of Buddhist-embraced science during King Bhumibol's early reign. The main focus of this work is on the role of the medical service, so it will only briefly touch upon these points because it is so important to comprehend with the perspective to the point of undeniable<sup>43</sup>. Buddhadasa claimed that the state of Buddhism at the time was "impure" due to poor monk discipline. His criticism and the new form of Sangha disciplinary was stricter than Chaofah Mongkut's version. His new direction of delivering the Buddhist teaching was by further synthesizing. This is generally known as an act of purification rather than synthetization. However, I stand firm on my ground to categorize it as synthetization. He ignored the supernatural religious story and only taught the "principle." He used this distilled principle instead of reciting old miracle fables. It is Prayudh Payutto who strengthens Buddhadasa's work by adapting Buddhist teachings to the universal reasoning standard. Their work became popular among educated central Thai elites and became the image of what "Buddhism" should be. Their works boosted the legacy of Chaofah Mongkut (Rama IV) and made the trinity of storytelling structure possibly flourishing, as it did during King Bhumibol's reign. Their work also influenced the medical service, which will be discussed in the next chapter. This new version of synthesized Buddhism would start to get popular in Bangkok and the central administrative bodies from 1947 onwards (Apaipat 2017, 61-65), even though Buddhadasa had begun his quest in 1932 (ibid, 53-61). Regardless, his national recognition and influence began later, around the late 1960s (ibid., 66-80). The main interpretation of Buddhism in society at the time was the Chaofah Mongkut version, which Buddhadasa revised and contended against.

---

<sup>43</sup> For a detailed study on the influence of Buddhadasa on Thailand's political landscape, please see Thiwaporn Apaipat (2017).

Also, probably coincidental, this development of reciting Buddhist doctrines that separated its principles from the mythical fables in both versions – by calling them ignorance (อวิชชา), Hinduism, Shamanism or Spiritualism of some sort – had ultimately allowed this synthesized Buddhism that originated from Chaofah Mongkut to attach or indoctrinate itself with the new social and materialistic development. However, it occurred without a proper secularization. This is because it was based on the ethnies introduced by Chaofah Mongkut, which embraces the materialistic world and the scientific narration rather than separating from it. The newly brewed Buddhism could, therefore, indoctrinate or apply to the “political direction” as well since it was built upon the ethnies that never detaches itself from politics and the material world. The Buddhist doctrine aligned well with liberal capitalism’s principles, especially Chaofah Mongkut’s version of the Buddhadasa. It has some elements in the teaching that intend to deny capitalism as well, but this point will be discussed in the next chapter. At least, it is far better than the Communism that aims for its destruction. For example, the principle of karma (กฎแห่งกรรม) could even be said to fill the hole of the liberal capitalism dream which keeps on repeating itself that opportunity would eventually arise for those who keep on working hard. This basic liberal capitalism belief was at best a fraud because we all know that the majority of people who are hard workers do not achieve or perceive that “opportunity” and end up thinking of themselves as “unlucky.” This is because the Buddhist teaching of karma states that the bad karma of one’s previous life(s) affects one’s fate in this life, thereby nullifying the—supposed to have—opportunity. If one wants to avoid a similar fate in the future, one must keep working hard to accumulate enough good karma to outweigh the bad karma from this life. In short, Buddhism gives reason for unluckiness, and that is more than what capitalism would wish for. This claim not only replaces the flawed structure with the notion of luck, but it also says that all wrongdoings or problems reside in each individual, not the system. You are responsible for the doom or the success. Since the elites who enjoy a luxurious lifestyle are those

who have accumulated enough good karma and merited such lives, this individualistic perspective upholds the mechanism of liberal capitalism more than liberalism itself. Not to mention other teachings of similar function like “one is responsible for oneself” (ตนเป็นที่พึ่งแห่งตน – อัตตาทิ อัตตโนนาถ) which ultimately is the concise version of Modus Vivendi or classic liberalism that focuses solely on the negative rights of each individual. This whole system of thought that places a huge burden on the individuals, in turn, grants the structural privilege to the state’s structure which is supposed to function as the New God. In short, the state could behave irresponsibly and enjoy impunity, calling all the bad results the karmic reaction of the victims. In order to gain a meritorious future and overcome the inevitable hardship, each individual is responsible for themselves and, hence, supposed to collect good karma and commit merit deeds—according to (Chaofah Mongkut’s) Buddhist standard. The influence of this narrative could still be seen strongly until the present day, particularly in the so-called rural regions where the less educated and superstitious people, by the urban populace’s standard, resided. In these areas, Chaofah Mongkut’s synthesized Buddhism meets some residual (or not yet eradicated) Hinduism and local beliefs like spirits.

As the Buddhist teachings have been embraced into politics since Chaofah Mongkut’s time, they can be used politically. It would be hard-pressed to find a better means to contest Communism ideologically. Therefore, Buddhism and all the political structures that are bound with it, namely scientific reasoning and the palace that originated it, would function efficiently against leftist doctrines during the Cold War.

## **The Cold War King and The Construction of Modern Mandala**

### *Background scenes:*

#### *The Cold War as the Emerging Global Structure*

Due to the fact that this part aims to investigate the beginning of the main narrative that would last until the end of King Bhumibol's reign, it is necessary to elaborate on the political landscape of the time in order to understand the conditions of possibility and reasons behind the selection of the chosen storyline. Two main backgrounds set the direction and conditions for the main narrative. The first was the US grand strategy of the Cold War. Second, since this work ultimately studies Bhumibol's storytelling through the medical service, it is important to elaborate on the "medical service sector" setting.

The Cold War's direct and indirect impacts on the world are undeniable, and Thailand is no exception. As the main victor and sole superpower state in 1945 (the Soviet Union did not develop and possess nuclear missiles until 1949) <sup>44</sup>, the United States had three foreign policy options, according to Monteiro (2014). One, a defensive realism policy or an option to return to its former sphere of influence and keep on maintaining its power. The isolation policy before the entrance of the US in World War II is an example of the policy choice in this category. Two, an offensive realism policy or an option to distribute some of its power to the key areas around the world to maintain the "new" status quo it had achieved after the Great War. Three, the progressive liberal policy or an option to use its strength to venture forth and force change to the global security landscape, including the attempt at social engineering. In short, an option that sees the world as the US's garden. Monteiro concludes that

---

<sup>44</sup> Generally, the starting point of the Cold War was counted from the Truman Doctrine in 1947, or roughly 2 years after World War II. However, the contestation of the expansion in the sphere of influence was normally counted from 1948 onwards, whence the Congress approved financial and military assistance to Greece and Turkey. Nevertheless, this does not change the fact that the US was still the only superpower state in the procession of nuclear weapons at the time, and, hence, further confirms that their foreign policy during this short period was chosen autonomously, not forced conditionally.

the US initially chose “option 2” (or at best a mix of 2 and 3), but later, during the Cold War, switched to “option 3” in full.

The main reason why the US switched from “offensive realism” (option 2) to “progressive liberalism” (option 3) was the intense influence of left-wing political proposals that even reached the US soil. These ideas enchanted many US workers and farmers to the point where they couldn’t be ignored. The US had to shift from classical liberalism, which left these people to find their own opportunities, to progressive liberalism, which cared more for the poor. The state’s better treatment of farmers and laborers helped calm them, but it also affected the whole society, making them more progressive. From the 1950s until the end of the Cold War, a more progressive stance was in demand. This phenomenon influenced the US government’s overall policy, including its Cold War foreign policy. However, John Mearsheimer (2018), a well-known international relations and security theorist, suggested that the shift from 2 to 3 was due to a strategic necessity. This, he says, was due to a perceived threat in the early 1950s. The Korean War made the US a full believer in the Domino theory, which existed prior to the war but did not play a significant role in policymaking. Mearsheimer bases his argument on the concept of “prioritization.” As a realist, he explains that not every region is equally important to the US and that there are only three: Europe, East Asia, and the Persian Gulf. This prioritization lasted from the end of WWII until the Korean War broke out in the early 1950s, when the US foreign policy changed dramatically. The US had spread its influence and created a buffer zone to contain the expansion of communism, and Thailand was part of this cause. By throwing the realist options away and acting like a full-bloomed progressive liberal, the US had also begun a “social engineering” policy in order to prepare the political and social landscape of the buffered nations for the incoming waves of communism. The US decided to fight communism and left-wing influence on all fronts once it became a firm believer in the Domino Theory. To achieve that goal, the population needed to feel secure in their livelihood or have the perception that the state cared

about their well-beings. In other words, the US had to care more about the “common people” than some of the communist countries at the time, or at least make the population of the buffered countries believe so, if not entirely for their own benefits but to counter-communism waves. This universal aiding rather than just for the certain significant ones like what a good realist would do occurred from then on. So, the US was influenced by the left-wing concept (See Mearsheimer 2018) and used it to fight back, resulting in progressive liberalism, which fueled the liberal hegemony scheme. For this reason, the US tends to focus on the most suitable infrastructure and social narrative. Thailand, a key buffer nation in Southeast Asia, has received similar treatment.

Moreover, the Asia-Pacific alliance structure allowed the US to tailor policy to each nation much more than the Western European alliance structure. It was called the “Hub-and-Spokes System” in Asia-Pacific. It worked with the US as the hub and other allied states in the region on a “bilateral basis.” This system was antithetical to NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). The US and its allies could declare war on the enemy in the Asia-Pacific system, but other allies in the region were not automatically included because the relationship was only bilateral. For NATO, a war on one member means a war on all. De facto, declaring war on one state meant declaring war on all other powerful states, so the NATO system clearly posed a greater threat. But the reason that the US could not apply the same system to the Asia-Pacific was for two main reasons. The first reason is that, unlike Europe, Asia-Pacific is a meritorious region. In such a situation, a bilateral relationship allowing the US to act more independently was deemed preferable. The second reason was out of strategical fear of what Victor Cha (2016) calls “the dangerous partners.” For Europe and any rational state, war is always the last option, but for two important allied nations in Asia, war was the desirable option. South Korea and Taiwan allied with the US and declared war on communism, but they also had an internal domestic war, with the opposing side being a communist faction. Because of this, these two countries have a

tendency to lead the US into unnecessary or wasteful wars, and if these two countries are put under the NATO system, then all Asia-Pacific allied nations may be forced into unnecessary or wasteful wars. This would bring down the entire alliance system. So, the US had no choice but to work on a bilateral basis. Nevertheless, it was this “Hub-and-Spokes” system that allowed the US to manipulate or social engineer the policy that was tailor-made to each allied nation in Asia, including Thailand. Such a structure would be far harder than in the case of the NATO system, where everything had to move in unity all the time. The Asia-Pacific Cold War alliance structure allowed for specific social manipulation, which matched Thailand’s political nature. Such a condition was how the ethnics laid by Chaofah Mongkut, which was based on the Buddhist teachings but could be aligned with the modern materialistic narrative or even disguised under the façade of democracy, came into fruition. The US and the palace-army faction grew together, forming a pact and growing the ethnics.

Chaiching (2020) detailed the influences and attempts to social engineer the Thai political landscape. Although the US’s support for Thailand’s modern medical services and the revival of royal narration, which had been weakened by the impact of the 1932 revolution, was not accidental, the Americans chose it because of the foundations laid by King Rama IV and the infrastructure prepared by King Rama V. William Donovan’s PSB-D23 was a prime example. It should also be noted that one of the reasons the US chose Sarit over Plaek Pibunsongkram was trust. Americans assumed Plaek was untrustworthy because he was related to Phao<sup>45</sup> (เผ่า), who gave financial support to the Chinese communist newspaper. Instead, America chose to

---

<sup>45</sup> Phao Siyanon was a director general of the Royal Thai Police in 1957 and a very close aide of Plaek Pibunsongkram. He was notorious for the use of excessive power and influence over his political opposition. He was extremely wealthy and believed to be a corrupted person as he used his power to demand protection money from the business sector, blackmail, or even get involved in opium business. He had been one of the main public enemies in 1957 until he lost his power and position from Sarit’s coup d’état in the same year.



back Sarit and Bhumibol's narrative over the People Party's, which was the dominant (or at least the official) narrative until 1947.

### *The Brief Picture of Siam/Thai Medical Service Sector*

Since King Rama V's reign, pharmacies called "Osot Sala" (literally, a drug or medicine pavilion) has been established in major cities and districts. However, the birth of modern medicine in Siam could be traced back to the 1830s, during King Rama III's reign, when Dan Breach Bradley, a western modern doctor and missionary, arrived, followed by others like Reynold Samuel House, for a total of 46 (Tangsuksan 1999, 38-59) With the arrival of modern medical agents, modern medical practices flourished in this land: surgery in 1837, tooth extraction in 1837, smallpox vaccination in 1840, and cholera treatment in 1866 (Pueksom 2007). However, the materialistic establishments to systematically support this new knowledge on the national level did not kick-off until King Rama V, a two-reign gap. Initially, modern medical knowledge was centralized and therefore not accessible to the majority of the population. It wasn't until 1881, during King Rama IV's reign, that modern medical knowledge was given serious consideration, resulting in the materialistic landscape of Osot Sala, first established in 1896 during the reign of King Rama V.

Until 1902, Osot Sala medicine pavilions were only settled in the central vicinity near Bangkok, in places like Pitsanulok, Uttaradit, Utaitani, and Pracheenburi, the main satellite cities at the time. Its main goal was to sell cheap drugs to the people. However, the government ran a deficit and had to close the Osot Sala. They were reopened around 1913, but only in some provinces, to sell drugs and provide health services. This project got a boost in 1932. First, the name "Osot Sala" was changed to "Suka Sala", which literally means "Health Pavilion." Second, the Suka Salas were classified as First Class for those in densely populated areas with permanent medical staff and Second Class for those in less densely populated areas with temporary

medical staff. When the Ministry of Health was established in 1942, some of the first-class Suka Salas were upgraded to district hospitals or even provincial hospitals. Some first-class Suka Salas were also reassigned to work for the local government (เทศบาล). The remaining First Class Suka Salas were renamed “First Class Public Health Center” or “First Class Anamai” (สถานีอนามัยชั้นหนึ่ง) until 1954. These Anamai centers grew rapidly from the 1950s to the 1970s before being renamed “Rural Doctor’s Public Health Center” (ศูนย์การแพทย์อนามัยชนบท) in 1972. In 1974, they renamed themselves “Doctor and Health Center” (ศูนย์การแพทย์และอนามัย). They were renamed and reclassified as “District Hospitals” in 1975 (Kaewnai 2009; Chokewiwat and Juensatiansab eds. 2013). The initial stages of drastic change occurred primarily in Thailand’s metropolises and heavily populated areas. The royal patronage medical services that arose in the late 1960s and early 1970s were probably the most influential agents of this cause and will be discussed shortly. From the 1970s onward, another health movement seemed to emerge from the rural or marginal regions of the country. The latter development to achieve social engineering for its ideological war campaign, it is clear that drastic change and materialistic development on health issues collided with Cold War programs in the 1950s that tended to boost infrastructure for better welfare levels within buffered states. This point will be mainly discussed later on in the next chapter. Anyhow, these developments during the Cold War programs underlined the intense focus that was placed on bridging the central connection with the people, a stark contrast compared to the pre-bordered nation, which focused only on the center.

The project that had spanned more than a century and eventually gained success during the reign of King Bhumibol was thus the endeavor to find a new connection with the society that ended up as “the people.” This work intends to show the continuity of this century-long project and how it could finally become ensconced in the public mind. Many works tend to solely depict the effects of the Cold War and the threat of Communism during the early reign of King Bhumibol, the influence of

the United States in social engineering Thailand, or the effectiveness of the army under Sarit Thanarat's control, leaving the story of the ethnics that originated this result for other kinds of works, like history, to illustrate. In order to better understand this project, this work believes showing the continuity of the accumulated efforts under the path of spiritual materialism as initiated by the monarchs, particularly King Rama IV during his time as Chaofah Mongkut, would be beneficial. The campaign had its ups and downs, like the 1932 revolution, but the conceptual root remains. The Cold War and the story of a new threat like communism allowed many spiritual materials to be established or operated, and thus the creation of the new mandala took shape.

### *Ethnic Implementation and the Construction of Modern Mandala*

During the Cold War, many palace movements were supported by the US as a form of social engineering to secure a political regime that would not yield to communist momentum. From the student protest, financial support for Sarit's administration, infrastructure projects, and the distribution of central monks to the border, dubbed "the Cold War monk"<sup>46</sup> (Ford 2017). It is possible to see the early

---

<sup>46</sup> Dhammayutikha Nikaya's influence has hugely developed during this time. Anyhow, it is not the Buddhist school with the largest number of followers—that one is the Maha Nikaya—but its influence precedes all others. As the first school to be properly institutionalized and used as the official narrative or representation of Siam, it contains the power to judge or dictate what is or is not a part of "itself". For example, Maha Nikaya has a lot more followers and many schools predate the existence of Dhammayutikha Nikaya, but the notion of "Maha Nikaya" itself was constructed to define "those that are not Dhammayut". In short, it is the narrative that builds upon the foundational narrative of Dhammayut, which signifies a higher status in terms of narrative influence. The expansion of Buddhism during the Cold War was, likewise, not an operation that made Dhammayutikha Nikaya the majority's school of Buddhism but to infuse this foundational narrative to every edge of the Thai state. The incorporation and expansion of this foundational narrative are far more important than becoming the religion of the majority. It holds more narrative power. The increase in the number of the members might be needed, but it is secondary in terms of importance here.

movements as a collaboration between the military government led by Sarit and the palace, where each side was interdependent. Initially, the palace and the army seemed to have equal power. This power collaboration seemed to gain momentum in the 1960s, with the palace taking the lead in promoting the monarchy rather than the army commander or the government. This is probably due to Sarit's kidney problems that led to his death in 1963. The death of Sarit became the condition of possibility for the palace to break free from the shackle of dependency and ultimately gain higher ground in terms of authority (compared to the equalized term during Sarit's time) as the depictions of power in the political unrest in 1973, 1976, and 1992 had shown. In the 1960s, when the palace seemed to gain an opportunity to break free from the army, they resumed their path of spiritual materialism and tried to secure their position as the main storyteller, which later resulted in the structure of the trinity. Figure 12 depicts the palace's activities in the 1960s and 1970s.

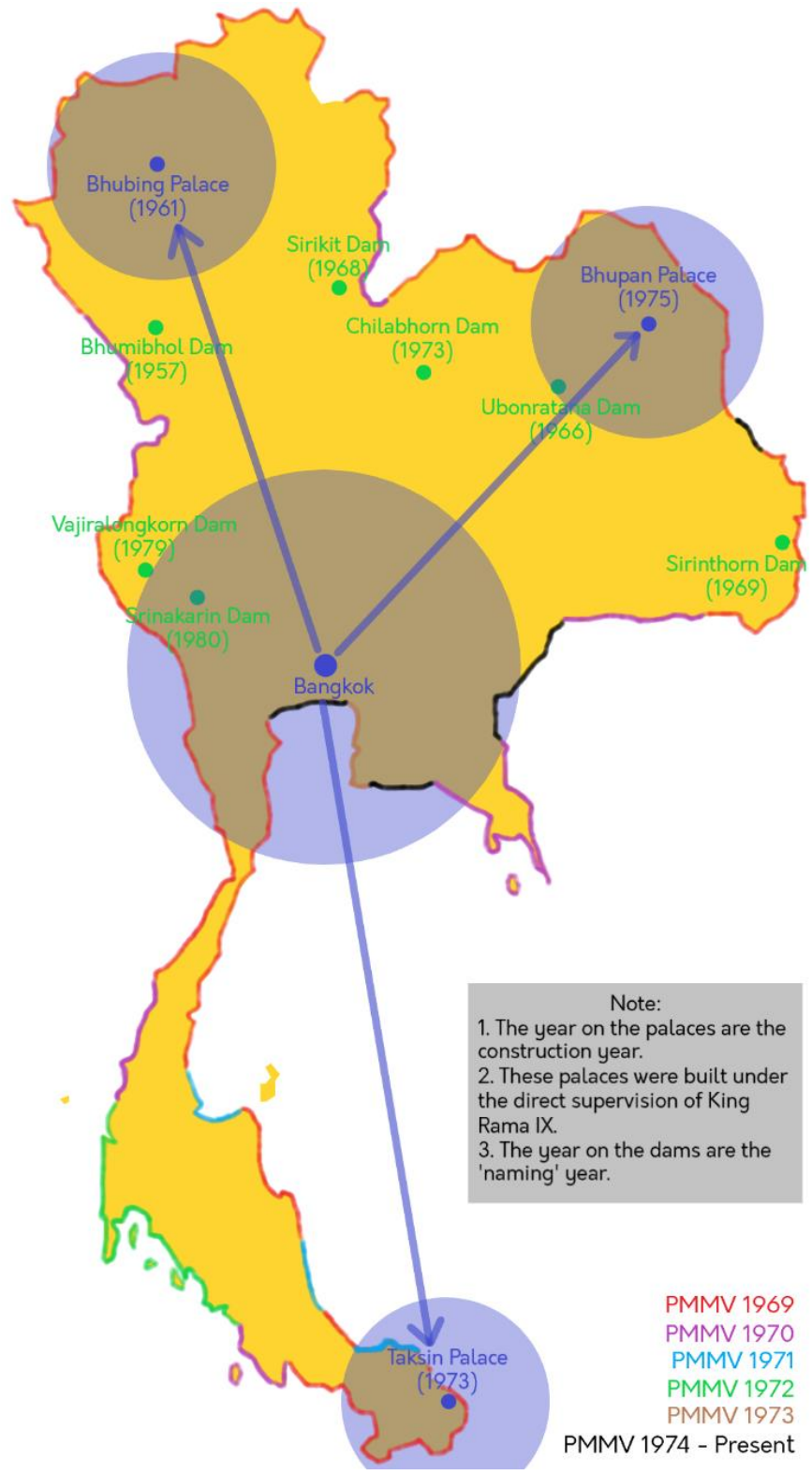


Figure 12: The Spiritual Materialism Movement of the Palace in the late 1950s – 1970s.

13 days before the fall of Pibunsongkram's second administration, when the government was on the verge of collapse from the army and palace faction's continuous push for at least 6–7 months prior, compromises were made by the government, including naming Bhumibol Dam in 1957. This could be seen as an early sign of the palace faction's spiritual materialism project, as well as an early sign of Sarit and palace collaboration. To begin with, Sarit Thanarat had earned Pibunsongkram's respect for his role in defending against the Palace Rebellion (กบฏวังหลวง) in 1949, which aimed to restore Pridi Phanomyong's civilian government after the 1947 coup ousted it. Sarit rose through the ranks after the incident, eventually becoming Commander of the Royal Thai Army in 1954. But Plaek Pibunsongkram and Sarit's friendship didn't last long. The clear conflict between Pibunsongkram and Sarit could be traced back to the controversies surrounding the 23rd February 1957 election, dubbed "The Dirtiest Election in Thai History" (although the latest election in 2019 could give this name a real challenge). During that time, protests against his government occurred over the tainted election. In March 1957, Pibunsongkram, who was barely able to maintain order, appointed Sarit, one of his most trusted aides, to command the entire army. When the demonstrators reached Makkawan Bridge, Sarit, instead of stopping them, waved his cap and said, "the soldiers will never harm the civilians," and let them pass. This led to the fall of the Pibunsongkram regime and the rise of Sarit as "The Hero of Makkawan." On March 13th, 1957, martial law was lifted, Pibunsongkram admitted to the election fraud, and a new election was promised. From then on, Sarit's popularity grew steadily, while the Pibunsongkram (anti-palace) faction struggled for survival. Although the exact timing of Sarit's collaboration with the palace and betrayal of Pibunsongkram is unknown, it seems likely that it occurred between the fall of the Pibunsongkram government and the incident at Makkawan

Bridge in March.<sup>47</sup> No matter when the collaboration between Sarit and the palace had actually begun, it could be firmly stated that the fall of Pibunsokram would not be far away as, since March, he had to make compromises and meet almost every demand in order to be politically persisted. In June 1957, one of the grandest material projects ever built in Thai history, the Yanhee Dam, had swiftly changed its name to Bhumibol Dam, and had officially taken effect on September 3rd, 1957. On August 10, 1957, Pibunsongkram appointed Sarit as Defense Minister, but Sarit declined and resigned 10 days later, leaving him only as Commander of the Royal Thai Army. Sarit's "clean picture" was assured by his choice. A month later, the army demanded Pibunsongkram leave office. Pibunsongkram, however, agreed to the demand but also added in his condition to arrange the new cabinet himself. On September 16th, 1957, a coup d'état ousted Pibunsongkram. The People's Party's effort to democratize Thailand ended on this date.

The movement that signified Parami's materialistic creation under the palace banner was hard to see after the first grandiose move of labeling the decade's largest material project under the King's name. It could even be said that collaboration between the palace, the army, and the US implied equal status in terms of influence. The close relationship between the palace and Sarit was well known, especially during Sarit's administration after he had committed a coup on his aide, Tanom Kittikajorn, in 1959, because Tanom could not secure peace within the country. Sarit had shown massive support for the palace after the coup to regain its former influence by reviving the discarded royal rituals. The Thai Royal Guard Parade, Royal Coronation Celebration, and King's Birthday as a national celebration were some of Sarit and his military government's major attempts at royal revival. During Sarit's last two years,

---

<sup>47</sup> Kullada Kesboonchoo Mead (2007) suggested the collaboration took place during the fall of Makkawan Bridge, as the United States also had conflict with Pibunsongkram and started to support Sarit and the palace faction instead.

the grand materialistic movement that had achieved the sole influence over the palace began to emerge again. As Sarit's health deteriorated, the palace faction re-established its century-long monopoly on establishing the structure of main storytelling in Thailand. Although King Bhumibol personally visited Sarit during his hospitalization, this work would argue that the palace movement came from a pragmatic standpoint in adapting to the ongoing political conditions to survive and maintain the newly resurrected influence rather than a well-established plan. King Bhumibol then built Bhubing Palace in 1961, two years before Sarit died of kidney failure, expanding his area of influence. From the People's Party to Sarit's reign, the king's sphere of influence, or Parami, was clearly limited. For the most part, this was particularly true during the People's Party era. However, even during Sarit's rule, the sphere of influence, although expanded to a more remote region, seemed to be limited to the central region of Thailand. Therefore, the rapid expansion, particularly in terms of the materialistic front to symbolize or represent the king in remote regions outside of the central plain, was necessary. The palace could not completely consolidate until, at least, the seizure of the Young Turk Rebellion in 1981 and the September 9th Rebellion in 1985. These two rebellions could be considered the last attempts of the army against the palace's rule. The result was the rise of the military faction led by Prem Trinnsulanont that fully sided with the King.





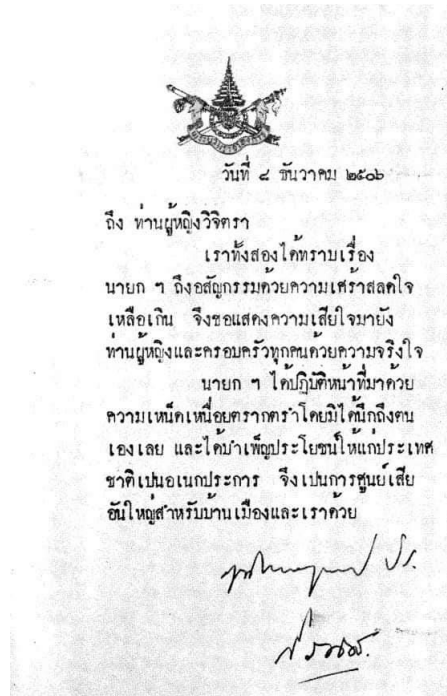
*Figure 13: King Rama IX personally visited Sarit during his hospitalized time.*

Several dams and palaces of a standard pattern followed Bhumibhol Dam and Bhubing Palace in the late 1960s and early 1980s. The new palaces themselves acted as influential power guideposts in remote regions where the royal Parami could barely reach before the construction. Nithi Eosewong (1995) examined the statue and expressed a similar sentiment. He claimed that “among many ways of writing the plot of the past, the writing by means of the statue is the most efficient one.” This is because the statue not only reminds viewers of the figure’s heroic past, but also tends to simplify the past’s diversity and complexity into a single unit. It also has ritualistic value for the worshipers. It is a one-stop shop for guided history. This work argues that as a guidepost of influential power, the royally named dams and the newly emerged palaces are similar. But, unlike the statue, these spiritual materials aim to write the plot of the present and future. Although these two materials have similar goals, they serve distinct purposes. The dams, which control the water supply and generate electricity for the entire country, tell the story and serve as a reminder of the king and his royal family’s unwavering benevolence to the country. The regional palaces, on the other hand, wrote the story of distance politics. They become a source

of closeness and a symbol of "togetherness" between the royal family and the people. The palaces were built to be easily accessible and have become a popular tourist destination in the region. In other words, these materials devoured and transformed the concept of nation (nation-state) from the state and its people to the king and his people, or nation-king.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> The operations of PMMV and the royal network, particularly narrative-wise, occurred under the condition that the government or state could not sufficiently provide materialistic welfare and benefits for the people, especially the marginal lives. These operations under the royal banner emerged as the new potential God, instead of the lackadaisical state. Since these narrative operations occurred under the pretext of insufficiency of materialistic benefits and welfare provided by the state, King Bhumibol who provided them under the privilege of none-criticism, transparency, and one-way propaganda, had instead taken the role of the new god. I only have time for a very brief explanation here. According to David Campbell (1998) and his reading on Thomas Hobbes—which I agree with—he argued that the rise of the modern liberal state is in fact the emergence of the new god, replacing the old one. The state is the new god. What he means by this notion is that in a pre-liberal-modern state or absolutist state, the state existed for its authority or owner, not the people—since everything including the people was considered the king's property. Under such conditions that the state did not exist to provide help and welfare for them, people asked and requested help from God. However, once the liberal modern state arises under the premise that it is owned by and exists for the people, the job of providing help and welfare to the people has, as well, been shifted from God to the state. Hence, making the state a new form of God. Anyhow, in the case of Thailand during that time when the government or state could not still provide adequate materialistic help and welfare for all, the establishment of the status of the Thai state as the new god was still far from complete. And, here, the operation of King Bhumibol occurred and intervened. Portraying to perform a better job in providing the materialistic benefits for the people compared to the state—and also many other factors that I do not have enough time to elaborate on today such as the politics of distance or the base narrative of Parami and Buddhist teachings that Bhumibol's narrative was built upon—it made people perceived King Bhumibol as a godlike being; a personification of benevolence. The one that they would be forever gratified and in debt to.



*Figure 14: The letter from King Bhumibol to Lady Vijitra (Sarit's wife), describing his sadness for the loss of Sarit and praising the tremendous contributions he had done for the country. (Written December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1963).*

However, the sense of closeness and togetherness brought about the recognition of a visible yet unreachable hierarchical status between the royal family and the people. They were here with us. They were one with us. But they weren't us either. They were to be revered and admired. They were the source of admiration that was almost reachable, physically. The closer they get, the more they can see the difference. Human Phenomenological Distancing refers to this non-spatial distance. Because the king must replace the state structure or the (New) God, phenomenological distancing in terms of hierarchical status is vital in the making of the nation-king notion. While he must be felt nearby and dependable, he must also be unapproachable by the common folk, thus worthy of reverence. Habitats like region palaces were ideal for this. Many of these projects were supported by the US to build local political power

against communism (Kesboonchoo Mead 2007). In any case, the royal faction seemed to be gaining influence. Therefore, regardless of whose intention it was in constructing these materials initially, the benefit gained by the king in order to continue the century-long project could find its way. This work would also argue that, considering the scheme's strategic potential, the royal faction in a country that has already adopted a democratic regime should consider this option as the only practical path to increase its power. Moreover, during the Cold War, Thailand was supported by the US as a buffer state. The monarchy had little choice but to expand its political power to fight communism under these conditions (especially the democratic limitation), since the king could not directly intervene or enter the political arena. The only logical option was to proceed with material, scientific, or developmental projects that evoked the image of pragmatic aid to the people without political ties. In a way, these projects that led to a huge royal faction achievement may not have been planned, but may have been situational and structural. During this period, the royal family invested in many other materialistic projects that simply shaped the setting of everyday life for the population (see Kongsawat 2019).

With the large-scale material development, it became the guidepost of influence that started the new mandala. The expansion of the modern mandala was fueled by both materialistic infrastructure and the human front. Eugene Ford (2017) studied the role and expansion of "Cold War Monks" in US Southeast Asian strategy during the Cold War. The Buddhist monks were sent to many places, especially the peripheral regions and borders, to expand the sphere of Dhammayuttika Nikaya influence, resulting in the overall construction of the said trinity of storytelling in Thailand's socio-political landscape. In a very similar manner, if the Cold War monks could be considered as the "spiritual army" in the construction of the main storyline in Thai politics, the movement that could be measured as "materialistic or scientific army" appeared around the same time starting from 1969. It was the movement of medical doctor under royal patronage. Right after its establishment, The Princess Mother's

Medical Volunteer Foundation (henceforth: PMMV) was established on May 21st, 1969, and right after its establishment, it emphasized working in the border area first. Figure 12 shows the areas in which PMMV chose to initiate its operation during its first six years and carry on until now. The first major movement in 1969–1970 concentrated on the border provinces in the North (e.g., Chaing Mai, Chiang Rai, Maehongsorn, Nan), Northeastern (e.g., Udon, Nakorn Panom, Nongkai, Sakolnakorn, Leoi, Ubonratchathani), South (e.g., Yala, Narathiwat, Songkla, Nakorn Sri Thammarat, Choomporn, Prachuabkeerikarn, Petchaboon) and Western (eg., Kanchanaburi, Tak) of Thailand. Later on, during the third to fourth years, it moved to the rest of the southern border and eastern coastline, and by the fifth year onwards, it mainly moved to the remaining areas, particularly the inner area of the country. The strategic movement clearly prioritized border areas. As a result of this belief, the United States began to apply its containment policy by socially engineering its alliance's political climate, including Thailand, to match the role of the buffer zone and contain the left-wing political sphere. Also, according to Charles Keyes (1967), a medical service unit was sent to Isan to establish influence against communist dominance. Regardless of the original intent, the result of PMMV's work in these many areas was the establishment of royal influence in remote areas, particularly along the border.

A human operational unit, PMMV, had a modern materialistic or secular function, like a dam or school. It met the population's modernized materialistic needs. However, although it functioned around what normally would be considered as the secular way of life, the case for PMMV was not entirely true since it was heavily branded as the royal patronage service and operated deliberately to implant such display of royal benevolence to its recipients: the people. The function in which PMMV performed was similar to that of a materialistic unit like the dams in the sense that it fulfilled the worldly needs of the population. While the dams provide electricity and water supply for household use and irrigation, PMMV has given free medical service

to the people in the name of the benevolent king and his family. At the same time, the state-provided public service dually produced an image of low quality, selective, and not even free service for the people. The result of achieving the century-long project's goal under these circumstances was not difficult to predict. This is the duty of the modern liberal state, which has replaced the spiritual god and reigns as the new god. However, in Thailand, the king and royal family were in charge of a large portion of this function. The non-stop broadcasted propaganda had given the life of the dying old-style spiritual influence of a divine king. This is the path that would be rendered an impossibility if Siam did not choose to embrace the new materialistic knowledge and contest against it instead; the result might be similar to the route the Western nations had taken. During the Cold War, the fruits of Chaofah Mongkut's labors began to bloom.

This work argues that the construction of a new mandala resembling Thailand's modern border began with this initiative from various royal envoys like PMMV. Although it had to struggle until at least 1985, if we consider 9th September Rebel as the last rebel against the royal faction, the palace's new mandala's power surpassed and supplanted the reality of the modern border. Simulacra of the modern mandala evolved from the engine that could reproduce simulations to feed itself without the author's intervention. In other words, at that point, the royal faction was not only the sole producer of the narrative but also part of the receiving end. The new mandala had restored the "relationship between the nation and the king". After all, the state had backed up all of the king's materialistic benevolence. His repertoire expanded after this point.

To summarize, the modern border robbed the king of his connection to the land, leading to a new strategy for the palace: building the national concept through the monarchic institution. This is what Thongchai Winichakul (2016) called "Royal Nationalism" (ราชาชาตินิยม). However, this work would further argue that the result of

this royal scheme was not only the conceptual recognition of the nation but rather the new geo-body of the nation itself. A new geo-body that looks similar to the previous one which built upon the concept of modern border but this one is based on the Bhumibol's domain of influence or mandala instead. It could be said that the second geo-body (the new mandala representing Bhumibol's influence) is the copy of the real or the original geo-body (modern border). The new one copies the imaginable territorial space of the nation but is based on an entirely different concept: reconnecting the king and the land instead of cutting their ties. Hence this work has earlier proposed the name "nation-king" as usually used for "nation-state." In short, the new mandala had taken place of the representative image of the geo-body instead of the modern border. The modern mandala acted as described in Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994). It is now perceived as more real than reality itself. Making a new mandala become a modern border copy that surpassed the border itself. The exact date when the *Simulacra* (copy of reality) triumphed over the supposed reality that runs on the notion of modern border cannot be pinpointed, but it can be safely assumed that from 1992 until the end of King Bhumibol's reign, the *Simulacra* had already achieved dominance. The depiction of Suchinda Kraprayoon kneeling before the king during the 1992 unrest was probably the clearest sign of the new mandala's success in producing the concept of "nation-king." It also marked the triumph of copy over real. The sturdiness of these simulacra could be observed on many occasions afterward. For example, in 2009, famous actor and director Pongpat Wachirabanjong said, "This (Thailand) is our father's home." "Whoever opposes our father (the king) should leave his property." This phrase was instantly accepted by Thais. During the intense polarization of the 2000s, almost every royalist in Thailand used this phrase. Another example is the sea of yellow shirts gathered to show their loyalty to King Bhumibol during his 60<sup>th</sup> enthronement celebration in 2006. This was Thailand until King Rama X or Vajiralongkorn came to power.

## The Royal Envoys and the Blessing of Benevolent Love

The PMMV was primarily a medical service sent to people in remote areas, particularly near the frontier. The palace had direct control over PMMV. Tapanawong Tang-uraiwan, an important member of the “Thai Medical Doctor United Group” (กลุ่มแพทย์ไทยสามัคคี) and a strong supporter of the PMMV system, gave me an interesting interview about the PMMV service’s process during his time of engagement.

As previously stated, PMMV doctors came from a variety of backgrounds and schools of medicine, but the most frequently selected were dentists and ophthalmologists. Tapanawong, an ophthalmologist, explained why these two schools of medicine were frequently chosen, referencing the public’s materialistic perception of medication. While general practitioners traveled light, mostly with a stethoscope, prescribing medicines to patients, dentists moved with a huge set of equipment. The equipment itself projected a strong materialistic image onto the people it visited. Also, the end result of the dental service was usually more visible, such as tooth extraction or treatment of oral dysfunction. In other words, people’s own physical bodies contributed to the observable benevolence and benefits gained from PPMV. Similar to dentists, ophthalmologists’ treatments often result in something tangible, like eye patches or even optical glasses, not to mention that ophthalmologists or eye doctors dealt with vision, which helped visualize the royal patronage service. To summarize Tapanawong’s interview, it appears that oral and eye doctors were frequently chosen to provide service because they could best convey the benevolence’s materialistic image while also transforming patients into walking propaganda machines. Such machines are far more effective than prescribed pills that could simply be hidden in the pockets of the patients and pertain to nothing. In any case, general practitioners were part of the service; they just were not chosen as often, which was odd because in most hospitals around the world, general physicians are in high demand, but this



demand was not reflected in the PMMV. Instead, the organization focuses more on showing grandeur through its materialistic side.



*Figure 15: Pictures of the “Royal Dental Unit,” displaying both the royal banner and a lot of visualizing equipment.*

From the 1950s until the end of the reign, the PMMV and other similar agencies had moved repeatedly and without criticism. Since they were related to the royal family, they were legally prohibited from expressing any critical views.<sup>49</sup> As a result, the public received only one-way communication. This process required a variety of agencies, whether directly narrating the royal narrative to the populace through education and mass media, or indirectly, through the creation of a materialistic

---

<sup>49</sup> The legal protection, particularly the Article 112 in the Thai Criminal Code – normally known as “Lese Majeste Law,” does not cover these agencies related to the monarchy in a literal sense. In a strictly literal sense, which is what ought to be for a case such as the criminal code of law, the legal protection only covers four individuals: the monarchy, the queen, the heir (crown prince or princess), and the regent. Not even the other royal family members are included. However, this law and its protection have never been used in this literal sense, but rather based on the culturally precepted sense. Hence, it is commonly thought of as covering all the family members, the monarchies of the past, and also the agency related to the monarchy; the closer to the king, the more intense the culturally enforced legal protection will be.

environment that shaped people's daily lives in accordance with the storyline. PMMV contributed to 3 main fronts of this process: (1) the direct narrator of the royal storytelling, (2) the constructor of the materialistic environment tailored to the story, and (3) being the source of the content of the story to be narrated. It should also be noted here that the foundation of the storyline that the PMMV and other agencies during these years (the 1950s onwards) was based on the synthesized Buddhism by Chaofah Mongkut, the Buddhist content with the scientific narration structure. The Cold War Monk, who was in the intended campaign to spread the once centralized Buddhist teaching to the most remote regions of the kingdom under the banner of Dhammyutikka Nikkaya, was a prime example of the agencies and the storyline that was planned to be used as the basis. But the scientific framework that framed the Buddhist content was revised during the time of Chaofah Mongkut, so it was not "up-to-date" even in the Cold War context. In this sense, it was an outdated, modernized religious teaching from the start of this Cold War campaign, particularly if compared with the rationalities and frameworks that were popularized on a global scale: liberal democracy and communism. This is to remind readers that a "modernized concept" is not necessarily updated. The notion of modernity here is constructed under the premise of the paradigm shift at the regime level and the way the narrative structure was explicitly altered to reflect this kind of scientific rationalization. The storyline that was the heritage of Chaofah Mongkut preserved the fundamental content of the Buddhist teaching which based itself on the cyclical time and logic. Then it was put in the scientific narration structure which has the infinite linear nature. This had ultimately resulted into the "wave-patterned" rationality as explained in the previous chapter. This is the basis of all Cold War campaign story production, PMMV included.

Back to the 3 fronts where PMMV contributed: The PMMV members were royalists who regarded the king as the country's great model. According to Tapanawong's interview, PMMV doctors or medical units under the royal patronage tended to see and position themselves on at least two spectrums. One, they saw their

work as a conduit for the king's kindness and benevolence. Two, they tended to see that by doing this work, they also gained Buddhist merit (ได้บุญ) since they were a part of the process of offering benevolence, which was one of the greatest deeds in the Buddhist perspective. Assuming this role, the PMMV became the direct narrator of Bhumibol's story, as they were both the carriers of the king's specific story and the believers and producers of the foundational narrative—Chaofah Mongkut's synthesized Buddhism—of the merit collection that resulted in the building of Parami. It should also be noted that these actors volunteered and promoted their activities to be directly under the king's command or intention. Their actions thus represented King Bhumibol on two levels: as commander of the army of medical benefactors and as the pinnacle symbol of benevolence as their boss.

The second front was where PMMV and other medical services acted as the constructors of the materialistic environment that was tailored to the story of the benefactor king. Health services were the prime movement that King Bhumibol operated during his early years. Medical projects, units, foundations, and the material structures to serve them emerged during this time. 9 major projects were established: Royal Mobile Medical Unit (โครงการหน่วยแพทย์เคลื่อนที่พระราชทาน) in 1967, Royal Medical Unit (โครงการหน่วยแพทย์พระราชทาน) in 1969, Royal Mobile Dental Unit (หน่วยทันตกรรมเคลื่อนที่พระราชทาน) in 1969, Medical Specialist Unit by Royal Intention (โครงการแพทย์พิเศษตามพระราชประสงค์) in 1974, Volunteered Surgeons of the Royal College of Surgeons of Thailand (โครงการศัลยแพทย์อาสาราชวิทยาลัยศัลยแพทย์แห่งประเทศไทย) in 1974, Village Doctor Training Project by Royal Intention (โครงการอบรมหมอหมู่บ้านในพระราชประสงค์) The Royal Surgeons of Thailand (โครงการศัลยแพทย์อาสาราชวิทยาลัย), Saijaithai under Royal Patronage (มูลนิธิसानใจไทยในพระบรมราชูปถัมภ์), and Royal Otolaryngologist and Allergist (โครงการแพทย์หู คอ จมูกและภูมิแพ้พระราชทาน) in 1979 (Thai Health Foundation 2009). These projects created the social environment that accentuated the Bhumibol narrative tremendously. As mentioned earlier, these medical projects and PMMV provided tangible, visualized simulations for people to

perceive. Medical tools and dental equipment, prescriptions and eye patches, mobile medical vehicles, and royal banners stimulated the materialistic environment for the cause. Not only the visualized social environment that had been created, the concrete and sturdy structures under the Bhumibol banner had also been developed. Ramathibodhi Foundation, Siriraj Foundation, Foundation for Thammasat University Hospital, Rajavithi Hospital Foundation, or the Thai Red Cross Society was the materialistic foundation that went under the royal patronage or banner and supportively narrating the royal story to the public both actively and passively. The foundations, projects, units, and even institutions of this category continued to multiply during the years, like the Dental Innovation Foundation under Royal Patronage (2009), to an insurmountable level and had become the tangible environment of its own, endlessly symbolizing the royal benevolence to the eyes of the beholders. This whole process and structure were practically the attempt to create what Benedict Anderson called homogenous, empty time or the singular ideology that binds the collective imagination of the people together by means of material factors and agencies. However, it was not possible to claim total domination and become the singular ideology of the nation during this period just yet, regardless of the attempt of the royal faction to promote the Bhumibol narrative, since there was still resistance up until the 1980s (the Young Turk rebellion). Only from the late 1980s onwards that I would call it the complete homogenous, empty time since Bhumibol's narrative had become the singular and dominated ideology that could bind the whole nation together.

The third front was where PMMV and other projects acted as sources of narrative or story. PMMV not only actively and passively narrated the royal story as the envoys of the royal benevolence and love for the people, but their activities have become the "sub-story" as well, an explanatory sub-story of the Bhumibol narrative. The scene of the medical activities under royal patronage or banner had been recorded, reproduced, and republished countless times via myriad of simulations from mass

media to educational textbooks or sometimes even in the national examination. In short, it was the story that the Thais had been forced to know. This storytelling reproduction and repetition has continued to this day. Clearly, it emphasizes the “royal favor” given to those who usually disclaim love or giving without expecting anything in return. These 3 fronts combined created a firm basis for the Salim Fundamentalists who display their love to the royal family under the charm of the received benevolent love from King Bhumibol. They, therefore, hold the moral obligation to return the favor forever. It is also worth noting that the scenes reproduced and republished here are used differently as a model of “goodness” that society should follow, as will be discussed in the next chapter. This reproduced narrative of goodness and royal benevolence in providing materialistic benefits to the people was told as a reminder of how perfect and untouchable King Bhumibol was compared to the people themselves. It was not an example for the mass to follow but a depiction of the perfect king and how insignificant the general public was compared to him.

This function of the narrative that constructs the image of the perfect and unreachable being by PMMV and other agencies is very important. It was based on the ethnics founded by Chaofah Mongkut, who had established it in the context of no contestation from any existing institutionalized narratives, as there was none yet. Such context is the condition this work calls “nothingness” in the previous chapter.<sup>50</sup> The narrative that emerges out of nothingness – the first or foundational narrative – is special on its own because it performs as the “common ground or the reference point” for all other narratives or identities that the given community would build upon or succeed on. Although the narrative of Buddhist cosmology was introduced and narrated in Siam peninsula since Sukhothai era in the work called *Triphum Phra Ruang* written by King Maha Thammaracha I (1347-1368), Buddhism had never been

---

<sup>50</sup> For further explanation please see Appendix I which elaborates Alain Badiou’s concept of the void and the succession.

“institutionalized” and assumed the official narrative (Chakrabongse 2020). The beliefs and religions, including Buddhism, were mainly scattered. It was only when Chaofah Mongkut had founded Dhammayutikka Nikaya that Buddhism was institutionally formed and functioned as the centralized and official narrative. As the first or foundational official narrative that represented the nation called Siam (Thailand), it was this ethnies formed by Chaofah Mongkut that ties the community together. Even though it was not nationwide influenced, it was narrated and functioned as one. It is the narrative that officially defines what differentiates Siam from other nations; in short, its identity. In other word, it could also be thought of as the “foundational narrative of Thainess,” although I personally do not incline on the concept of uniqueness attached to such a word. This ethnies, as the foundation, has become so common in representing what being Thai is to the point that if one was to deny this official narrative, one would have no other choice but to reference back to this root in order to deny it. The ethnies that has gained the position of commonness due to its emergence from nothingness is what Badiou calls the “singleton” (the successor of nothingness or the void). I will not use such term in order to avoid more confusion. Instead, I will simply use the term “commonness” to represent it. So, “commonness” is the shared narrative that emerges from the condition of no contestation (nothingness) and in turn becomes the foundation of other narratives that tie the whole community together. In short, it is the narrative that exists in every other narrative of the given community. In such a case, if someone or something could become the sole depiction of this foundational ethnies (commonness), that certain thing or person would, likewise, be “commonized” or become part of the commonness as well. Thereby, this “ethnies implementation” is a crucial point in the process of dominance for Bhumibol’s narrative. It forced the picture of Bhumibol to be the sole representative of the ethnies and, hence, would eventually make him become the depiction of the Thai’s commonness himself. Since the ethnies was constructed on the Buddhist teachings like the concept of Parami building, of benevolence deeds, and of

accumulated merits, under the framework of modern materialistic narration, King Bhumibol and his envoy also put themselves in as the sole characters of such teachings and narrated their stories in accordance with the modern causal-effect that was based on infinite linear time. The king was, hence, in the heart of everyone and represented everything in this nation. And since the king—the perfect being and the peak of Parami—reigned the country in this period, the society was blessed with the golden age. Therefore, one should take note of how lucky one was and remind oneself once the declining phase (Parami deficit) had inevitably come. This reminder will set one’s mind more at ease and ready to face the stormy days without whining or taking it on the system, only doing the best of oneself, waiting for the next golden age to come.

Being the common himself was important. It meant he became omnipresent in Thai society, akin to a deity. As the king who represented “the commonness” that could be connected via everyone’s mind, King Bhumibol transcended the concept of phenomenological God. He was more aligned to the concept of omniscient God or “สัพพัญญู” in Theravada Buddhist teachings. The way he narrated himself to fit the ethnics’ storyline emphasized this point. From farming, irrigation, water reservoirs, music, art, crisis management, education, economics, forestry, and health care, he developed a reputation as an expert in almost everything. He knew and represented all phenomena, not just one. Also, I should clarify the concept of God here. The nature of power was one of the most significant differences between the Israelite God, who became the “Christian God” and most other gods and goddesses of the time, including Hindu gods. Most gods were phenomenological in nature, like Zeus and Thor with thunder, or Helios and Ra with the sun. These gods represented the thing that was commonly observed but not the common itself. But the Hebrew God was built differently. He was singular and transcended the phenomenon; he externalized himself from the sense-perceptual phenomena and influenced the events from his own realm, outside the realm of the occurring events itself. At the same time, he represented all of the sense-perceptible phenomena and stood outside (or beyond)

their realm. As a result of these qualities, the Christian God is omnipresent and knows everything. He oversees all things from the outside, the presently existing things or ongoing events. He is the common. Because the Hebrew and Christian God is the perfect being that transcends sense perception, he is always great and flawless. I argue that the “end result” of Bhumibol’s narrative had depicted him in a similar fashion of this Hebrew-Christian God. King Bhumibol would later be perceived as the perfect being that knew it all and resided everywhere in the minds of the Thai populace. He would become the commonness that tied the whole nation together, and the whole nation would assume themselves as his metaphorical children (ลูกของพ่อ). His achievement of this feat was due to the extensive operations of the mentioned royal envoys, the nationwide development of materialistic campaigns or infrastructural projects, and also the influence of the “politics of distance” that will be discussed later. Anyhow, Bhumibol was unlike other non-Christian gods, such as Hindu gods. They were still subject to sense-perception flaws. Even when judged by their respected cosmology, they may do wrong, argue, or contribute to immoral acts. Plato made a similar observation when defending the Greek gods and goddesses, claiming that the mythology of the gods portrayed a mix of good and bad deeds, which he could not agree with. According to Socrates and Adeimantus, the gods are flawless. However, even with Plato’s (Socrates’) flawlessness of the Greek gods, it was still done in such a way that the gods’ actions were perfectly good simply because they did not need to commit the immoral act. They had the ability but not the need, so they did nothing wrong and were thus perfect (Plato 2004, 58-61). Even if one claims the gods’ flawlessness, it is conditional, unlike the unrestrained, unconditional, and universal like the Hebrew or Christian god.

Although Buddhism and the Buddha’s story were initially influenced by Hinduism, the image of the Buddha changed after Chaofah Mongkut synthesized Theravada Buddhism in Thailand. The synthesized Buddhist cosmology depicted Buddha as an “enlightened being” with structural similarities to the Christian God. The



enlightened being of the synthesized Buddhist transcends natural phenomena and knows it all. After enlightenment, the enlightened beings share the Christian god's "unconditional" flawlessness. Here, the main distinction is between God and the enlightened being's powers: one is innate, while the other is gained through the struggle of Parami building, which is the accumulation of good practices and endeavors; in short, it is attainable. In this sense, King Bhumibol, the Buddhist enlightened being, reached the God frontier. In a similar way to the Buddha, he externalized himself from the karmic cycle and its sense perception (realpolitik) while influencing it from within his own world. He was "representing the commonness" but did not attach himself to any certain phenomena; he got himself beyond them. He was outside the realm of politics, yet he was watching it from afar.<sup>51</sup> Due to his Parami, he becomes "unconditionally flawless" or guilt-free in the sense of "incapable of being guilty" rather than immune from guilt. Thus, the rationale behind Thailand's lese majeste law, which grew alongside Bhumibol's narrative, was never understood under the rhetoric of a democratic or political system. Rather, it was perceived as absolute perfection or incapacity to be guilty. This made Bhumibol a divine king, more like a Christian god than a Hindu god, who gained his power through endeavor and Parami building. Or to be more precise, he was the divine-king whose origin was rooted in the Hinduism cosmology of gods, but he was re-narrated under the synthesized Buddhism by Chaofah Mongkut that illustrated him differently and provided him the structural influence in Thai politics that resembled the Christian God more than the original

---

<sup>51</sup> I would like to make a precise remark here that the notion of "externalization" here was the elaboration on the conceptual and structural level. On the personal level, however, it did not necessarily imply that King Bhumibol perceived himself as externalized to the sense-perception of politics. I do believe that to a certain degree or at least from time to time, he did believe that he was involved in the sense-perception politics and somewhat out of goodwill. In short, it was not possible in a practical sense for King Bhumibol or anyone to be able to completely externalize oneself from the sense-perceptual world and operate objectively according to one's solid plans and such.

Hindu-Buddhist god. That is roughly how I see enlightened Buddhists like King Bhumibol. King Bhumibol's divine status came from two sources: (1) Chaofah Mongkut's control over "commonness" and (2) his Parami building practices as part of his royal narrative building, including PMMV.

As a living god, Bhumibol could tame the nation, like many national heroes throughout history, from the Greeks (Yunis 1996) to the American Revolution (Bouton 2007). The idea of "taming the nation" or "taming politics" is not new, and it has been extensively researched (see: Yunis 1996; Grant 2000; Holsti 2004; Bouton 2007; Neelands 2007; Parkin 2007; Buruma 2010; and Bush 2015, for instance). Centralization, law and regulation, cultural dominance, hegemony, propaganda campaign, and so on could be considered attempts or approaches to tame society. So it's no surprise that this premise is a favorite among social scientists. The case of the American Revolution heroes resembles Bhumibol more than any other case I have worked on. Bouton (2007) shows how the American Revolution heroes like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were heavily portrayed as the ultimate heroes after the independent war. They were almost like the perfect being that represents the war, the independence, and established principles that formed America itself. They were the creation that came out of the condition of no contested official narrative (nothingness). They had become a symbol of the nation's founding ideology. They were perceived as representing the entire revolutionary war and democratization, even though they did not. In short, these figures had become "the common" in the case of the United States so they could tame the nation and gain the obedience of the ruled citizens. But King Bhumibol was not entirely like the American revered heroes. First, the nothingness upon which they built their foundational creation was secularized. While the Siam case was unsecularized, Chaofah Mongkut had integrated the materialistic and spiritual realms. Second, the normalized regime of truth and what ought to be during the American revolution was liberal democracy, whilst in the reign of Chaofah Mongkut it was a royal autocracy. Thirdly, the cultural influence that

directed the western cosmology is mainly Christianity which has the (finite) linear time and rationality from the start, so no alteration is needed in the narrative structure. It also has a different system to gain religious merit compared to (synthesized) Buddhism. Finally, the environment that hosts the commonness in the American case was weaker as a result of the first three. Due to the liberal democratic foundation of American culture, their heroes are easily questioned, challenged, or criticized. With the Thai royal storytelling trinity structure, the perfect king representing Parami at its unquestionable height was much more secure.

### **Between the King and the People: Space, Distance, and Relation created by PMMV**

As previously discussed, royal agencies and materialistic structures like PMMV, Cold War Monks, and dams contributed to the formation and expansion of the new mandala, which gradually contested the modern border premise. In short, it was a political war about how space (territory) and people interacted. It was a battle to control the narrative that shaped how people viewed authority over the land and whom they trusted. Both the modern border and the modern/Bhumibol mandala were built on the interrelationship of three factors: land, people, and king. But the relationship hierarchy was different. The modern border based itself on a fixed border with people as the representation of the nation, and the king either functioned as the ruler (absolutism) or the symbolic institution (democracy) under the said condition. The land (border) and the people dictated the relationship, while the king was the dependent variable. The hierarchy in the new mandala, on the contrary, is based on the relationship between the king and the people, with the land as the dependent variable, i.e., the king's influence and domination over the people, which would result in the extent of his ruling land or domain. In this sense, the king was the representation of the people (under his authority) and the land represented the king.

These factors interacted to create a new mandala that required reverence from the people to display dominance and influence (Parami).

*Territoriality* is the 1970s term coined by Claude Raffestin to describe the politics of various factors in a given territory. Raffestin and Butler (2012) defined territoriality as the set of relations that society maintains with exteriority and alterity to meet its needs and achieve maximum autonomy within the system's resources. Ariel Handel (2018) took on this concept and explored it with the focus on "distance" as the driving force behind the construction of relationships within the territory, and it led to two very thought-provoking premises: Distanciation and human phenomenological distance, which has a lot to do with the comprehension on the PMMV and other materialistic developments that upheld Bhumibol narrative.

When considering distance in relation to territory or spatial space, the first – and often "only" – consideration was given to measurable or unit-based space, specifically the distance that would take someone or something from A to B. So, this is what Handel called "abstract space," a concept of unit space that emerged in the 18th century (along with the premise of the modern border). Distance and space are two of the closest things to human life that emerged far before the standardized unit of distance measurement, but they are rarely discussed in depth. Distance is usually entwined with human experience in complex ways. For example, measuring distance has always been based on personal experience. It takes 2 days to walk there. A train ride from A to B takes 2 hours. Getting to City C from here would cost around \$50 in fuel. These are human experiences in space that help us understand distance.

Linde and Labov (1975) conducted a scientific study on how humans perceive and depict "space" in relation to distance. There are two main ways of picturing and elaborating "space and distance:" mapping and touring. Mapping is the way that illustrates the space and distance by the "geographical location" of the targeted place; for example, "the restroom is right next to the kitchen." However, touring is self-

centered. So, for example, "exit this door and walk along the corridor. Once passing three doors, turn left and you will find the restroom." Linde and Labov proceeded their experiment by asking people to portray the map of the room. Stunningly their finding showed that only 3% of the people used the mapping approach, whilst the rest took on the touring method. This simply shows how much space and distance are attached to one's experience instead of the human-detached unit-based structure. In short, space and distance exist objectively, but they are perceived subjectively. A similar effect was created by PMMV and other materialistic agencies on people's interpretation and perception of space, especially between them and the king, who owned these powerful agencies.

Handel emphasized the importance of distance in human experience and relationships within the same spatial space. Distanciation is the idea that "objective distance and its purpose" is the mediator that shapes human relationships. For example, building a 4-lane highway not only reduces travel time between two points, but it also reduces distance. In this case, the 20-meter-wide road should be able to objectively claim "space compression." But Handel disagreed. Handel claimed that this road "expands" the distance and distances the people in the given space from one another. Instead of compression, the road could facilitate "space expansion." Because the road makes commuting "across" it more difficult, the people on either side of it become "further away" even though their objective distance remains the same. In extreme cases, this one road may be unreachable. One is the West Bank road. It separates the lives of the Palestinians on the other side of the road. Not only extreme cases, but also minor or everyday issues contribute to the concept of distanciation. The road itself, for example, has lanes for slower and faster commuters. The lanes themselves are the mediators that dictate vehicle capability and economic class division. To summarize, "material in a spatial space" affects distance perception and human relationships. The material structures or movements used to tell Bhumibol's story also induced distance. This will be discussed shortly.

Here's another Handel's premise: Human phenomenological distance describes the perceived "closeness and distance" between people and the targeted entity. Objectively speaking, the distance of 5 meters is undoubtedly less than 1,000 meters. Therefore, Person A who is 5-meter away from Person B is considered as "closer" compared to Person C who is 1,000-meter away. This claim is not necessarily true when considering human phenomenological distance. Closeness and distance are directly related to how each person feels. Hence, one might feel closer to someone on the other side of the globe than to his next-door neighbor. In this way, people in a slum in the middle of a giant metropolis might feel so distant from their flamboyant urban surroundings, whilst people of the metropolis thousands of miles away—a sister-city, for instance—could have a closer relationship. It is also possible to perceive distance differently for the same entity depending on the time, conditions, perspectives, or topics. For example, a child who studied abroad but occasionally communicated with his mother may feel closer to her than a child who grew up with a mother who had Alzheimer's. Handel called this sense of belonging or sense of closeness to the spatial space and the people within it "proximity." People could be close regardless of the abstract space's distance. Distanciation constitutes a sense of proximity and hence its effects on human's phenomenological distance as such.

Assuming these two premises, I argue that Bhumibol's nationwide visits and numerous infrastructure and material projects have reduced the perceptual distance between people and the king on both distanciation and human phenomenological distance. It drew people closer to the king. They would feel close to King Bhumibol regardless of the objective distance in abstract space between them. This was due to the abundance of materialistic symbols of his existence that were literally all over the place. It was difficult not to think of him in that setting. The way he presented himself also influenced the perception of distance. He always radiated openness and care, not the usual "royalty-liked" air of a king. His charisma was undeniable. The king's agencies, like PMMV and royal medical units, also played a role in maintaining this image.

Overall, it made people feel close to him all the time. However, when compared to themselves, they would conclude that Bhumibol and they were beings of a great distance, if not of a different realm. He, therefore, was in such close proximity to them, yet practically unreachable—like the distance of the road across the West Bank in the eyes of the miserable Palestinian. So, what could one conclude from such a contrast of extreme closeness with a positive vibe and the utter disparity of perfection and imperfection? The most obvious and logical answer was that of an omnipresent God in action. In this state, Bhumibol was religiously perceived and thus dominated the people's spiritual conception. The claim that King Bhumibol had achieved spiritual materialism as part of Thailand's path to modernity was discussed in Chapter 1. In short, King Bhumibol became the personification or new geo-body of the nation and the notion of benevolence itself, presenting the perfect illustration of peaked Parami. I named this phenomenon "the cult of persona" because the narrative centered on one static person: an irreplaceable king to whom the believer would be forever (morally) indebted.

### **"From Dad" Storyline and Salim Fundamentalism: Eternal Love, Loyalty, and Debt**

The status of reverence towards King Bhumibol that resembles the omnipresent God could be understood by the 2 logical concepts discussed: the ethnical implementation that has turned King Bhumibol into a part of "the commonness" in Thai society—a representation of the collective Thainess, in a more conventional word—and the politics of distance by Handel. This status was gained through the king or the nation's holy father's benevolence to the people, which this work calls the "From Dad" storyline. This was the rationale of Salim Fundamentalism. They saw King Bhumibol as a god-like being who had perfected his Parami (story of benevolence and the support from the myriad agencies). This view of King Bhumibol dictated the rationality of Salim Fundamentalism (wave-patterned logic) to see themselves as

forever in debt and must perpetually return the favor. Yes, this is the point that differs the living God from the mythical ones; he could be practically repaid by his believers. Their rationality even considered it meritocratic. This debt-repayment cycle resembles the karmic rationality of a Bhumibol cult. However, the thought of repaying the eternal debt was not a proper dogma of this cult since it did not dictate or illustrate on how to practice this repayment. Ones are free to do what they perceive as good and capable of being counted as repayment. Ultimately, under this karmic rationality, these meritorious deeds would accumulate and affect their personal selves anyway. It was not the act that aimed for the greater good or the system. It was completely self-serving. Its freestyle practice made it dangerously versatile; anything could be claimed as the king's repayment. This, unavoidably, constituted the cultural application over King Bhumibol (and the royal family) in a similar manner to "Dues ex Machina" or "the God of Machine" in the storytelling plot.

The term "Dues ex Machina" dates back to the Greeks. It is used to fix the plot. The narrator would introduce a new and powerful character into the story once the story reached a point where the current characters could no longer handle the challenge. Their issue is now resolved! In short, Dues ex Machina trumps all preceding reasons. The Bhumibol cult, Salim Fundamentalism, used the idea of King Bhumibol in this way. Anything that shows Bhumibol's benevolence (debt) or their attempt to support him (repayment) trumps all prior reasons. The language that killed all other languages. It spread easily because it was freeform and versatile; no prior knowledge was required to practice it. This foundation, along with wave-patterned rationality that produces "fixed causal-effect and mindset", is the source of Salim Fundamentalism's stubbornness. Even the arrival of a new reign that bears no resemblance to the previous one was not enough to shake it. The change was so severe that even the other category of Salim (the progressive one) has been shaken. Because King Bhumibol is compatible with the concept of Dues ex Machina, everything related to this storyline could be condensed into one being: a cult of persona.



It should also be noted that the new mandala took several decades to fully replace the notion of the modern border. Although it is hard to pinpoint the exact time, I would point out that it had finally completed its road of domination in the late 1980s, after the Young Turk Rebellion, which could be considered the last movement against the royal faction during the reign of Bhumibol. The coup of 1992 was further proof that Bhumibol's power had surpassed all other political players in Thailand. The image of Suchinda kneeling before him and obediently stopping his action proved this to all Thai political observers. Nonetheless, during the Cold War, agencies like PMMV played a vital role in implementing the ethnics and securing the structure that would last until the end of Bhumibol's reign. Some even held on until today.

## *Chapter 3*

### **Dogmatizing the Nation: The Rise of the Thai Health Don**

When discussing the medical service and royal politics, one name comes to mind almost immediately: Prawase Wasi. Prawase was a key figure in Bhumibol's network monarchy (see McCargo 2005, Kumpha 2019), connecting the royal storytelling politics with the medical service, civil society, and sometimes the governmental body itself. If Prem Tinnasulanon dominates the military and politics, and Sumeth Tantiwetchakul dominates the royal projects and some bureaucratic tasks, then Prawase dominates the medical and civil service portions of the network monarchy. Also, he built his foundation differently from the previous generation of medical services, like PMMV and the royal medical units discussed in Chapter 2. The rise of Prawase himself indicates the new phase of storytelling politics as narrated by the medical service, but, with the new phase emerging, it does not mean – in any sense – that the old tale would disappear. It simply means that there are more options of a story to recite. After establishing his factional foundation, Prawase was responsible for so many projects, policies, and socially perceived ideologies that some Thai medical doctors referred to him as the godfather or Don of Thai medicine. This chapter will focus on his early political career and the influence of Bhumibol's storytelling.



*Figure 16: Prawase Wasi.<sup>52</sup>*

In the days before Prawase, the medical services acted as an envoy of royal benevolence in royal storytelling politics. By introducing a new storyline, Prawase and his faction changed the main scheme by dogmatizing the nation and prescribing the "proper way of practice" for the people. He mainly narrated this new storyline by allegorizing the nation into human bodily functions to depict what the people, as a part of "the body," ought to practice or behave. This could also be called an "organic nation." This idea would later become one of Bhumibol's most important stories. The purpose of this chapter is to present (1) the emergence and influence of a new medical agency, orchestrated by Prawase Wasi, which caused a rift within the royal medical units that preceded him; (2) the new alternative that this newly emerged agency brought, as well as the opportunity that the royal faction could exploit from it; and (3) the new medical faction's contribution to Bhumibol's narrative. Let us start with the beginning.

---

<sup>52</sup> Source: Matichon. (2017, July 6). URL: [https://www.matichon.co.th/local/news\\_597259](https://www.matichon.co.th/local/news_597259) [Retrieved November 15, 2021].

## The Network

### *The Formative Years*

The foundation of Prawase’s network (of political power) should be traced back at least to the time he first moved to Bangkok and studied at Triam Udom Sukasa School (โรงเรียนเตรียมอุดมศึกษา) for his pre-medical school path. Fundamentally, Triam Udom Sukasa is a high school, and hence, it may sound somewhat exaggerated to claim that Prawase’s political network began there. But, Triam Udom Sukasa was and still is regarded as the pinnacle of an elite school in Thailand. The word “elite” here does not purely imply solely the economic or social class since Prawase himself actually came from a rather poor family with almost no social background at all. But elites here infer to the very “crème of the crop” of the society, academic-wise. This status of “elite” was particularly true during the time when Prawase was admitted to the school since the basic education in Thailand had not yet widespread or highly accessible to the public, not to mention its advancement. Therefore, Triam Udom Sukasa, which aimed to select only the very top intelligent students since its inaugural day, became the gathering place – almost the monopoly – of the future elites of Thailand’s political landscape. It was a sort of elite prospects playground for a selected few. Prawase’s admission there and his academic achievement as one of the top students at the school had eventually created a lifelong network for him. Prawase had written a very extensive book called *Sen Taang Cheewit* (เส้นทางชีวิต), which could be described as a mixture of his autobiography and personal memoir. He wrote it during the late 1980s and finished it around 1991 and published it in many volumes. It was then recollected and reprinted in one thick volume in 2011 and will be a prime source of information on Prawase in my work, along with the interview I had with him on August 29th, 2018. *Sen Taang Cheewit* illustrated his life from a very young age until the decade in which it was written. In this work, he mentioned an extensive list of people he came into contact with and befriended, including numerous ministry permanent secretaries

(ปลัดกระทรวง), Ministers of Health, Prime Ministers, military generals, highly revered monks, and so on. Chiefly, his network started from Triam Udom Suksa School and has lasted for his entire life. However, I do not aim to research Prawase's political network or his life per se. Therefore, I will only mention the network he came into contact with and related to the structure of the politics of storytelling, which is the focal point of this work.

After Triam Udom Suksa School, Prawase had spent a few years at Chulalongkorn University studying his pre-clinic classes. During this time, his network became much more focused on the medical doctors since, during the time of his study, Siriraj Medical School and Chulalongkorn University were the only options available to study medicine. Everyone had to take pre-clinic classes at Chulalongkorn University for 2 years first (Wasi 2011, 102), then the students would take a lottery which dictated the medical school which they would attend during their clinic years (ibid., 112). In short, they tended to know, or at least familiarize themselves with, every one of their generations and also some elite doctors of previous generations who had taught them. Furthermore, cronyism or patronage system was nothing new in the medical doctor society. Prawase himself had witnessed it many times during his days at Siriraj. One of the examples, as he portrayed, was a story of his respected mentor named Prasert Kangsadal (ประเสริฐ กังสดาลัย) who later became the head of the department of medicine at Siriraj Medical School. According to Prawase, Prasert had told him that after Prasert finished his medical degree from the University of Edinburgh, UK, and returned to Siriraj, he was banned by Khun Pra Uppuntrapartpisa (คุณพระอัปถนตรา พารพิศาล), the head of the department of medicine and the school's dean at the time, from enlisting in the Inpatient Department (IPD). Instead, he only remained enlisted in the Outpatient Department (OPD). Although they had a relatively good relationship, This ban occurred simply because Khun Pra did not like Chai Yunipan (ไช่ ยูนิพันธ์ุ) who merely happened to graduate from the UK. Therefore, he banned everyone who had graduated from the UK, including Prasert. Also, Khun Pra was suffering from the

political enmity of his own by the group that he called “The German Faction” which refers to a group of medical doctors who graduated from Germany. Also, he claimed, had aimed to sabotage him from his positions. Khun Pra was eventually ripped-off of his position whence Prajuab Bunnag (ประจวบ บุนนาค), the minister of health at the time, visited Siriraj by boat and found out that the pontoon at Siriraj Pier was sunk. He used this as the reason to oust Khun Pra from his position. Prasert Kangsadal, as a result, had taken his position as the new head of the Department of Medicine. It should also be noted here that one of the “German Faction” members was Term Bunnag (เต็ม บุนนาค), a relative of the minister himself (ibid., 149-150).

This was simply a small example and did not have much of an effect on the grand scale, apart from the fact that Prasert Kangsadal, who gained more authoritative power in the medical world from this event, was really close with Prawase, who, himself, even confessed that Prasert was one of his greatest influencers (ibid., 148). However, the reason I chose to include and mention this event was that it was one of the first experiences of the patronage system that occurred to or by someone who was close to Prawase, and it would benefit Prawase quite a lot as well. After Prasert got the position, he helped shield Prawase from another patronage request from the higher-up that Prawase did not want to submit to (ibid., 150–151). Also, it is important to pinpoint that although Prawase had publicly witnessed and criticized unfair conducts or treatments, he could intentionally turn a blind eye to them once they occurred to whomever he saw fit or he himself reaped the benefit. This kind of attitude appears throughout his long memoir, and it would reflect quite a lot on the dichotomy of his teachings, which seems to be both progressive and conservative at the same time. This character matched with the notion of Khon Dee Politics (การเมืองของคนดี) or the politics of the meritorious person, which was strongly influenced by him and has dominated the Thai political landscape for many decades. Later on, this point will be further discussed in the next chapter.

The first direct contact Prawase had with King Bhumibol was in 1957, as the second recipient <sup>53</sup> of the Anandamahidol scholarship. <sup>54</sup> However, since the scholarship was at its earliest stage and solely funded by the king's personal budget, the selection criteria were not so systematic; it almost – if not entirely – depended on one's own connection. In the case of Prawase, one could possibly say so as well. In 1957, Prasert Kangsadal, Prawase's mentor and the head of the Department of Medicine at Siriraj, had written a letter to his friend, Kaset Sanitwong (ม.ล.เกษตร สนิทวงศ์)<sup>55</sup>, Queen Sirikit's uncle and the head of the department of obstetrics and gynecology at Chulalongkorn University. As the queen's relative, Kaset also had a close relationship with King Bhumibol and acted as one of the Anandamahidol scholarship committee members. Prasert asked him to send Prawase to study abroad, so Kaset informed King Bhumibol about the request and the king accepted it. Before Prawase's departure, he had an audience with King Bhumibol as he described the event as "The king had personally taught me so thoroughly for 2 hours about the way to study, the way to behave, and the western lifestyle" (ibid, 158-159).

Prawase went to the University of Colorado, Denver, USA for his doctoral course in hematology. There, he met Matthew Block, his mentor. Block had become another influential figure for Prawase, somewhat like a role model for his medical practice. The

---

<sup>53</sup> The first recipient was Jarus Suwanwela (จรัส สุวรรณเวลา) who, later, would become another close friend of Prawase.

<sup>54</sup> The Anandamahidol scholarship was named after the late King Rama VIII, who died of a sudden death by gunshot. It was personally initiated by King Bhumibol as a pilot project in 1955. During its first pilot years, the scholarship was even subsidized personally by King Bhumibol himself. In 1959, it became a full-fledged foundation, supporting students with high academic merit to study abroad, starting from the school of medicine and science. Since its establishment, the foundation has focused chiefly on the medical school, as the scholarship at its initial stage rose from the demand and significance of medical doctors being observed (Association of Anandamahidol Scholarship Recipients 2005).

<sup>55</sup> Prasert Kangsadal and Kaset Sanitwong knew and befriended each other during the time of their studies in the UK. Prawase himself had mentioned that the letter from Prasert contributed heavily to the selection process that allowed him to go abroad for the first time (Wasi 2011, 158).

great characteristic of Matthew Block, according to Prawase, was his exceeding diligence and that he was not greedy by nature. Block displayed and imprinted the picture of a tough and highly disciplined doctor to Prawase as he perfectly performed his work as a socially agreed function. Therefore, he did not approve of any gifts given to him by his patients, even after he had cured their diseases. And if someone did, he would heartlessly reject them since, as he claimed, they had already paid him to work by national taxation and it was his obligation to cure them. Therefore, a gift must not be given for this cause. (ibid., 161-164) Prawase had followed this mindset to the point that the university department's record on their staff, entitled "History of the Department of Medicine 1933-1985 University of Colorado School of Medicine" by Charlie Smyth (1985, 105) had mentioned him, after his 3-year of studying there:

*The training program was boosted by the three-year stay of Dr.Prawase Wasi, the first of the King's scholars from Thailand to receive special training in hematology at the University of Colorado. He was a dynamic, highly intelligent individual who worked seven days and nights a week. He published six papers.*

This certain perspective of what a good doctor ought to be would be carried on in Prawase's life and later, when he had attained the position of power, it would be added to his teachings and some of it had become the standard notion for medical doctors in Thailand. However, it would take some years to reach that point. During his time in the States, naturally, he had made friends with many other elites and "crème of the crops" who would also be in a position of privilege just like Prawase. After three years in the USA, Prawase spent another year in the United Kingdom. He went to the Galton Laboratory at the University of London in order to take a class on human genetics, as he believed that it would help him comprehend his research on thalassemia (Wasi 2011, 177). During this time, Prawase had gained an in-depth foundation of genetic knowledge, and that included an understanding of how the



environment, culture, and nature had affected human behaviors as well (ibid., 177-184).

### *Siriraj Network*

Prawase returned to Thailand on April 2nd, 1961, and began his career as a lecturer at Siriraj Medical School. As usual, he had made contact with plenty of prominent figures. Jamlong Harinsut (จำลอง หาริณสูต) and Weekij Weeranuwat (วีกิจ วีรานุกัตติ) were among them. These two figures were the personal doctors of Sarit during his prime of power. (ibid., 186–187) However, during this time, not only did the number of his colleagues grow, but there were also signs of conflicts. As a new and relatively progressive doctor among his peers and having a hard-working Mathew Block as a role model, he had seen some laid-back co-workers and therefore tried to push the hospital policies forward, which in this case means "work harder." For example, the medical mentors should be scheduled to work on weekends as well, not leaving the whole hospital to the interns and house officers. The proposed policy ended in failure as the hospital board committee did not grant enough votes for it to pass (ibid., 190). This proposal initiated by Prawase had made the conflict with the "opposing side" grow since no one wanted to be forced to work harder. However, rejecting it—as they did—would also cause a negative image for them too.

Yet this was not the end for him. Prawase had started his own network with the young doctors, sometimes even facing conflicts with his peers to shield them. Young doctors during that time tended to leave the country to work in the States as if it were "a fashion" (Prawase's own word). This trend was so intense to the point that there was a rumor that suggested that the whole first generation of medical doctors from Chiang Mai University (a newly established medical school during that time) had chartered the whole aircraft to take them to the States and work there. Many years later, the government could not let this go and issued a new policy that forced the newly

graduated medical doctors to work as interns for 3 years in the country. (ibid., 201) However, this policy might have had some influence from Prawase and his colleagues as well during his first season as a committee member of the Medical Council of Thailand (แพทยสภา), which I will discuss in more detail later on. This was because they were the ones who initiated the moral code of conduct for medical doctors and also expanded the specialist programs in order to prevent the newly graduated doctors from following the trendy fashion of going abroad (ibid., 235). Anyhow, during his first years at Siriraj as a lecturer, Prawase had the propensity to protect and groom the young doctors who had the academic potential or were not likely to follow the conventional trend of the medical community (or displayed both qualities). Sukon Wisuttipan<sup>56</sup> (สุคนธ์ วิสุทธิพันธ์) was one of the examples. Sukon, a silver medal awarded recipient for her academic excellence, had clashed in a dispute with her superior and came to Prawase, as they were quite close, for help. Prawase assisted her by sending her to Denver, Colorado, and working with his colleague there, Von Kaulla, for many years until she received her doctoral degree and returned to Siriraj to work at the department of hematology, under Prawase's wing (ibid., 201-202). Sanga Phutrakul (สง่า ภูตระกูล) was another example of such a case. In 1962, Prawase found and observed Sanga, a medical intern at the time, who he thought was worthy of grooming. He, therefore, invited Sanga to join his hematology lab team, becoming the 4th staff member. To help Sanga, Prawase, together with another of Prawase's respected colleague Supa Na-Nakorn (สุภา ณ นคร), went as far as confronting Udom Posakritsana (อุดม โปษะภักษณะ), the dean of Siriraj Medical School at the time, because Sanga was not enlisted as the new lecturer there. In Prawase's opinion, this was not something he could let go of. It resulted in his confrontation with his superior in order to comfort/protect his junior. It could also be said that this situation contributed to the

---

<sup>56</sup> Her family name was "Wasuntapruek" (วสันตพฤกษ์) but changed to Wisuttipan after her marriage.

construction of his network as well since Sanga would eventually work under him later on (ibid., 202–203).

Similar cases have happened numerous times. Anong Suengdamrong (อนงค์ ซึ่งดำรง), the third staff of the hematology lab, was sent to Prawase's friend, Bob Kohler, in Portland, Oregon, before she moved to Vanderbilt University, received her Ph.D. and returned to Siriraj Medical School. She worked in the hematology department (under the supervision of Prawase) until she eventually succeeded in his position as the head of the department later on (ibid., 203). These examples were given in order for this work to illustrate how Prawase had constructed his network among the young doctors in Siriraj Medical School and also gained quite a popularity there. Meanwhile also creating some tension with his own peers as well. This kind of atmosphere was soundly developed and resulted in Prawase gradually collecting the new waves of potential network members who would return to Thailand and possessed highly academic skills, and hence, also possessed the prospect of attaining a high-ranking position in their respective fields.

### *Connection with Royal Family*

In May 1962, or only a little over a year after Prawase returned, one of his greatest supporters and an influential figure at Siriraj Medical School, Prasert Kangsadal, had passed away from a cerebral-vascular rupture. (ibid., 191) However, his connection with the palace seemed to be strengthening. Ever since his return in 1961, he and Jarus Suwanwela (จรัส สุวรรณเวลา)—the first recipient of Anandamahidol scholarship, had become the frequent visitors of the palace as they were invited there on numerous occasions, be it new year party, the king's birthday, the king's marital anniversary day, or when the king had the important guests of the state attended. Since the Anandamahidol scholarship had just been founded and privately funded by King Bhumibol himself, its recipients had become interested in the royal elite. The

royal family had invited them to join their dining table many times, and Queen Sirikit had even often conveyed to them King Bhumibol's message, "he sees them (the scholarship recipients) as his own children" (ibid., 196). It could be said that Prawase's close relationship with the palace started from this point on.

Later on, King Bhumibol suffered from hematochezia, or blood excretion. Prawase Wasi together with Jinda Sanitwong (ม.จ.จินดา สนิทวงศ์) and Aroon Netsiri (อรุณ เนตรศิริ) had been chosen for the treatment. Prawase had diagnosed that the king experienced bacillary dysentery. Queen Sirikit sat at the top of the table, in charge of the orchestration of public announcements, and had directed the doctors to broadcast the king's symptoms as they were (ibid., 197). Although this point may not be directly related to Prawase's connection, it was worthy of note that normally, in a constitutional monarchy, royal-related public announcements must be supervised by the parliament or the cabinet. However, this statement from Prawase had shown that the royal family had the power to control their public narrative since that time, at the very least. This ability to control or supervise the public narrative is of grave importance in the politics of storytelling. This power could be operated intentionally, conditionally, or even ignorantly, but the result that the job was done according to the royal family's order proves their dominant influence.

Prawase's relationship with the inner circle of the royal family had, then, been elaborated upon by Prawase himself on many other occasions. For example, he had mentioned his close relationship with Kallayakit Kittiyakorn (มรว. กัลยาณกิติ์ กิติยากร) or Khun Groi (คุณกร้อย), an elder sister of Queen Sirikit, who was also a medical doctor and used to work at Siriraj Medical School but moved to Ramathibodhi Hospital afterward. Khun Groi had asked him to co-own and co-run a medical private clinic with her, but Prawase had turned her proposal down, and she did not seem to have opened any clinics during her lifetime. Also, they had a friendly relationship to the point of joking around with him as friend (ibid., 266-267 and 280-282).

Not long after, Kaset Sanitwong, an uncle of Queen Sirikit who had gotten closer with Prawase ever since he was introduced to be a candidate for Anandamahidol scholarship by Prasert Kangsadal and eventually saw Prawase as one of his own sons (ibid., 783–784), told Prawase that he would ask King Bhumibol to grant him a new research building. He proposed having it about the size of the Tanpuying Vijitra Building<sup>57</sup> (ตึกท่านผู้หญิงวิจิตรรา) but Prawase seemed to find its size inadequate for doing research, teaching, and providing medical services to patients. Hence, he asked for an even larger building. The palace gave the green light and consequentially came the 3-story tall building called “Anandaraj” (อานันทรราช). In order to get the funds for the building’s construction cost, King Bhumibol had given one of his personal movies to be screened at Chalermkrung Cinema as the material for fund-raising, not to mention various donation campaigns from the palace too. Also, Prawase and his respected senior, Supa Na-Nakorn, had first-handedly involved in the detailed and functional design of the entire building together with Jane Sakoltanarak (เจน สกอลตันรักษ์), an experienced hospital architecture. Once the building was done, both King Bhumibol and Queen Sirikit acted as the ceremonial heads, and the building’s opening ceremony was performed by them on December 21st, 1965 (ibid., 204). I believe that this whole scenario could portray a certain degree of favorability that the palace had with Prawase since the early 1960s.

The initial sets of medical tools and devices of the newly built building were donated by the “China Medical Board,”<sup>58</sup> a branch foundation of Rockefeller Foundation which had played an important role via grants and donations during the Cold War (see Mueller 2013, and Parmar 2015). Later on, the supports had also been

---

<sup>57</sup> A small building in Siriraj Medical School’s complex. It is located close to gate 9 which connects to Prannok Street.

<sup>58</sup> China Medical Board was firstly established in order to provide medical supports for China, but once China had committed themselves to communism, the board had shifted its assistance to elsewhere in Asia instead (Wasi 2011, 205).

granted from the United States' National Institutes of Health (NIH) as well, and the close connection between the United States and the Thai palace during the Cold War period was not a secret as they were also hugely supporting Sarit Thanarat as a part of their Cold War's anti-communism campaign which was mentioned in the previous chapter (see also Chaiching 2020). The help and connection with China Medical Board and Rockefeller Foundation seemed to have implanted some impression to Prawase as he had praised them as follow:

*Medical Schools in Thailand have been massively supported by China Medical Board. In the United States, there are many foundations like Rockefeller, Ford, ..., and so on. This is owing to their culture that the rich have the tendency to make a huge donation for the creation of knowledge* (Wasi 2011, 205).

This impression seemed to influence Prawase to a certain degree, as he had mentioned that NIH had a significant influence on universities in the States; it dictated the demand for research grants. According to Prawase he also wished for this model to be applied to The Ministry of Health in Thailand as well. However, his dream did not come true because, according to his observation, "our thoughts and budgets were insufficient" (ibid., 205). Also, later on, when he gained a huge portion of influence over Thai foundations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), he would follow the said model. Prawase tended to see foundations and NGOs as the means to disrupt the stagnated bureaucratic system in Thailand. He argued:

*Private and developed organizations like these<sup>59</sup> are agile because they are not chained by rules and the politics of bureaucratic system, of which were called 'Non-Governmental Organization' or NGO. We had translated it to*

---

<sup>59</sup> He had named some examples before the selected quote like The Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, and also private universities like Harvard, John Hopkins, and Stanford (Wasi 2011, 310).

*“Organization for Private Development” (องค์กรพัฒนาเอกชน หรือ อพช.). In the United States, there are tens of thousands of these foundations which involve a large number of people.*

*In foreign countries like the United States, Canada, and Germany, the government subsidizes to or working via these organizations a lot because they’ve got stagnated [by the bureaucratic system in the normal procedure]. However, we are only accustomed to the bureaucratic system, but not so much to non-bureaucratic ones (Wasi 2011, 310).*

As he sees NGO as an organization that could be related to government but lacks the bureaucratic structure, this foundational thought would play a much more vital role in his future. NGOs may even be used to implement government policies. Also, the observation on the “culture of the rich” would stimulate him to create a very immense political campaign that could be called the main royal-political campaign of Prayuth’s cabinet later on. Nevertheless, that would be quite some time from this point on when he just got the new building. I simply remark here to illustrate the consequences of these events and how his network could make it possible and put it into effect.

### *Rural Doctors and the Nationwide Health Care Network*

During his time as a medical lecturer, Prawase had accumulated some fundamental framework that would lead to his future main and nationwide network as he traveled the country for his medical research. During this time, as he claimed, he had learned and experienced plenty of lives that were in the scarcity of health care, and many of these problems could not be solved with a doctor visit once in a while. This has become the foundation of his thought, as he stated:

*...[W]e were worried because we would visit just once and then leave, but the problems stay there with them still. What will they do?*

*The thalassemia survey in villages all over the country seems to be the cause of my interest from just the medical service within the central medical institution to a wider community medicine or health care system.*

*The pictures of patients in villages, their poverty, and the challenges stay with me always. This makes me interested more in the health system and society* (Wasi 2011, 213-214).

This memory would consequentially become one of the first sparks of "the rural doctor," arguably one of Prawase's most nationwide networks. From 1979 onwards, Prawase had a firm hold on the managerial position in Siriraj Medical School, and as the leading medical school among a few medical schools in Thailand at that time,<sup>60</sup> it also meant a position that could have a significant influence on the health campaigns and activities as well. It was during this time that Prawase robustly expanded his network and foundation, the "Rural Doctor Foundation" (มูลนิธิรณแพทย์ชนบท). At the end of the year 1980, at Lamtaklong Dam in Nakorn Ratchasima (Thailand), a club called "Rural Doctors," which had been supported by many influential, young, and talented medical doctors at that time, including Prawase Wasi, had come to the conclusion that it needed to strengthen itself as an institution for rural medical doctors by becoming a proper foundation. The procedure to elevate the status of the network was run by Manit Prapantsil, the club president at the time, and it was legally recognized as a

---

<sup>60</sup> Presently, there are 22 medical schools or institutions in Thailand. However, during the 1970s, there were only 7 medical schools (in order of their establishment): Mahidol University - Siriraj Medical School (1886), Chulalongkorn University (1947), Chiang Mai University (1956), Mahidol University - Ramathibodi Medical School (1965), Prince of Songkla University (1973), Khon Kaen University (1974), and Phramongkutkloa College of Medicine (1975).



foundation on March 15th, 1982 (Rural Doctor Foundation 2021). The main objective of the said foundation is to promote the work and status of medical doctors working in rural areas of Thailand.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the royal medical units and PMMV were also networks of medical doctors, and their emergence preceded this one chronologically, so what significance did this Rural Doctor Foundation bring? Even though the first chapter had ventured on the structural relationship between the public and the medical doctor or life-prolonging practitioner, it does not mean that there is no such thing as a “hierarchical structure” among the medical doctors themselves, and this was one of those cases. Although new medical schools like Chaing Mai University (1965), Songkhla (1972), and Khon Kaen (1972) had opened outside Bangkok during this time period, their graduates were often viewed as inferior by both the society and the medical community. Local doctors were viewed with much less respect by the general public than centralized and institutionalized doctors. A centralized doctor was thought to be more credible and thus of higher social status. This situation obviously displeased rural medical doctors who were—arguably—working harder due to the rural doctor-to-patient ratio being so low. Before the foundation, rural doctors were treated less well than centralized ones. So, once the foundation was laid, the reception from doctors in the peripheral region had become more positive. The same goes for Prawase’s teachings, as he was regarded as a key figure in setting up the network.

Afterward, in the early 1980s, Prawase had established an informal central command center for his network, particularly based on the rural doctor network, called “Sampann Group” (กลุ่มสามพราน) which he constantly had a meeting at Sampann Garden every month until the present days. This meeting was considered a “war room” for his group to some observers (see Sakworawish 2015). The meeting itself acted like the brain or commanding unit of Prawase’s entire network which had flourished

exponentially from the 1980s onwards. Institutions and foundations under his influence, for example, are National Health Security Office (NHSO), Thai Health Promotion Foundation, Health Intervention and Technology Assessment Program, International Health Policy Program (IHPP), and so on. In 2011, he had positions in more than 60 institutions, foundations, public and intellectual service committees. The nickname for the health organizations or institutions related or influenced by Prawase is known as “Sor Family Network” (เครือข่ายตระกูล ส.). As of 2015, there were at least 23 institutions that were considered as a part of Sor Family Network, the examples were as mentioned earlier (Sakworawish 2015; See also Pitakthanin 2011).

Before I go into detail about Prawase’s teachings and his promotion of the new storytelling that eventually impacts the whole picture of the royal narrative politics, let me go back to the royal medical units and PMMV for a bit. In the previous chapter, some lengthy analysis of this group had already been discussed. However, it had not yet been mentioned that they were mainly comprised of the centralized and institutionalized doctors who had a relatively close structural relationship with the palace, at least when compared with other doctors. Such personnel moved according to the royal decree from the center to the margins, representing the benevolence of the king in the process. From this circumstance, they—apart from being the envoys of Bhumibol’s storytelling—had become the network of sort for the centralized and institutionalized medical doctors as well. In short, they had also formed a loose faction of their own and maintained their monopoly on political power within the medical world prior to the rise of Prawase.

### *Centralized and Administrative Body of the Health Institutions*

Another main network of Prawase came from the administrative body of the medical world itself. As briefly mentioned earlier, Prawase also had a role in the Medical Council of Thailand. Prawase’s path to the position of power in the administrative body

began with something rather minuscule. May 1969, he had written an article entitled “Siriraj’s Problems” (ปัญหาของศิริราช) for a journal called “Sarn Siriraj” (สารศิริราช) which, as the article’s title suggested, portrayed the problems resided) in Siriraj Medical School in, as Prawase claimed, an unapologetic and direct manner. This caused some impact and polarized his peers toward those who were displeased with him and some of his new comrades-in-arm. One of his new same-minded friends named Wichai Chokewiwat (วิชัย โชควิวัฒน์), who was still a medical student at that time, showed him Nidhi Eoseewong’s article. The article’s sharp criticism on the health system fascinated him as it was presented in a never-before-seen perspective. Prawase, therefore, passed this article on to Somchai Bowornkitti (สมชัย บวรกิตติ), the editor of both Sarn Siriraj and the Medical Chronicle. He found the article interesting and published it. However, it brought quite an uproar within the medical world. What ensued was a movement led by many senior doctors to discharge the editor out of his positions (Wasi 2011, 231-233). To prevent this and somewhat felt responsible for what had occurred, Prawase and his colleagues had a meeting at Attasit Vejajiva’s<sup>61</sup> (อรรถสิทธิ์ เวชชาชีวะ) residence and concluded that they had to win the Medical Association’s Committee election. Once they had a firm grip of the committee’s order, they could re-appoint the editor position to the same guilt-free Somchai, their friend, to continue his job (ibid., 233).

Winning the election that would result in the domination of the administrative body over the medical doctor community might not sound like an easy feat that a sudden preparation and on-a-whim planning like this would achieve. However, according to Prawase, it was that easy. He said that during that time, the minimum number of assembly members participating was 60, but, even with that measly number, the members presenting had rarely been enough to proceed as regulated, and

---

<sup>61</sup> Abhisit Vejajiva’s father. He, later, held the position of the Deputy Minister of Health during Anan Punyarachun’s (อานันท์ ปันยารชุน) administration. It was a royal conferred government after the military coup in February 1991 and he was introduced by Suchinda Kraprayoon (สุจินดา คราประยูร), the coup leader himself.

they had to ask or convince nearby members to attend. Therefore, in order to win, they simply needed to arrange for people from their faction to attend the assembly in a large enough number. And that was it, a win for them, and in an overwhelming fashion as well<sup>62</sup> (ibid., 233). Although they did not hold the position of the president of the association at the time, since they held every other position, they had rendered the president's voice powerless by sheer outnumbered votes. He could not win even on the motion to take in a person he thought was suitable for the committee since this team rejected him.

Additionally, and very coincidentally, in the very same year, 1969, a new law had been issued for the establishment of "the Medical Council of Thailand," and it required every medical doctor in Thailand to be enlisted as its member. Prawase and his colleagues had yet again come to a conclusion that they should run for the positions in the council as well in order to contribute more extensively (ibid., 234). It was absolutely clear here that their objective, as elaborated by Prawase himself, had changed drastically, from helping a friend amidst the storm of maltreatment to the domination of the administrative body of the medical society as a whole. And, as everyone could have guessed, they won this election again and became the first committee of the Medical Council of Thailand<sup>63</sup> (ibid., 234). The committee issued various policies, ethical standards, and teaching programs for medical doctors. The Regulation on the Ethics of Medical Craft (ข้อบังคับว่าด้วยมารยาทวิชาชีพเวชกรรม), the

---

<sup>62</sup> 8 members of Prawase's faction was elected: (1) Sood Saengwichien (สุด แสงวิเชียร), Kajorn Pranich (ขจร ประนิช), Patchreesarn Chumphol (มร.พัชรีสาน ชุมพล), Prasarn Taangjai (ประสาน ต่างใจ), Narong Sadudee (ณรงค์ สดุดี), Somchai Bowornkitti (สมชัย บวรกิตติ), Attasit Vejajiva, and Prawase Wasi.

<sup>63</sup> The committee was comprised of 10 members: (1) Sood Saengwichien, (2) Boonsom Martin (บุญสม มาร์ติน), (3) Prawase Wasi, (4) Wikij Wiranuwat (วิกิจ วีรานูวัตต์), (5) Direk Pongpipat (ดิเรก พงศ์พิพัฒน์), (6) Sanong Unakul (สนอง อุณาคุล), (7) Phuket Wajanont (ภูเก็ต วาจานนท์), (8) Uay Katesingha (อวย เกตุสิงห์), (9) Songkarn Niyomsaen (สงกรานต์ นิยมเสน), and (10) Prasarn Taangjai.

examination for the certification of medical craft, the training on the house staff,<sup>64</sup> and the examination for the certification of medical specialization were ones of the instances (ibid., 235). Later on, Prawase got himself into the position of the president of the subcommittee that was responsible for proposing medical profession planning and the national health system to the Medical Council of Thailand (ibid., 237). Overall, this could be seen as the first step of Prawase in establishing his institutionalized administrative bodies within the medical world and ultimately becoming the "don" of this realm. The health system and its ethical standards had been proposed and issued based on his experience and observations gained during the time he had been visiting places around the country for his medical research surveys as well as from his very own judgment of what he deemed right and wrong.

During this time that he had his mind on the health care system and formulated his thoughts on the projects that needed to be done, he decided to tell Queen Sirikit, who happened to have her eyes on the surface of this issue (ibid., 267), how the health care system should be adjusted and improved. The queen seemed to concur with the proposal and replied to him as follows:

*Dr. Prawase **must** tell his majesty [the king] about this, so he could **order** Marshal Tanom [Kittikajorn]* (Wasi 2011, 268; my own emphasis in bold).

This development showed Prawase not only used the (relatively) legitimate administrative body to exert influence, but also used the network monarchy and royal decree to further his plan. In the same line, it depicted the king's dominating power over Thai politics. For fear of provoking too many reactionaries, the king blocked Prawase and Marshal Tanom's medical reformation projects (ibid., 282-283).

---

<sup>64</sup> House staff is the title to call a position of (new/in-training) doctors of the British system. There are junior house staff and senior house staff.

Ultimately, this whole scene underlines the significance of this section. It was obvious that such power to cause the structural change was held in the hand of these human agencies and networks for the most part, at least the centralized and official version of the nation's narrative. Understanding how Prawase had made contacts and built his own network is essential to understanding how he could deliver his message to the political and public spheres.

### *Connection with Civil Society, Social Science, and Religion Networks*

I had mentioned earlier that ultimately Prawase had a strong sense of what he deemed right and wrong and this implied that he was at his core an essentialist which would later cast a huge role in his teaching and narration. Speaking of what he considered right and wrong, another topic should also be explained, and it was very important since it would affect a lot of his teaching, narrative construction, and policy proposals. It was about his encounter with Social Science Perspectives (สังคมศาสตร์ปริทัศน์) and his connection with the "Scientific Buddhism" led by Buddhadasa and Prayudh Payutto. Prawase's scope of interest used to be chiefly focused on what was happening in his medical world; however, before he returned to Thailand from the United Kingdom, he heard his colleagues talked about a man named Sulak Sivarakasa (สุลักษณ์ ศิวรักษ์) who went back to Thailand before him and had started a journal that intensely criticized the state of Thai politics and social problems. That journal was, as heralded, Social Science Perspectives.

The journal did not only expand Prawase's horizons of interest but also introduced him to a new plane of community. He befriended Sulak himself and got to know Prayudh Payutto later on as a result of his discovery of this journal (ibid., 223). Prawase had found his great examples on the blending of Buddhism and how social lifestyle ought to be directed via the works of Karuna Kusalasai (กรุณา กุศลาสัย) which he first stumbled upon in this journal and afterward met and befriended the author in

person (ibid., 224). Prawase had also written articles for the journal as well, and the long-time impact of this journal on Thai society, particularly the university students during the late regime of Sarit Thanarat onwards, was well known among the observers of Thai politics (see, for example, Sripenchan 2013). However, his friendship with Sulak had caused him some weight as well, as the ultra-conservative faction had seen Sulak as someone who defiled the king harshly, let alone leading many others in doing so as well. Prawase tended to protect Sulak's stance as he mentioned that "he [Sulak] loves the monarchic institution, religion, and the kingdom so much, yet he criticizes things violently, particularly in a revisionist way" (ibid., 226). This situation at least tells us that within the royalist circle itself, they were not entirely homogeneous. In any case, they could be divided into the conservative faction and the (more) progressive faction. This development would play a vital role in the development of storytelling politics too, but I will leave it here for now and discuss it in the following parts.

Prawase's interest in Buddhism started to bloom around 1964-1965, due to two main factors. One was due to his role model and respected friend, Uay Katesingha (อวย เกตุสิงห์), who had his mind on Buddhism, and it influenced Prawase to try to venture on this path. The other was an influence of encountering with Social Science Perspective journal that drove him out of his limited medical world and felt the need to learn more of other kinds of knowledge. (ibid., 241) He, therefore, took his first step on this path. He started from spending some years—on and off—paying homage to the practice-oriented and Parami-collected Dhammayuttika Nikayaya monk-like Bua Yanasampunno (บัว ญาณสัมปันโน) or sometimes known Ahjarn Maha Bua until he eventually settled himself down with Buddhadasa. Prawase saw himself as an intellectual disciple of Buddhadasa, and he claimed to have attentively read every publication written by the Buddhist grandmaster and remembered them dearly in his heart (Akkarawit Chookiattichai interviewed Prawase Wasi in Buddhadasa Indapanno Archives 2020, and Buddhadasa Indapanno Archives 2020).

As a “political human agent,” Prawase’s close relationship with Buddhadasa<sup>65</sup> was well-documented, and he is currently the president of the Buddhadasa foundation; however, this work does not address this point (see Wasi 1993; Wasi 2011, 543-599). But it needs to be mentioned because it is obvious that Buddhadasa was the intellectual force behind Prawase. Block, Prasert, and Kaset may have played a role in being his role models, but it was not as much as the influence implanted by Buddhadasa’s teaching. As I will explain in the next section, Buddhadasa’s teachings became the dominant foundational idea in which Prawase used to interpret the world.

Regarding networking itself, Prawase had made a lot of connections with disciples and worshipers of Buddhadasa to the point that Prawase saw himself as the man in-between the two realms of cosmology: modern science and Buddhism. However, if I had to make my call on what he sided more with intellectually, I would say Buddhism. He has befriended various leading or popular monks, politicians, or even medical doctors who revere Buddhadasa. Also, he had the intention of incorporating Buddhism into the teaching of science, particularly to medical students, ever since the Salaya campus of Mahidol University was about to open (Wasi 2011, 255). With his friendship with both Sulak of the Social Science Perspectives journal and Buddhadasa’s network, Prawase had gained a much wider network with the social science and civil services parts of society, and this would result in his expansion of

---

<sup>65</sup> As mentioned in the previous chapter, Buddhadasa (1906–1993) was one of the most important and influential Buddhist monks in Thai contemporary history. He experienced the “impure” conducts of the monks, including the Dhammayuth ones, during his formative years and believed that Buddhism as it was needed to be reformed. He, therefore, reinterpreted the Buddhist teaching, making it more aligned with modern scientific rationality and less dependent on the institutionalized Sangha, or Buddhist administrative body. In short, one does not need to become a monk to pursue enlightenment. It can be gained solely on the basis of conduct, as long as the conduct strictly follows the teaching of the scripture. I find this interpretation really similar to the concept of “Sola Scriptura,” or on the scripture alone, which is the main preaching pillar of Protestant Christianity that bases its conducts and beliefs on the biblical scripture alone and denies the significance of the institutionalized Catholic Church as the representation of God and the gateway to the promised land.



influence into various fields later on, especially from the 1980s onwards. Some parts of the expansion could even be viewed as Prawase incorporating the existing network under his wing. The Buddhadasa network could be considered one of them as he is now the president of the Buddhadasa foundation, although he tried to humbly say that he also did not know how come the foundation had chosen to invite him to the seat of its presidency (Chookiattichai 2020). It should be mentioned as well that another monk who contributed tremendously to the modern and scientific narration of Buddhism, like Prayudh Payutto, also had a strong relationship with Prawase. Prawase was actually the one who introduced Prayudh to the programmer to collaborate with him and achieve the first digital Tripitaka, or Buddhist scriptures in Thai (Prawase 2011). It could be said that his new and stronger network was the consequence of having the other networks and building himself up upon them. For instance, his relationship with Sem Pringpuangkaew (เสม พริ้งพวงแก้ว) occurred from his position in the Medical Council of Thailand. They were developing plans for the health care program, and Sem was introduced in the mix as an expert in the field. Also, Sanya Dhammasak (สัจญญา ธรรมศักดิ์) was introduced to him when he had planned to incorporate the Buddhist teaching into Mahidol Salaya's courses. He visited and consulted Sanya who was the president of the Buddhist Association of Thailand at that time. Later on, Sem became the Deputy Minister of Health in Sanya's government and held the minister position during Kriangsak Chamanan and Prem's administrations as well. All of these simply showed how strong his network was and how he could possibly plant his narrative into almost every section of a society powerfully.

## The Conflict and Changes

In the previous part, there were clear hints of conflict. Although Prawase Wasi was not a "progressive mind" in the Western sense, or even in comparison to other

progressive scholars and activists in Thailand, he was a reformist among his peers. Due to his progressive mindset, Prawase had brought many conflicts upon himself and his faction, which he called "polarization." His first conflicts with peers appeared after he returned from studies at Siriraj Medical School. He tried to push the senior medical doctors' working hours to match the young ones, as his role model, Matthew Block, had done at the University of Colorado. His attempt failed because most senior doctors did not want to add to their already heavy workload (Wasi 2011, 190). This minor conflict from Prawase's desire to reform appears throughout his memoir, including the time when the king intervened, halting Prawase and Tanom's medical reform campaign. This showed that some medical doctor-related factions close to the palace did not entirely agree with Prawase's reformist behavior.

However, there were two big conflicts that, to a certain degree, structurally changed the direction in which the medical units narrated the royal story to the public. The first one was the emergence of the rural doctor network. It was precisely because of this condition that had caused conflict and somewhat polarized the factions within the medical world, especially after the Rural Doctor Foundation had firmly found its ground. According to my interview with Tapanawong, a vanguard of the PMMV faction, Prawase's teachings that aimed for the new standard-setting for medical doctors was one of the main causes of this. The foundation and its members kept on expanding and rapidly rivaled the prior network. The members of the new foundation were principally comprised of the young doctors as they were forced to go and work in the rural area according to the rule imposed. Since the tuition fee for the medical students was so high, the "conditional scholarship" has been imposed in order to boost the number of medical doctors and also to prevent them from leaving the country and working abroad immediately once they graduated. The state will provide the majority of the tuition fee for the student and, in turn, once the medical students have finished their six-year program at the medical school, they have to work at the public hospital—

mostly in the rural region.<sup>66</sup> This is not compulsory as one can willingly pay back in money (around 400,000 baht or 1,380,000 yen) for the governmental subsidy. Moreover, if one is studying at the private institution which initially does not involve any governmental support, this rule is also not applied. In the end, however, most medical students would eventually choose the “intern” track. It is due to the governmental rule that a medical student who does not go through the interning process cannot apply for the specialist course that most of them aim for. Therefore, the majority of medical students have gone through this process and experienced rural treatment to some degree. Due to this condition, the wave caused by the Rural Doctor Foundation, which stands against the ill-treatment the young doctor had received, made them side with the foundation in haste. Moreover, as time passed by, this rural doctor network was gaining greater momentum since the young doctor would eventually become a senior in the field and also gain more authority. Also, the new waves of medical students who had suffered the same experience would add on to and strengthen the network. This development led to the factional polarization: Prawase and his “Sor Network” on one side and the anti-Prawase, usually known as “Sam Mae Krua Group” (กลุ่มสามแม่ครัว)<sup>67</sup>, on the other. The anti-Prawase faction was mainly related to the direct supporters of the PMMV system. Nevertheless, after the rural

---

<sup>66</sup> There are currently four main options for the medical student to work or do an internship in order to return the scholarship. One of these four options at the front may allow the student to do the internship at the medical institution in Bangkok (Chulalongkorn University, Siriraj Medical School, Ramathibodi Hospital, for instance). However, even going by this option, the student still has to complete their first year of internship in the regional hospital or medical institution first and only return to the centralized institution on the second year. Therefore, the intensity of the experience may be somewhat less than on other tracks chosen, but they would still experience similar treatment, more or less.

<sup>67</sup> Sam Mae Krua in Thai means 3 female cooks. The name suggests a group of three leading female doctors who find Prawase’s health policy and dominance of the field rather unacceptable. However, this does not, by no means, mean that every existing Anti-Prawase faction is under this group’s wing. It is not. It is only that this group seems to be the most active one and tends to display their movement in public more than others. Therefore, they have eventually become the representative of the anti-Prawase faction.

doctor network gained more and more momentum in later years, their influence lessened as a result. They had somewhat bounced back some of their influence in 2002 onwards when the declaration of universal health coverage was announced and many medical doctors, particularly those that worked in the medical institutions in the urban areas, were not inclined towards the policy and therefore sided with the anti-Prawase side. Anyhow, this point will be further elaborated on in the next chapter.

As a result of this condition, Prawase could preach his new medically standardized virtues and teachings that sparked a new direction and ideological landscape for the grand scheme. Prawase and his colleagues laid the groundwork for the scholarship and intern period when they were trying to prevent young doctors from working abroad and create more medical treatment units in rural areas. With this move, he had managed to expand his faction, weaken the opposing network's influence, integrate his narrative with the members of the community, and achieve his philosophical reformist goal.

The other main conflict that occurred seemed to stem from his closeness with Sulak and the Social Science Perspectives journal. As aforementioned, the journal was very influential among the younger generations during that time, particularly university students. The contents of the Social Science Perspectives journal were often perceived as radical, extreme, violently progressive, or even a hub of communism in the eyes of Thai elites and old-school conservatives. Sulak himself was also subjected to a similar excuse. Many times, he has been charged with Lese Majeste law – although he deliberately underlined his unfathomed love of the monarchic institution repeatedly and explicitly. Some elites and his supporters found this friendship to be incomprehensible (Wasi 2011, 226). He, therefore, was accused of being a communist leader as well because of the article he wrote for the journal that was published in January 1974 (ibid., 303). It was not clear who had accused him of this, but presumably his opposing faction. The reason behind it might stem from other causes mentioned

above, but the fact is that the journal itself was used as a means to take him down. The accusation was told to King Bhumibol, who, then, had to reaffirm it with Kaset Sanitwong, the Queen's uncle, who was close to Prawase. Kaset had sturdily confirmed to Bhumibol that: "If Dr. Prawase could be counted as a communist, then I am one of them as well" (ibid., 303-304). And he, hence, visited Gen. Saiyood Kerdpol (พลเอก สายหยุด เกิดผล), a deputy commander of the military's anti-communism bureau, to issue a confirmation document for Prawase that he was not a communist but a "humanitarian reformist." Prawase seemed to find the occurrence amusing and had a great impression on Saiyood as well, to the point that he praised the man who was responsible for many deaths during the Cold War in Laos and the people massacred on October 6th, 1976, as a man with a progressive and modern mindset that tried to work for the greatness of the nation (ibid., 304-307).

In any case, the scene implied that Bhumibol hadn't read the article before calling Kaset for confirmation on Prawase, because the article explicitly stated that "the communist terrorists" were one of the nation's greatest threats (Wasi 1974, 62 and 69-71). Prawase was not a communist based on this article alone. However, the article itself contained some "progressive proposals" that may have offended old-school conservatives and thus indicted communism. In fact, Prawase's problematic article outlined his vision of what a society should be. To be or do things "Like Dad", or having King Bhumibol as a role model, became one of the grand narratives of royal storytelling. I will discuss this point in the next section. Also, I would venture to say that Bhumibol's concept of self-sufficient economy (เศรษฐกิจพอเพียง) may have been influenced by the content of this piece. At the very least, I could claim that Prawase's work was seen by the public before Bhumibol's. Prawase's work, which seemed to ground the core concept of Bhumibol's self-sufficient economy, was published and distributed in early January 1974, whilst Bhumibol's first officially accepted mention of self-sufficient was on July 18th, 1974, or a bit more than half a year after Prawase's publication. Of course, the self-sufficient concept was discussed in greater detail in

Prawase's article compared to Bhumibol's first speech on the topic at Kasetsart University (Student Association of Kasetsart University 2021; and The Chaipattana Foundation 2021). Not to mention the fact that the 1997 economic crisis helped to popularize this royal concept (Center for Sufficient Economy, date of access: 5 March 2021).

## The Teaching

Prawase's political projects and teachings revolved around Buddhadasa's core teachings. To understand Prawase's teachings, one must first comprehend Buddhadasa's teachings as interpreted by Prawase. Prawase distilled Buddhadasa's important concepts into five points.

1. Sunyata (สุญญตา) means "state of (self-) emptiness." It implies that everything, including oneself, will eventually die. The act and urge, especially in a materialistic way, is nonsensical.
2. Pratityasamutpada (ปฏิจจสมุปบาท or อีทัปปัจจอยตา), is usually translated to English as "dependent origination." It is one of the Buddhist key teachings that believes that all events or causes (dharma) originate in accordance with or dependent on other causes that come before. To put it simply, if one phenomenon collapses, then the others will as well. It was a structure of countless causes and effects, unlike the fixed causal-effect normally interpreted by the Dhammayuttika. It could be said that this teaching denies the "fixed causal-effect" that is based on the waved-pattern time Dhammayuttika endears. Buddhadasa employed the interpretation that the occurrence of one event was a result of several causes combined, and that such an event would also affect countless possible outcomes as well. This complex interdependence of cause and effect leads to a structure that is severely multifaceted. In many senses, this teaching resembles the

structural function of ecology or environmental studies. Hence, it has gained the support of a lot of those then-considered progressive minds. The denial of fixed causal-effect and insistence on various possibilities of causation is the key idea of Buddhadasa that has brought his synthesization of Buddhism into line almost entirely with the modern way of rationalization, infinite linear time and causal-effect.

3. The idea of righteousness goes beyond good or evil or any kind of polarization (as the result of *Pratityasamutpada*).
4. The interrelationship among religions.
5. Withdrawing oneself from “materialistic fulfillment.”<sup>68</sup> Doing so is the only way for the world to escape its state of crisis (Wasi 2011, 588).

From all of these key points, if I had to condense Prawase’s fundamental teachings into one simple word, it would be “selflessness.” However, this notion of selflessness contains quite a myriad of conditions and specifications of its own. At first glance, this idea of selflessness seems to stem from key points 1, 2, and 5 (and probably 3 as well), which is correct, but Prawase has also taken it a bit further.

From key point 1, Prawase concluded that “the fear of death” should be eradicated or at least controlled. Because everyone’s life will end, there is no need to fear it or cling on to it (*ibid.*, 571–573). He had even stated as clearly as saying: “Buddhism does not teach us to fear death but the contemporary society has its basis

---

<sup>68</sup> Originally, he used the word “วัตถุนิยม” which should be literally translated as ‘materialism.’ However, the definition Prawase, Buddhadasa, and also the general population in Thailand implied is not similar to the concept of materialism in the Marxist tradition or the main driving force of the “base structure” that is commonly understood in the western world and universal academic language. I, hence, translated it to “materialistic fulfillment,” which represents the greed for possessing material or objects (as much as possible), as this is the meaning that it has been used in a Thai context. Prawase had actually mentioned that the need for materialistic fulfillment was based on the concept of “hedonism” in the western hemisphere (Wasi 2011, 574), not the concept of “materialism.”

from the western civilization which teaches one to be selfish, love oneself, and fear death” (ibid., 574). We seek materialistic indulgence that is out of proportion to our needs. It leads to over-consumption and a huge wealth disparity. Prawase sees this as the selfishness rational structure that was founded on the old-school Buddhist rationality (one that was originated by Chaofah Mongkut) which had been tainted but dominated the society, together with the western influences that overly aroused the society’s materialistic greed. Prawase adheres to Buddhadasa’s infinite causal-effect structure (point 2) and believes the new paradigm should replace the old one. This is the teaching of Buddhadasa that he reveres the most and it is the core mechanism in hijacking “modern rationality” as well. Prawase’s interpretation and conceptualization of Buddhadasa’s causal-effect structure resembles modern scientific rationality. They are both based on the infinite linear time where “cause X leads to effect Y” runs on. The endless possibilities of cause X’s effect can be seen. In short, “Y” is not given. For example, if person A is late for class (cause X), he must solve an emerging problem (effect Y). This effect Y could be hiring a taxi instead of taking the train, rushing to school without showering, or calling in sick. All are plausible. We judge that they are plausible according to the scientific possibility. This is what academically known as the “regime of truth,” a term coined by Michel Foucault. In other words, if A claims he rushed to school by growing wings from his back and flying directly to class, we would consider it a lie or at best an analogy. This is because the scientific possibility that performs as the regime of truth dictates us so. This scientific regime of truth could be called the core essence of “modern rationality.” Instead of introducing science, Prawase hijacked the modern narrative of Thai society by mechanizing Buddhist causal-effect and introducing it as a narrative tool. This “Buddhist causal-effect structure” replaced “scientific rationality” by demeaning western values and redefining or asserting Buddhist concepts into modern scientific or democratic concepts. The Buddhist causal-effect gained the Thai regime of truth position under the perceived notion of “modernization or progressive.” It is perceived this way because it tackles



the old-school way of reasoning—the wave-patterned narrative which displays the fixed causal-effect—without the society realizing that this “new and seem-to-be more educated way of thinking” is simply the same old Buddhist content that fixes its narrative framework to fit more with the progression of the world.<sup>69</sup>

Prawase believes that the superior causal-effect structure introduced by Buddhadasa should replace the one introduced by Chaofah Mongkut. This ultimately makes him a kind of essentialist. This stance of his makes him flighty or even carefree towards political accountability since he lives his mind beyond good or evil (key point 3)—as long as the essence or “righteousness” he has opted for can be progressed.

---

<sup>69</sup> If I have to summarize Buddhadasa’s core teachings in a more simplify fashion, I would say that Buddhadasa had changed the “format” of karma from cyclical and perpetual to linear and instantaneous. In a nutshell, Buddhadasa disagreed with the interpretation of Buddhism left by Chaofah Mongkut that still was reasoning based on the fixed causal-effect as shown in the waved-patterned time. Although it is somewhat doable to put such a way of reasoning into the modern framework ultimately it is quite forceful and goes against the nature of infinite linear rationality which produces a fluid or unfixed causal effect.

Therefore, Buddhadasa proposed a new interpretation that far more fitted with the modern way of rationalization. He rejected the merits of all most every kind of ritual or superstitious teachings. He denied the importance of the Sangha or institutionalized monkhood as the way to enlightenment, elaborating that everyone could attain enlightenment as long as they are strictly following the Buddhist conduct and way of thinking. He underlined the importance of the present and reinterpreted karmic logic. He portrayed the karmic law in a new form. Receiving good results back from committing a good deed does not appear in the same format as “A did a positive thing to B, and B would eventually return the favor or such act will be accumulated as one’s Parami and will eventually return to the doer one day.” Karmic is instant here, for Buddhadasa, the goodness in return is the positivity one gains in committing the act itself. This, for him, was a superior form of goodness since it occurs in the mental or spiritual realm of the doer. This creed, in short, urges people to be selfless and does not hope for anything in return, and once they could do so, goodness will naturally accompany their good deed.

Since his teaching does not require waiting for the karma in return and is pretty much intangible and instantaneous, it matches completely with the causation of the infinite linear time because it starts and ends linearly and doesn’t require the wait or accumulation of Parami to one day return.

Therefore, he could befriend Sarit Tanarat, Tanom Kittikajorn, Saiyood Kerdpol, and so on regardless of their political evilness. Prawase used them to achieve his goal of integrating the remastered Buddhist path into modern (Thai) society. And since selflessness or the ability to act for the greater good was what constituted a "proper or ought-to-be person" in his eyes, it was possible that Prawase could regard blood-soaked humans like Sarit or Tanom as "good people" if all the bad things they did were for the greater good. Because of this, Thai critical scholars often see him as an anti-democratic faction who does not speak the language of rights and liberty (see Taweesak 2019). Although I do concur that it is accurate to categorize him as undemocratic or probably even anti-democratic, Prawase is far from someone who does not speak the democratic language. He understands the importance and impact of democracy and modern principles, so he tends to use them and twist their meaning or usage to match his goals. Like authoritarianism, he sees it as a means to an end. One of the examples could be seen when he underlined the meaning of liberty that matched Thai society and, for him, it was a superior form of liberty compared to the western universalized one since it does not attach itself with "materialistic fulfillment" (key point 5). This is also counted as an example of hijacking modern scientific or democratic words by asserting the Buddhist teachings I mentioned earlier. He said:

*Liberty in Buddhism goes beyond the definition given by the western. Buddhism views humans as slaves to their own greed due to their own ignorance. This condition forces people to take conflicted actions both for themselves and others, creating broad unrest. But, when one can eradicate ignorance and wisdom blooms, one's mind will be released from its slavery. This is true liberty that will lead to happiness or peace (Wasi 2011, 192; See also Wasi 2019).*

Prawase is the epitome of the Thai storytelling trinity (Monarchy, Purified Buddhism, and Modern Science)<sup>70</sup>. He has strong ties to the royal family and believes in Buddhadasa's Buddhist preaching, despite being a medical doctor trained in a materialistic or empirical framework. A human-agent like Prawase, thus, is the prime example of how this whole system functions and engrains itself into the society, creating a new development of its own logic in contrast to that of the universally accepted one. Prawase is also aware of his role as a bridge between materialistic knowledge (as a medical doctor) and the spiritually comprehensive realm (Wasi 2011, 578). And he tried to instill the Buddhist teachings that inspired him in the medical officers (ibid., 575–577). The importance of medical doctors in storytelling was also well understood by Prawase. He explicitly elaborated that “*Medical doctors are influential in the society because their work is related to the life and death of people. Therefore, the more people fear death, the more powerful medical doctors will be... Most people might not have a chance to appear in court, but everyone would face illness and death. Hence, they valued the doctor's power more than that of the judge* (ibid., 575).” Anyhow, reading this at present under the conventional understanding of democracy, one may find Prawase's political projects quite conservative and somewhat behave like Tibetan monks who incorporate the Buddhist teaching into politics. But within the political context at that time, where Cold War influence was still immense and the scientific-materialistic comprehension of the public was still in its formative years, his political projects—the Buddhadasa's Buddhist Utopia—were already quite

---

<sup>70</sup> Prawase had replaced the base essence of scientific rationality into Buddhist reasoning as interpreted by Buddhadasa. The whole category of physics, chemistry, biology, or democracy has been elaborated by Buddhadasa's teaching via Prawase's wording. This is the process I call “Hijacking Democracy and Scientific Regime of Truth.” In a way, it could be seen as another form of “copying the real” as the case of the modern mandala that copies the borderline. In this case, it is the copy of the modern notions and content and makes people believe in the copy more than the original itself.

reformative. In the Cold War era, reform and progressivism were unpalatable to many, so some even accused Prawase of being a communist.

His article was published in the Social Science Perspectives journal, which influenced many of the younger generations at the time, so it was not surprising that his peers found his teaching incompatible with theirs. However, re-reading the article reveals many of his board ideas, proving the consistency of his preaching as well as some recent policies related to Prawase. To me, his 1974 article “Recreating Thai Society Anew” (สร้างสรรค์สังคมไทยขึ้นมาใหม่) was a compilation of earlier key points and political proposals he wished to see implemented. I will put myself on the edge and argue that the fundamental ideas found in this article were the ideas that were responsible or at least contributed a fair share of influence on the 6 grand narratives of Thai politics that were related to the storytelling of King Bhumibol, although the direct policy stemmed from this piece of work may emerge at different times. Some were sooner than others. It is these narratives that he has been using to replace the modern concept of both democratic value and scientific knowledge by asserting the Buddhist content or definition into them, a process I call hijacking (liberal) modernity or democracy. The six grand narratives related to Prawase’s teachings are:

1. Thai style democracy (ประชาธิปไตยแบบไทยๆ) which could be called the central theme of Prawase’s teachings. This is a tailor-made political condition that befits the Thai context which is superior to the western standardized version.
2. Self-sufficient economy, one of the main propaganda narratives of King Bhumibol, whose inaugural was around half a year after this article was published and got popularized again in 1999 after the 1997 economic crisis.
3. Pracharat policy, a policy that has become the main engine of Prayuth Chan-o-cha (ประยุทธ์ จันทร์โอชา) government during late Bhumibol’s reign until now.

4. The organic nation, the concept that Prawase had allegorized his knowledge of the human body as a medical doctor into the political project of the nation.
5. The sickness and the cure of the nation. This point was highly related to the previous ones and somewhat acted as the theme for his whole political proposals. If Thai-style democracy was the theme of the “answer” for Thailand’s political crisis, then the sickness played the role of the thematic “cause” of the problem.
6. The king as the role model, or the new narration of “(Be) Like Dad.” The new direction for the royal storytelling from the previously dominated “From Dad” narrative during PMMV and materialistic developments.

### *Thai Style Democracy*

I have elaborated on the “sickness” of the nation in the introduction chapter, so this will be a brief summary, and Pracharat policy will be discussed in detail in its own chapter. Here, I will only concentrate on the 4 other points: Thai-style democracy, Self-sufficient economy, Organic nation, and the “(Be) Like Dad” narrative.<sup>71</sup> First, Prawase sees the western model of ideology and social tradition as the sickness that erodes Thai society. The more western-style Thais follow, hoping to improve things, which is actually like taking the wrong dose of medicine, making things worse (Wasi 1974, 59-60 and 62). Thailand should use the new method he transcribed to replace the old one. This new method used the king as a model for a Buddhist political life (see *ibid.*, 62 and 69; and Prawase 2011, 303). This is the essence of “Thai-style democracy.” The way to fight western mental illness is to develop our own logic. Prawase’s solution to the structural degree problem is to be selfless. However, one person’s selflessness

---

<sup>71</sup> Prawase seems to (intentionally) omit this “(Be) Like Dad” stance when King Bhumibol had passed away and the new reign had begun (see Wasi 2019).

will never be enough, so he aims to collect all the "selflessness" a society has to offer and consolidate them in a "systematic" way. This view of his will is carried on and has become the basis of both his concept of an organic nation, which also originates his renowned concepts like "Triangle that moves the mountain" (สามเหลี่ยมเขยื้อนภูเขา) or "Chickens in the coop" (ไก่ในเล้า)<sup>72</sup> – and Pracharat policy.



*Figure 17: As Minister of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, Anek Laothamatas stated that Thailand should develop its own set of social science concepts rather than importing them from the west. He denounced the ‘west’ (even calling it a ‘sickness’) and urged Thailand to go its own way [25 November 2020].*

<sup>72</sup> It should be noted here that Prawase borrowed this word from Prayudh Payutto, another prominent figure in the second-synthesized Buddhism phase. Along with Buddhadasa, they re-conceptualized Buddhism and popularized the idea, contending against the dominating Dhammayuttikanikkaya, which they believed to be tainted already. Prawase has a close relationship with Prayudh Payutto as well, as he was the one who helped Prayudh with his online Tripitaka. Nevertheless, I didn’t investigate him much because Buddhadasa played a far larger role in Prawase’s indoctrination, which in turn affected the whole society.

Similarly, with the logic of the fear of death, in fact, Prawase's proposal undermines or even reverses the fundamental concept of liberal modernity, which is that one must own one's own life and possessions (also known as "individual self-ownership" and "right to life"). This is the essence of modern logic because it underpins all rules, political principles, etc. Rules are enforced to guarantee the well-beings of lives in the society and their possession, likewise for principles and other forms of modern liberal narratives (see also Wongswangpanich 2016). But, once Prawase declared the need to be free of fear of death, he rejected the entire foundation of liberal modernity. Human lives are not the most important aspect of the story, so their sacrifice for something considered more valuable is logical. If, as Prawase has stated many times, the common peacefulness/calmness and happiness are the most treasured values of this structure, and one must be selfless, then incidents like October 6th, 1976 or the red shirt movement massacre in May 2010 would be considered logically valid under this condition. No investigation and erasing public memory of the 1976 massacre or the Big Cleaning Day that immediately followed the end of the 2010 massacre would be examples of selflessness in this story. This is how heavy the deletion of fear of death in the modern context is (see also Wasi 2011, 572). As I had pointed out, the Thai style democracy is like a theme or the frame which represents the new direction of Thai royal narratives; it is where the Prawase's other royal narratives reside and operate but it is not the narrative itself. The main narratives that were fueled by Prawase and operated under this theme from 1974 onwards to the end of Bhumibol's reign, at the very least, were the organic nation, "(Be) Like Dad," and the self-sufficient economy.

### *Organic Nation*

Plato's *Republic* is one of the most famous examples of reducing a vast and complex entity or concept like the world, reality, or wholeness into a miniature version

that we are familiar with in our sense-perception domain. Prawase was doing the same thing when he conceptualized "the nation." As a doctor, his main sense of perception is medical, as shown by his metaphor of the national or global crisis as a sickness, germ, or disease. Compared to the existence of the universe or biological life, the emergence of human civilization is relatively young. In this regard, Prawase asserted that the formation of society occurs last. It is still in its infancy and has not been perfected. So he seeks the simulation of what has already been perfected: physics and biology. I will discuss his "mass allegory" in a later chapter about Pracharat policy and only elaborate on the biology part here (Wasi 2019). Based on his knowledge of the human body and its biological function, he categorizes the human body as the ideal model of a nation. This is similar to the organic nation concept discussed in the west, particularly by Thomas Hobbes. But Prawase, with his modern medical knowledge, takes the organic nation to a cellular level, which he calls "the molecule" (ဝေဇ္ဇာ).

Prawase began by stating that nature creates the human body perfectly. It maintains the physical structure and interacts with the environment. Every cell understands its own function and can see the big picture of what would benefit the whole system; they share a common goal and direction (My interview with Prawase Wasi in 2018; and also Wasi 2019). An organism's flawlessness begins with a single perfect cell; one that knows its function and can curate what is good for it. Prawase says we should follow this perfect biological model to take our society to its transcendental state. Everyone is the smallest unit of a large community, like a nation, followed by a family or small community. If a nation is a human body, then each individual or small community is a cell. The cell attributes that Prawase seems to endear the most are (1) the cell membrane, (2) the autonomy, and (3) its natural perception of systematical wholeness.

Let me elaborate on Prawase's three main attributes of the human cell as his model for the perfect society. The cell membrane has three main functions. First, it



acts as a border or wall between the cell mass and its environment; in short, it is the only cell structure that connects and interacts with the environment. Second, it is the cell's curator. Since it is the only structure that interacts with the environment, it receives information and then curates and specifies how the cell should adapt and behave. The cell membrane would judge what is good or beneficial for the cell and only select those that would improve it. Finally, as a wall and curator, the cell membrane is the first line of defense against negative environmental impacts, which Prawase calls "sickness" (Wasi, 1974). As a result of this selection and adaptation, the cell will become a specific organ that serves, functions, and maintains structural balance. Prawase suggests that each individual or community should take note of these qualities and follow them. The environment (the west and universal standard of thought in this regard (ibid.)) should be understood, but only the beneficial ones should be copied. To develop the curating layer of Thai society, education and knowledge are vital (Wasi 2011). In the case of a small community, he proposed an "organic council" made up of the community's elders to guide and function like a cell membrane (My interviews with Prawase Wasi in 2018 and with Wasi in 2019). Because the western lifestyle and political regimes mobilize arrays of trouble, we should curate only the portion that is good for us and blend it in with what we have in order to create a system that matches our uniqueness (Wasi 1974; and Wasi 2011). For this, Prawase had deliberately stated: "When the world is in the wrong, and we have yet noticed the problem and even follow such a wrong course, we would eventually blunder into the distress that will result in the overall decrease of happiness in Thai society" (Wasi 1974, 62).

Autonomy means the cell-transformed organs are aware of their supposed mechanism. For example, the heart knows it must beat to circulate blood within the body, and the lung knows it must breathe. Cellular autonomy is vital for a smooth body system. This property of cells is fundamental to the centuries-old concept of "organic nation" popularized by Hobbes. Prawase also calls for autonomy or

functionalistic quality to establish his Buddhist utopia of eternal balance and peace. The Buddhist precept says society has no crime, so the locks and keys are unnecessary (Wasi 1974, 59). He asserts that every member of society should be aware of their duties. One should perform one's duties and obligations without external motivation, such as an excessive desire for materialistic fulfillment. (Wasi 1974; My interview with Prawase Wasi in 2018; and Wasi 2019) In short, it's his core idea of selflessness. Prawase conceptualized and popularized this idea in the 1980s when he had a nationwide network like the rural doctor and also penetrated many civil society organizations. "The triangle that moves the mountain" and "the chickens in the coop" are the most well-known examples. His 2019 speech showed a significant conceptual development of thought. However, this notion has at the very least stemmed since early 1974, as he mentioned:

*Society is comparable to the human body. The organs that comprise them work together to form the body and live together in a balanced manner. If one organ malfunctions or is infected with a disease and the sickness that originates from just one organ spreading, it could cause the whole body to cease. Likewise, for society, if any part suffers distress, particularly if it happens to the majority, the whole society will also suffer the same sickness. Society can only be blissful once the sense of conformity has widely occurred and the social obligation has arisen (Wasi 1974, 61).*

Finally, the natural perception of systematic wholeness by the cell or organ is probably the "end result" of the first and second attributes combined. With its autonomy comes the responsibility to automatically contribute to the system as a whole. Identifying its deficiencies and excesses, and acting as function allows (My interview with Prawase Wasi in 2018; and Wasi 2019). It is the epitome of selflessness in Prawase's cosmology. He adores this prescribed utopia so much that he calls those

who lack it "the cancer cell" (Wasi 2019). The system would normally get rid of them on a regular basis since this type of cell emerges constantly, but if not in excess, our body would have its own way of dealing with them (Wasi 1974; and Wasi 2019). It is therefore not surprising to see Prawase's indifferent reaction to the violent means of subduing the progressive movement that brought chaos and disorder to his under-constructed utopia. On this note, it could be said that he has been forcing society to conform to his creed, regardless of his awareness, since he could sincerely believe that he was really doing it for the greater good. Similarly, with the Yellow Shirts, who, at least during their active time, truly believed that they were doing great deeds. This concept of organic nation that asserts the Buddhist teaching into science—in this case "biology"—is also a part of the "hijacking modern science and democratic concepts" mentioned earlier.<sup>73</sup>

### *(Be) Like Dad*

Personally, I think this is the most important contribution Prawase and his network have made to Bhumibol's narrative. It's a new storyline and so influential. Due to its unique characteristics, it directs society's behavior. Thailand would eventually become ascetic – believing and acting religiously according to Bhumibol's narrative or a gateway to Prawase's dreamed Buddhist Utopia. To achieve the noble obligation and full commitment of selflessness, society needs an example that could serve as a guidepost and bring a sense of togetherness. Prawase seemed to understand

---

<sup>73</sup> Prawase's way of integrating scientific knowledge, particularly biology, with the elaboration of social practice, or "what ought to be/do," is not at all "new." Leonard Hobhouse (1864 - 1911) had introduced a rather similar idea since 1901 in his classic and famous work "Mind in Evolution" that elaborates human social behavior based on the practice of the evolution of the organism (see also Yerkes 1916). However, Hobhouse and Prawase's foundations and goals for the marriage between science and social conduct are entirely different. Hobhouse's goal was liberalism, while Prawase's was a Buddhist Utopia. Hence, their proposals and expected regimes of truth are quite polar opposite.

this need and thus provided a role model for the population. To achieve the Buddhist utopia, he combined the Buddhist teaching with scientific observation, introducing the king as the pinnacle of this combination. He began by contrasting the presidential and the monarchical system to show the latter's superiority. He claimed that even after the election, the negative feelings lingered because of the contestation and slandering of opponents. Also, the president lacked parami (sacredness) and thus couldn't serve as the nation's spiritual leader. The monarchy, particularly King Bhumibol, possessed these vital qualities and helped the nation weather numerous crises. Thus, Thai society should not adopt the Western view that the monarchy is unnecessary or wasteful. In fact, one should find tune with the monarchy and apply a different perspective on the throne to see the new light (Wasi 1974, 69). In this respect, it infers that in order for Prawase to achieve this "(Be) Like Dad" narrative, the "From Dad" narrative must be successful in its function to a certain extent. This is because the "Like Dad" narrative mirrored the "From Dad" narrative in at least two ways. The first was the highlighted "leading agency of the narrative," King Bhumibol, who represents benevolence. Regardless, the first narrative used "benevolence" to show the king's superiority over his subjects, while the second used it as a supreme example or model of selflessness. The "Like Dad" narrative also acted as a reactionary movement to the "From Dad" storyline. The "Like Dad" narrative acted as a project to purge the "western-influence" out of the Thai realpolitik scene, as perceived by the public. It keeps on shouting, "stop following the western lifestyle that will make us greedier and greedier for excessive materialistic needs" and offers an alternative way of life to replace the western standard of conduct. That is the core essence of this "Like Dad" storyline.

For this reason, he declared the king the people's role model (ibid., see also Wasi 2011, 269 303 328). To love and revere the king, one must emulate his qualities: honesty, benevolence, selflessness, lack of obsession with material gain, and perfect observance of Buddhist precepts (ibid.). In fact, Prawase ranked King Bhumibol higher than Buddhist monks in terms of exemplifying Buddhist doctrines and virtues. As he

had stated, the Sangha, or Buddhist monk institution, could not truly lead Thai society intellectually because they focused on rituals. According to him, the way Buddhist monks teach the masses should be changed to reflect the Buddhadasa approach of integrating the doctrine with current issues and phenomena of the world while ignoring the supernatural tales that often accompany the doctrines. As usual, he urged the "non-excessive consumption of materialistic fulfillment" (ibid., 68).

The proposal to have the king as the role model was colossal in terms of the narrative's impact. Not only that it paved the way for the new branch of storytelling for Bhumibol, but its influence was probably among the greatest ones in Thai history and had been recited in many from across the board until the present days, long past the expiry date of the king himself. I would like to illustrate some of the examples of how popularized and widespread this line of the royal story has become, which also portrayed the importance of Prawase in this part. The Office of the National and Economic Development Council has published a series of quotes, deeds, and activities of King Bhumibol as a role model for the people to follow (Office of National Economic and Social Development Council n.d.). Books that directly affiliate with this "(Be) Like Dad" notion blossomed all over the country, for instance, *Growing along Dad's Path* (เติบโตตามรอยพ่อ), *Be Like Dad, From Kor to Hor* (ตามรอยพ่อ จาก ก-ฮ), *Record of Dad's 99 Teachings to Follow* (บันทึกตามรอย 99 คำสอนพ่อ), *70 Royal Teachings that the People Remember* (70 คำสอนพระราชาทวยราษฎร์น้อมรำลึก), and so on. The SME's (Small and Medium Enterprise) strategy with the royal teaching (SME Thailand Club n.d.) as the model also came by. Museums with "(Be) Like Dad" exhibition (Thailand Museum Pass n.d.) has been a common scene, not to mention the student exhibitions that were run by the schools nationwide (Loeipittayakom School n.d.). Social-related programs run by the private sector in Thailand also take this similar route and collaborate with the royal narrative of following the king's meritorious examples. These examples can also be seen everywhere in the nation, quite literally (The Power of Human Energy n.d.). Television and the mass media have been broadcasting this notion repetitively

for decades. Tour routes that are inspired by the royal projects and working paths have been established as well (Wongnai 2019). Text books and practice books to gauge one's closeness to the path of King Bhumibol have also been merchandised. This clearly represents how popular the narrative is (AKSORN n.d.). The notion itself has also become the workshop manual for the bureaucratic staff and local administrative staff as well (Department of Provincial Administration 2017).<sup>74</sup> Not to mention a number of songs and simulations like movies and TV series that simply keep reciting Bhumibol's doctrines directly to the public eyes and ears (see for example SUJIPULI Film Production Studio). Songs like *Be Like Dad* (ตามรอยพ่อ)<sup>75</sup>, *Follows the King's Course* (ตามรอยพระราชา)<sup>76</sup>, *Walk along with Dad's Footstep* (เดินตามรอยพ่อ) which pictured the medical doctor who inspired by the greatness of King Bhumibol that eventually changed his life's perspective<sup>77</sup> or *The King of the Fairy Tale* (พระราชาในนิทาน)<sup>78</sup> which was produced by Sathira Dhammasatarn who has a strong relationship with Prawase and had occasionally worked together are some of the examples of how insurmountably popular and widespread the narrative has become.

I may have shown many examples, but they are only a small part of what has actually occurred in the society. Of course, Prawase Wasi isn't the only one to blame, but his work shows that he was one of the main initiators of the story and played a significant role in its success. The more variety it has, the easier it is to be recited by various other entities, and thus it gains its own life that it could live without the original. This narrative path allowed the royal politics to continue even after Bhumibol's death because it focuses on his example and deed. In short, it urges its audiences to be the active slaves of the story. On the contrary, the former storyline of

---

<sup>74</sup> This booklet is categorized as the "work manual" for the staff.

<sup>75</sup> See Carabao Official (n.d.)

<sup>76</sup> See Bird Thongchai (n.d.)

<sup>77</sup> See Collection of Artists (n.d.)

<sup>78</sup> See Satian Dhamma Sathan (n.d.)

the benevolent king underlines him as an active agent, and this storyline makes its audiences the active slaves of the king and only the passive slaves of the plot. They would wait for the benevolence to come and praise the incalculable royal love. The new “Like Dad” story has given the whole project a religious touch in terms of story’s structures—a dogma, if you will—that even if the prophet died, the followers could continue its ritual. Thus, the new storyline gives the royal narrative non-exclusivity. The story or project no longer belongs to the monolithic god-like being; it now belongs to everyone who shares the great one’s dogma. To summarize, the first batch of royal storytelling, “From Dad”, is portrayed by royal envoys like PMMV and other royal materialistic projects, while the second batch, “Like Dad”, is portrayed by Prawase Wasi along with others. Also, just because I have divided the royal storytelling into batches doesn't mean the second batch replaced the first; rather, it’s a reinforcement rather than a replacement.

### *Self-Sufficient Economy*

A self-sufficient economy is in fact a part of the “Like Dad” or a dogmatic storyline, but its influence is so colossal that I think it deserves its own section and elaboration here. For decades, the Like Dad narratives and dogmas have been produced. Nevertheless, most of them are quite intangible or even spiritual, like being diligent as presented in *The Story of Mahajanaka* (written by King Bhumibol in 1997), doing good for itself and the nation (not to be celebrated) as illustrated in *A Man Called INTREPID* by William Stevenson (translated by King Bhumibol in 1993), and so forth. Still, self-sufficient economy and also New Theory, a narrative that often tagged along, take an entirely opposite direction. They are highly tangible, materialistic, and practicable, making them highly effective political dogmas. Prawase is also a major player in the creation and maintenance of this hugely influential narrative. Prawase’s article in *Social Science Perspectives* in 1974, almost 7 months before King Bhumibol

addressed it for the first time at Kasetsart University, elaborated on the idea of a self-sufficient economy. Also, Bhumibol's first statement was far less detailed than Prawase's. The dogmatic narrative has been popularized since 1999 as the royal suggestion for the 1997 economic crisis. In this regard, the economic context is undeniably important. Since then, a self-sufficient economy has been incorporated into Thailand's compulsory basic education curriculum, and attempts have been made to theorize and conceptualize it to new heights. Also, it gives the narrative a much more scientific tone and grammar.

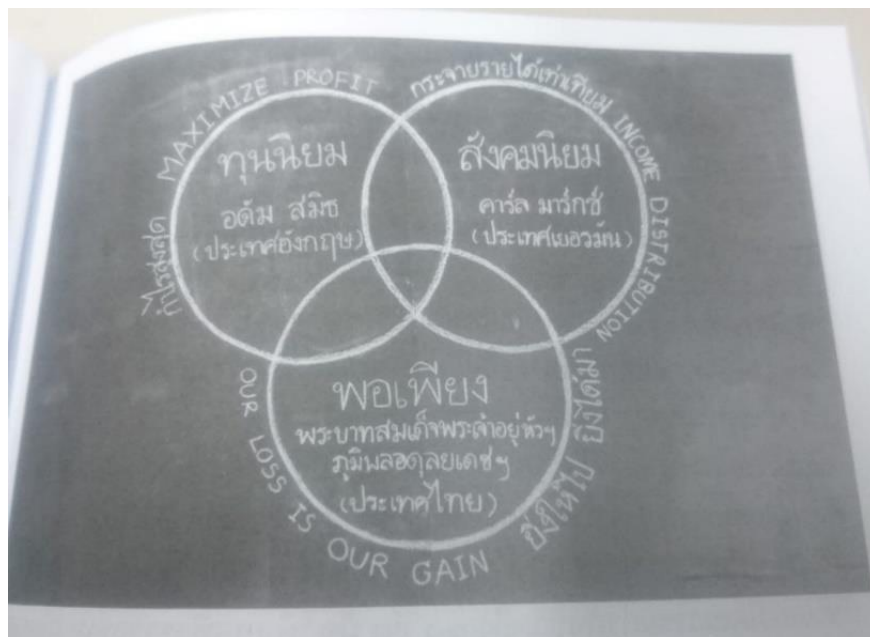


Figure 18: Conceptualizing "Self-Sufficient Economy."<sup>79</sup>

In Figure 18, the upper-left circle with "maximize profit" explains capitalism's core value and its creator, Adam Smith of England. The upper-right circle depicts socialism's main values and its German creator, Karl Marx. King Bhumibol's "self-sufficient economy" circle represents the middle ground between capitalism and

<sup>79</sup> The picture comes from the educational book published by the *Self-Sufficient Economy Learning Center* (ศูนย์การเรียนรู้เศรษฐกิจพอเพียง).



socialism, with the greatest yet most oxymoronic description like "our loss is our gain." This thought process extends into Pracharat Policy, which will be discussed in a later chapter. More loss equals more gain. It may sound intriguing or even confusing, but loss and gain are two distinct things. The idea is that letting go of materialistic possessions or needs will lead to greater spiritual and mental fulfillment. As a result, the two sides of the scale are completely incomparable. Not to mention the inability to calculate actual intangible gain. At least since 1974, as he mentioned, Prawase had laid the groundwork for such an idea.

*People with a lot of monetary power might use it to invest in something that harms society, like the massage parlor or the invention of unnecessary materialistic commodities such as cosmetics or candies. Then, they would use their monetary power to hire mass media and also other means, like employing some clowns to propagandize and urging people to yearn more. Once people have their desire for unnecessary things, they will eventually be at a loss. This demonstrates that "hunger for money" is the power that dictates the course of every faction in society without rumination on the common social loss. The irresponsibility towards the greater good and actions that lead to the loss and inferno of the public can be found all over Thailand (Wasi 1974, 61).*

These were the "more losses" from "more gains" in Prawase's teachings. He added that these useless and harmful goods, places, and promotions "must" be eliminated. Materialistic products should be used sparingly and with care (ibid., 62-63). And of course, only the superior mind that has escaped the universal chaos of western thought and entered the profundity of Buddhist selflessness like Prawase knows what materials are "needed." He even stated what was later considered the dogma that the amount spent should be in accordance with one's own financial status. (ibid., 63) And, as stated, he laid this foundation before Bhumibol established his own

self-sufficient economy. It was Prawase's and Saneh Jamrik's<sup>80</sup> (Kitirianglarp 2009, 22-23), combined vision of the self-sufficient economy that resulted in an unparalleled royal narrative from 1999 onwards. The attempt to "modernize and intellectualize" self-sufficient economy can be found in many other aspects as well from asserting the notion to international academic journal (see for example Mongsawad 2010) to the modern architectural project (see for example ADF web magazine n.d.).

To sum up, I believe Prawase resembled Plato (or Socrates) in his creation of Kallipolis, a utopian city that eschewed contemporary politics (see Plato 2004). Similarly, Prawase aspires to create a Buddhist utopia based on what he considers good social behavior. Plato, on the other hand, knew that his political project was not for everyone, and he did not want the majority of the population to become philosophic citizens, because "a philosopher bakes no bread." However, Prawase seeks to callously inject his goal, his world, into everyone. He sees the nation as his own patient, able to dictate its behavior as he sees fit, disregarding people's consent. His dogma would eventually become the main practice and desire in Thai society. It was later dubbed "Khon Dee" politics.<sup>81</sup> This notion of Khon Dee or good man, once boiled down, its core concept "selflessness" as proposed by Prawase would appear.<sup>82</sup> Its

---

<sup>80</sup> See also Aporsuwan and Mektairat (1986).

<sup>81</sup> Khon Dee (คนดี) literally means "Good Person" or "Moral Man." However, the core component of what defines goodness in this case is entirely different from the universally accepted notion. For the Thai case during Bhumibol narrative as the dominant storytelling, the notion of Khon Dee could be categorized into 2 types, very much related to the type of "Salim:" the fundamental type that relates this notion with Buddhist Parami or the collection of sacredness within the cyclical rationality where King Bhumibol was the perfect agency of the perception, and the progressive type where the concept of Khon Dee is influenced by Prawase's narrative of 'selflessness' with Bhumibol as the perfect example of such deed.

<sup>82</sup> Since the core idea of Buddhadasa's teaching is being selfless so one could gain positive mental or spiritual feedback in return and focusing on practicing or following the proper practice without the need to be ritualized and become a monk to attain enlightenment, his teaching could sum up into "the practice of selflessness."

emergence and widespread acceptance would become a core principle of the more progressive royalists or royal-nationalists (ราชาชาตินิยม). The relation of this teaching (self-sufficient economy) and the notion of nationalism where “nation (the people), the land, and the king” tied together could also be found in the way one of the prominent self-sufficient learning centers named itself: “Ban Kong Por” or the dad’s home (Ban Kong Por n.d.). The name indicates the king as the representation of the nation, which, in the use of the word, means both the land and the people, not just the people.

### **Progressive Salim and the New Categorical Successor of Bhumibol**

The Prawase faction’s new royal storytelling dogma and credo contributed to a new interpretation of the Bhumibol narrative among believers, resulting in the new Salim category. Before, the Salim Fundamentalism, which glued their interpretation to the synthesized Buddhism revised by Chaofah Mongkut, had very loose and unsystematic dogma. Anything goes, as long as it counts as a good deed or karma

---

Just like the scientific regime of truth that we make our judgment on what is right or wrong, credible or not credible base on scientific rationality. For example, if I say “I just had a very hot Tom Yum Kung for lunch, it so hot that I could breathe fire.” Everyone here would automatically understand that I am joking or simply speak something untrue because the scientific regime of truth dictates us to think this way and consider this value judgement as rational. However, if this similar sentence was spoken 3,000 years ago, it might be perceived as credible in some civilizations that had different narratives as its regime of truth.

Likewise, for Khon Dee politics, the value judgement has been placed on the notion of selflessness. The action of the people will be judged as good or bad, tolerable or intolerable based on their intention to be selfless. So, Thaksin was once revered as Khon Dee or a selfless billionaire who sacrifice himself for the nation and everyone adored him even the citified folks. However, once the perception of him turned into a corrupted selfish being, these similar people were ready to throw everything at him in order to get rid of the guy. They had even chosen to trade democratic regime to oust him because, for these people of Khon Dee politics, democracy is simply the vessel or means to achieve the system of selflessness.

personally. Obviously, the way in which the interpretation of goodness was framed was through Buddhist rationality. So, gratitude and returning received benevolence (กตัญญูกตเวทิตี) are epitomized forms of good karma. In this regard, King Bhumibol, who had made himself the symbolic and pinnacle of the nation's benevolence by means of various materialistic developments and agencies, stood as the destiny for those who conducted good deeds. In this sense, anything that could be done under his name, regardless of relevancy, could be counted as good karma in the Salim Fundamentalism aspect. But the new Salim thought otherwise. They believe that good deeds must be systematic and aligned with current materialistic knowledge, as Buddhadasa's teachings and Prawase's interpretation. So, the progressive credo had to be adopted. This new category was named "Progressive Salim." I named them that because they tended to be more progressive-minded than the rest of the Salim community. Also, just because this work conceptualized Salim into two categories does not mean they are completely separate. In fact, depending on the issue, they often intersect or even alternate. It is the orientations of thoughts and interpretations one could take in regard to Bhumibol's narrative. The concepts of benevolence, central to Salim Fundamentalism, and selflessness, central to the Progressive Salim dogma and credo, are always intertwined. They are hardly separable. In terms of origin, they both come from the same source, the Vessantara Jataka, an important and well-known tale of Theravada Buddhism. The tale tells of Prince Vessantara's Parami building (a past life of the Buddha). It was built on benevolence and sacrifice—giving away everything he owned, even his family. His sacrificial acts embodied the Buddhist ideal of perfect generosity (see Jory 2017). It was simply how the two Salim groups distilled and perceived this story (Jataka). The differences lead to different "narrative frames." One is more fundamental, while the other is more progressive. The word "more progressive" is in a sense that it is aligned more with the modern scientific temporal perception and rationality of causal effect. Salim Fundamentalism tends to interpret the act of benevolence not purely for the cause of "benevolence itself" but partly for one's own

Parami building or collection of good karma as well. It is not entirely "selfless." They aim to accumulate their own Buddhist merit, which could be called "selfishness." The Progressive Salim, in contrast, has been gunning their path for the "selflessness in itself," and that is why they tend to see themselves as "morally – and perhaps rationally – superior" to the former category. In short, the Salim school of thought was interchangeable and nearly inseparable. Therefore, one Salim may lean towards one category over the other, and it is only in this regard that this work is meant for the member or human representing each category of Salim. They are not always completely distinct.

Hence, the new dogma and credo not only established the categorical distinction between Salim Fundamentalism and Progressive Salim, but also transformed the two categories. Since Salim Fundamentalism could act in the name of the king and his goodwill, their notion of goodness centered on King Bhumibol. So, their myriad acts to portray goodness in remembrance of his benevolence were done under the rationality of the Chaofah Mongkut's synthesized Buddhism. Bhumibol was the personification of good karma in this sense. However, for Progressive Salim, the core idea was selflessness itself, not the king himself. King Bhumibol was taken as the role model of "what kind of selflessness" should have been done and followed. In short, King Bhumibol personified the entire narrative upon which the Salim Fundamentalists based their rationality. But King Bhumibol, in the Progressive Salim's mindset, was replaceable. If a better model of selflessness came along, or if King Bhumibol died, the new model would be chosen. It is simply that under the structural condition that the trinity of Thai storytelling had placed on the nation, it does not allow anyone to be a better role model than Bhumibol for such a position.

The Progressive Salim regarded Bhumibol's actions and teachings as a model of good conduct (selflessness), or Khon Dee. They embodied Bhumibol or at least his teachings. In short, for this category of Salim, the materialistic personification of King

Bhumibol himself, like the dams attached by the royal names or the palaces that represent the king, would be less impactful since the narrative was not created with King Bhumibol as the personification of the whole rationality—like an omniscient God—himself. This story focused on his teachings and the portrayal of his good deeds to be emulated. To use a religious analogy, King Bhumibol was the omniscient God of Salim Fundamentalism. For the Progressive Salim, King Bhumibol was a prophet, a national spiritual guide, or the cult's supreme leader. Of course, the main distinction is that the former is irreplaceable while the latter is not. Regardless, the new dogma made achieving "Khon Dee" status more systematic. The new credo also made teachings and reasoning more appealing to modern generations with more developed materialistic and scientific reasoning. Examples of the campaigns and the more scientific rationalization and theorization of the king's teachings, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, were the evidence of the consequences this new dogma and credo had paved. Shortly put, Salim Fundamentalism values the "cult of persona" rationalized by the first version of synthesized Buddhism, whereas Progressive Salim values the "cult of dogma" (and the person who represents it, alas replaceable). Salim's understanding of events was based on these two main rationales. Therefore, whilst the non-Salim or those who align with the universal standardized rationality see the Salim as "stupid or irrational," they—vice versa—see the universal recipient of logic as stupid, immature, deceived, or irrational as well.

Under this cult of dogma, the role model of selflessness can be many others as well; it's just that the king was at the top of the pyramid of goodness. In this way, the praise and recognition given to individuals for their selflessness or good character (Khon Dee) may occur and change dramatically. One is Thaksin in his early years. Thaksin was viewed as a good or selfless person who sacrificed his growing business to help the country. After a few years, those who used to see him as selfless now see him as corrupted and selfish. Then came the public demands for "moral politics" in the dominant cultural output and mass media, even sacrificing the entire democratic

regime to eradicate this so-called impurity. Similarly, Suthep Tueksuban's reputation as one of the most corrupt politicians changed. When he declared himself the vanguard in fighting Thaksin, a greater evil in the eyes of these highly educated Yellow Shirts, he became a saint. They saw Suthep as a sacrificial leader who fought evil for good. The difference in the outer layers of the two categories of Salim may appear subtle, but once revealed, it was quite a sight to behold.

## *Chapter 4*

### The Universal Health Care: Bringing in the Everlasting Specter

#### Simulacra and Securitization of Bhumibol's Narrative

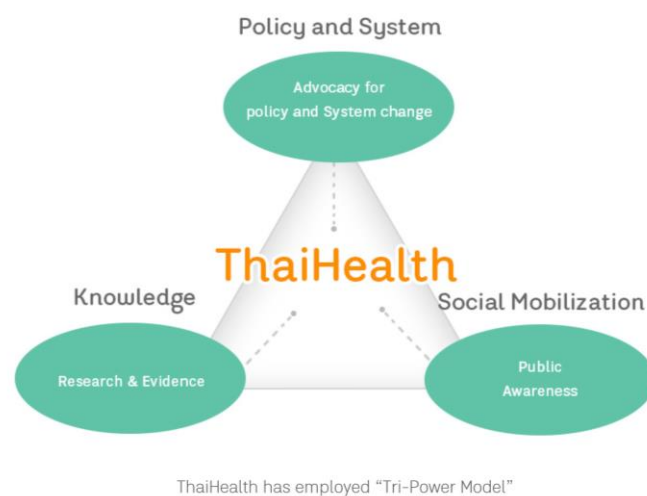
The 1980s–2000s were a golden age for the royal faction, as Bhumibol's narrative dominated the nation. Using materialistic means to capture the same collective imagination that turns into a singular community centered around himself, King Bhumibol achieved the state of homogeneous, empty time as introduced by Benedict Anderson in the truest sense of the concept. It was indeed the fruit of his many-decade-long endeavor to implement the ethnics left behind by Chaofah Mongkut and the newly augmented one introduced by Buddhadasa and Prawase. This was not only King Bhumibol's golden age but also Prawase's. Prawase's influence in society grew steadily after he established and seized Buddhadasa's network. His selflessness narrative, with King Bhumibol as the model, has been widely distributed through his various channels. 3 main types of channels exist. The primary one, he directly took part in, both as a member and as the main influencer of the designated activity, like being the speaker for the bureaucratic compulsory training program. The second kind is not directly involved with Prawase or his organizations, but receives tangible support from being hired by his network. Lastly, the tertiary kind, or ones that had no tangible involvement with his network but had been charmed by Prawase's preaching and publicized by several means, from books and magazines to mass media platforms. The second kind was notable for delivering a good example of Prawase's thoughts becoming reality. As stated previously, Prawase saw NGOs and civil society as the state's tools to achieve his desired result more effectively than bureaucracy. It really showed the result here. Prawase's network's financial fund is aimed at NGOs and civil society. Prawase had almost monopolized state funding for NGOs (Kitirianglarp 2009).



A recent interview with Supreeda Adulyanont, director of the Thai Health Promotion Foundation, confirmed that the practice was ongoing and would not end until the proper "health regime" was established. If such a day comes, the Thai Health Promotion Foundation will gladly close, as it will no longer be required to raise public awareness of health issues. The use of financial subsidy widened his network because most NGOs and civil society organizations seeking financial assistance fell under his network's umbrella, and Prawase's teachings underpinned the network's paradigm. The director of the Thai Health Promotion Foundation, who has arguably been the most important player in narrating and depicting the health promotion campaign in relation to Bhumibol's narrative to the public, could hardly hide his fanfare toward Prawase during my interview with him. Not to mention that the foundation's official website proudly displayed the model of Prawase's concept as its own representation (Thai Health Promotion Foundation, n.d.). In summary, Prawase's network functioned well and expanded beyond its previous horizon.

PMMV was still operational and targeted the "less educated" or "less scientific-oriented" population, the Salim Fundamentalists. The "Village Health Volunteers" (henceforth: VHV) were an unintentional bridge between Prawase's conceptual desire and Salim Fundamentalism, which was built on King Bhumibol's absolute benevolence (see Juengsatiansab and Suksut 2007). This program was designed to train untrained villagers in basic medical knowledge and create a nationwide network of people who can help others with minor injuries to prevent the overload of the already overcrowded hospitals. More frequently, it also helps promote health campaigns and survey patients with chronic health issues in the village, aiming for a ration of 1:20 in each village. It began in 1979 and has grown ever since. At first glance, it was clear that Prawase's conceptual desire and influence spawned VHV. The VHV who are considered "less educated" will be trained by a health manual that is tailored to their level of intelligence (see Department of Health Service Support 2019 and VHV n.d.). However, because VHV employees were rural villagers, they were not as influenced

by Buddhadasa’s teachings as urban residents or educated citizens. From my interview with several VHV members in many provinces in 2019, it suggests that they based their rationality more on the Chaofah Mongkut’s side and somewhat saw an act of volunteering themselves for the community as a meritorious deed that would greatly benefit their karma. Also, their love for their community plays a part in the decision and this portion of “care for greater good” could be counted as the mixed-in influential of Buddhadasa’s teachings. This simply illustrates the fact that the two categories of Salim are not decisively divided; they are intelligibly mixed. And, from the start, the act of volunteering or self-sacrificing mirrored King Bhumibol’s narration as the absolute benefactor. Thus, the VHV appears to follow Prawase’s teachings of selflessness and sacrifice for the greater good, but in reality, they are a hybrid of the two categories. Regardless, this work argues that after the introduction of universal health coverage (UHC), VHV seemed to outnumber PMMV in narrating Bhumibol’s story. Of course, both materialistic and nonmaterialistic envoys and agencies were working. They ushered in Bhumibol’s golden age. The nation’s sole ruler with no significant rival.



*Figure 19: Prawase’s Teachings and Simulation Platform.*

*(Source: Thai Health Promotion Foundation Website n.d.)*

The late 1980s were the only era solely dominated by Bhumibol's narrative. Many factors, at least six major ones, helped this happen. First, during Prem's administration, the government heavily promoted the nation's "cultural heritage" or "ethnie," announcing December 5th as "National Father Day" in 1980<sup>83</sup>. Second, there was the victory over the last significant anti-royal faction, the Young Turk Rebellion, in 1981 (see also Ewsakul 2018). Third, the first financial (stock market) crisis in Thailand in 1981–1983 asked for a strong government to lead the nation out of the catastrophe, and there, Prem, the most revered figure in Bhumibol's network, was in a position of autocratic succession and did a far better managerial job compared to his predecessors. Forth, the 66/1980 policy (นโยบาย 66/2523) during Prem's first administration normalized the communist supporters, who were mainly operating against the Thai state in the forests, and allowed them to peacefully return to the city—and, hence, returning their life. This policy might be the cause of the abrupt decline of the left-wing scholars who directly criticized the monarchy, as in Somsak Jeamteerasakul's (2021) observation of his contemporaries, and resulted in the lack of an overall critical view of the king in society. Fifth, the mercantilism policy was proposed by Chartchai Chunhawan (ชาติชาย ชุณหะวัณ) in 1988. This policy created many new Thai-Chinese business tycoons and thus widened the operational sphere of the royal faction. It was the dawn of the royal capitalism network. Last but not least, there had been the continuous and increasingly robust simulation of Bhumibol's narrative by various agencies, which constructed King Bhumibol's status in places never deemed possible before. The narrative's constant reinforcement made it the nation's dominant story, displacing or overwhelming other narratives. In short, King

---

<sup>83</sup> On December 5th, 1960, Sarit Thanarat changed the "National Day" from June 24th, which was democratization day, to December 5th, 1960, which symbolized the People's Party. He claimed that this would more fit to the "Democratic Regime with the King as the Head of the State." Apart from glorifying the king, this act could also be seen as erasing the cultural heritage and the memory of Sarit and the king's oppositional power.

Bhumibol and the royal faction were the only possible allies for the newly emerged powerhouses in politics, like the Chinese tycoons.



*Figure 20: The Thai Health Promotion Foundation's director affirmed Prawase's teachings not only in theory but also in how he sees society as sick for consuming alcoholic beverages and needing social vaccination [December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020].*

The political unrest of 1992 exemplified Bhumibol's dominance. Suchinda Kraprayoon had just taken control of the country's administrative body from the pro-democratic camp by force and assumed the position of prime minister against all odds, even against his own promise. The historical scene of him kneeling before King Bhumibol and eventually ceasing his endeavors as the king's command was stamped into the memories of the citizens from the baby boomers (born in 1946 – 1964) to generation X (born in 1965 - 1980). The powerful image may even affect early generation Y (born 1981–1995) as it was the golden age of state-controlled or state-connected mass media. It was a scene of total submission. This was not the first time King Bhumibol's power had surpassed the nation's administrative body, the

government or the bureaucratic system. In fact, the previous chapter elaborated on the royal influence on Tanom Kittikajorn's administration as part of Prawase's memoir, and that Prem Trinnasulanont was King Bhumibol's most important retainer. However, prior political power had been exercised discreetly. The only comparable moment was probably in 1957, when the king made Sarit Thanarat the protector of Bangkok without counter-signatures, but it was far less well known and visualized, and the structural condition of King Bhumibol and the royal faction's (political) power was incomparable.<sup>84</sup> So, after the royal faction monopolized power in the 1980s, I would argue that Suchinda's act of kneeling was the first grand display of the king's power in public. This historical marker signifies the age of exposure. The royal family's political activities no longer required secrecy or discretion. It could happen in plain sight and still be accepted. This was the stage where Bhumibol's narrative successfully replaced reality. It was the time when myth replaced reality.

What reality did Bhumibol's story replace? The reality of the nation's entity. It replaced the notion of modern border and the imagined geo-body that Thongchai (1997) had proposed, as this work (specifically in chapter 2) called it the modern mandala. It was "defeated" by the collective efforts of various mechanisms that narrated Bhumibol's storytelling, from envoys of all fields to materialistic and nonmaterialistic projects that had expanded to every nook and cranny while

---

<sup>84</sup> The case of promoting Sanya Dhammasak to be Prime Minister after Tanom Kittikajorn in 1976 may also be counted as another "comparable" case. But all in all, it was narrated under the resignation of Tanom himself, and was counter-signed as well as not live-broadcast like the case of Suchinda, which obviously had the intention of being viewed by as many as possible. Also, the structural condition of his power was still not stable, despite being much more uniformed compared to the declaration of Sarit in 1957. It was because the 1976 massacre in itself could partly be counted as an anti-monarchic movement (See: Ratchakijchanubeksa 1973)

continuously projecting the monarchy's greatness and authority.<sup>85</sup> By implementing Chaofah Mongkut's ethnics, Bhumibol succeeded in creating his own story, or becoming the "collective Thainess" (homogeneous, empty time) himself. His presence, or even the perception of his presence, binds the nation. However, unlike modern border or democratization<sup>86</sup>, Bhumibol and the royal faction hijacked the modern democratic reality. The hijacking of democratic and scientific language by Bhumibol's network, particularly the Prawase faction, reoriented how people define or understand democracy and modernity. For lack of a better term, it took over the paradigm that was universally accepted. Even though the content was not modern liberal democratic, the people and nation saw, perceived, and presented themselves as such. The unfitted, newly replaced content was not noticed, or to be more accurate, it was not perceivable since it acted as the reality itself. People doubt what they believe to be false, not what they believe to be true. So, in Thailand, criticizing the monarchy or demanding proper accountability was deemed strange or even dangerous.<sup>87</sup> The hijacking and

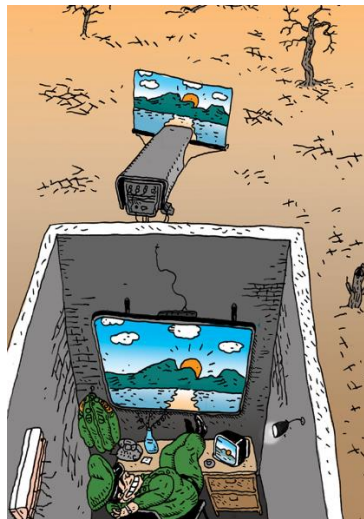
---

<sup>85</sup> Prae Chittipalangsri (2021) had also shared a similar observation coming from her examination on the novel called "Four Lands" (สี่แผ่นดิน), written by Kruekrit Pramote (ศีกฤทธิ์ ปราโมท), another important member and promoter of Bhumibol's network. Her observation suggested that the use of the word "land" (แผ่นดิน) in Thai, and in particular from this piece of work onwards, was quite unique as it may be the only language (at least to her knowledge) that represents 3 things: the spatial territory of a nation, the reign of the king, and also the time or era that depicts the connection between the king and the nation itself. This observation aligns with this work's argument that the "modern mandala" mechanized as the bridge between the king and the notion of nation itself. This observation also coordinated with this work's view on the 'temporal' quality as it was this concept of time that glued the king and land. Together, this work also had argued that the temporality affected the rationality of both categories of Salim in different ways and they find tune between the people (Salim) and the king, finding the appropriate place for the monarchy to fit in under the influence of his narrative.

<sup>86</sup> As mentioned in the early chapters, the story of the modern border and the democratic revolution were the two main "narrative contenders" that predated the domination of Bhumibol's narrative, and it had to contend with these two.

<sup>87</sup> In physics, this similar phenomenon could be observed from what is called the "Newtonian Timeline," which is the timeline that portrays "our timeline" and is revered as the most significant one since we

replacement of reality by simulations is known as "simulacra." Jean Baudrillard's (1994) concept of simulacra has influenced philosophy and theoretical media studies, particularly with the rise of mass media. It suggests the impact of simulations that formulate the "simulated real world" or "modeled real world," which ultimately overwhelms the perception of reality itself. As a result, the new mandala that replaced reality was a form of simulacra, a modeled real world that was perceived to be more real than reality itself. In a sense, it was somewhat accurate to say that they were perceived and had been perceived by the society at large as the owner of the nation; or to be more precise, the successor of what the nation is. In a sense, this claim is quite similar to Joseph Harris's (2015) autonomous political network in the sense that the mechanism could operate on itself. But the claim I argue here does not only include the substantial political network but the whole society at large that has become politically autonomous. It is somewhat a mixture between Harris' proposal and Jeanteerasakul's (2012) mass monarchy, the whole mass was involved.



*Figure 21: The illustration by Aroon Watcharasawat in Matichon Weekly, crisply captured the concept of simulations and simulacra.*

---

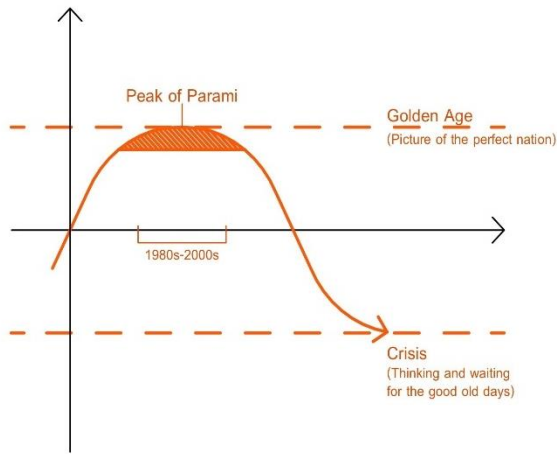
are observing and perceiving events or making judgments on this specific timeline, while the other timelines that are unperceivable to us, although they exist, are not noticed or not even regarded.

Simulacra have their own distinct character that fits well with Bhumibol's ongoing narrative or the modern mandala. The said feature is content that can self-produce and reproduce without an author or agent. Likewise, the story of Bhumibol from the late 1980s onwards, particularly from 1992, kept reproducing itself without the need for initiative from the royal faction. Society produced and received the narrative. This could be equally true for the royal faction as well. Tamada Yoshifumi (2009), who thoroughly studied and examined Thai politics during the period of 1992 political unrest, also illustrated the ambiguousness caused by the interplay between myths and realities, mainly the myths of the middle class offsetting the realities. Of course, this does not mean the royal faction ceases all activities. They kept working and appearing in public. They simply did not need to make their presence or involvement known as much. Royal initiative projects and royal patronage institutions, for example, are still operational, but their importance has subsided over time. Not because the royal faction has slacked off on their propaganda, but because the populace produces it at their leisure. The system hosted more royal simulations for more channels. Thus, a reduction in emphasis in a relative sense, not in an absolute sense. The personal visits to places nationwide were also lowered, far fewer random ventures but focusing more on producing the distancing and human phenomenological distance from a more passive position like the public universities' graduation ceremony, whence a member of the royal family would personally hand the diploma to the newly graduated student, one-by-one. With the advent of the modern mandala, the system could produce and feed itself with Bhumibol's story, making the royal faction's role less active. The king's dominance had already passed the point of direct involvement or intervention. The royal faction knew that, if necessary, they could simply redirect the elected government with a word from their lips. This advancement in democratization and party politics in Thailand was seen as a successful endorsement of the modernization theory, which resulted in an increase in the middle-class population that preferred democracy over other autocratic regimes.

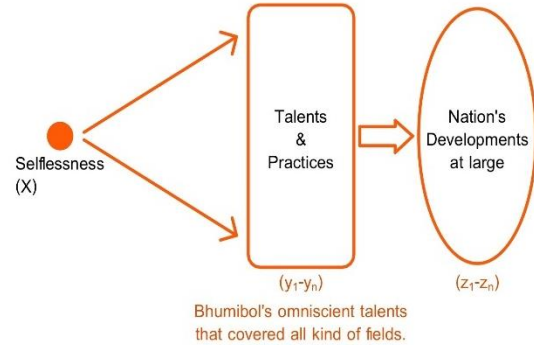


Undoubtedly, a large proportion of the anti-Suchinda protestors were middle class, proving that the Thai middle class had shifted from a marginal to a central role in Thai politics, but this does not mean that the widely accepted modernization theory could be assumed here. Yoshifumi (2009) called this generic assessment an "unreal portrait." This work agrees with his assessment, albeit from a slightly different perspective and understanding of Thai political structures. Tamada focused on two points. First, the role and status of Chamlong Srimuang, the anti-Suchinda faction leader, were glorified and then discredited by the king himself (together with Suchinda) as the cause of bloodshed violence. And, two, the over-assessment of the mass media in praising the middle-class had formulated what Tamada called the myths. This work also agrees with Tamada's analysis but would also add that such a result was the product of the luxury of the excessive domination of King Bhumibol, particularly of the pro-democratic middle class, since he was the one who put an end to Suchinda's cause. Also, Prawase's network targeted the middle class or "educated," as previously stated. So, even if the Thai middle class appeared democratic, it was only a "democracy in disguised" because the democratic value was built on conceptually hijacked premises. Selflessness and Khon Dee politics were hidden behind the democratic facade. In short, democracy was seen as a means to achieve self-sacrificing utopia, so if it failed to achieve this goal, it could be easily denied and shifted. Chamlong, who was the so-called pro-democratic leader himself, was a great example of my argument as he turned into a real beast of autocracy, even demanding a military coup d'état in the mid-2000s. The middle class in Thailand, for example, does not necessarily yearn for democracy. They yearn for whatever the grand cause the ethnical narrative had been conveyed. However, they also want a few upgrades such as the format of modern liberal democracy in order for them to structurally align the grand cause with the universal course of global modernity as argued since the beginning.

## 1. Salim Fundamentalism



## 2. Progressive Salim



*Figure 22: The Modern Mandala and the 2 Salims' Temporal Perceptions.*

Mérieau (2016) called this structure of extensive royal domination with enough luxury to be relatively passive the “deep state.” Even though the royal faction's top tier members (Privy Council members, royal family members, etc.) were more passive, social mechanisms like the entire society had become more active. They happily, sometimes when unintentionally, contributed to the creation of campaigns and narratives about Bhumibol. During this time period, and especially after the 1997 economic crisis (Tom Yum Kung Crisis), the reproduction of Prawase content dominated its competitors. The self-sufficient economy and new theory exemplified the dogma and credo. The 1997 economic crisis also demonstrated Bhumibol's narrative's dominance without his direct involvement. Usually, once the national crisis occurred, if the domination level had not reached the peak level yet, the society would call for the active direct intervention from the monarchy to “cleanse” the government. If not asked, the king would eventually get involved in his own term anyway since there was no other option or luxury to spare. Despite the fact that many people still consider the Tom Yum Kung crisis to be the worst economic (and later political and

social) disaster in modern Thai history, the monarchy's active and direct intervention to re-adjust the administrative body was almost nonexistent. Instead, reform was demanded of the political system and regulation, resulting in the 1997 constitution, hailed as the most democratic yet. It will be discussed separately in the next section on the emergence of the “everlasting specter” of the royal faction. In this crisis, people were simply happy to follow the dogma of a self-sufficient economy and new theory as conveyed in his speech. The dogma that was resurrected from the short rhetoric almost two decades ago got refurbished a bit, and then it was ready to serve and had the society consumed. The rest of the job befall his retainers and the society itself to recite, reinterpret, theorize and re-theorize, publicize, or even fantasize it. Literally, every platform of simulation known to humans during that time had transformed into the reproduction machine of Bhumibol's teaching without him having to do anything apart from propagandizing the picture of his well-used empty toothpaste tube. The image of this empty toothpaste tube was probably more powerful than the Democracy Monument itself.

While the royal family has become more passive in realpolitik and public work, this does not mean they have succumbed to the universally accepted democratic framework. They could do whatever they wanted because they owned the country. Shopping on public roads? Checked. Blocking the traffic on the overpass tolled expressway because they were commuting on the ground and did not allow anyone to be physically above them? Checked. Having people kneel down and revere their pet dog? Checked. And most of all, many military coups were arranged in the name of the King (see the following table.) This work could not cover all of the “in-plain-sight” abnormalities that occurred, but these examples should provide a hint. Sure, some people whined after experiencing it, but that was it. They did not demand change, and many, if not the majority, defended the actions while whining. This phenomenon caused the very first question that prompted this work: “Why are Thai people so stupid?” We have been trying to figure out how this seemingly irrational and

incomprehensible phenomenon got started. It also shows how powerful Bhumibol's narrative was in Thai society. It also covers other royal family members or even dead kings from different dynasties, and even before Siam or Thailand was formed. Similar to the "abnormal events" mentioned before, the use and enforcement of lèse majesté law had been overwhelmingly defended by the society itself for decades.

Reasons/Excuses for Coup	No. Time(s)	Year (the Coup occurred)
1. Illegitimate Government	1	1933
2. Economic Problem	4	1947, 1948, 1977, 2014
3. Immoral Government	2	1947, 2006
4. Communism Threat	2	1951, 1976
5. Corruption	4	1951, 1958, 1997, 2006
6. To Re-election	1	1957
7. To exile the PM	1	1957
8. Domestic/National Conflict	5	1971, 1976, 1977, 2006, 2014
9. To protect the monarchy	6	1971, 1976, 1977, 1991, 2006, 2014
10. The Delay of Cons. Amendment	3	1971, 1976, 2014
11. Politician's Abuse of Power	2	1991, 2006
12. Parliamentary Dictatorship	1	1991
13. Threat to the military (as inst.)	1	1991
14. Establishing confidence of the Nation	1	2014

*Table 1: Coups and Excuses.*

The auto-reproduction of the royal story (and thus influence) was vital to the monarchy's dominance and status. Its most terrifying feature was that anyone could be the narrator. People who are Progressive Salim can simply become Bhumibol's narrator by following the royal doctrine (selflessness). If one is a Salim Fundamentalist, one can become the narrator by simply doing good deeds to repay the royal benevolence. This stage of the self-feeding royal narrative machine is what this work calls the "For Dad" phase. Making a contribution to the community or nation in the name of King Bhumibol (the national father) was considered a great deed. This, again, could be traced back to Prawase's notion on the "atomic or cellular" level of an organic nation that each cell (the smallest unit of the community) should thoroughly follow its designated function and this would eventually contribute to the whole system. The designated function which comes from its closest and most minute community to the whole system was designed by nature and conducted by the brain. The king was the nation's brain, the model for all the "cells" to follow. This simulacrum was the monarchic institution's securitization mechanism. It prevented and prevailed the system on its own. So long as this "For Dad" machine is produced, the monarchy is safe. In this sense, the myriad social mechanisms that contributed to Bhumibol's simulacra structure were the result of successful institutionalization of storytelling politics and became one with state function. These mechanisms firmly securitized the monarchic institution as a whole while maintaining the narrative's influence. This result reflected the changing "structure" of Thai politics. Human agency and structure were initially intertwined because the authoritative power was concentrated in a small number of people making decisions. Of course, these certain few were still subjected to a bigger structure – like the global level – and the conditional effects of the setting. As the chain of command and the network grew, so did the material structure and the social demands. The structure gained the ability to control the nation systematically and permanently at this stage. It eventually led to a structure that included all aspects of society, official or unofficial, institutionalized or not. The structure implied

“normality” and imposed “thinkability” in a nation.<sup>88</sup> To become the community's norm, this narrative has dominated all other possible or potential contestants. The “For Dad” campaign marked the start of a new era. This “For Dad” phase has dominated Thailand’s (officially) accepted reality since then. Here are some examples of “For Dad” campaigns in Thailand.



Figure 23: The campaign to ‘eradicate the mosquito’ for dad (the king).



Figure 24: The university’s training program to follow the doctrine of a self-sufficient economy in order to overcome the hardship of the Covid-19 economic situation.

<sup>88</sup> The framework of “thinkability” or what is thinkable is based on the premise of “regime of truth” elaborated in chapter 1.



Figure 25: The official Ministry of Health spokesperson stated that the duration of the Covid-19 virus is dependent on how much we love the king, and that committing to a self-sufficient economy is better than any vaccination.

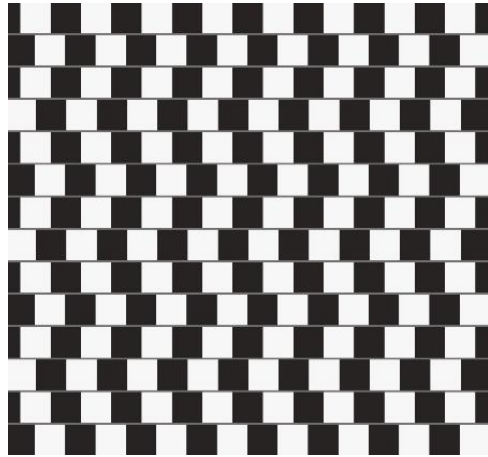


Figure 26: Mon Rak Dok Kayang (มนต์รักดอกกะแยง) (11th June 2021), depicting the 'new theory' and the lingering attachment to the deceased King Bhumibol.

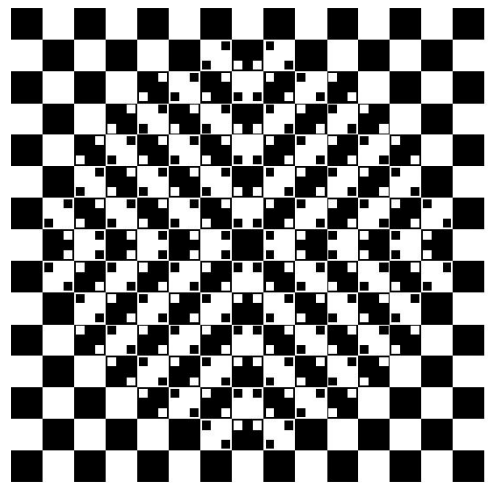
The proliferation of new royal storytelling platforms has robbed the narrative of its ownership. The narrative was no longer controlled by a few individuals, institutions, or agencies. People moved, owned, narrated, and even created stories based on this dominant narrative that had become their reality. No one, not even King Bhumibol, could claim authority over this story. However, it also implied that the nation's collective sense-perception had been linked to this modern mandala simulacrum. Sense-perception is linked to reality reception because humans have always judged reality (or even "the fact") based on their sense-perception. So, if one could manipulate the other's sense-perception, one could probably manipulate their reality judgment as well. The processes of telling Bhumibol's story and settling the modern mandala were parallel. They influenced sense-perception as well as intelligible or ideological realms. The narratives had become tangible. As shown above, from mosquito-killing campaigns to soap operas and official and institutionalized propaganda, including royal envoys and Prawase's network health policies, they all accounted for the people's sense-perception dominance. The work of royal envoys (of all levels and fields) and materialistic developments that helped achieve the simulacra glued the Thai populace's sense-perception towards their narrative goal. And since people tend to believe in sense-perception, they judge what they perceive as reality. Even if it is false, people believe it to be the only reality or possibility of "what is." Reality does not require reevaluation. Consider the lower section's optical illusions. They show the "false results" of our sense-perception (the eyes or visual perception). We would conclude that the content in the images is bending, curving, sloping, or even moving. Once we reached that conclusion, we perceived the pictures as real without needing to make an objective measurement to prove it. But the objective facts themselves do not support our erroneous conclusion. The images are completely flat, with no curves, slopes, bends, or movements. The simulations run in Thai society by the royal faction, envoys, or materialistic and nonmaterialistic bodies worked similarly to these optical illusions, but to all senses and almost constantly for decades. This is



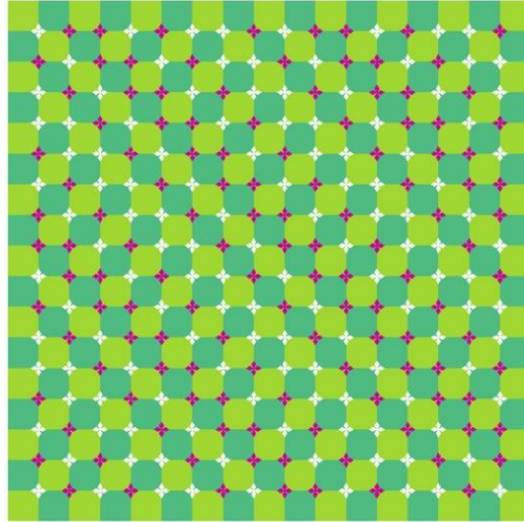
how the simulations glued the Thais' sense-perception to the newly created simulacra, the "modern mandala."



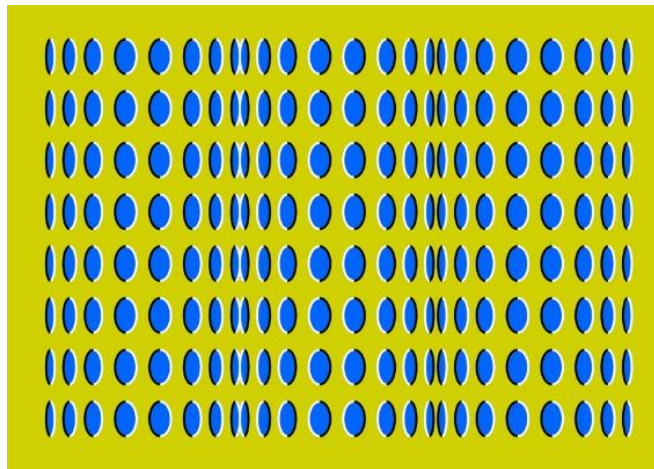
*Figure 27: Optical Illusion 1 – The Horizontal lines in the picture look sloping but in fact horizontally straight.*



*Figure 28: Optical Illusion 2 – The grid lines in the center of the picture look curved but they are in fact all straight.*



*Figure 29: Optical Illusion 3 – All the components in the picture look ‘wavy’ but they are simply flat.*



*Figure 30: Optical Illusion 4 – The blue dots in the picture look like they are rotating but they are in fact still.*

Sense-perception is thus powerful and often misleading. It gives us the most reliable information about the phenomenon, but it is not necessarily true. For decades, Bhumibol's narrative has had the same effect on all senses, not just the visual. Thus, many of the world's "abnormal events" may go unnoticed. It could be like these optical illusions that occur right in front of our eyes but still construe a falsehood instead of

reality, but it is already perceived as reality. For years, the effect of simulacra, or simulated reality, perplexed Thais. The blind trust in King Bhumibol as the absolute being made him "incomparable," in the sense of "unsurpassable." He was supreme as a role model of selflessness and as the personification of benevolence. Conscientiously or unconsciously, the incomparable king overshadowed public figures, especially politicians (see also Jeamteerasakul 2007a and 2007b). Each one seems inadequate in comparison. Not to mention that one side could be openly criticized while the other was shielded. In short, King Bhumibol was not only the ultimate benefactor and role model, but also the elusive goal. He was somewhat like the premise of "immortality" that makes godhood unattainable but still being yearned for as the ultimate goal since time immemorial. In this case, it was on the concept of Parami and Khon Dee (selflessness).

A new security paradigm emerged with the monarchy replacing the state and acting as the tie for the people of the nation (ลูกของพ่อ). The securitization of the monarchic institution resembled the state's security and must be protected at all costs, even without the protection agent. Because of simulacra, the nation's geo-body was perceived as the king's domain rather than a simple imaginary fixed-line internationally agreed. This new geo-body imagining was so strong that the idea of "Dad's Home" (บ้านของพ่อ) spread like wildfire in 2009. Pongpat Wachirabanchong (พงษ์พัฒน์ วชิระบรรจง) is an actor, singer, and director who popularized the term (Posttoday 2017). This rhetoric, as I recall, had been used prior to its popularization, but no documentation or record could be found. The concept of "This is Dad's Home" was simple: the king owned the entire country (Thailand). It was his domain and anyone disagreeing or disliking this fact should leave. The Thai people overwhelmingly agreed with this viewpoint, outnumbering those who disagreed. This showed how simulacra had changed the geo-body's collective imagination.

Also, during the construction of the modern mandala, autocratic military governments dominated Thai politics. Aside from fighting their own people, the Thai modern army had no history of fighting or warring against an external threat. At best, they were used as a diplomatic tool by attending the WWI victory parade. Phantpravit (2022) examined this phenomenon and concluded that the modern Thai army placed its pride or code of honor on protecting the monarchy rather than the "nation" as a whole. They never had to protect or fight for "the nation." This creed continues on as you can see from the table of "excuses to commit coups" that the political involvements in the name of protecting the king ranked the first among all the possible reasons. The fact is that all the major political incidents—particularly those of October 6th, 1976 and May 2010—were done in the name of eradicating the enemy of the throne. Since Sarit's time, such practices have been accumulated and portrayed the army's role in politics. It proved Pattarat's conclusion that the army's spiritual roots are still valid today. It would have been a huge benefit to them if the king's status had expanded to include the entire nation. The Thai army protects the throne, and the throne protects the nation; in short, the nation without the king is unthinkable.

What did the royal network and modern mandala achieve? Aside from the royal influence peak and the effect of simulacra, this work created a new "setting" for the Thai political landscape. The setting during the ethnical formation stage (from Chaofah Mongkut on) was an unsecularized absolutist state (kingdom). Then came capitalism, which was still in its infancy and not widely spread. The political campaigns and functions also behaved accordingly to the mentioned setting. Since capitalism's materialistic indulgence was still geographically and sentimentally limited, ethnical and narrative could be formed solely on Parami's spiritual foundation or the king's divine rights. It urged followers to solely rely on these ethereal tales. However, once the domination of capitalism started to develop – at least market-wise, new material development and products aimed at the mass like magazines, newspapers, and so on had been gradually penetrated the society. In this context, "new (westernized) ideas"

were more widely spread. Among them were individualism and an awareness of materialistic needs and temptation. The spiritual narrative was losing its grip, and new (materialistic) demands emerged. Then the partial success of the 1932 democratic revolution joined the fray. The new "setting" necessitates a new "political function." To find the right "function" (and benefit distribution) for the newly formed setting, the period from 1932 to Sarit could be seen as the social negotiating and adjusting phase. Unfortunately, the pro-democracy faction failed to establish the role of liberalism in society due to internal conflicts and external pressures. Instead, the royal faction (Bhumibol) and Sarit (the army) found tune first and benefited from the Cold War program (see Nuttapol 2020). The result was a spiritual and materialistic collaboration. The palace had been tirelessly running their narrative that was based on the mentioned ethnics since the Cold War time. They had developed their path of influence on both the intangible and tangible fronts, along with the widely propagandized dogma. King Bhumibol had become the master and representation of both materialistic and spiritual narratives, even blending them together. He built Parami with materialistic generosity. Because the army was a parasite to the Bhumibol narrative and had no significant story of its own, their relationship gradually changed from that of collaborators to that of master and subordinate. As his influence spread, this relationship expanded to every corner and institution in society. The politics of the late 1980s onwards was the prime of newly settled master-subordinate relationships across the board. The new relationship between society and King Bhumibol was in itself a new function. It was hegemony in the strict Gramscian sense that emerged from the 3 components: crisis (Pibunsongkram, Communism, many political turbulences, people's scarcity), authoritative power, and majority consent. And, since the new function and the new setting were correlated with each other, the emergence of the new royal hegemonic function also signified the coming of the new setting as well. It was a setting that this work would call ascetic politics.

The new political ecosystem was called ascetic politics, and the regime was no longer an absolutist state. It had democratic mechanisms and institutions but acted in a strictly guided manner. The guidance is not necessarily hidden like the concept of “deep state” claimed. To be an ascetic means being self-denial as a measure of personal and spiritual discipline. Thus, the dominance of the narrative initiated by Prawase’s teachings (autonomously selflessness) mixes with the Theravada Buddhist logic’s “measurement criteria.” There may have been some internal conflict between these two branches of the royal narrative, but there was little visible separation between them. The conflict was never explicitly shown, but the alignment under the same umbrella, King Bhumibol, always was. The democratic mechanisms and institutions under the autocratic narrative, therefore, work under this charm. The teaching itself has been repetitively re-interpreted to catch up with contemporary development and ideas, and it has been systematically put into people’s heads, particularly the bureaucrats, owing to its vertical power structure. Additionally, it should not be forgotten that in both storylines of Bhumibol’s narrative, the placement of King Bhumibol is comprised of the strict practice “on or around material.” They grew the “ascetic politics” to maturity. Eulogizing people who could portray selflessness as close to the unreachable role model, King Bhumibol, as possible. This was the new setting, or political ecology, I mean.

### **The Crack: Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and the Everlasting Specter to the Royal Narrative**

From the mid-1980s to the early 2000s, and particularly from 2005, the Bhumibol narrative had dominated both culturally and politically. From then on, the simulacra’s sailing was not uncontested. That doesn’t mean the Bhumibol narrative lost its hegemonic status after the mid-2000s. The statement simply implies the arrival of a new “challenger” that could threaten the hegemonic status after nearly two

decades of monopoly. Yes, I am referring to Thaksin and the Thai Rak Thai Party (henceforth, TRT). Regardless, work on Thaksin and TRT has been piling up since the 2000s (see for examples Phongpaichit and Baker 2004; Looney 2004; McCargo & Pathmanand 2004; and McCargo 2006). With no interest in joining this Thaksin-focused group, this work offers no fine details or new discoveries about Thaksin and TRT. Nevertheless, the rise of Thaksin in Thai politics was significant to this work from a certain perspective, and that is the redefinition of materialistic benefits. If we look at Bhumibol's story so far, we can see that he used materialistic benefits to create a public perception of perpetual benevolence. It was a patronage system. However, Prawase's second phase transformed this idea into "excessive greed and selfishness." Limiting one's materialistic desires is deemed selfless by them. The TRT's policy-oriented electoral politics has also transformed this perception of materialistic benefits. And, for this, I should briefly explain how this happened and how Thaksin benefited from Prawase's teachings that dominated society at the time. Prawase, like many progressive royalists of the time, was a well-known supporter of Thaksin in the early years of TRT. During our interview, Prawase admitted as much. But things went sour after that. Thaksin, too, as an educated Buddhist middle-class man during that time, could be considered someone who was affiliated with Prawase's branch of teachings or at least with Buddhadasa's interpretation of Buddhism, as he himself had admitted his take on Buddhism to be "Sola Scriptura." Prawase's faction had been reciting it since Thaksin's formative years (see Shinawatra 2021).

Now comes the structural benefits Thaksin and TRT got from Prawase's branch of the narrative. The constitution of 1997 influenced Thaksin and TRT's rise. The constitution was largely the result of distilling the accumulated consequences and demands of the 1980s and 1990s politics and is, hence, widely regarded as the most democratic constitution ever to exist in Thailand. First, the 1992 political crisis ended the military autocratic regime's adornment and increased demand for a more democratic government. Second, the many immature dissolutions of governments

made up of coalitions of small parties had proven too unstable (see also Yoshifumi 2009). Third, the idea of “pure and uncorrupted” politics, which echoes the democratic principles of transparency and accountability. Yet it was more likely to share the same root that was dominating the selflessness concept or Khon Dee politics that Prawase had raised. Under such context that looked for “clean and not-benefit-driven” politics, the government that does not need to trade-off benefits among the allied parties before the need of the people was anticipated.<sup>89</sup> Also, it was no secret that the 1997 Constitution was largely shaped by Prawase’s study group, as Shinawatra (2021) publicly acknowledged. So, it was not surprising that the constitution’s “transparent and pure” drafting process reflected Prawase’s teachings. And, as stated previously, Prawase and his faction had never renounced democracy. Their Buddhist utopian narratives always used democratic terms but hijacked the definition. His network and other royal narrative-building methods spread this Buddhist-transformed democratic concept into society. It flourished in the late 1980s. Lastly, this work would argue that the need for the new constitution was to reestablish the placement of the monarchic institution in the already settled yet new political and social setting. It was to allow the monarchic institution to enjoy the luxury of manhandling the politics behind the scenes of the established institutions. Their politics could be done while highlighting their extraordinary and above-the-law status. These conditions shaped the 1997 constitution, which proclaimed its democratic origins and procedures. Another important factor in the rise of the “successful-business-tycoon-led party” was the 1997 Tom Yum Kung economic crisis.

---

<sup>89</sup> Thanksin elaborated on the “behind-the-scene” reality of this period when he was still working as a secretariat of sort for the cabinet minister (although on paper he was the minister’s personal police officer) that due to the benefits that needed to be shared among the coalition parties, sometimes the cabinet had to ask for a loan from the racecourse in order to adequately distribute the “benefits” to the allied parties, especially before the voting of the important governmental budget (see Shinawatra 2021).



Undoubtedly, Thaksin and TRT's unconventional electoral policies aided their rise to power in parliamentary politics. TRT proposed groundbreaking policies such as legalizing underground lotteries, debt settlement for farmers, village financial funds, and more. Anyhow, arguably the most influential and impactful policy was the "30 Baht (1 Dollar) Cure All Illness" (สามสิบบาทรักษาทุกโรค), which was the beginning of the universal health coverage (henceforth: UHC) campaign. The list of policies here was to depict TRT's policies marching for materialistic benefits and consequences. TRT, a political party that aimed for a large and dominating majority government from the start, offered a full set of economic and materialistically beneficial policies that did not adhere to any specific ideology. Some were left-wing policies, while others were right-wing. In short, TRT was not an ideological party. From their policies, they were a "goal-driven and practice-focused" political party. Their goal was simple, but difficult to achieve. That was to maximize the majority's income and minimize its expenditures, regardless of ideology. This seemingly impossible goal was achieved only a few years after Thaksin and TRT were elected to power. They repaid the IMF debt and gained massive popularity. His dominance gave him an arrogant demeanor in public. He also had serious ethical and humanitarian principle issues with his political policies, such as the drug war, social disciplinary program, and the Takbai-Kruesae incident (ตากใบ-กรือเซะ). Educated people, including Prawase, criticized him, but mainly on the corruption part, not the humanitarian issues. Some called him a corrupted man, while others accused him of spreading populism. This was the result of the "selflessness" or Khon Dee politics that greeted Thaksin with open arms. Initially, Khon Dee's politicians saw him as a selfless tycoon who devoted his precious time and labor to the nation. But when this picture turned out to be incorrect and his intentions lacked the purity they desired, they rejected him regardless of his achievements.

However, the number of people who supported him and his party was still monumentally overwhelmed by those forsaking him, as proven by the landslide victory of TRT in the following election, which made TRT the single party with the majority

seat in parliament for the first time in Thai history (see Nam and Nethipo 2021). According to my own observation after having interviewed many of his supporters in the past decade, they revered him and considered his deed an act of benevolence. They idolized him. They felt indebted to him. They wanted to repay him. Of course, this did not apply to all of his supporters, since many of them also favored the policies and the system themselves rather than the person. But it was undeniable that many of his supporters worshipped him and his benevolence in that way. Although Thaksin's materialistic benefit policies engendered a sense of benevolence in the recipients, it was the benevolence of policy-focused and electoral politics. For the most part, it was not a matter of the revered deity's personal benevolence. The way TRT expanded its influence to the periphery could even be considered similar to what King Bhumibol and his royal envoys—like the PMMV and Cold War Monks—did a few decades earlier, structurally speaking (see Nam and Nethipo 2021). In this sense, Thaksin was seen as a benefactor, but from a different perspective from Bhumibol. It made him the strongest contender for the benevolence branch of the stories, which functioned more among the grassroots or less-educated community. This was in contrast to the dominating narrative raised by Prawase which tended to regard these people as less virtue-conscious and less sensible. This was also the reason why the middle-class, who were chiefly influenced by Prawase's branch of narrative, has a spiteful position towards Thaksin policies and supporters,<sup>90</sup> rendering them into merely populism spells

---

<sup>90</sup> By mentioning people of the same age group as Prawase, rather than directly mentioning Prawase himself, Shinawatra (2021) concluded that people of this age group could (1) be easily gone senile, and (2) know how to adapt their way of life to live peacefully (อยู่เป็น).

Although this was indirectly answered, I believe it is clear that this was Thaksin's position and the reason for his dislike of Prawase. Nonetheless, I disagree with this reasoning, which highlights society's incorrect preconceived perception of this phenomenon, thus highlighting the importance of this work, as the subject remains unclear. My reasons for disapproval are: (a) During my personal interview with Prawase a few years ago, more than a decade after the mentioned enmity began, he was still very healthy and strong for his age, as well as his thinking and recollection abilities were still top-notch; (b)

and the materialistically greedy sheep, respectively. The community of Thai scholars during the early 2000s was a great example of these characteristics (see Jeamteerasakul 2007b). Also, another important instance was

the rise of the People's Alliance for Democracy (henceforth: PAD) in 2005, which was the mixture of the believers in the King as the perpetual benefactor of the nation and the believers in selflessness who saw Thaksin as the pinnacle of corrupted evil. The two shades of people, although blended for most of the time, saw Thaksin from different Salim's perspectives. The first one, Salim Fundamentalist, saw him as the disrespectful challenger who dared to contend against the status of the benevolent god and was punching above his weight (did not know his own place, so to speak – ไม่รู้จักที่ต่ำที่สูง, ฟ้าสูงแผ่นดินต่ำ, ปีนเกลียว). The latter, Progressive Salim, saw him as the greedy influencer and the maliciously corrupted person. What they had in common was getting rid of Thaksin from politics. So, working together unitedly as PAD was the result.

Likewise, the rise of the Future Forward Party (henceforth: FFP) came into being 2 decades later. They played a huge role in the narrative building at the moment, which was the opposite of the conceptually based narrative like that of Prawase, since they portrayed the conceptual narrative of "what ought to be done" in a moral high ground or essentialist manner. Functional-wise, they were similar to what Prawase's storyline did, but they steered it towards a democratic direction. For now, we can only hope that they stay true to this democratic path and will not be overruled by the moral high ground, which tends to overvalue itself while undervaluing others' beliefs. The case of the educated middle class who associate themselves with Prawase's teachings is still fresh. They have been getting on a high horse towards the grassroots for decades simply because they do not share the same rationality and beliefs. So, it is the political

---

as this work has developed, it can be seen that Prawase has barely changed. So, it wasn't Prawase who changed, but his view of Thaksin.

pilgrimage that FFP has to take on, and the result of this future episode can only be waited for and observed for now.

The UHC campaign was, similar to the majority of TRT's policies, based on materialistic benefits, aiming to minimize the expenditure of the people. The rise of UHC has drastically changed the structure and political ecology of the health care system, and probably the politics at large as well. It was the policy that was arguably the most impactful and memorable of Thaksin (and TRT) in people's minds. Similar to the works focused on Thaksin, works that focused on this policy were abundant, to say the least. The most notable one is, of course, *The Path to Universal Health Care* (บนเส้นทางสู่หลักประกันสุขภาพถ้วนหน้า) written by Sa-nguan Nittayarampong (สงวน นิตยารัมภ์พงศ์), the founding father of Thai UHC, himself (see Nittayarampong 2005, and also Na Ranong et al 2002 & 2005; Tangchareonsatian, et al. 2004; Tanmanthong 2010; and Nam 2015). However, this work does not intend to be the work that focuses especially on this issue. Thereby, it will limit its elaboration to only the details of UHC on the part that relates to the storytelling of Bhumibol's narrative politics or the details that involve the operation of the established health care sector and agency that is responsible for the narrative building.

The UHC started at Sa-nguan Nittayarampong. It was a big claim, but so true that hardly anybody could deny it. It was his dream and life goal. Sa-nguan had been trying to sell this policy to many potential political parties for years before the rise of TRT, but everybody rejected him. It was Surapong Suebwonglee, his colleague and an important figure in TRT, who heard of it and found it interesting. Therefore, Surapong asked him to present it to Thaksin, and as was known to the public, the three of them and many more people involved made this dream of Sa-nguan a reality. I had a chance to have an interview with Surapong in 2020, asking him about the ins-and-outs of this policy. First, it was publicly known that Sa-nguan was one of Prawase's factions, and a member of the Suan Samparn group, the medical doctor technocratic and

academic cluster which, to some extent, had influenced the direction of health policy in the country. After the popularization of UHC was established, Prawase himself and his group, as a de facto representative of the royal fraction, even took some credit as the supporters of the policy. However, as I was informed during the interview, it turned out that Prawase and the majority of the Suan Samparn group disagreed, almost unanimously, and rejected this policy. Sa-nguan was, in fact, left alone on this course. Of course, the opposing faction had formed even before the policy was enacted, ever since the policy was announced during the election campaign. But "once the policy was launched, it was the point of no return; people yearn for it and would not allow its rejection." These were Surapong's own words during the interview and it could hardly be denied. As time went by, criticism and rejection gradually faded, focusing on the medical community, which claimed to be overwhelmed by the sudden influx of 20 million new potential patients. They had no choice but to slowly accept the new fate. Similarly, despite their silence during the commotion, the Prawase faction eventually became a supporter of this policy after seeing the positive public trend.

The coming of UHC has transcended the established structure of the health care system almost entirely, particularly the budget structure. To understand this changing structure, allow me to briefly elaborate on how UHC in Thailand came into being. Before the TRT's UHC policy, Thailand had five types of health coverage and insurance. The first of its kind was private insurance that was run by an international company in 1910. This led the Siam government at the time to issue its first regulation on health insurance in order to control the private insurance company (Jongudomsuk 2004, 2). Later on, after the initiative of the private sector, the concept of national insurance was gradually developed and came the second type, which was the health care subsidy for bureaucrats (ข้าราชการ) and state enterprise officers (เจ้าหน้าที่รัฐวิสาหกิจ) in 1963 and 1980, respectively (Tanmanthong 2010, 14). It should also be noted here that the word "bureaucrat" in Thai is Kar-Rat-Cha-Karn which literally

means “the servant of the king.” Therefore, it was not so surprising that the bureaucrats were the first to receive this benefit, and systematically giving their loyalty to the throne, since the time at which this occurred was the ending phase of the Sarit administration, where the palace and the government were hardly detachable. The time also overlapped and was aligned with the period of Cold War kings discussed in Chapter 2 and reflected the similar political structure as well. The third kind of health coverage and insurance appeared in 1974 when the government issued a regulation to have the private sector solely provide health coverage for their employees. This coverage was revised again in 1990 during the Chartchai Chunchawan administration, gaining the health coverage budget from the government subsidy, the employer, and also the employee under the supervision of the Social Security Office (henceforth: SSO). In 1975, the government had launched the fourth kind of health coverage under the name of “social welfare” (สังคมสงเคราะห์)<sup>91</sup> for the people of low income. Later on, during the Chuan administration, the coverage had been extended to those in need of social patronage like the elderly, children, the people of disability, Buddhist monks, and so on. This type of coverage was clearly founded on the patronage system, where materialistic benefits were given as a means of expressing benevolence and the status of the vertical social structure. It was, then, renamed to People’s Welfare on Medical Coverage Scheme (โครงการสวัสดิการประชาชนด้านการรักษาพยาบาล หรือ สปร.) in 1994. This coverage was strongly aligned with the function and structural mindset of the PMMV and the royal patronage system that had dominated the field since a few decades before its emergence. The last type of health coverage before the rise of TRT began in 1983. It was the system of co-advance payment between the government and the citizens under the guidance and later

---

<sup>91</sup> The word “สังคมสงเคราะห์” or “social welfare” in Thai has the definition that leans towards “patronage or benevolence” rather than the notion under the concept of welfare where equality of all is considered as the universal basic right.

changed into the “Voluntary Health Insurance” under the “Health Card Scheme” which started to get the state’s subsidy in 1993 (Tanmanthong 2010, 14-15).

On paper, at least, it seemed to cover around 70% of the population, leaving the remaining 30%, or around 20 million people, in dismay and awaiting the arrival of PMMV and the like (The Executive Committee for the Development of Universal Health Coverage Policy 2001). Therefore, the emergence of TRT’s UHC had colossally influenced the whole scenario of Thai political ecology and health care system, from the budget structure, effects on the service providers and the service receivers, and the internal conflict within the medical community, to the grand storytelling structure of Bhumibol’s narrative.

In general, the structure of the health industry remains the same. It could be divided into two main categories: the service provider and the budget provider. However, the structural change could be seen by the budget provider, which is normally known as the purchaser, describing its function of purchasing the service of the citizens. The change, in short, is that the ratio of the budget provided by the providers has been dominated hugely by the newly established institution called the National Health Security Office (henceforth: NHSO); and, as mentioned in the previous chapter, it has long been considered one of Prawase’s fortresses of influence. As of now, the NHSO is responsible for the budget of around 49 million citizens, followed by the SSO, which holds the budget of 12 million welfare cardholders, and the budget for 7 million bureaucrats and their families is in the hands of the Comptroller General’s Department (กรมบัญชีกลาง). These budget providers would, then, offer the contract stating that they would pay for the medical service in place of the citizens (service receivers) to the service providers (which normally are the public or the hospital). This change obviously meant that the distribution of benefits among the medical community also changed as well. It partially caused the conflict among the medical community, which to some extent affected the narrative structure as well. The conflict

was mainly derived from two main causes: one was the payment delay and the burden of proof that the service providers had to face, and the other was the monopoly of the (high-priced) drug buying by NHSO. To put it simply, according to my interview with the former director of Buriram Provincial Hospital, who claimed himself to be one of the sufferers of this new structure, with the NHSO as the main service purchaser, the delay in payment occurs due to the relatively more complex accounting system and a large number of service receivers (the patients). This increases the burden of proof that the service providers, like hospitals, have to prepare in order to claim the payment, and the redundancy of medical services that comes from the influx of patients also causes some errors in the payment system. This, eventually, results in some financial problems, particularly with the cash flow in many hospitals, making them condemn the new system. The second cause comes from the fact that before the emergence of NHSO and the UHC, hospitals were comparatively more open to choosing their drug suppliers. Obviously, the higher the price and margin of the drug, the greater the benefit involved. However, NHSO sees the problem that drugs with a high price tag like anti-cancer medicine have in the universalization of the coverage campaign. By prohibiting citizens of low income from enjoying the program at its maximum capacity or letting the service providers (hospitals) purchase the high-priced drugs the way they used to whilst guaranteeing health coverage for all, the expenditure would be too high. Therefore, NHSO makes a huge purchase order of high-priced drugs from its selected supplier, claiming that buying in a huge lot like this has more negotiating power and could lower the price of the drugs and hence the budget spent. Then, it forces the service providers to only purchase these high-priced drugs from themselves. Although the movement has been declared by NHSO to save the national budget around 8,567.48 million baht (approximately 29,543.03 million yen), the uproar from the hospitals could still be heard until now (see also Watcharasukpo 2019). In my interview with the former director of Buriram Provincial Hospital, he asserted that this move did not only cause an uproar among most of the hospitals but



also the “unchosen” drug suppliers who had lost a huge benefit in the process. It has also brought about the question of transparency in the drug-buying deal. Anyhow, regardless of the fact that this event had caused conflict within the medical community, and since NHSO has been considered one of Prawase’s domains, the anti-Prawase faction grew and the domination of Prawase in the medical community was more critically questioned.

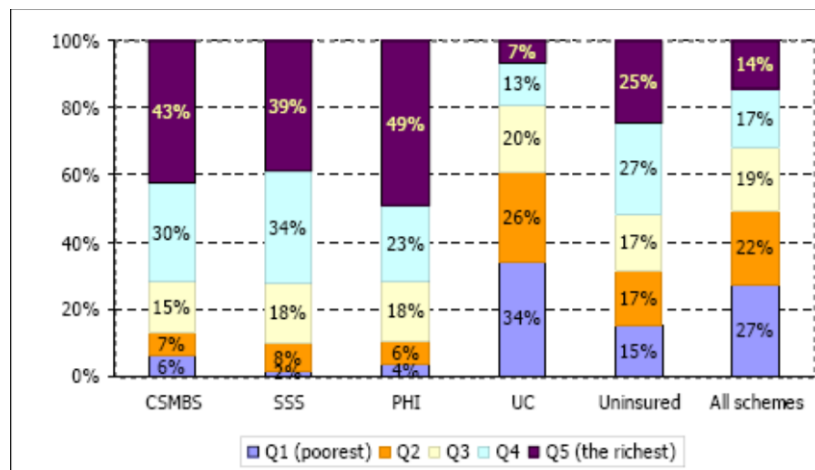
The conflict from the change in the budget structure mainly affected the “managerial” medical doctors compared to the ordinary medical doctors who are not involved in managing tasks. However, the conflict also spread to the general medical staff as well. The reason was far less complicated; it was the sudden change in workloads. With the increase of 20 million more potential patients almost immediately, even though the system and materialistic infrastructure were well-prepared and readied for the overwhelming inflow of service receivers, the medical staff could not cope with it simultaneously. During the transitional process, voices of suffering from the medical staff could be heard everywhere in society, and my interviews with many medical staff (a total of 15 staff, a mixture of doctors and nurses) also confirmed this reason (see also Tanmanthong 2010, 95). The worn-out medical staff could not bring themselves to enjoy this new policy that had put them into the slave of state’s welfare, so to speak. Anyhow, on this note, Somsak Akkslip (สมศักดิ์ อรรคมลิลป์), the director-general of The Department of Medical Services (อธิบดีกรมการแพทย์), had made a remark during my interview with him in 2019 (prior to the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic) that, as of his observation, it was more of the generational perspective on what hard work is. His reasoning and point of reference were that the ratio of medical doctors to patients had been improving almost every year. Though it was not yet sufficient, it was on a positive trend. In addition, the medical equipment was far more advanced compared to the past; therefore, the notion of “hard work” he saw and that the relatively younger doctors kept on complaining were different. Whether the cause was actual overworking or perceptual

overworking, the result remains the same. That is, in the early stage or transitional period of the UHC policy, 2002–2003, a large portion of the medical doctors felt that they could not bear the work under such conditions. Moreover, 85.86% of the doctors who resigned from the public hospitals (the main service providers of UHC) had given the reason for their resignation that they quit the public service job for a position in the private hospitals where there were fewer workloads and they could earn more money (Tanmanthong 2010, 94). Nonetheless, the overwhelming influx of patients, specifically in the OPD, occurred only the first year (2002 – 2003) which reached approximately 40 million cases. Then, things had cooled down and returned to a rather normal situation, averaging a little over 20 million cases from 2003 – 2006 (the average number of OPD cases before the emergence of UHC was a little bit under 20 million cases) (Punpiamrat 2008, 17). In this regard, it could be said that the claim of overwhelmingly overworking was probably a hallucination of the first year of UHC memory rather than an actual overload of work, so the observation of Somsak that it was more of a perception of overwork might be accurate.

These conflicts had been the major obstacle to Prawase’s influence in the medical community and partially made him withdraw himself from dominating the entire administrative body of the medical community. The anti-Prawase faction naturally took this chance to grow and collect more members during this time. However, Somsak Akkaslip, the director-general of the department of medical services who claimed himself to be the neutral faction in this charade, had elaborated during my interview with him that it was not the end of Prawase faction. His influence in the health ministry and administrative body may be subsided and taken away partially by his opposing faction, commonly known as “Sam-Mae-Krua” (สามแม่ครัว), but he simply moved his influential domain to those that hold more money like NHSO and the Thai Health Promotion Foundation. In short, Prawase’s narrative influence as the agent of the medical sector in a strict sense had been in decline, but his influence on civil society and the public was rising during this period. This was due to the fact elaborated

earlier that, rather than relating to the technical practices of medicine or directly engaged with the public domain, these newly established institutions were funding NGOs and civil enterprises to narrate his cherished story.

Regardless of the internal conflict in the medical community, the overwhelming fanfare of this UHC policy in the public domain was real and undeniable. No matter what measurements or indexes one uses, the results all indicate that the success of TRT’s UHC policy was at a phenomenal level. From roughly 70% health coverage before the policy was issued, the rate of health coverage increased to 92.47% in 2002 and reached 97.82% in 2006, the year that TRT was forced out of their legitimate governmental position by the military coup d’état (NHSO 2007, 31). Not only that, the policy has shown its achievement in benefiting the target groups, which are the grass roots and people of low income. Please see the following figure for details.



*Figure 31: Percentage of people in each economic class in each type of health coverage program.<sup>92</sup>*

*Source: Research Institution for the Development of Universal Health Care.<sup>93</sup>*

<sup>92</sup> Note: CSMBS = The health coverage program for bureaucrats and state enterprise’s employees; SSS = Social Security System (Social Welfare program); PHI = Private Health Insurance; UC = Universal Health Care; and Uninsured = No insurance or benefited from any health coverage program.

<sup>93</sup> From Srithamrongsawat (2008).

Figure 31 suggests that the health coverage programs before the rise of TRT's UHC barely benefited any grassroots or low-incomers (Q1 and Q2); they only had things to do with the middle class and the rich (Q3–Q5), particularly in the private health insurance (PHI) sector. The coming of TRT's UHC policy had rightly hit the target, which was the poor (Q1 and Q2) and the lower-middle-class, achieving 60% of the service receiver percentage. Not only did the universality of health coverage prove its success, the lower expenditure on medication after the rise of UHC also proved the achievement of a similar goal. The following figure shows the drastic decrease in household expenditure on medical or health care. The radical decrease from around 500 baht per household in 1998–2001 to 20.12 baht per household in 2002, when the TRT's UHC began and the overwhelming influx of patients occurred, was objectively stunning. Even after society had to find tune with the policy and the average rate that reflected reality had surfaced, as seen in the years 2004–2006, the expenditure reduction was still enormous, with the number on average more than 200% less than the expenditure before the rise of UHC.

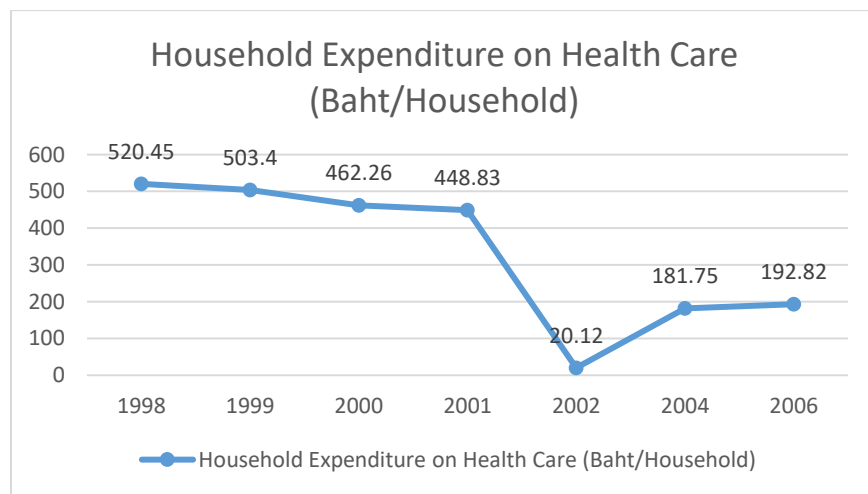


Figure 32: Average Household Expenditure on Health Care (Punpiamrat et al. 2008).

To summarize, it was not a surprising result that people would love and revere Thaksin and TRT. It was very rational, in fact. The success of TRT's policies, the UHC

in particular, was so perceptual that it could easily make of the previous governments irrelevant. Their followers grew, as proven by the election result for their second run for office, achieving an unprecedented victory and forcing other political parties to follow suit with policy-oriented politics. These policies were not only causing the change in the electoral politics but they also created what this work camakeled “the crack of Bhumibol’s narrative” as well, particularly his role as the sole benefactor or the only possible system suited for Thai society. Since Thaksin and TRT’s policies’ basis was materialistic benefits, then, the policy’s function was primarily working on the base structure or the realm of “sense-perception” of society. It might not directly affect the ideological understanding of liberal democracy, but that could happen naturally as a part of the social learning process of electoral politics and policy-oriented benefits. This “crack,” therefore, was very important to the whole scenario of the storytelling politics of King Bhumibol. It did not necessarily erase or replace the old tale, as later proven by the fact that many Red Shirts or TRT supporters who fought during the severe polarization of Thai politics also still revered the monarchic institution and remained royalists. What it caused, however, was an introductory of the new regime of “possibility or thinkability”<sup>1</sup> in Thai politics regarding the narrative of materialistic benefits. In other words, they did not essentially need to reject the way of receiving materialistic benefits that the king had presented, but they were aware, because of TRT, that the king’s way was not the only way. This new realm of thinkability alone could make Thaksin and TRT the strongest contenders in Bhumibol’s narrative ever since its inaugural days during the Sarit administration. The king and royal envoys were not the only possible materialistic benefit producers anymore in their perception.

During this polarization, the so-called “liberal or critical scholars of Thai politics” had also faced the dilemma. As mentioned earlier, Thaksin’s policies, especially the political ones, were not necessarily aligned with democratic or liberal values. This left many scholars unable to make the decision of whom they would side with: Thaksin or

the palace (represented by the coup). Somsak Jeamteerasakul (2007) observed and critiqued this phenomenon as he called them “the two rejections” (สองไม่เอา). The two rejections stood on two main grounds: the contextual condition and the political strategy at that time. The contextual condition was that Bhumibol’s narrative was so domineering to the point that any critique or negative comment, even encrypted, was virtually impossible to do without the risk of imprisonment. Rather, the elected politician could be criticized freely and overwhelmingly, notably Thaksin. This created the condition of severe “imbalanced critique.” The imbalanced critique caused the disparity between monarchic status and electoral politics to be greater after years of endeavor to promote the significance of electoral politics. This, eventually, resulted in the more imbalanced relative power between the two institutions once compared. Also, during this time, Thaksin was the only potential contender against the dominating royal narrative, so—for Somsak—it was also a strategic choice to support Thaksin, even if one did not like him, and hence his condemnation for the scholars with “two rejections” stance. I would argue that this stance was influenced by Prawase’s teachings and cultural domination, either on a conscious or subconscious level. People like Anek Laothammatat, Chamlong Srimaung, Chaiyan Chaiyaporn, and so on were prime examples of these groups. Also, even if the ones who displayed this stance were not influenced by Prawase’s cultural domination and identity politics, it could still be argued that this stance in itself was politico-strategically aligned with Prawase’s Khon Dee politics to the bitter end. Somsak claimed that indecisiveness led to an even more disadvantageous status for electoral politics. Anyhow, it should also be noted that there have been many counter-arguments to this “two rejections” critique. The main counter-arguments are (1) it was too “black and white,” (2) it did not put the variety of the personal condition of the academia into account and it forced them to take risks that they were not ready for, and (3) the method of counter royal dominating narrative could also be done gradually rather than immoderately. Not to mention that some even claimed that Somsak had cruelly chosen to sacrifice the 70

lives of the Takbai-Kruese incident and the legal due process in the drug war for his principle.

This was also the reason why the people of Salim's rationality regarded Thaksin and TRT as the counter-royalism movement. They also perceived this similar picture but interpreted it differently. If they belonged to the Salim Fundamentalism group, they tended to see this contestation as challenging the absolute Parami of the king, and, hence, their aforementioned accuse of "not knowing their (Thaksin's and TRT's) own place and disrespectfully fight above their own weight" (ไม่รู้ฟ้าสูงแผ่นดินต่ำ, ไม่รู้จักที่ต่ำที่สูง, ปีนเกลียว). On the contrary, the people who belonged to the Progressive Salim category tended to defy Thaksin and TRT from a different position by taking on the "impurity" like corruption cases to portray his evilness as opposed to "selflessness," the core value they hold dear.

The conflict essentially led to another political turmoil known as the "Red Shirt – Yellow Shirt Conflict., formally from 2007 when the United Front of Democracy against Dictatorship or UDD (แนวร่วมประชาธิปไตยต่อต้านเผด็จการแห่งชาติ หรือ นปช.), which commonly known as the Red Shirt Movement, was officially formed. Anyhow, unlike the previous political turmoil which tended to be an ideological confrontation (for example, nonliberal capitalism versus communism, military autocracy versus Buddhist-style democracy, and so forth), this conflict, I argue, was the fight for the survivability of the new form of materialistic benefits. The names of the opposition, UDD and PAD, both involved "democracy" or "against dictatorship," and the reason for establishing UDD was officially claimed to counteract the 2006 military coup d'état. After a few movements, it became clear that these words were merely decorative. It was especially clear for the Yellow Shirts, who refused to vote and called for a coup. At least in the beginning, The Red Shirt did too. They were not founded on ideological grounds, so they did not fight for the chivalric and democratic goals from the start. They sometimes aligned themselves with the undemocratic role of the monarchy. They

demanded universal amnesty for all political criminals, legally convicted but not necessarily just. Not to mention that some of them invaded Chulalongkorn Hospital during the height of the conflict, exemplifying their non-ideological stance. At least during their initial stage, the UDD tried to secure the continuation of their new source of materialistic benefits, which were Thaksin and TRT. Nonetheless, even though this new source of benefits was not beautifully decorated with the perfect illustration of democratic principles, it was structurally derived from the democratic and electoral roots. So, while the Red Shirts' foundation was not purely principled, they steadily built their understanding of democratic significance. For example, they were given materialistic benefits and functions that democratized them. So, this turmoil was the battle to determine which materialistic benefit system would prevail: monarchical benevolence or electoral policy. The confrontation continued for years until it met with the final showdown in 2010 when the Abhisit government, the loyal retainer of the throne, decided to put an end to this unending conflict and ordered the massacre, killing nearly a hundred Red Shirts and wounding several thousands.

In terms of realpolitik and the political system's institutional structure, the Red Shirt movement had lost. Institutionally, the old rationality system won at least twice. The first was the 2006 coup and the 2007 Constitution that benefited Thaksin's opponents. The second was the May 2010 massacre, which severely limited the ability of the Red Shirt movement to physically confront their opponents. The political institutions revert to what the Red Shirts fought against. The royal faction had won the conflict and resumed their position. They are in charge of the political administration, influencing the court and sentencing the electoral bans on many TRT core members (let alone dissolving the party a number of times), and they are also practically in control of the legislative body itself. Under these institutional mechanisms in the palace's control, the political system was allowed to return to its normal procedure again. Then came the 2011 general election. The Pue Thai Party (PT), the dissolved TRT's successor, won the election by a landslide, achieving the status of



a single majority party for the second time after TRT did so in 2005. This result showed that controlling institutional mechanisms was not enough to keep Bhumibol's narrative monopoly and prevent the people from indulging in Thaksin's narrative. In short, the rise of Thaksin and TRT, or “the crack”, induced the collapse of the simulacra that took decades to build. Society was not properly charmed and reproducing the singular narrative anymore. There were more options for narrative to choose from. These successive electoral victories, Samak, Somchai, Yingluck, against the political and institutional obstacles and even the brutal eradication by means of physical violence in the center of public attention, showed how difficult it was to kill the memory of Thaksin and his legacy. In a way, this makes him the everlasting specter of Bhumibol's narrative, undying and unkillable.

Because the previous institutional mechanisms and social movements were insufficient, a new tool with a more monarchical rhetoric was officially introduced in November 2013. It was the rise of the People's Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC), led by former Democratic Party core member Suthep Thueksuban. The name PDRC might not especially trigger the sense of the said monarchic pronounced. However, if we take its name in Thai which is “คณะกรรมการประชาชนเพื่อการเปลี่ยนแปลงประเทศไทยให้เป็นประชาธิปไตยที่สมบูรณ์อันมีพระมหากษัตริย์ทรงเป็นประมุข” (กปปส.) and make a literal translation, it would translate as “people's committee for changing Thailand into a complete democracy with the king as head of state.” It was then not so difficult to find the newly intended theme. They, hence, became the new representation of monarchic loyalty and the royal narrative-producing machine. Also, despite Yingluck's (or Somchai's and Samak's) overwhelming electoral victory, the government's authoritative power was weakened compared to Thaksin's golden age. This was because almost every institutional mechanism showed them hostility to varying degrees. Some were subtle, whilst some were rather aggressive, like the constitutional court and the press. Managing the country in such a situation was obviously not an easy feat. Not to mention the possibility of the army knifing their back and staging a

coup d'état which had always been a concern. This made Yingluck's government tend to back down rather than openly confront the PDRC. It was to the point that Yingluck herself claimed to already withdraw to the dead-end (KomChadLuek 2013). Eventually, Bhumibol was hospitalized in 2008 and had barely appeared in public since. At this point, it could be judged that the recitation of the royal narrative by PDRC was hardly a success. This may be due to Yingluck's concession strategy which led to no political violence. This deprived the army of any legitimate reason to move their force as they used to. This strategy forced the army to stage a bizarre coup d'état on the negotiating table. They were simply informing the government that the army would now control it.

To summarize the crack in Bhumibol's narrative caused by Thaksin and TRT policies, particularly the UHC, I would call it a sense-perception war of dominance (as opposed to Prawase's intelligible domination) on what would be considered the conventional standard of contributing materialistic benefits to the public. In the ongoing domination of materialistic benefits built upon the notion of benevolence and the patronage system with the king as its personification, Thaksin had proven himself materialistically what he was capable of and contested it on the same ground. The royal supremacy as narrated had constricted the thinkability of the society. Moreover, the re-connection between the king's influence and the land had resulted in the modern mandala, as known and popularized contemporarily as "Dad's Home." The nation and the king were one. Given that the perception of a "nation or nation-formulated state" was formed by the monarchy's benign influence, Thaksin and TRT's crackdown was also an attack on the understanding of what a nation is. During such conflicts, (national) purification was required, as Charles Tilly (1992) proposed. So, it was not surprising to see so many accusations against Thaksin as a national traitor and an enemy of the perfect royal family during the contest. The conflict forced the "nation-formulated state" to focus more on what the official narrative considered purer while distilling or marginalizing the less pure and impure. The whole scene of conflict

raised by the crack could be structurally seen, and that indicated how serious and powerful the crack was. It was a crack of no return. Although the epistemological origin of the word “Salim” is still not yet properly examined, it was during the period of this crack that people generally believe it was first used to describe “people with non-universal rationality.” These people claimed to be a supporter of democracy, but at the same time they were also backing up the royal influence as well as the power beyond the accepted principle of the democratic regime. The place that the word was introduced in this manner was argued to be the Samesky web board (เว็บบอร์ดฟ้าเดียวกัน), the cyber hub for the peripheral populace with critical minds towards the monarchic institution.

Finally, this chapter makes three points. First, from Chaofah Mongkut until the early 1990s, Thailand’s “structural politics” was based on the monarchy’s personal network, except from 1932 to the late 1950s when the People’s Party controlled the state’s administration. It was impossible to disentangle network politics from the structure because it was one with the national administrative body. But it was not until the late 1980s and early 1990s that structural politics truly functioned, meaning that every part of society contributed to the progression of politics. Obviously, the structure was in the form of a modern mandala, hence reproducing the royal narrative systematically and automatically. Second, it shows how narratives can form an institution. Narrative politics is usually thought of as relative power, whereas institutional politics is more rigid or static. This usually leads to their separation. But this chapter argues otherwise. As opposed to a simple fluid influence, it depicted the narrative and political agenda as becoming a dominating institution rigidly controlling the political structure. Finally, it depicts the transition from the contestation to the “cult of persona”—a storyline introduced during Sarit’s reign and centered around the king’s materialistic benevolence. The rise of Thaksin created a new “cult of persona” but on a different basis. The shift was from personal or divine benevolence to systematic, policy-oriented and electoral materialistic benefits. The systematic

benevolence that comes from their own choice and their own decision somewhat works against the old precept that emphasizes the kindness and the act of giving away something to the less opportune. The Thaksin cult that tried to worship and deify him in a similar way to King Bhumibol is, of course, problematic. However, despite their similar narrative structures, Thaksin's political power base is far more legitimate. Sure, he and his administration were not perfect, but they were democratic and electoral. Only this must be defended.

## *Chapter 5*

### **Pracharat, Love Performance, and the Royal Necromancy: Forging the Dying Narrative**

After the crack had occurred, the fruit of the royal faction's long endeavor, namely the modern mandala, was shaken, and the specter who signified the crack had even become everlasting and undying politically. The collapsing simulacra needed refurbishing, if not remodeling. Sadly, for the royal faction, King Bhumibol was hospitalized in 2008 and could no longer function as he did decades ago. He had barely appeared in public ever since. From his admission to Siriraj Hospital in 2008 until his death in 2016, he only appeared to the public and gained their attention a few times, like when he advised a management plan for the flood (Prachachart 2017) but nothing was worth mentioning. Ironically but unsurprisingly, it was his death on October 13th, 2016 that drove people into a state of craziness for days, competing to perform their love unyieldingly to the point of witch-hunting and lynching people who felt or expressed otherwise (see for example Prachatai 201).<sup>94</sup> In 2019, Prem Trinnasulanont, King Bhumibol's most powerful retainer, died. The palace camp was clearly in trouble, but predicting the death of an elderly man in a hospital was unlike exploring uncharted territory. The royal faction was not an imbecile who did not see this coming. They prepared and armed themselves for this unfortunate but predictable end, and the result was the military coup d'état on May 22, 2014, around two and a half years before King Bhumibol died.

After deposing the elected Yingluck government and silencing dissenters through legal and physical means, the military junta began reorganizing the country

---

<sup>94</sup> Similar incidents had occurred for 10 consecutive days.

and restoring the ailing royal mandala. In addition to the new constitution, constitutional courts, electoral committee, and other political institutions, they had devised the “Pracharat policy” (นโยบายประชารัฐ) to popularize themselves. While these main engines functioned, the narrative refurbishing worked quietly but steadily to align UHC and welfare politics with the royal narrative structure. However, many people were unaware that Prawase Wasi initiated and influenced the entire structure of Pracharat policy. So, in this chapter, we will discuss how Prawase emerged, influenced the new dominant policy, and played a role in electoral politics, reviving the dying royal narrative. It will also look at re-narrating and re-modeling welfare policies based on universal basic rights into Buddhist merit, or Parami rationality. Finally, the crisis imposed by the new king, Vajiralongkorn, on the royal narrative led to the near-total collapse of the royal domination, storytelling-wise.

### **The 3 Ps: Prayuth’s Pracharat, Prawase, and the (Guided) Perfection**

My initial understanding of Pracharat policy was that it was brewed and pushed by Somkid Jatusripitak (สมคิด จาตุศรีพิทักษ์), the Deputy Prime Minister at the time, who was overseeing economic policies. In 2017, I had the opportunity to interview Samran Chartto, who was then the vice-editor-in-chief of Channel 3 News and a key figure in Prawase’s network of thought-leaders. When Samran was explaining and praising Prawase, he casually mentioned the connection between Prawase and Pracharat policy. So, on a whim, I asked Samran about Pracharat and how it came about. The next part is the interview summary.

Samran said Prawase had called him one day, asking to meet. The meeting was held in the TV Channel 3 tower, and if Samran is correct, he suggested the potential policy name. He said Prawase had started the meeting by expressing his concern that Thai society had lost its catchphrase or narrative. So, he needed to introduce the public to the new narrative that still maintained the core concept. In short, the idea of a self-

sufficient economy and new theory had begun to lose their appeal, and Prawase tried to recapture it. He tried to rebrand the narrative with the more modern concept of “social corporate,” where the private sector prioritizes social benefits over their own (for the greater good). Prawase had twisted this existing amalgamation of narratives aiming to request the cooperation of the private sector to return the benefits back to society. He reasoned that the nation had already given to the individuals a lot, so it was now their responsibility to return the good cause. The private sector included both business and civil society. This time he asked for feedback and suggestions from the meeting led by Samran using the self-proclaimed social corporate concept. At this point, Samran claimed he suggested the name Pracharat, based on the Thai national anthem’s lyrics, to Prawase. Prawase, according to Samran, pondered for a moment and decided it was a good name that could cover the concept well and capture people’s minds.

In late August 2019, about a year after my interview with Samran, I had the opportunity to interview Prawase, as mentioned previously. During our interview, I also inquired about Pracharat’s policy. To clarify, Prawase admitted that he was the one who first thought of this policy, though he did not remember it being named at “Channel 3” as Samran claimed. To be more precise, he didn’t remember it being worth remembering. According to my interview with Prawase, he developed the Pracharat policy on the basis of “biology allegory and organic nation,” but he tried to rationalize it more structurally and scientifically. In his opinion, the main issue in society today is that people are unaware of their own role in society and lack unity to improve it. Instead, they are guided by materialistic greed and a lack of “wisdom” to the point where they have become leeches, waiting to suck the blood of the nation dry. In order to make the nation a better place for everyone, he devised this new policy to raise people’s awareness and find collaboration from all sectors. Prawase then met with Somkid Jatusripitak, the Deputy Prime Minister at the time, to explain the new method. Somkid bought the idea and helped Prawase introduce it to junta leader

Prayuth Chan-o-cha. The prime minister and cabinet liked Prawase's idea and made it a priority. After a few years, Prawase backed out of the project, claiming the military government had different goals from his own. Regardless, they seemed to have parted ways, if only temporarily. Then, Somkid assumed the leading position in this project and used his salesmanship to collaborate with the large enterprises and business sectors to gain benefits in the name of the nation (see: Kongkirati and Kanchoochat 2018).

Regardless, a year after my interview, Prawase gave a keynote speech on "social inequality" in Thailand at the King Prajadhipok Institution (สถาบันพระปกเกล้า). He elaborated on this point in a systematic and scientific way. He claimed that everything in the universe exists and matures in order, from the notion of forces in physics to the emergence of organisms in biology, and lastly, human society, which is still in its immature state. Hence, he urged people to follow the approaches and examples laid out by the already matured knowledge of physics and biology. A stance meant to appear objective as a good scientific narration should. He started his story with physics's "law of matter." He claimed that the smaller matter gravitated towards the larger mass. He then elaborated that the state and the capital have a large "influential mass" while society is small. As a result, society has shifted/gravitated to the demands or benefits of the state and the capital. This unbalanced condition causes Thailand to have a vertical structure, resulting in corruption, inequality, etc. In short, the notion of selflessness stems from this structure, so he suggested a way to eradicate this situation by turning Thailand into a horizontal structure.<sup>95</sup> The upper section of figure

---

<sup>95</sup>It should be noted here that, fundamentally, his stance has remained the same since at least 1974, but during that time the word "vertical structure" was used as a synonym for "bureaucratic system or structure". Also, in the keynote speech, another core point Prawase tended to emphasize was that Thailand is strongly influenced by Buddhism, which is ultimately and undisputedly a good thing, but the reason that so many bad things happen in Thailand is due to the vertical society and selfishness; one should only love oneself and the Buddha but not the others (to love the other unconditionally is also indicated by his sturdy stance on the selflessness notion).



33 represents this imbalanced power where the state's power is represented by the blue circle and the capital power is presented by the pink circle. The social power, hence, is depicted with the small white circle. He claimed that criticizing, cursing, or weakening the two dominant powers, particularly the capital, was futile. Communism tried but failed. His solution was simple. It was to make all three powers work together and to expand society's power to rival the other two. The result of this solution is illustrated in the lower sector of Figure 33. As one can see, all the power circles are equalized, and the dashed circular line connecting the three equal powers represents the foundational idea of Pracharat, a tool of wisdom.

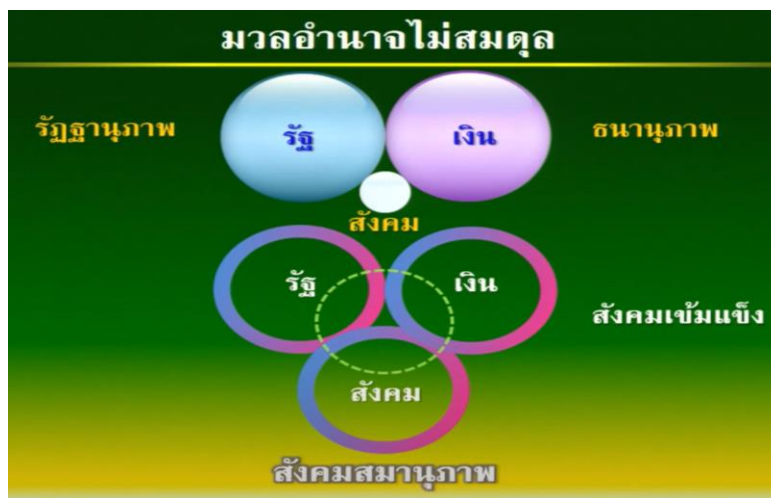


Figure 33: The Root Concept of Pracharat; deriving from “Law of Physics” (Wasi 2019).

But how can Thailand's social power rival the state and capital? Prawase used biology allegory to preach here. Prawase's narrative is based on the idea that our biological body is the most perfect functional system in the universe. The premise has matured after 3 billion years of natural experience. I simply highlighted these minor details to show how Prawase tended to build the credibility of his story by reproducing Buddhist content in a new narrative body, a process I call "hijacking modern scientific

narrative and democracy." Figure 34 shows the Prawase analogy between biology and social structure. Then and only then could the entire living system function in a healthy and balanced manner. He compared the single cell to the smallest or even the most primitive tribal community, stating that its simplicity and balance could last for centuries. These small communities would eventually become the locality, city, and country. They were, thus, the core of his teaching. His emphasis on the cell being "perfectly encoded" shows his existentialist leanings. In short, there is a perfect and proper form of community. To achieve this, the cells or small communities must be guided or adjusted. The rest of the analogy depicts the perfection he seeks in a cell or society. The rest of the biological analogy was discussed in Chapter 3 (especially on "organic nation"). This demonstrates Prawase's steadfast devotion to (Buddhadasa-style) Buddhist utopia. Some say Prawase has gone from progressive to conservative. He has not. He has never changed. It is society that advances. So Prawase, since the 2000s, has been reversely deemed a political conservative by the public instead. All in all, Prawase simply wants to direct society in the way he sees fit.



Figure 34: The approach to strengthening the 'society' deriving from the knowledge in biology (Wasi 2019).

To summarize the biology analogy, Prawase's teaching has five main points. For one, the cell or community must know its own function in the system and what it

should do. Two, the cell or community must have communal sense and respond to the needs of all, not just one. Three, all cells or communities must be able to communicate with each other in order to reduce conflicts and increase collaboration. Four, the blood carries nutrients to the cell, representing the distribution of resources in society. And finally, the immune system that protects the cell or community from unwelcoming “ideas or information” that would sway the society to the wrong direction. The endeavors of guiding them to the right path are done in the name of protecting the “identity.” A self-sufficient economy teaches the materialistic sufficiency of life as the recommended immune system against the insignificance of worldly desires, introduced and allured by western concepts. During the Pracharat inaugural speech, Prawase had even recommended the “Merit Bank” (ธนาคารความดี), a place where good deeds could be deposited and transformed into actual money once it is withdrawn (Wasi 2019). A full capitalization of Khon Dee politics indeed.

So, in order to achieve this goal and establish a systematic means of collaboration, the Pracharat proposal was introduced based on the “P-P-P-O” steps, as figure 35 suggests. The first P stands for “Purpose”, as Prawase believes that the collective purpose or end goal of the whole society is what is initially needed. And in this case, it is the reduction of inequality and the promotion of meritorious justice. This is followed by the second P, or “Principle”, that acts as the core standard of what to do to reach the goal line. For this, a strong society and support from both the state and capitalists are needed. The third P, which is “Participation,” and as the word suggests, it asks for the collaboration of everyone in the country. Lastly, O, or “Organization,” implies the need to establish or readjust the organization to serve this collective goal, and that is Pracharat. The derivation, as said, came from the keynote speech that was entitled “The Inequality in Thailand.” Hence, Prawase did not directly use the word “Prachart.” He had already faded himself from the functioning organization of the Pracharat campaign at the time of the speech, hence refrained from mentioning it straightforwardly. Anyhow, all of these contents were an exact

clone of what he told me during the interview about the original concept of Pracharat. This keynote was narrated more systematically and also had the presentation provided, so it was much easier to summarize it through this keynote speech in place of the interview.



Figure 35: The formation of Pracharat, dismissing unrealistic ideology and pursuing the approach aims at achievement at its core (Wasi 2019).

This policy was bought by Somkid and Prayuth Chan-o-cha and has become their main policy driving force. Prawase, who initiated the plan, was only involved in the policy's execution for a few years before leaving the group, saying it did not go as he had planned. The Prayuth military junta used the nation's tax to build favorability towards themselves by systematically giving money directly into people's hands on a national scale. The junta then created a political party called "Palang Pracharat Party" (Henceforth: PPP) or "Pacharat's Power" and prepared for the upcoming general election. The Pracharat's money policy is sometimes designated as only "Thong Fah Pracharat" (literally translated: Pracharat's blue flag shop). It is the shop where the Pracharat capitalists sell their discounted goods. So, there is no long-term benefit to the people, and the main beneficiaries are the Prayuth governments and their backers.

Toon Bodyslam, a famous rock singer who ran a marathon for donations to buy hospital equipment, was even adorned and used by the Prayuth government as a role model of Pracharat's mindset. As an observer of Thai politics, I had the opportunity to first-hand observe the election campaigns for both the 2011 and 2019 elections, and also interviewed some electoral candidates in the Northeastern region, generally known as the "Red Shirt territory." The result from the field study and interviews during these times pointed out that since the crack was occurred by Thaksin and TRT, the attempt to systematically eradicate this crack or any contestation of Bhumibol's narrative did happen, and it will be elaborated on in the next part.

### **Killing the Unkillable Specter: The Attempt to Constrict the Policy-Oriented Electoral Politics**

This work will show the impact of the 2006 coup until the age of Pracharat in modern Thailand. As previously stated, the royal faction wielded considerable institutional power and used it to target its opponents, in this case, the TRT, or Pue Thai Party (Henceforth: PT). The constitutional courts' dissolution of parties or the prejudices and disadvantages suffered by them and their supporters have been well documented and publicized for decades, though rarely has the perpetrator been charged or sentenced. The Red Shirt Massacre of May 2010 was a prime example. The People's Information Center's (PIC) report on the victims of the massacre is available online for free download. It was firmly rooted in the violent history of Thai politics (PIC 2017). Because I am assuming that everyone knows about these well-known cases, I will only recapture what I learned and experienced during my fieldwork and interviews.

My field study was surrounded by the election campaign and leading politicians from various political parties. To put it bluntly, they were put in completely different situations under the same rules and aiming for the same election. First and foremost,

"vote-buying," where a politician gives money or things to voters in exchange for their votes, has been a hallmark of Thai electoral politics for decades. It is still being used as an accusation today, but much less frequently than in the 1990s–2010s. It exists, but its importance has dwindled since TRT's policy-oriented electoral politics became entrenched in Thai politics. The central region, the citified people, and the south have always framed the north and northeast (or Isan) as poor, uneducated, and more susceptible to vote buying due to their lower moral standards and their indulgence in their own shortcomings. Statistically, these regions have higher educational rates even today (Office of the Educational Council 2018). So, they assess themselves as relating more to ascetic politics by upholding more moral high ground. Once the electoral issues regarding the North and Isan regions (the fortresses of TRT and PT) came into focus, the everlasting vote-buying myth emerged.

Although policy-oriented electoral politics has largely eliminated the money-or-gift-giving tradition, local network politics based on benevolence still exists (see also Nethipo 2015). But, as stated, in the most notoriously corrupted regions, this "offering" has simply become a tradition, not a factor influencing decision-making. Using the logic of vote-buying, the party that pays or gives the most during the campaign has a better chance of winning in each constituency. In the most accused regions, such a claim was often refuted by a landslide. During the 2011 electoral campaign, the regional major politician of the Democrat Party admitted in an interview that his party had paid the most but barely got a few seats back from the entire region (consisting of 4-5 provinces). After that, he had to face the party board committee, explaining that money no longer worked, as in the case of the South, where people voted for the Democrat Party no matter what. Politicians from other parties, as well as the Democrat Party, have expressed similar sentiments. Other opposing parties scouted and proposed many TRT or PT politicians to join, offering 3–4 times more electoral funds than TRT or PT, but they chose not to join. They did not lose their financial ambitions

or become extreme party supporters; they just believed that even with more money and a network, winning an election was difficult. So, TRT or PT was their choice.

It wasn't that TRT or PT didn't want to pay more. According to the prominent TRT and PT politicians who gave me the interview, they wanted to pay more because it would increase their chances of winning. They simply couldn't. Since the 2006 coup, the election committee has been surveilling them more than other parties, especially the Democrats. They had to devise a creative way to avoid the electoral law that could identify them to the Constitutional Court, which would then disband them. One of the region's most famous politicians came up with the idea, which was later copied by his colleagues. His staff was to ask potential voters what they lacked or needed, mostly everyday items. He then bought a full truck load of household supplies and sold them to voters at a discount of 1 baht each (around 0.29 yen). This constraint prevented TRT and PT from spending more heavily on their funds. At the same time, they were also partially putting the financial restrictions on themselves as well. So, it was not entirely conditional. As the first and probably the only party to use polling and big data analysis in electoral campaigns, they knew that the tides were on their side because people loved their policies and were not swayed by money or gifts from other parties. Their main concern was the personal and benevolent relationships and networks that the other parties had. In any case, this proves that vote-buying is no longer a significant factor in the election. People have grown and society has changed.

Returning to the earlier hinted "tradition," it was true that the tides were on TRT's side, and that the policies had proven to be very beneficial and offered more. But money or gifts were still required. Thus, the creative way to avoid electoral punishment was executed. If vote-buying was a myth, why was it needed then? The question was posed to both TRT and PT politicians as well as potential voters in the area. The answer was similar. The money or gift was seen as a token of remembrance. It was just a way for politicians to show they remembered them and would not forget them. It was an emblem of trust. So long as the token could perform the function, its

absolute value was irrelevant. Similar to the materialistic and tangible infrastructure that represents the royal connection to the people in its located areas, it acted in a similar manner. It was like the royal dams or the regional palaces, a thing for people to remember the connection.

Despite several attempts to undemocratically eliminate TRT (or PT), including drafting a new constitution in 2007 and conducting a military breakdown in 2010, they have survived and thrived. Clearly, they are less powerful now than they were at their peak. But their decreasing numbers did not suffice to remove them from parliamentary politics. There is no way the palace can go back to the pre-Thaksin luxuries and privileges that came with the undisputed dominance of their narrative. The outcome of the royal faction's political killing attempts by undemocratic means such as coups, constitutional court verdicts, massacres, etc., was not profitable or even equilateral. These efforts were spent on their decades-long legitimacy built by their narrative. The more attempts are made, the more questions and defiance are raised. This phenomenon is known in Thailand as "awaken" or "eyes wide open" (ตาสว่าง). With the death of King Bhumibol and the inability to kill Thaksin (and TRT), another huge political maneuver was once again executed. Its goal was to derail PT, TRT's successor, and reclaim power (indefinitely). The 2014 coup was followed by the 2017 constitution, which shamelessly imposed many restrictions designed for PT. This new electoral system eliminates the possibility of a big-party system and gives the military junta's hand-picked senators the power to vote for the prime minister. It was easy to guess who they would vote for. This observation of the new constitution was not only known and criticized by the military junta opposition, but the huge supporters of the junta also acknowledged it. Somsak Thepsutin, a leading figure in the Palang Pracharat Party (henceforth: PPP), had said to himself that "This constitution was designed for us" (KomChadLuek 2018). Also, Wanchai Sornsiri, one of the junta-selected senators, openly accepted and declared that the senate was premeditated in this way in order to back up Prayuth Chan-o-cha, who would surely be prime minister after the election



(PPTV HD 36 n.d.; and workpointTODAY 2018). Until the 2019 general election, the Pracharat policy had been working continuously throughout the new constitution's drafting process. It gives money to the "poor" by registering them on the "poor card" – part of the Pracharat campaign. The "poor" will then be given money to buy goods from Pracharat shops called Thong Fah, which exclusively stock goods from the project's tycoons' companies. Also, the military junta did a great job of making the poor and middle class poorer the longer they ruled the country. So, the Pracharat allowance became more valuable, especially for the unemployed and the elderly who could no longer work.

As the election results showed, the power of narrative fueled by the crack overcame the institutional compression placed on them. So, the new 2017 Constitution was needed to create a new stage that is anti-PT from top to bottom. However, the new constitution allowed the new opposition to emerge, seizing the opportunity of the newly formed stage to solidify their influence. The new opposition was the Future Forward Party (henceforth: FFP). This entire event has changed the Thai electoral landscape. My fieldwork and interviews from late 2018 to early 2019 showed some changes in the same region. First, the unbalanced restriction and surveillance were more intense than in 2011. FFP, and Thai Raksa Chart (henceforth: TRC), a branch party of PT, were aiming for the proportional party seat quota enforced in the new constitution. The new electoral vote-counting system made the big-party system unworkable. Electoral committee would intervene and exercise their authority at their own whim. This was particularly true for PT, the electoral billboard announcing the candidate or even the leaflet possessed and distributed by the PT electoral staff were carefully checked before leaving the party office. They knew they were being watched at all times. In short, this was the cleanest PT (or TRC) campaign ever, at least in this region. Only verbal explanations and promises were used to explain to the voters. They told their potential voters why the restriction was put on them and why they could not offer this token of trust. Of course, this was all happening while the PT's

opponents, especially the PPP, were actively campaigning with cash and the Pracharat monthly allowance. This forced PT to rely more on policy-oriented politics and the beneficial memories of voters that revolved around Thaksin. In short, the cult of persona based on electoral politics was forced to intensify, deepening the crack between the two opposing narrative holders of materialistic benevolence.

This phenomenon grew as I interviewed potential voters in Isan. It should be noted that the situation in their community was quite similar in almost every rural district I had visited, with an increase in the elderly and children, and a decrease in working-age people who left to find work and sent money home. So, grandparents and grandchildren stayed home while parents worked in cities or industrial areas. Children who were not eligible to vote as well as the elderly became the transcendental factor, receiving a monthly stipend from Pracharat policy. Being mostly unemployed, they valued the Pracharat money. In short, they were more swayed by the policy than working-age residents. Regardless, this power was not uncontested. In many interviews with potential elderly voters, they stated that they were frequently contacted by their children who lived in the cities, telling them not to vote for PPP or else they would stop supporting them. These young adults supported PT but also gave their parents options like PT or FFP, as long as it was not PPP. This occurrence clearly displayed the contestation between the old cult of persona that relies on personal benevolence and Buddhism logical system to uphold the patronage network and the new cult of persona that relies on the electoral system and policy-oriented benefits. Both cases adore the personification of materialistic gain, but the narratives' backgrounds are vastly different.

A legal, narrative, and institutional crises confronted PT in this new electoral game. Not to mention that TRC, a party founded by PT to address new disadvantages, was later disbanded by the constitutional court. The dissolution occurred in the face of the nation's doubts. Meanwhile, a new party, FFP, was gaining momentum, aided by the new electoral rules. The rise of FFP will be discussed in the next chapter as it

is related a lot to the rise of the 2020 demonstration, which this work counts as the second major crack in Bhumibol's narrative. They also end Bhumibol's narrative and legitimacy, though the institutional structure and network politics remain.

This entire section could be called "Replacing Dad," hence the name of this new storyline. Since King Bhumibol was hospitalized in 2008, the end of his reign was near, but the influence of the crack or Thaksin has yet to be adequately subdued. Thus, this historical phase occurred. As previously stated, the 2014 coup and the 2017 constitution were part of the crisis management. But, as we will see, it may be the decision that digs a deeper grave for them. Regardless, the Prayuth junta's early narrative crisis management was neither impressive nor systematic. There was a lack of a flagship policy that would automatically link to Prayuth and his crews. Unlike Thaksin and UHC, the relatable Prayuth administration flagship did not emerge until Somkid's Pracharat policy was fully bloomed and later run by PPP. Prawase, the initiator, declared that he could not agree with Somkid's version of Pracharat.

Prawase initially intended to use the Pracharat campaign to replace decreasingly popular dogmas like self-sufficiency economy or narratives aligned with selflessness and Khon Dee politics with more popular ones. In short, it was to strengthen his own cult of dogma. Instead, it became the foundation of materialistic benevolence, not the conceptual credo to replace the fading old ones that Prawase had aimed for. So, he has to continue his political project separately, like the 2019 keynote speech mentioned. The function that provides materialistic benefits on the rationality or narrative of "giving to those who are less fortunate or less powerful," like the poor card and the elderly monthly allowance, makes the Pracharat policy become the replacement of the deceased dad, King Bhumibol. It continues to give and be benevolent in his place. Of course, since it is a political party policy, the royal camp's new materialistic benefits are more systematic than the old ones. Also, it was clearly intended for use in electoral campaigns and politics in general. Then, it could be justifiably claimed that this policy aimed at tackling the crack caused by Thaksin and

taking back PT's (or TRT's) influence at their own stage: the general election. Of course, cheating tools like the 2017 constitution helped. In this regard, the Pracharat policy in itself has been molded to replace the king and create the "systematic or electoral patronage system," making the provider of this policy become the new "personification of benevolence" to serve the cult of persona. In short, the systematic policy performs a similar function as King Bhumibol in the cult of persona narrative. Anyhow, it might not be a "persona" in a strict sense anymore since the person no longer exists. It was quite ironic to see that UHC and other TRT policies forced the palace's side to admit that the only way to push their narrative through and survive was by winning in the new playground created by their challenger. Of course, in this new playground, the narrative roles were reversed. The palace was now the challenger trying to win on the policy front using electoral language. Their use of other political tools to assist or cheat was simply an admission that their electoral narrative could not yet overcome Thaksin's dominance. Although I argue that both King Bhumibol and Thaksin had created the cults of persona, their foundations were entirely different. The concentration on overcoming the crack originated by TRT and the lack of focus on the fading conceptually dogmatic narrative left some room for the new contestation to grow. Hence, a new crack, FFP, emerged. Instead of tackling with one crack, the palace now has to tackle with two, a mission hardly possible to achieve. So begins the end of royal narrative politics. They will probably be left with a crude autocratic structure composed of various institutions and business partners at their command but lacking public obedience and fanfare. Their authority would be void of narrative, an age of self-governing. If the situation fully blooms, the monarchy's hegemonic status, which requires public consent, will also vanish. Then only the dreadful dictator's image and memory would surface, along with a much harder job governing and steering the country.

## Remodeling the Crack: Reversing the Function of the Universal Health Coverage

Attempts to hijack and re-narrate the TRT's initiated policy, particularly UHC, have occurred. The royal faction tried to convert universal basic rights into Buddhist meritorious logic, where more giving equals more Parami. However, since it was both subtly performed and received, its impact were far less than the Pracharat policy's. Anyway, since it happened and fits the narrative function of Pracharat policy, I think it is appropriate to elaborate here.

Around 14.30 hours on the 18th of July, 2019, Anutin Charnweerakul—the newly enthroned Minister of Public Health at the time—had given his first public talk as the minister. He shortly illustrated the function of UHC during the inaugural Q&A session with the news reporters. He said, “The universal health care project is the distribution of sorrow and happiness. Those who are capable of taking care of themselves and do not need to take public service from the state are equal to those who are performing merit (ทำบุญ/ทำทาน) to the nation and fellow-countrymen by granting their quota to those in need of this service. Those that are not lucky enough” (Wongpanya 2019, 5.22 – 5.58 minutes, my own emphasis).

Tewan Liptapanlop, another Thai minister, enforced an urgent policy to have every temple in Thailand chant the Rattana Sutra prayer on national broadcast television, to outcast the spreading coronavirus from the land and to uplift the morale of the populace in March 2020. It happened again in May 2021 (see The Standard 2020 and also Figure 36). The belief that collective prayers would remove the global threat is not new. It still affects many people in the so-called peripheral areas, especially in rural areas where Chaofah Mongkut's synthesized Buddhism, Hinduism, and local spirits still exist. Even if such a belief persists, no rational government would launch such a campaign. And they did it twice, despite the criticism they received each time. Enforcing such a policy on a national level is clearly “irrational” by the universal standard of rationality. Since its inception, the campaign has been unpopular on

almost every major public platform. Once this campaign was launched again, it could not be considered an attempt to gain popularity or credibility for the "unique solution." It was obviously an error in policymaking. It was an attempt to reclaim the scientific and materialistic ground lost to Buddhist influence. The scientific and materialistic understanding aligned with Thaksin's crack was unwanted. It was, therefore, preferable to reverse it for the royal narration. Fortunately, it was not well-received by the public and had little impact on the overall scheme. So, it simply illustrates the misguided attempt to hijack the electoral universal language and put it into Buddhist logic.



*Figure 36: The government-organized 'Live-broadcasting event' of National Collective Buddhist Prayers against Covid-19 (May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021).*

*[Source: Voice TV online]*

This simply demonstrates the eccentric nature of Thai politics, specifically the universal health care campaign, which is generally perceived as a very progressive policy, even among highly developed nations. Normally, a nation's universal health

care policy requires extensive debate and public consensus to be fully implemented. This is especially true after the fall of a left-wing fortress like the Soviet Union, which weakened left-wing policy. Consider Bernie Sanders, who ran against Hillary Clinton in 2016 and Joe Biden in 2020. For decades, he had tried to persuade the American public to accept universal health care and other progressive ideas, but the election results showed that the majority of Americans were unable to accept Sanders' proposal as "too progressive" (Rothman 2016). Thus, universal health care was considered a progressive or even left-wing policy until recently. It is now arguably one of the most modern liberal policies today. However, the health minister's perception of universal health care in Thailand appears to be anything but progressive.

As a result, the Anutin and Prayuth administration (including their Covid-19 policy) tries to reverse the systematically electoral benefits that the UHC portrayed. Instead of granting everyone the universal basic rights to receive health care equally, they grant them the eccentric notion that the rich are receiving merits from helping the poor. No wonder why their attempt failed miserably.

## *Chapter 6*

### **Fleeing from the Sickness: Internet, Reality, and the Transition of Sense-Perception**

After a long hospitalization, King Bhumibol's reign had come to an end, and it was time for a change. King Bhumibol, whom people longed for and some even claimed to be the foundation of their existence, barely had any (public) activity during his last years of life while the people could still enjoy their life to the fullest. A constant dystopian atmosphere persisted during the first 10 days after his death. Witch-hunting and physical violence were used against those who did not show enough "sorrowfulness and yearning" publicly. Even a simple comment like "every human is subject to death one day" could cause an uproar like the case of the soybean milk shop family in Phuket, as the son's comment triggered the anger of the mass to the point of attempting to stomp him by surrounding his residence for many hours.

The 2017 constitution, which aimed to completely eliminate PT (TRT) influence, followed the newly enthroned monarch. The same old royalist institutions like the constitutional court, electoral committee, and senators were re-enforced in their undemocratic boldness. With no regard to legitimacy or dignity, they were ready to act in any way possible to reduce PT's influence, regardless of proper and democratic rationality. It is a cultural legitimacy investment that clearly illustrates how much fear, annoyance, or uncertainty PT (TRT) had posted to the royal faction in the past 2 decades. Of course, PT tried to overcome these structural disadvantages by forming Thai Raksa Chart (TRC), a party aiming for proportional representation. They also tried an unconventional approach, forming a public partnership with Ubonrat, the enthroned King Vajiralongkorn's older sister. However, they ended up with a verdict



by the constitutional court to dissolve the party. So, any large-scale solution for PT to progress and win the election was also cut.

However, the methods and tools used to kill PT had created a new threat to Bhumibol's narrative. The Future Forward Party (FFP) was founded on March 15, 2018, or 11 months after the 2017 constitution went into effect. Like TRT, the FFP reaped the benefits of the new constitution's electoral mechanism. Their rise was perhaps unexpected by the royal faction, who believed they were the only ones capable of dominating the new electoral system. This chapter will begin with the emergence of this crack and its consequences which contributed to the most direct confrontation of the Bhumibol's narrative in Thai history. The story has lost most of its charm now. To illustrate the FFP and the new crack it has brought, the chapter will discuss the waves of resistance to Bhumibol's narrative and the factors that contributed to their occurrence. Finally, it will summarize the work's main findings and the alternative modernity this royal narrative has achieved.

### **The Second Crack: An Ideological and Dogmatic War**

This work shows that TRT and Thaksin's crack was an unintentional confrontation with Bhumibol's cult of persona based on the premise of Parami building and the first synthesized Buddhist rationality via materialistic benefits. It was a story about personal benevolence versus electoral policy. Similarly, the rise of FFP is a direct challenge to Prawase's cult of dogma. The first crack was considered a contender for the cult of persona because it invaded and fought on the same narrative battlefield. It also portrayed Thaksin as the personification of electoral materialistic gains. On this note, Prawase's cult of dogma, unlike the previous structure of storyline, has a more flexible "symbolic figure" that can be replaced over time. As a result, the figurehead does not have to be a member of the royal faction, but rather the one who best represents the Khon Dee (selflessness) dogma.

The Khon Dee dogma dictates what people should do. It must claim a higher moral, ethical, or ideological ground than the others. Hence, other ways of committing “good or meritorious deed,” like the western values or storyline believed by Salim Fundamentalist, is considered less virtue, less rationale, less correct, or less educated. In short, if anyone has emerged and could fill this “dogma’s requirement,” then it is possible for them to be regarded as the representative of the dogma. Thaksin, too, was once thought of in this way although he was placed far below King Bhumibol. However, the new king does not capture the requirement to represent this dogma and continue his late father’s self-built reverence. This shakes the monarchy’s unrivaled position in this trend of storytelling. Unlike Thaksin, FFP arose after the death of the incomparable role model king. The new king, who represents the dogma, is weak in narrative and unsuited to the dogma’s core value of selflessness. Moreover, the FFP promoted itself almost exclusively on ideological and principled grounds. They had shown that they would work for the greater good and lead the nation according to democratic values. In short, they had quickly risen to the top of the figurehead race in the cult of dogma. They were riding the structural advantages, both legally (the new electoral mechanism) and culturally (the hype for selfless role models).

Unlike TRT, FFP had not had a chance to be the acting cabinet, so they had not been proven materialistically yet. But they fought for royal supremacy through non-sensory means, the intelligible realm. Their main marketing tool had been to emphasize the “ideology of democracy” or the “theory of form” of the democratic principle. This fits the phrase “arming the people’s thoughts” used by FFP. This method of narrative building inevitably leads to the perception of what the superior form or progress of democracy should be: the “progressive liberal dogmatic” path. Thus, it is a battle between selflessness and the second synthesized Buddhist Utopia dogma versus democratic dogma. Unsurprisingly, the FFP was able to recruit many so-called ex-educated Salim who favored Progressive Salim rationality. This phenomenon reduced the number of Democrats voters and turned the power of Democrats ex-voters

to theirs. Many of the FFP's supporters are ideological immigrants from Progressive Salim to the democratic camp, so their rationality might not be based on democratic values. It could be seen from the FFP leader's actions and self-promotion which matched the "cult of persona." Even though they might have changed side, they are still holding on to the same frame of thoughts. So, these Progressive-Salim-turned-FFP supporters are still developing and should not be judged yet. It is still unclear whether the old Khon Dee political frame or the FFP's new democratic goal will have more impact. The positive point here is that FFP's narrative is more universal and democratic-oriented than Prawase's teaching. The latter has long hijacked the democratic vocabulary and redefined it with Buddhadasa's contents. In terms of the narrative content, a shift towards a more democratic mass could be desired. However, the narrative structure is similar, i.e., the moral, ethical, or principle high ground. As such, FFP's stance represents not only the general democratic system but also the form and manner in which democracy should progress. The framework itself is based on a similar function to Prawase's. The 1997 constitution and politics could be thought of as one example of this misinterpretation. They believed that the development of the hijacked democracy was indeed the ideological progression of universal liberal democracy. Also, this "principle or moral high ground" stance could cause a crack in the resistance alliance of Bhumibol's narrative or the PT's (TRT's) supporters as well, since this group of masses does not learn about the significance of democracy via the intelligible realm but by the materialistic gains from electoral politics and policy-oriented systems. Also, there is the fact that TRT or PT has always been a party built upon the goal-driven (materialistic-wise) basis from the beginning, not from the ideological standpoint. So, the images of democracy that these two groups yearn for or imagine are also different. This would cause a rift between them, not just with Bhumibol's story. And, the conflict is somewhat similar to the one between the two categories of Salim. The scene of conflict from the resistance camp would be revealed in the same way. Fans of the FFP tend to look down on PT supporters, claiming they

are less intelligent, less democratically principled, or less well-thought-out. PT supporters, who tend to have a more flexible ideology, may also play the oppressed card by claiming that FFP supporters are only mumbling their worshiped principles without understanding or having basic empathy towards the lives of the poor. Or they sometimes even claimed to be the less fortunate who do not have the luxury of defending and achieving every principle before moving on with their lives. Some members of this group are also arguing on the basis of political-strategic moves or simply rejecting the idea of a more proper version of democracy that the FFP's followers revere.

Regardless, the rise of FFP caused a great political migration in Thai (urban) society. With the rise of the educated urban masses, this crack began to cast doubt on long-held Thai values and establishments, from the army and court to the monarchy. As the new crack emerged, the royal faction chose to deal with the unforeseeable electoral factor that was FFP. They used the constitutional court's decision to disband FFP. Then they tried to gain as many FFP MPs as possible. For many educated urbanites, the dissolution of FFP was their first encounter with political injustice. This is given that many of the FFP's voters were first-time voters, and some had always sided themselves with the royal camp and cheered for the Democrat Party before joining this oppressed side. So they had no direct experience or awareness of this type of injustice. An uproar and demonstration erupted in response to this negative newness. It eventually erupted into the people's long-running demonstration that continues to this day (October 2021).

After interviewing dozens of demonstrators of all ages and backgrounds, I discovered that the disbanding of FFP was indeed one of the main catalysts. Then they started seriously questioning the Thai political establishment. The demonstration will be discussed in detail in the next section. This part would simply highlight the emergence of a new crack that is still in progress. So now both of Bhumibol's main narratives are being challenged. The impact of the emerging crack is so strong that it

has shifted the dominant culture and narrative away from Prawase's influence. Even if the narrative speculation is correct, the monarchic faction still controls the institutional and political system as a whole. In practice, the dominant side remains unchanged, but progress is evident.

As a result of the structural shift, the production of "royal stories" ceased during the reign of King Vajiralongkorn or Rama X. This change emphasizes the importance of the "storytelling structure" itself. The new crack has won over and pushed the so-called ignorant masses or those who are inexperienced in political unjust and often turn a blind eye to the normalized abnormality of society to mobilize. While the king held institutional powerhouses like the army, the parliament, and most major Thai corporations in his hand, the newly awakened mass had become 2020 demonstrations and confronted him directly. Without the storytelling structure that contains the attribute of politics of permanence, things are designated to move, as they should be.

### **New Material, New Reign, and New Reality: The Waves of Resistance**

Clearly, the 2020 People's Demonstration is the most critical of the monarchy. However, it was not the first resistance to the royal storytelling, quite a distance from this position. Let me begin by illustrating waves of resistance in order to see the structural development of the people who tried to escape this narrative imprisonment. The quest for Bhumibol's dominance began with Sarit's rise in the late 1950s. As explained in Chapter 2, it gained nationwide momentum in the late 1960s and early 1970s via PMMV and royal initiative projects. Around this time, the first clear resistance to this influence seemed to emerge. These waves of resistance against the royal narrative began in October 1973 and October 1976. While it cannot be said that the two movements were specifically formed to counter the Bhumibol narrative, it is undeniable that some of the forces involved in the movements did. Either they directly

targeted the narrative or their ideologies influenced the indirect confrontation. In short, society has begun to question Bhumibol's dominance since then.

## Waves of Resistance

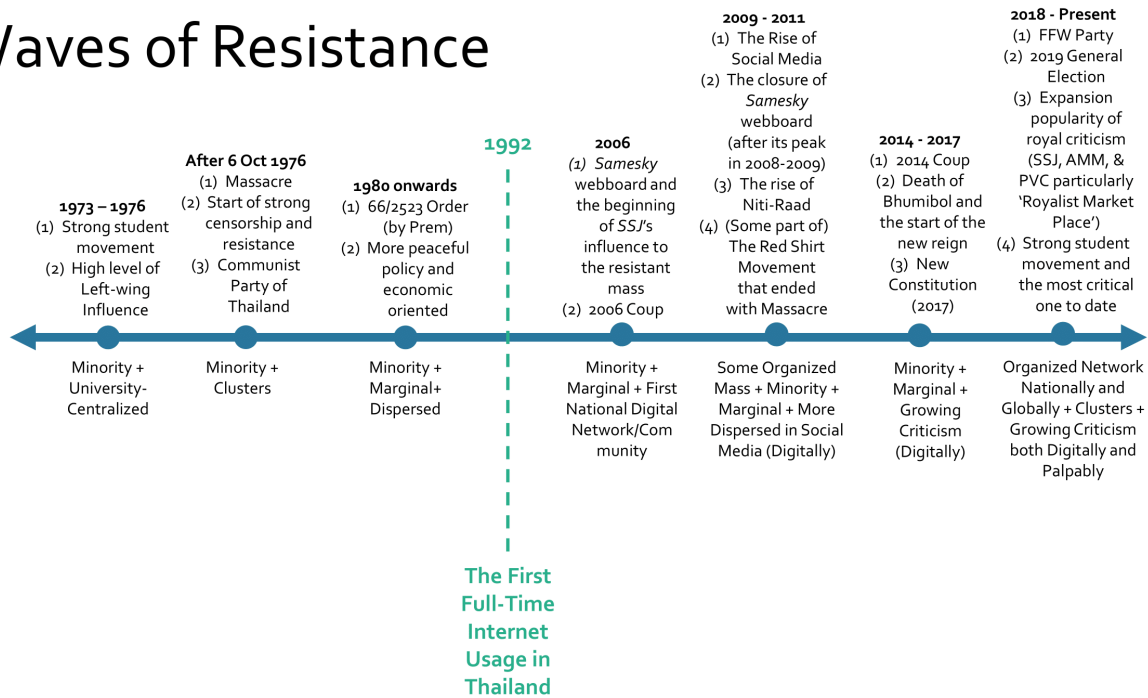


Figure 37: Waves of Resistance to Bhumibol's Narrative.

Figure 37 depicts the resistance's structural evolution since the 1970s demonstrations. Since this is merely a summary and broad analysis of previous waves of resistance, I will keep it brief and focus on the main components. In short, some details that some may find important will be omitted. From 1973 to 1976, strong student movements led the resistance. They were well-organized and had social support. This is where the left-wing has begun to gain its influence. Although some provincial universities' students also joined the creed, the movement was very university-centric. And since the involvement was mainly within Bangkok, it could be argued that the movement itself, although impactful, was still not the riot of the majority. This was especially true for those influenced by left-wing ideologies or critical of the monarchy. At this stage, opposition to Bhumibol's narrative was still a minority,

but it was organized and systematic. However, after the massacre on October 6th, 1976, the organized hub of the student movement was demolished. Some chose to give up. Some were jailed. Some joined the Communist Party. During this time, the resistance was even more dispersed and decentralized. They were operational unit clusters (see also Yimprasert 2007). However, it could also be said that, contrary to the withering force in terms of quantity, the narrative confrontation towards the monarchy was more direct and pronounced during this phase. In the 1980s, Prem issued the 66/2523 Order, which reconciled the critical mass of communists and allowed them to return to normal life. During this period, the monarchy's critics were marginal and dispersed. This dispersed resistance allowed Bhumibol's narrative to quickly dominate.

Thailand fully launched internet connectivity in 1992, and its popularity has steadily grown since then. Samesky Webboard was founded in 2006, during Thailand's golden age of "webboards." This web forum was created by Samesky Books, a publisher known for its critical stance on Thai politics and culture. This particular webboard had arguably become the first digital hub for the dispersed peripheral critical mass. Midnight University, founded by Somkiat Tangnamo, was also active at the time, but it seemed to focus more on producing political-cultural encyclopedia content than creating a community hub. Not to mention that it was less popular than Samesky Webboard. I would argue that the Samesky Webboard was the first nationwide critical mass community to express its opposition to Bhumibol's tyranny. This almost unknown digital land gained popularity after the 2006 coup as the only refuge for the critical mass who had no platform to express their doubt, anger, or criticism towards the political mayhem in Thailand. Also, it was in this space that Somsak Jeamteerasakul, a Thai historian with a critical standpoint almost solely on the monarchical issue, began to ground his public influence after years of criticizing other scholars without listening to their answers or replies, for the most part. Whether you like it or not, Somsak was the first critical scholar to dominate a "new

communication platform," in this case, an internet webboard. He had also gained popularity in the online community. Due to their political stance, Samesky Webboard and the community faced many challenges. They were repeatedly subjected to state coercion, as was I. So, when discussing the monarchy or what was considered "unthinkable" at the time, the language had to be encrypted. However, based on engagement, the webboard continued to grow and peaked around 2008-2009. Regardless, it ended soon after.

Shortly before the closure of the Samesky webboard, a new cyber community platform, notably Facebook, was introduced to Thai society. Therefore, once the Samesky webboard reached its end, a great digital migration of the critical mass occurred. Somsak once again succeeded in becoming the first critical intellectual who could influence a huge number of digital citizens. The stage is even bigger than before. However, due to the less community-driven Facebook ecology at the time, I would argue that the digital mass community had become more dispersed. Because most Samesky Webboard members used fake names as usernames for their own safety, they lost contact with each other after the great digital migration. In this sense, Somsak's Facebook page had become a new potential meeting place for the dispersed critical mass that used to reside on Samesky's webboard. Of course, as the stage has grown, new faces appear and old faces seem to fade away. This period saw the rise of a group of (critical) legal scholars known as the "Nitirat" or "Enlightened Jurists" a few years later. They had openly criticized the constitutional court's "never-before-questioned verdicts" with their legal viewpoint. They questioned the 2007 constitution's drafting, the monarchical status in democratic constitutionalism, etc. This directness has caused many minds to question their unquestioned normality. Regardless, it is fair to say that the 2006 coup shook the most people. The royal family's unfair treatment of the two demonstrations' participants, Red Shirt and Yellow Shirt, also shook the people's minds. Queen Sirikit herself had attended the Yellow Shirt participant's funeral and given many things as a token of moral support,



while the Red Shirt only received oppression and accusation as the city burners. This drastic treatment widened the existing crack and increased the resistant population. In addition to these events, the rise of new technology and platforms aided in maintaining the curiosity and criticism by giving the critical mass a place to voice their opinions. This grew into a sense of community to work and share similarities. This period ended with Abhisit's Red Shirt massacre in the heart of Bangkok. Thousands were injured, and nearly a hundred were killed by real army-grade bullets. Until now, the victims had not received official justice or fairness. This fueled more skepticism and resistance to the monarchy. But it was far from the dominant or majority group in Thailand. Also, after the massacre, the Red Shirt and critical mass were subdued. The military junta had ordered a large number of influential people and scholars to report, and many had been detained for several days near the army barracks. So, even though the number of critical thinkers was increasing, the military's use of brute force reduced their dominance.

As previously stated, the 2014 coup had many causes and effects. It tried to put a systematic end to PT and ensured a smooth transition to the new reign. The new constitution was designed to take away PT's electoral advantages. The subpar performance of the junta government itself, the awkwardness shown in the process of constitutional drafting, and the relatively less regal and charismatic nature of the new king have contributed to the rise of criticism. But the mass's dominating stance toward the monarchy had not yet emerged. It was still being done discreetly. So, I still consider the anti-royal narrative movement a peripheral movement. They encoded their messages to keep themselves safe.

The new electoral phase began after almost 5 years of military junta rule and the long and awkward 2017 constitution process. New political parties emerged, including FFP, which eventually became a star among the urban educated mass. Also, the general public's continued skepticism and suffering towards the junta's rule

increased the audience for anti-royal scholars' public posts. Somsak Jeamteerasakul, Pavin Chatchawalpongpan,<sup>96</sup> and Andrew McGregor Marshall<sup>97</sup> are notable scholars who have influenced the masses. Critical scholars and many satire pages like Kai-Maew (ไต่แมว) or Manee Mee Chair (มานี้มีแซร์) keep on posting their relatively progressive thoughts on social and political issues. They greatly initiated the critical minds among many social network populaces. These posts were renowned for their criticism of the junta government and a clear counter-argument to the royal narrative. Increasingly, these figures' followers had become accustomed to the critical messages directly opposing monarchical dominance. They were the messages some would not even be assumed thinkable. Pavin, in particular, had eventually started a page called "Talaad Luang" (ตลาดหลวง) which literally means "royal market," but Pavin has given it an English name as "Royalist's Marketplace." This is probably for a hint of a sarcastic tone. The page has over 2 million members and contains a mix of open and hidden criticisms of the monarchy. This community's emergence marks a major shift in Thai society's narrative. Things had changed, and it could hardly be undone. During all this, the general election began. First came PT, then Palang Pracharat, and thirdly, FFP. However, the winning party's collaboration with the third-ranked party and others could not defeat the second-placed party. This was because of the influence of the

---

<sup>96</sup> Pavin Chatchawalpongpan is a political science scholar at Kyoto University. He often appeared in the media and offered critical views towards the monarchy. He is gaining more and more popularity on the various social media outposts. He is famous for his use of cursing or satire directly at royal family members on his media channels. He came to the position of influence after Somsak, but it is fair to say that he dominates more digital platforms than Somsak or any other scholar combined. His influence on the critical mass, although in an explosive manner rather than a long-lasting one, cannot be denied.

<sup>97</sup> Andrew McGregor Marshall is a former journalist who is now a university professor in Scotland. Among the three noted critical scholars, he is the least well-known, probably due to the fact that his social media posts are in English and the majority of Thai population cannot read them properly. Anyhow, he gained his fame and influence among the Thais as the anti-royalist scholar due to the fact that Somsak and many other critical scholars had shared the information regarding the royal family he had posted to the public. He, then, is viewed as the main source of counter-monarchic news. Anyhow, the three of them might share the same political goal but not necessarily be friends.

senators who unanimously voted to reinstate Prayuth Chan-o-cha, the junta leader turned Palang Pracharat Party leader. This situation, along with the apparent electoral fraud, had many voters confused. Also, the cheating scenes captured in the live videos could not legally charge Palang Pracharat. All of this sparked a public and unconvinced mass uproar. Following the electoral rise of FFP and the growing number of new critical masses who clearly support FFP (or at least do not approve of unfairness against them), the constitutional court dissolved them. As previously stated, this was the main catalyst for the new critical mass to take to the streets. It began in July 2020. They started by condemning the injustice, trying to amend the new constitution, and opposing the dissolution of FFP. After only 4 months, the protest had evolved into a full-blown confrontation with the royal narrative and their overwhelming dominance.

During the first six months of the 2020 demonstration, I had some opportunities to interview the participants, particularly the younger generation who initiated the campaign.<sup>98</sup> Later on, on July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021, I had a chance to interview Parit Chiwarak,<sup>99</sup> also publicly known by his nickname “Penguin,” to look back and evaluate the factors that had contributed to the emergence of the demonstration, the components that had created the condition of possibility for such event to kick-off,

---

<sup>98</sup> From July 2020 to September 2020, I conducted interviews with the participants in the demonstrations from various age groups, numbering almost 40 people, for approximately 20–30 minutes each, mainly off-record because the issues asked were quite politically sensitive and could cause harm or disturbance to the interviewees. The people of the younger generation, which I define as ones who were born in the 2000s onwards and still within their university’s bachelor years, I interviewed during this process were around 20. As this work is not mainly focusing on the political demonstration itself, but on the way the people could escape from the influence of Bhumibol’s narrative. If you are interested in this topic specifically, please see Kanokrat Lertchoosakul (2021), which solely concentrates on this issue and, so far, is the largest collective of oral history of the subject.

<sup>99</sup> Parit Chiwarak, or Penguin, is considered by most of the participants in the demonstration as one of the main leaders or figureheads of the movement. He both played the part in leading the movement and, as the spiritual leader, displaying many unprecedented feats to insist on the people’s demands being heard. He is now imprisoned without the right to bail by the government.

and also his personal observation on Thai politics and the royal narrative itself. Lastly, from August 20th to August 25th, 2021, I interviewed the participants and observers of the collaborative demonstration in Tokyo. It was the demonstration initiated by the Red Shirt group and Thai students in Japan to give their moral support for the main demonstration in Thailand. I chose to interview this group because one of the main narratives used by the Thai protesters against the royal narrative and its shaken simulacra is the notion of world citizens and the claim to be unbounded by nationalism. So I interviewed a group of people who share the same goal and sentiment as the protesters in Thailand but are physically located elsewhere. From these three main sections of interviews, it is possible to conceptualize the key factors and circumstances as follows.

First, most of the young participants, including Parit, agreed that three main components dispelled them or their generation from Bhumibol's narrative. The rise of digital technology and platforms as a means of communication and a source of new knowledge is the first component. The second component is Prayuth's administration's inability to control the country's systematic injustice due to his obvious inferiority. The third component is the rise of Vajiralongkorn, who is morally and politically inept compared to his late father. The dissolution of FFP was also confirmed by most participants (except Parit) as the main trigger for seeing things as they are and questioning the never-asked questions. Most of them felt strange about the situation before the dissolution but were not ready to physically confront the authorities. They felt that once FFP was dissolved, the situation would become unbearable.

Regardless, a divide exists. I asked the same question with the participants and observers who have long been in a critical stance towards the monarchy, like the critical Red Shirt or the long-time political observers who have self-censored themselves prior to the emergence of this demonstration. There are two main factors that motivate people in their category to participate in and criticize the monarchy.

First, it was the unknown or dead-end future, both professionally and politically. This point, anyhow, could also be considered Prayuth's incapability, like the former group as well. Second, the Bhumibol era ended. I asked them if it was because of Vajiralongkorn's enthronement or King Bhumibol's death. But even if they think both are important in this great escape from Bhumibol's narrative, they think Bhumibol's death is more important. The reason given is that King Bhumibol's dominance bred self-censorship. "A sense or the veil of regal mysticism," said one interviewee. This veil made people not dare to express their thoughts, even if they had a critical stance. However, this atmosphere ended together with Bhumibol's life. Contrarily, most of the newly engaged younger generation and the older generation (born in the 1990s and beyond) who had only been "politically awakened" in 2020 did not agree. This group of people shared the same stance and insisted that the rise of the new king was more important than King Bhumibol's death. Some of them admitted that they still revere or have feelings for King Bhumibol. The reason they gave was that they made an imaginative scenario where the newly enthroned monarch was not Vajiralongkorn but his popularly revered sister Sirindhorn instead. In such a scenario, they do not see themselves as politically aware. So they concluded that their main motivation was Vajiralongkorn himself, rather than Bhumibol's eternal departure. When asked what they see in King Vajiralongkorn that breaks them from Bhumibol's narrative spell, the answer revolves around the new king being unqualified. Unlike his late father, he has shown an unacceptable or immoral portrayal unsuitable for a king.

Similarly, when asked about King Vajiralongkorn's rise, people in their 50s to 70s gave very different answers. These answers also demonstrated their logical reasoning. Specifically, they are people who used to love and support the monarchy, King Bhumibol in particular, but have turned against the new king, both discreetly and publicly. Nowadays, there are two types of people: rural and urban. They were all long-time Democrats who switched to the FFP under the new regime. To put it bluntly, people in this age group who are less educated and live in remote areas, like small

towns or villages, tend to act more discreetly. Despite their disapproval of the new king, they are afraid to openly criticize the monarchy. They believe openly criticizing the king will cost them. They speculated on the basis of Buddhist karma, which states that a king would inevitably accumulate a high level of Parami, which could easily overwhelm theirs. That is why, if they dislike the new king and believe he is unsuitable for the job, they will choose to observe in secret and vote for the FFP instead. No need to risk their lives by challenging people with higher Parami. If they do so, they will accumulate bad karma. However, those in this age group who are more educated (most went to university) and live in cities have chosen to openly reject the new king. They openly stated that King Vajiralongkorn's actions and conduct are unsuitable for the position, particularly his inappropriate dress and polygamous desire. So, they turned to FFP, hoping they would better fit their desired code of conduct (Khon Dee). I find no significant differences in economic or class status between these two groups of interviewees, as both could be classified as middle or upper-middle class. They are materially successful at work. This group is mostly ex-Democrat Party supporters who still dislike Thaksin, so they are fundamentally different from the Red Shirts who openly baptize the establishment. Clearly, the rationale of the elderly with a high level of education is quite similar to that of the younger generation. They have a "cult of dogma" mentality and seek out the Khon Dee, or selfless role model. The older generation is more likely to be influenced by Prawase's teachings, while the younger generation has less experience with it, though not entirely free of it. This parallel shows how FFP has challenged and replaced Prawase's cult of dogma.

Also, I asked the young and recently-politically-awakened interviewees why the dissolution of FFP triggered them but the TRC dissolution did not. The answer was unanimous: TRC was part of the "old system." The old system refers to a politics based on self-interest and lobbying, i.e., dirty politics. So, they felt less compelled to defend the TRC. They see FFP differently. For them, FFP represented a new political path free of greed, interest, and impurity. In short, it is politics that promotes a higher moral

ground and political project. This is where they could fight for more. That does not mean they will ignore the injustices done to the people or political parties of old. It is only that the weight put on their mind is different according to the political orientation they see themselves in.

Finally, all interviewees agreed on the importance of the role played by the rise and widespread use of digital platforms. The young and recently-politically-awakened generations emphasized this point far more than the early political bloomers. For the younger generation, the answer is that they, as digital natives, believe that the internet and digital platforms have been their primary source of information and contact with the world since their earliest memories. 16 out of 20 interviewees stated that their perception of reality differs from previous generations, who are referred to as digital immigrants, nomads, refugees, or aliens. People of the previous generations, according to their answer but under my conceptualization, tend to make a separation between the "physical world" and the "digital world." In short, they base their reality on the physical world. Thus, they are bound to be constrained by modern border and geographical restraint concepts formed into their sensory reality. But the digital world was not separated or judged as a second reality for them. It is part of their one actual reality. The digital world is inseparable from the physical world because they were born and have been spending most of their lives in it. Unlike a nation, school, or other materialistic entities, the digital platform has no physical or geographical basis or boundary. The internet knows no borders. It has space but is unmeasurable physically. This freedom from geographical constraints has become their reality. They do have a sentimental attachment to the geographical space they grew up in, but at the same time, they do not deeply believe in the geographical roots that nationality dictates. Hence, the rise of the concept of "world citizen or global citizens" was used in the demonstration and they aligned themselves with another spatially separated uprising under the name "#MilkTeaAlliance." In addition, the Facebook page "*Yai Pra Ted Gun Ter*" (ย้ายประเทศกันเถอะ) was created, which means

“Let’s Change the Country to Live.” It gained almost 1 million followers overnight, mostly young people. Its rise and popularity coincided with the decline of the 2020 demonstrations and the political victory they sought. Such popularity could be seen as proof of this unrestricted mentality. It is the opposite of when Bhumibol’s narrative was at its peak and the simulacra were fully operational. The parade of celebrities could then tell the people to “get out of Dad’s home (or country).” During Bhumibol’s reign, this message was based on the common belief that the father’s land was deeply loved. In short, under this different set of realities, the digital native can be charmed by the narrative that is based on physical or tangible reality as well, since it is also a part of the reality they grew up with. They also thought it was easier to dispel this influence because the other half of their reality was not based on physical constraints. This is different from the older generation whose reality is bound to the world of sense-perception.

Parit noted that while he found this explanation plausible, he was unsure whether his generation could truly merge the physical and digital worlds into one reality. He went on to say that he felt the digital world had influenced the perception of his generation. They can receive information faster and the issues are vast. However, the concentration of his generation seems to be deteriorating due to the constant stream of information from the digital world. Parit said that this is the effect of the digital world that might cause people of his generation to change relatively easily compared to the previous generations. Parit was not sure if this could be related to the “different perception of reality” the other interviewees had given. However, the digital platform does play an important role in generational differences. Most of my Tokyo interviewees agreed. They were unsure if the sense of reality was completely different but did not deny the claim. They were certain that the digital platform gave them a sense of unity with demonstrators in Thailand or elsewhere, despite the geographical limitations. On this note, they could feel the conformity of the movement even if they physically demonstrated on the street near Shinjuku while the main



movement occurred thousands of kilometers away. The fact that the digital platform provided information and discussion space was the main factor that drove Bhumibol's narrative away from them, which was also unanimously agreed upon by all interviewees.

Second, a final word on FFP. The rise and action of FFP was seen as an act of "selflessness" by their supporters, both new and ex-Salim voters. In raising such a provocative agenda, they were fighting for the betterment of the nation. After the death of King Bhumibol, the FFP became the only role model for the Progressive Salim's Khon Dee (selflessness) dogma. As a result, Progressive Salim deflected to the Future Forward party. They now worship the new selfless role model. In this sense, FFP has successfully hijacked a large portion, but not all, of royal supporters, thereby strengthening their own and weakening the palace side. Nevertheless, this result is not necessarily good because it does not contest or challenge Salim's selfless discourse. The rise of FFP is rather a shift from one hero to another. In other words, if the claim of "old politics" – politics that are related to the interest and impure goal - that the Salim-turned FFP's supporters or the young generation have posted on PT or TRC is correct, then, their way of engaging politics is also "old" as well. They simply resemble Prawase's Khon Dee political framework. Salim's move to FFP and FFP's similarity to Prawase's political framework could be seen as risky moves. Anyhow, the ideological backgrounds of FFP and Prawase are different. One is "progressive liberalism" while the other is Buddhist Utopia disguised with democratic language. Therefore, FFP's influence could affect their supporters and lead to a more democratic end. However, if the influence of "the framework" similar to Khon Dee politics outweighs the ideological foundation presented by FFP, a new Salim category may emerge. It is similar to the subset of Salim Fundamentalist that surfaced from a portion of Thaksin's supporters – sometimes known as "Red Shirt Salim" or the Red Shirt who are maniacally supporting Thaksin even at the price of the whole electoral system and the democratic regime itself. Nonetheless, the FFP's direct confrontation and hijacking of

Khon Dee supporters means a new narrative battlefield has begun, opposing the Prawase-initiated storyline.

And lastly, on the policy-oriented politics and the complexity of Salim after all of these developments. In these circumstances, I believe the concept of Salim will be more widely used and disorderly. The short-term policy-benefited voters would have been included in the proximity of Salim. These were the voters who voted for Palang Pracharat solely for the material benefit from Prayuth's Pracharat policy. The new liberal or critical mass tends to immediately categorize them as "Salim." In fact, I think the opposite should be concluded. Voters in this category can vote for parties that represent Salim's rationality, but not for the party's "end goal." It is solely for their own benefits from the Salim party's policy. They simply vote for the candidate who benefits them the most. So, they are very adaptable to the materialistic benefits that they could receive from the policy, especially short-term ones. This is because this group of people (according to the field research) does not usually plan ahead. Many of them are elderly and past their prime, so the short-term benefits make more sense to them. If a non-Salim or anti-Salim party arises and offers them a better tangible benefit, they will easily switch. In accordance with universal logic and rationality, people in this category should not be counted as Salim. They are often misinterpreted as one because they may vote for the Salim-oriented party in Thailand. In short, they base their logic on individualism, placing personal gains above grandiose political ideologies. Individualism and the ability to see past the materialistic benefits of political policy would greatly benefit the development of democracy. On the contrary, people or voters that vote for a party that represents a more progressive ideology, rationality, or appearance might have a more salient rationality when compared to the first category party. While Progressive Salim do not entirely reject democracy, some do support it as long as it adequately portrays "selflessness" (the foundation of "Khon Dee politics"). In short, democracy works as long as it represents selflessness or the people who represent it (Khon Dee). Democracy is supportable as the dependent variable of the Khon Dee. This

type of Salim often fantasizes about the political system's purity. Many of them enjoy the disguised democracy or the democracy that simply acts as a vessel for their Khon Dee politics. They might be seen and see themselves as "more progressive" compared to the former category due to their own interpreted sense of heroism and the party they support representing a more ideologically progressive goal. But that is merely a self-delusion.

### **Summarizing: Recapturing the Essence of the Work**

This is the conclusion, as it should be. This section will recapture the link between the theoretical framework introduced in Chapter 1 and the phenomena described in Chapter 2. It will conceptualize the entire work proposal, connecting all the important notes.

The main study of the work is the politics of storytelling related to King Bhumibol, which this work calls Bhumibol's narrative, with the medical network as his narrative instrument. It focuses on the structural implications and transformation stemmed from it. In short, it only concerns the politics of the structural level. The structural focus on the mentioned subject is particularly on the "rationalization" of the Salim's logic – not just examining its origin or its consequences. The work limits itself to the production of storytelling via the medical and health care sectors, medical doctors, in particular. It constructs its own arguments on these grounds, inferring the larger political structure and mechanisms.

Therefore, the work began with the significance of the medical doctor as a role in the politics of storytelling. It elaborated the role of medical doctors into 3 main parts. One is the innate or universal characteristic of this role. Regardless of time or social development, this function remains the same. So, the work began its narration since time immemorial with the role of shaman and the connection with "higher

knowledge” together with the quest to achieve immortality in relation to “godhood.” This function continues on, unchanged, structurally and functionally speaking, until the present day. Two is the role of the medical doctor in the (western) liberal modernized world. Their influence and position in the politics of storytelling is, even more, strengthened since the concept of life and death of the people in relation to the *raison d'état* of the state is changed. Since everyone's life is indispensable, the role of life-prolonging practitioners like medical doctors arises. Medical doctors who extend the lifespan of people match well with the modern liberal condition. They prolong the “workable life” of the laborers in the industrial and capitalist society. They function as a part of the state's welfare as long as the modern state has assumed the position of the new god. Also, their status as the main narrators of the dominating story within the context of modernity has been transformed to be almost, if not entirely, everlasting thanks to the politics of impermanence grounded by the foundational concept of science, which is universal reproducibility and falsifiability. And, three, is an even more influential position as the narrator in Thai political ecology since they have the narrative qualities of the first two points and are backed by the “static power structure.” This static structure comes from the dominant power of absolutist monarchism and the unsecularization of Buddhism, which have been blended into one with “scientific narration.” With this condition, the narrative structure which this work calls “the trinity of storytelling” emerged, and the medical sector functions as a part of this structure. Therefore, it enjoys both privileges in terms of narrative politics. One is from its modern universal character, or the politics of impermanence, and the other is from a unique character, or the politics of permanence. In short, this part kicks off the work and answers why it has to be the “medical service” in the study. I elaborated on (1) its essence, (2) the temporal comparison (past and present) of the people in this role, and (3) the spatial comparison (place A and place B), which is the medical doctor as the narrator in the western universal perception and in the case of Siam/Thailand.

From this point on, the work focused on explaining how this structure, the trinity of Thai storytelling, came about. It is also the root of what is later known as "Salim's mindset or rationality." I started with the "temporal origin of modernity," or how the concept of modern time affects rationalization and forms itself into the concept of universal modernity. The modernity route took off in Europe and became the global model. For example, the hypothetical deductivism and imperative; "if X then Y" or causal effect rationality. During Chaofah Mongkut's active years, he transformed the narration of old Buddhist content and beliefs into the new temporal tradition. This process changed the perception of time from cyclical to wave-patterned. Permit me to elaborate on the development based on figure 38.

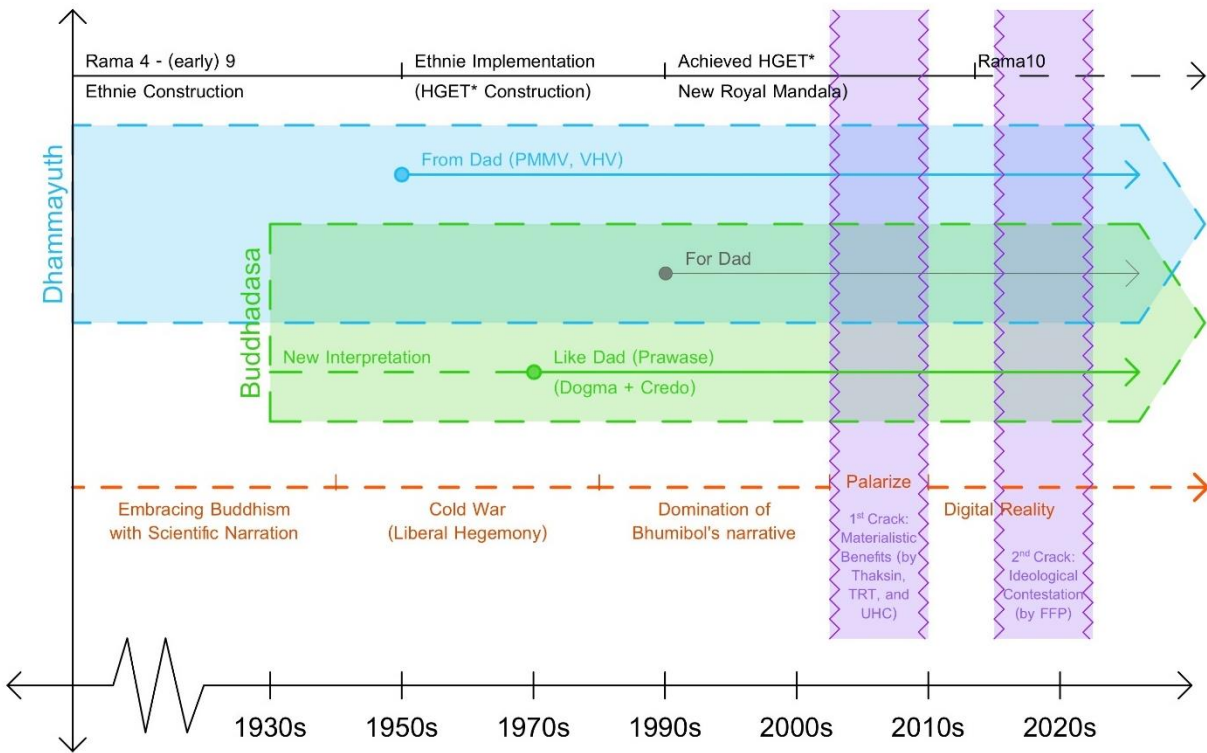


Figure 38: Summary timeline of this work.

From the time of Chaofah Mongkut's (or King Rama IV's) active years up until the early reign of King Bhumibol (before 1957), this work sees this period as the process

of "ethnie construction." The ethnie, or pre-national history, was constructed around the founding of Dhammayuttika Nikkaya, a branch of Theravada Buddhism that had gone through the process of synthesization by Chaofah Mongkut. It distilled Hinduism and local tales from the Buddhist content to fit with modern scientific narration. Chaofah Mongkut and his successors benefited from this situation. The specific setting has three conditions. Firstly, the stage where the community did not have any institutionalized major belief, in this case, Buddhism. This is the condition this work calls "nothingness." This condition allows the ethnie to become the sole or main representation of the entire community (commonness). Second, the ethnie construction must take place in a pre-materialistic society. In short, the base structure is still weak, and the guided superstructure (or "Chaofah Mongkut's ethnie") could still shape community perception. Third, to successfully guide the formation and direction of the coming ethnie, one must possess a certain authoritative power. Thailand or Siam had all of these components at the time. Unlike in Europe, where the Catholic Church had become the dominant power, Buddhism in Siam was scattered due to the "forest monk" tradition. These monks were operating in close geographical proximity and passed down their teachings to a limited number of disciples. So, once the new set of narratives was constructed, the competition between the old and new for the main narrator was minimal.

No institutionalized or official narrative (nothingness) means that the community had no representation or identifiable character. So, if the narrative could be constructed to achieve this feat, the representational character of the entire community would emerge (commonness). This is the nation's foundational identity. It will set the tone and dictate the regime of truth, or what is considered as normal and thinkable in a given community. The guided normality is the result of Chaofah Mongkut's construction of the foundational identity. The pre-materialistically developed society, likewise, created the prerequisite conditions for Chaofah Mongkut to be the leader or owner of the materialistic trend. It was important for the king to

achieve the guided normality and lessen the probability of questioning or challenging from the mass. This normality was what ought to be, in regard to materialistic notion as “introduced to them.” In Europe, society learned about the development of materialistic benefits almost as simultaneously as the authoritative power at the time. So, the society’s learning curve and authority toward materiality were almost on par or better than Siam’s context. Hence, in Europe, the authority in power could not solely dictate the perception toward the modern and fully material benefits. But in Siam, the perception and purpose toward the materialistic benefit was guided by the coming ethnies because the society at large had virtually no experience regarding the fully materialized condition. Lastly, the authoritative power, as its name suggests, authored how things should be. Chaofah Mongkut could achieve so as a prince and then a king. Although Chaofah Mongkut’s power was not completely overwhelming the royal court, compared to the majority of the populace, it was undisputedly exceedingly higher. Not to mention his successor, King Rama V, who may amass enough power to become an absolute monarch. Using all of these elements, Chaofah Mongkut created an ethnies that embodied the modern nation’s foundational identity through distilled Buddhism and scientific narration. I should make it clear that it was not “science” that became the foundational ethnies. Science or scientific reasoning or narration simply functioned as the narrative framework (narration) or vessel of the Buddhist story that Chaofah Mongkut had narrated. To put it simply, not every school or teaching of Buddhism could become the foundational ethos of the nation, even for the pre-dated Chaofah Mongkut’s version. It was the Chaofah Mongkut’s or Dhammayuttikya Nikkaya Buddhism that could become the foundational ethnies of the modern nation because it contained the definitional element that defines the stage of modernity: scientific reasoning. Therefore, the content of the foundational ethos of the modern nation is that of Buddhism, but the way in which it was narrated was a scientific framework, or else it could not be considered “modern.” The fact that Chaofah Mongkut chose to combine Buddhism and science rather than separate and secularize

them as happened in Europe, was the key to the ethnies' formation. The fact that Chaofah Mongkut encouraged his followers to make a separation between the reasonable Buddhist story and the irrational or indescribable ones proves his attempt to narrate Buddhism as scientifically as possible during his time. Here, the Thai storytelling trinity of the unsecularized state, synthesized Buddhism, and scientific logic were born. Initially, it may be limited to the central plain, urban areas, or areas near the palace. But it was growing. Some may be a mix of this new set of official narratives and local fables, especially in the more remote areas. The fact that it was institutionalized and stood the test of time is significant in and of itself, as it would later become the foundation of Bhumibol's narrative and Salim's rationality. This work, hence, named the ethnies which did not separate the materialistic world from the "Spiritual Materialism."

After the reign of King Rama IV (Chaofah Mongkut), the ethnies created by him had been further utilized or strengthened. The most obvious cases were the proper institutionalized of Dhammayuttikha Nikaya by King Rama V in 1902 and later categorized every scattered Theravada Buddhism in Siam as Maha Nikaya which simply illustrated "those that are not Dhammayut" and the writings of King Rama VI that underlined the superiority of Buddhism over western values. It could be summarized that Dhammayut was gradually expanding its influence. It might have some ups and downs during the time but had remained intact until the reign of King Bhumibol. During the reign of King Bhumibol, things began to rapidly transform. From the 1950s to the late 1980s or early 1990s, I call it the "ethnies implementation" phase. This phase was achieved within the context of the US Cold War campaign. Sarit and King Bhumibol – or the royal faction – eliminated their opposing faction, the People's Party. They had to replace the opponent's narrative. Their royal ancestors' ethnies seemed to be the answer they chose probably because it was already an established narrative that has been used as the common identity for the Thai for quite some time, albeit not widely influential. Under the new placement of the monarchic institution



caused by the democratic revolution in 1932, the activities of the monarchy, in this case, King Bhumibol, had been restricted from direct political involvement. So his narrative options were severely limited. I would say that the path that focused on the scientifically materialistic benefits and infrastructural developments came out of necessity rather than a well-laid-out plan. During this time period, many royal initiatives were launched to spread the *ethnie* nationwide. The royal family's nameplate bloomed in practically every corner of the country, including PMMV who was the main narrative contributor from the health care section. Similar to other royal envoys during this period, the PMMV acted as the medium of the narrative that recited the royal benevolence, mercifully granting the materialistic benefits for the people of all regions, spreading the once rather centralized and limited *ethnie* to all the borders. Chaofah Mongkut incorporated the scientific narration into the distilled Buddhism as *ethnie* itself was built upon the modern temporal framework or the hypothetical imperative and the wave-patterned time. The main attribute of the wave-patterned rationality is its "fixed logic." The spread of this *ethnie*, consequently, instilled this mode of rationality to the society as well. The new temporal logic and narrative were perceived via the materialistic projects placed and distributed spatially. The infrastructure projects were dispersed across the country, as were the medical and personal envoys providing material benefits. This feat reminded the people of the king while also reconnecting the king and the land (via the people). This reconnection reflected the monarchy's sphere of influence. This power was once represented by a mandala, a king-land tie. But the modern border, which has a fixed line rather than a sphere of royal influence, broke the tie. Following the materialistic implementation of the *ethnie* nationwide, a new sphere of monarchical influence presided over the nation.

The fixed logic and the narrated story focusing on King Bhumibol's benevolence had portrayed him as the personification of *Parami* or Buddhist merit. Someone for whom the people would always be grateful. This was when Bhumibol's "From Dad"

storyline began. It created the mindset that materialistic benefits were earned based on one's level of benevolence. Obviously, King Bhumibol was pictured as an incomparable entity in this narrative. This work refers to "Salim Fundamentalists" as a group of people who adhere to a cult of persona based on a person's generosity. A cult of persona that sees King Bhumibol as the divine being who reached Parami.

In the 1970s, a new storyline for Bhumibol emerged. This branch of the narrative was introduced by Buddhadasa, who began his project of re-synthesizing Buddhism in the 1930s. However, Buddhadasa's life work focused on the Buddhist community and its adherents. It officially entered state affairs and public consciousness in the 1970s thanks to Prawase Wasi and his network. Prawase's network began during his time at Triam Udom Suksa School and grew after his doctoral studies abroad. When he returned to Thailand, his medical network blossomed both technologically and administratively. He also got close to the palace due to his status as a recipient the king's private budget scholarship. Because of that, he got invited to the palace rather often and he also had been treating the king during his hospitalization with the blood-related disease. He then redirected the health policy with the help of palace network members like Tanom Kittikajorn and others. Prawase was also interested in civil society work at the time due to Sulak Siwalaka's Social Science Perspective Journal, which led to their friendship. Prawase recognized the importance of civil society and NGOs and began involving them in this segment. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Prawase had devoted his life to studying Buddhism, particularly the teachings of Buddhadasa. Prawase, the man between scientific knowledge and Buddhadasa's re-synthesized Buddhism, has been making this new Buddhist teachings more aligned with modern temporal concepts and universal rationality. It was the process I call "hijacking modernity and democracy." The main mechanism in achieving this result was by totally submitting its narrative structure to the infinite linear time and going full steam with the causal-effect rationality. But the change was made to the regime of truth or range of possibilities.

This scientific regime of truth frames modern man's ability to think and judge what is rational or believable. In Buddhadasa's re-synthesized Buddhism, Buddhist logical possibilities replaced scientific possibilities. So, instead of scientific regime of truth, Thailand has Buddhist of truth disguised under the façade of democracy and modern scientific narrative. Many call this new narrative Khon Dee politics, based on the concept of selflessness. Prawase had put this new concept into practice, steering the society in this direction. His efforts to shape Thailand into a Buddhadasa-style Buddhist utopia were so intense that it could be considered a lifelong political project. Prawase had proposed King Bhumibol as a role model of "selflessness," an essence of Khon Dee, in practice. What actions were deemed good or meritorious? Take a cue from the king. This scheme created both the dogma for the people to follow and the new storyline for Bhumibol's narrative, "(Be) Like Dad." Bhumibol's story rooted the cult of dogma in Thai politics and gave rise to a new Salim category I call "Progressive Salim." They are a group of people who are more educated and urban. The Buddhist creed of purification was intensified and accumulated into the "better way of life." This result is what this work calls ascetic politics.

Up until this point, there were two distinct Salim categories, each with its own set of stories. "From Dad" spawned Salim Fundamentalism, and from "(Be) Like Dad" spawned Progressive Salim. As the Salim Fundamentalists grew from the cult of persona, their revered figurehead was relatively more static than the one in Progressive Salim, which developed from the cult of dogma, where the figurehead was somewhat replaceable if a more suitable candidate for the worshiped dogma emerged. Although under the grand scheme of things they seem to have a similar representation, King Bhumibol, and worked together under this context, internal segregation did occur. As a result, the "From Dad" narrative influenced more people from the peripheral or greenbelt regions of the country and attracted people with lower educational backgrounds. The Progressive Salim, who tended to be more urban and educated, saw them as a "lesser form or belief" than the one they indulged in. Also,

the Salim Fundamentalists' code of conduct was deemed less scientific, less rational, and more centered on selfishness. They were viewed as self-centered or even corrupted by greed, enamored by materialistic gains and collecting Parami for their own benefits, not for the greater good. Alas, this classification is purely academic and conceptual. In reality, these two groups of people are not entirely separated but internally intermixed; it is only that the weight or favorability of each individual gravitates to what branch of the narrative could indicate their Salim's orientation.

This work, which claims to examine the political structure, seems to be heavily oriented toward the direction of network politics, and it was aware of this. However, it was inevitable given Thailand's long period of autocracy. The personal or network politics itself authored the structure. But this does not mean that this state will remain static; it may evolve in the next political phase.

From the late 1980s to 2020, the narrative and storytelling structures were well-received, and Bhumibol's simulacra, or "modern mandala," was built. It was the point where the story could self-replicate without the agent's help. It replaced the modern border, which severed the king-land bond. It was owing to the royal network, both the envoys of royal benevolence and Prawase's, who had been relentlessly for decades before. It was during this time that Bhumibol's new storyline, "For Dad," began. En masse, society produces fables about returning the king's favor or following his path to make him proud. However, in the 2000s, the UHC and other Thaksin-era policies based on the materialistic needs of the majority caused a permanent crack in the royal storytelling structure. The royal influence has been hampered by these policies and narrative. The royal faction was then forced into a surprise coup to eliminate the crack agent. Since then, Thaksin has been deposed but remains undefeated. Also, it should be noted that what Thaksin had done was mostly a contestation of materialistic needs, or the base structure level, not the "superstructure." Anyhow, the change in the base structure has undoubtedly affected

and formulated the new superstructure for the policy's recipients as well. This crack started the Red Shirt movement that benefited Thaksin and TRT. In this sense, many Thaksin and TRT (later PT) supporters have personified Thaksin as the embodiment of electoral materialistic benefits. It was in direct opposition to Bhumibol's "From Dad" storyline, which also portrayed materialistic benefits based on his incomparable benevolence. Anyhow, the cult of persona originated with Thaksin, and TRT's policies were far better, judging from the democratic standpoint because it was based on electoral politics and allowed people to write their own materialistic future. The material gains were not enslaved by a certain person's goodness.

Once enthroned, Vajiralongkorn does not exhibit the same "selflessness" as his late father. He appears in the opposite direction. So, the king is no longer the model or manifestation of selflessness revered by Progressive Salim. In short, the category of Salim who mainly claimed themselves to be devoid of materialistic needs mainly yearned for superstructural needs. They yearn for the grand narrative that can help shape their understanding of the superior political goal. They could not ignore the Thaksin faction because they represent the materialistic gluttony they have always despised. However, the immoral king, renowned for his licentiousness, could not perform this function for them as well. When the FFP entered politics and took a stand on the superstructure level, they filled the narrative void for this Salim group. The FFP leader presented themselves as the new hope of ideologically democratic selflessness, which matches the Khon Dee dogma. Then came the Salim exodus. Many Salim had turned orange (the symbolic color of FFP) within a short period of time. Thus, the core value they revere is still selflessness. But the FFP's democratic value orchestrates the realm of possibility (regime of truth) changing from Buddhist-King to democracy. Their narrative framework is similar to Prawase's Khon Dee politics but with different values or content. It is more democratic. In this sense, the rise of FFP, about two decades after TRT, has created the second crack in Bhumibol's narrative. This new crack is a direct challenge to Prawase and his faction's "(Be) Like Dad"

storyline. In the same way that the first crack personifies Thaksin as the embodiment of electoral benefits and created a new form of political cult of persona contending against Bhumibol's cult of persona. This new crack is a direct match with Prawase's Khon Dee politics, as it is creating a new cult of dogma that is based more on democratic values and ideologies.

After the constitutional court dissolved FFP in July 2020, the criticism and curses against Prayuth's government has increased dramatically. It sprang from the 2020 people's demonstration, initiated by the younger generation, especially university students and those born in the 2000s. Various interviews with participants reveal the importance of the internet and digital platforms for their movements. The movement was sparked by (1) the proliferation of digital platforms, (2) the ineptitude of Prayuth's administration, and (3) Vajiralongkorn's unsuitability for the throne. Polygamy and excessive tax consumption are his main immoral issues. The first factor, based on technological advancement, is currently universal. But the last two are unique to Thailand. As a result, these two factors, believed to be involved in the dissolution of FFP, acted as the main driving force for people to take to the streets. The first factor creates the environment or conditions for the phenomenon to occur. According to the interviewees, the digital platform is more important than initially thought. They claim that their generation—the so-called digital natives—perceives reality differently than previous generations. The main distinction is that they do not separate the "physical world" from the "digital simulated world." They see the two worlds as one. Because the digital world is as real to them as the physical world, they are less affected by the narrative that is built on physical, tangible, and geographical constraints. If the interviewees were correct, the digital platform and internet accessibility could be considered the "third crack." If so, it will be the first materialistic crack without a human leader. It might be categorized as the third crack because it directly competes with the simulacra, or modern mandala which was created by reuniting monarchy and land, giving rise to the concept of nation-king, or Dad's

home.<sup>100</sup> That the physical and simulated worlds are inseparable challenges the concept of simulacra, which is based on society's "sense-perception." The sensory-perceived simulations create a new modeled reality that replaces the old. However, if actual reality and simulated reality are never separated and both are equally real, then the concept of simulacra collapses. If the elaboration is accurate, this could be regarded as the real material turn. Regardless, the accuracy of the interviewees' self-observation may require further investigation and time to unfold.

Finally, this work claims that these five conceptual frameworks are the engine that keeps Salim's logic rational in Thailand. First, the "Trinity of Thai Storytelling Structure" is based on the politics of permanence and impermanence, which assume their passive influence throughout the work as the background structure. Second, the framework derived from the temporal origin of modernity directs the way the established narrative has been narrated to match the changing world while maintaining its old content as much as possible. Third, it was the framework that relied on the Marxist and Marxian concepts of base structure and superstructure. Fourth, the modern mandala is based on Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulacra, showing how King Bhumibol could re-connect with the land through the nation (people) and claim it as his own. Lastly, the three stories gave birth to the Salim people and mentality. "From Dad", "Be Like Dad", and "For Dad" are these three storylines.

---

<sup>100</sup> The Thai Constitutional Court's verdict on the leaders of the 2020 People's Demonstration also displayed the very similar mindset and rationality of "nation-king" here as the claimed that "the monarchy and Thai nation are the inseparable entity. It has been this way from the past and will continue so in the future" (พระมหากษัตริย์กับชาติไทยเป็นของคู่กัน เป็นเนื้อเดียวกันตั้งแต่อดีตจนถึงปัจจุบัน และดำรงอยู่ด้วยกันต่อไปในอนาคต). For more detail on this point, please see: Constitutional Court (2021).

## Appendix I

### Badiou's Set Theory: The Void, Singleton, and Infinite Successors

This part is derived and summarized from Alain Badiou's *Being and Event* (2007), *Logics of Worlds* (2008), and his lecture video at European Graduate School (2011), as the conceptual tool to a deeper understanding of how Chaofah Mongkut's ethnics and Bhumibol's narrative that were built on it could become "the commonness" in Thailand. Badiou is one of the greatest French philosophers of our time. In his work, *Number and Numbers*, he proposed the logical explanation of the foundational "common element" shared among everyone in the world by using mathematics as the ontology: the notion of 0 and 1. The logical execution of Badiou was tremendously complex, and since it was not the central point of this work, allow me to elaborate on it in a brief and concise version, merely adequate to carry on the point of singleton set. In the main text, however, I used a more commonly used words to explain his concept for ease of comprehension: "nothingness" was used in place of "the void," "somethingness" (that came out of nothingness) was used in place of "singleton," and "commonness" was used in place of the (operation of the) "infinite succession." Here, I have extracted the notion of 0 and 1 into the main structure of its logical operation as follows.

Badiou began with the concept of absolute beginning, or the state of complete nothingness, which he referred to as "the void." It is the state of no object, or anything at all. However, from the "nothingness," humans have the possibility of doing something out of it. For that, humans need language and three abilities or possibilities to begin the quest.

P1. Possibility to give a name to something. (Require "language")

P2. Possibility to begin with nothingness.

P3. Possibility to put things together.



These 3 are the fundamental capabilities of humanity.

From here on, he executed the logical rationality of the mathematical ontology.

First, if  $\{ \}$  = the set = the possibility to begin from the void or nothingness (the untouched space = the void), and “x” is the substance or the mass or the element of something we have seen or experienced.

We have the capability of putting things together and the ability to “name,” which are P1 and P2 respectively.

$\{ \} + x = \{x\} \rightarrow$  a new thing that is different from the preexisted one.

So, we begin with “giving a name to the void.” [Using P1 and P2.]

Assuming that “O” is the result of “giving a name to the void,” it is, therefore, the name of the void, using P1 and P2. Then, by using P3, we can put the void or O to  $\{ \}$ .

The result is  $\{O\}$  or the name of the void in a set form.

$\{O\}$  is called “the singleton,” or the set which has only one element. The name “singleton” comes from the concept of “singleton set” in mathematics. By creating “singleton,” we have the ability to give it a name, in this case, he named it “1.”

$\{O\} = \text{singleton} \rightarrow \text{named} \rightarrow \text{“1”}$

Since O is the name of the void, and  $\{O\}$  = the singleton of the name of the void, then O is different from  $\{O\}$ . They are not the same thing. Therefore, the result of using all possibilities is the creation of 2 different things. The difference of O and  $\{O\}$  is the beginning of all differences, or what Badiou considered “Pure Difference/Minimal Difference.”

As a result,  $\{O\}$  is one element of its own, at least by the definition, since “singleton” is something with one element inside. O, on the contrary, has no element

(or substance) at all, since it is just the “name of nothingness.” Philosophically speaking, at this point, we are at the point of “creation of difference.”

The difference = Nothingness vs Somethingness (so to speak).

The process so far is “The Void (nothingness/no element) → (named+begin/P1+P2) → The Name of the Void = O → P3 → Singleton of O = {O} (somethingness/contains 1 element).”

In other words, it is the difference between “O” and “1.” [O = the name of the void, 1 = the name of the singleton of the void]

The difference between O and 1 has kicked off every possibility and creation of multiplicity in the world. This has been proven by the construction of the digital world that bases itself on creating new things on binary code, or “O and 1” alone. Therefore, creation or multiplicity in the world is the infinite play of O and 1, which equals the infinite play of this “pure difference.”

The pure difference = the minimal difference = the origin of all differences.

However, neither O nor {O} is the void itself, the void is what separates or in-between O and 1.

Although it may be impossible to put the case of Bhumibol into Badiou’s logical context and make it fit perfectly, I do believe that it does share a huge resemblance to the elaborated process. Assuming that the political condition without any dominant ownership is the void, the untouched space is defined. This phase was, therefore “O,” or the name of the void. From this, by using Possibility 2, or the creation out of nothingness, the emergence from the name of nothingness came. The result was the creation of Dhammayuttika Nikaya, or the first synthesized Buddhism, and the incorporation of modern scientific narration by Chaofah Mongkut as the dominant narrative, which would later become the perceived ethnics which defines what a (Thai) nation is. It was, in this regard, a “common notion shared among the people.” It was,

therefore, {O} or the singleton. It is the foundational entity that exists among all Thais. However, at this point, it was still unnamed, which means it still did not have a singular representation of itself. It had been an unnamed common entity for decades after decades until the emergence of Bhumibol's narrative. The first phase of the construction of Bhumibol's story as the epitome and representative of {O} was, as a result, a process of naming {O}. Hence, King Bhumibol was named after the name of the singleton. King Bhumibol, or 1, was not the singleton ({O}) itself, but he was the pure somethingness that comes out of the set of nothingness. He was the succession of the said singleton. As for this process, that is the reason why I called him the singleton king.

The aforementioned remark may sound like some philosophical gibberish, but it actually quite powerfully elaborated the status of Thai socio-political structure at the historical conjuncture whence the "nothingness" (no domination) had become "somethingness or completeness" (total domination). Also, it displayed the relationship and importance of "unsecularization" as a factor in this whole scenario. Because Siam during the time of Chaofah Mongkut was deeply unsecularized and culturally scattered, it created a common space between the political-governmental body and the social body since no one owned it just yet. In short, it warranted the condition of possibility to claim the ground of "nothingness" (the void) that would be shared inseparably among the populace. Based on this condition, the new creation – a synthesis of Buddhism and modern scientific narration – could be founded and exist as the Thais' common entity. It achieved a feat that the prior masters of Forest Tradition Monks could not. The forest monks, while famous and well-respected in their own right, did not establish themselves from the aforementioned "common" space; in this sense, they may have had their nothingness to begin their own somethingness (tradition, teaching, rite, and so on), but it was not the void that we discussed, which was founded on the ground of "commonness." According to this, Chaofah Mongkut, who aimed at the commonness itself, won the game. The commonness was further

accentuated during the Bhumibol period by the “Cold War monks” and also PMMV and many other actors, with himself as the symbol of the creation itself. He, then, grabbed the “commonness” in his own hands. The commonness was him, and he was common.

In this sense, at least judging on the structural defensive mechanism, it could even be said that the sacredness of Bhumibol was deep, deeper than those American founding fathers mentioned as the comparable example in the main text. And as Badiou explained, the emergence of the first somethingness will lead to a myriad of multiplicity. They are, crudely speaking, the successors of the singleton. Given that 0 is the name of the void, and 1 is the creation that represents the somethingness that was created out of the void, 1 is the succession of 0 or “ $S(0) \rightarrow 1$ .” From here on, multitudes of succession could be carried on:  $S(1) \rightarrow 2$ , for instance. In this case, the envoys of Bhumibol’s benevolence like PMMV, other agencies, and also an array of materialistic environments that emerged to represent him were this  $S(1)$  or 2, the successor of the successor of the singleton (Chaofah Mongkut’s Dhammayutikka Nikaya cosmology). These envoys or the second batch successor could bring about the next batch of the successor of themselves as well. For example, the story of PMMV that was reproduced and re-narrated would be  $S(2)$  or 3 in this mathematical ontology. The influence gained as the successor of the foundational commonness allowed Bhumibol to captivate the mind of the nation, and its ability to produce a multitude of successions enabled it to secure and strengthen the significance of Bhumibol even further. This put him into a position of sacredness. And, this is what I propose to be the placement of Bhumibol in *Salim Fundamentalist’s* mind. However, the usage and practice of the singleton and its successor (Bhumibol) could be interpreted differently as well, but the common or the initial creation of the void—the ethnically royally created by Chaofah Mongkut—still remains intact. This different interpretation would be seen in the next chapter as Prawase Wasi and his faction took on a different approach towards the singleton. Anyhow, the status of the singleton king had led to many

consequences and activities as lengthily mentioned in the previous part, and that includes the focus on the materialistic image that could bridge the people and King Bhumibol together. But what else does the materialistic image of benevolence bring? Apart from the construction of the image itself, it stemmed interesting phenomena on the concept of distance. In “Politics of Distance,” there are two terms that are highly relevant to the occurrence caused by the benevolence images produced by PMMV. One is “Distanciation” and the other is “Human-phenomenological Distance.” These two phenomena played a role in supporting and securing the dominating status of Bhumibol’s narrative.

Regarding this point and the successful establishment of King Bhumibol’s influence, this work applied that framework of “the void and the successor” laid by Alain Badiou as the premise, explaining the special condition of “nothingness” in the production of “somethingness.”

## Appendix II

### The Interviews' Details

#### List of Interviewees

Name	Positions and Functions	Remark
Prawase Wasi	Medical Doctor and the important figure of Bhumibol's network monarchy	Question 1
Somsak Akkslip	Director General, Department of Medical Services, Ministry of Health (Neutral Faction in Health Network)	Question 2
Dr.Suprida Adulyanont	Director General, Thai Health Promotion Foundation (Pro-Prawase Faction in Health Network)	Question 3
Samran Chatto	Vice Editorial Director of Channel 3 TV News (Pro-Prawase Faction in Mass Media Network)	Question 3
Tapanawong Tanguraiwan	Medical Council of Thailand and PMMV supporter (Anti-Prawase Faction in Health Network)	Question 4
Suraphong Suebwonglee	Former Deputy Prime Minister and Former Minister of Finance (One of the main initiators of UHC)	Question 5

<b>Prachak</b> (pseudonym)	The Director of Buriram Provincial Hospital  (The anti-UHC policy)	Question 6
<b>Parit Chiwarak</b>	Thammasart University Student and a political prisoner (now)  (One of the leaders of the 2020 People's Demonstration)	Question 7
<b>Kriang</b> (pseudonym)	PT MP in lower Isan region and Deputy Leader of PT (and also TRC)  (PT's main MP advisor in the region)	Question 8
<b>Chuwit</b> (pseudonym)	PT MP in lower Isan region  (One of Kriang's network)	Question 8
<b>Rattakit</b> (pseudonym)	PT MP in lower Isan region  (One of Kriang's network)	Question 8
<b>Somkid</b> (pseudonym)	PT MP in lower Isan region  (One of Kriang's network)	Question 8
<b>Witun</b> (pseudonym)	Democrat Party MP and Former Democrat Deputy Leader  (Democrat Party's main MP advisor in the region)	Question 8
<b>Sittichai</b> (pseudonym)	Former PT MP that turned to PPP/Former Deputy Minister of Interior  (PPP's main MP advisor in the region)	Question 8

<b>Supol (pseudonym)</b>	Former PT MP that turned to PPP (Anti-Kriang's faction in the region)	Question 8
<b>Young participants</b>	The participants of the 2020 People's Demonstration, aged under 25 years old	Question 9  No. of Interviewees: 20
<b>Middle Age participants</b>	The participants of the 2020 People's Demonstration, aged 25-50 years old	Question 10  No. of Interviewees: 25
<b>Senior participants</b>	The participants of the 2020 People's Demonstration, aged more than 50 years old	Question 10  No. of Interviewees: 18
<b>Thai expats participants in Japan</b>	The group of Thai people in Japan who arranged the demonstration in Tokyo to (harmoniously) join the movement in Thailand	Question 9  No. of Interviewees: 10
<b>Turned Coat Seniors</b>	Interviewees who aged 50 years or more and have turned from Democrat supporters to FFP supporters with more critical mindset toward the current monarch	Question 11  No. of Interviewees: 20
<b>PT potential voters</b>	Interviewees who declared themselves as PT supporters	Question 12  No. of Interviewees: 20



<b>PPP potential voters</b>	Interviewees who declared themselves as PPP supporters	Question 12 No. of Interviewees: 10
<b>FFP potential voters</b>	Interviewees who declared themselves as FFP supporters	Question 12 No. of Interviewees: 10

*Table 2: List of Interviewees*

**Sample (Main) Interview Questions:**

*Question Set 1*

- 1.1 What kind of incidents that you perceived as the biggest threat in contemporary Thai political history and why?
- 1.2 What is your suggestion to solve such threats?
- 1.3 What is the role of the civil society in making this suggestion proposal into fruition?
- 1.4 How do you operate your network (Sor Family network)?
- 1.5 How did Pracharat policy come into being?

*Question Set 2*

- 2.1 How did the conflict (Pro- and Anti-Prawase) in the health care community occur?
- 2.2 What is the development of the said conflict like which side gain the community's momentum in each certain period, and why?
- 2.3 How do medical doctors communicate with people in the rural areas where the educational level is comparatively low or to the people with problem of health literacy?

2.4 The medical doctors, particularly the relatively younger generation, often claimed that they have been overworked particularly after the rise of UHC policy, what is your take on this point?

### *Question Set 3*

3.1 How do you come to know Prawase Wasi and idealized his teaching?

3.2 How have you applied his teaching into the your own (professional) work?

3.3 Do you plan to (or already did) spread this teaching to the public since you are in the position that could possibly do it? If so, how?

### *Question Set 4*

4.1 How do you find the UHC?

4.2 What makes you think the UHC does not work or the former system is relatively better?

4.3 What do you find in Prawase and his faction that is the most unagreeable with, and why?

4.4 What have you and your group (Sam Mae Krua) done in order to resist against Prawase's influence?

### *Question Set 5*

5.1 How did the UHC policy actually begin?

5.2 How did you, Thaksin, Sa-nguan, and TRT prepare in order to launch UHC policy against all odds in the health community?

5.3 What is Sa-nguan's position in Prawase's network concerning this UHC proposal?

5.4 How did Prawase react to the success of UHC policy that he formerly rejected?

### *Question Set 6*

- 6.1 What do you think of UHC policy that TRT had launched?
- 6.2 What were its consequences to the hospital that you were managing?
- 6.3 What was the policy fatal flaw in your opinion?
- 6.4 How much and how did the immediate launch of the policy affect the provincial level hospital?

### *Question Set 7*

- 7.1 What is the vital factor(s) that made the people of young generation decide to take the streets and with a very critical mindset toward the autocracy and monarchy?
- 7.2 What is the structural or conditional factor(s) that helped brew the condition of possibility for the protest to occur?
- 7.3 Do you think that the same narrative tools or mechanisms used by King Bhumibol will still function in the current reign?
- 7.4 How do you evaluate the claim given by many of the participants that they are enlightened or awakened now, and that mainly came from the difference perception of reality they have compared to the previous generations (non-digital-natives)?

### *Question Set 8*

- 8.1 How and what do you communicate with the potential voters?
- 8.2 What kind of problem the people usually have and how did you deal with them?
- 8.3 Did your party support you in the electoral campaign? If so, how?
- 8.4 What is the main challenge you have in the previous and coming election? Could you please compare them?
- 8.5 What policy or set of policies that is most popular for the potential voters, and why?

### *Question Set 9*

- 9.1 What is the decisive or igniting factor that put you on the street?
- 9.2 What in the current situation or political structure that makes you feel or perceive as distinctly bad compared to before or the “still-tolerable time”?
- 9.3 What do you find in the monarchy that is intolerable? And, why do the previous generations tend not to see it?
- 9.4 If you have to evaluate yourself on the root of your critical stance toward the monarchy that requests for its reformation, what is the main factor between the death of King Bhumibol or the enthronement of King Vajiralongkorn or other reason(s)?

### *Question Set 10*

- 10.1 What is the decisive or igniting factor that put you on the street?
- 10.2 As obvious as it is, the current demonstration has a critical stance toward the autocratic regime of Prayuth and the monarchic institution, since you are participating, I will assume that you share these political perspectives, then, how does this mindset formulate?
- 10.3 Do you have a critical or as popularly called “awaken” mind from the start? If so, what makes you stay still until the current demonstration occurred? If not, what turns you into one?
- 10.4 If your previous answer was “yes” (you have a critical mind before the demonstration), please elaborate or compare the differences of the society when you were at the same age as the young generation who initiated this demonstration. If your previous answer was “no” (you did not have a critical mind before the rise of FFP or the demonstration), then, please evaluate yourself like

the way you perceived and rationalized things before the “awakening”? How did you justify what you are now rejecting?

### *Question Set 11*

- 11.1 As someone who had long been a supporter of Democrat Party (or other anti-TRT parties), what turned you to FFP instead?
- 11.2 As you have mentioned yourself that you are also not on the same page with the current monarchy but don't want to talk about this topic because you are feeling uneasy about it, what makes your feel so? What is the reason behind the uneasiness?
- 11.3 If direct criticism is not allowed or should not be done, then what can we do?
- 11.4 Do you also plan to join the current demonstration? If so, why? / If not, why?

### *Question Set 12*

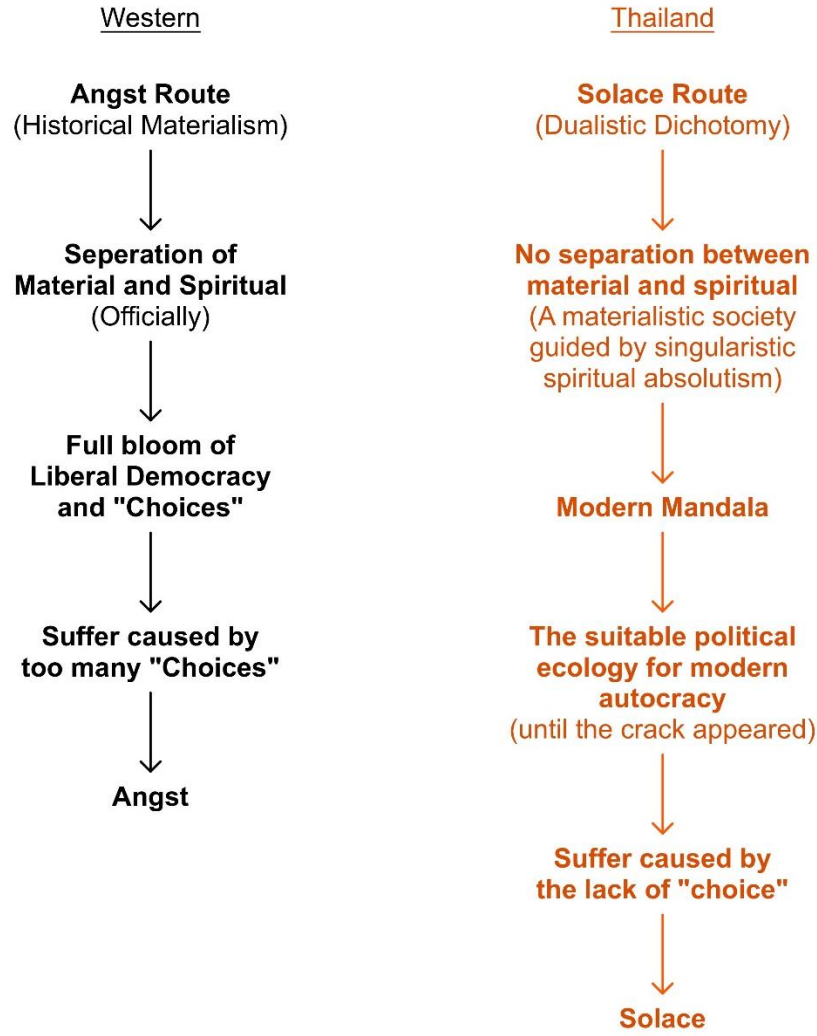
- 12.1 What criteria or decisive factor that makes you support your supported party?
- 12.2 Which policy of your supported party that attracts you the most?
- 12.3 What prospect that you have on the future of your supported party?
- 12.4 How did your supported party aid you in your problems or inconvenient circumstances?
- 12.5 What is the biggest challenge do you think that your supported party has to face?
- 12.6 What do you think of the UHC or other kinds of welfare policy? And, how did it help you?

## Appendix III

### The Thai Path and Its Alternative Modernity: Angst and Solace

From the arguments and content, it appears that this work attempted to highlight Thailand's "uniqueness" through Bhumibol's narrative. In other words, re-orientalism. This work disagrees with the claim of uniqueness as is too convenient to use, especially as an excuse. This work, strictly speaking, has the mind of an essentialist and a universalist that backs the secularized liberal modernity route as the main goal. Since there is not a similar structural context everywhere, this work does not believe that simply replacing or reproducing the steps laid out by western history will achieve this goal. Several routes to modernity may be required to achieve the same goal, so, the work began with a closer look at non-European modernity. In this case, Thailand was used as a model to see the structural requirements and the settings that allow for possibility. Most importantly, it identifies the main issues preventing the alternative route to modernity from achieving its liberal goal.

In this regard, the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard (1981) used the term "Angst" to describe Europe's path to modernity. The premise of Angst here is that the European route to liberal modernity causes anxiety or dreadfulness (Angst) due to the overwhelming choices each individual has to choose constantly simply to pursue their materialistic living. This overwhelming feeling led Kierkegaard to conclude that an ascetic dogmatic life was preferable, like blindly following the apostle and God's preaching. By contrast with the path of Angst, if this philosophical sentiment could be construed as the psychological structure of modern liberal modernity, then this work would argue that Thailand and many other countries would suffer from what it would call "Solace." Figure 39 depicts the conceptual and structural evolution of these two modern routes.



*Figure 39: Conclusion on the route to modernity, Angst and Solace Routes.*

The Angst Route was a process of secularization that involved clashes between the materialistic and spiritual worlds. Materialistic welfares, benefits, or policies provided by the state would be considered the public sphere, while those involved by individualistic choices would be considered the private sphere. Spirituality has been pushed into the private sphere. In accordance with the concept of basic rights, one has the right to believe what one desires spiritually, regardless of the level of rationality offered. In short, no one can tell you what to do with your life, especially

in terms of money. Choice is how liberalism and liberal democracy bloom. There is a structure that is designed to allow people to live in a world of choices.

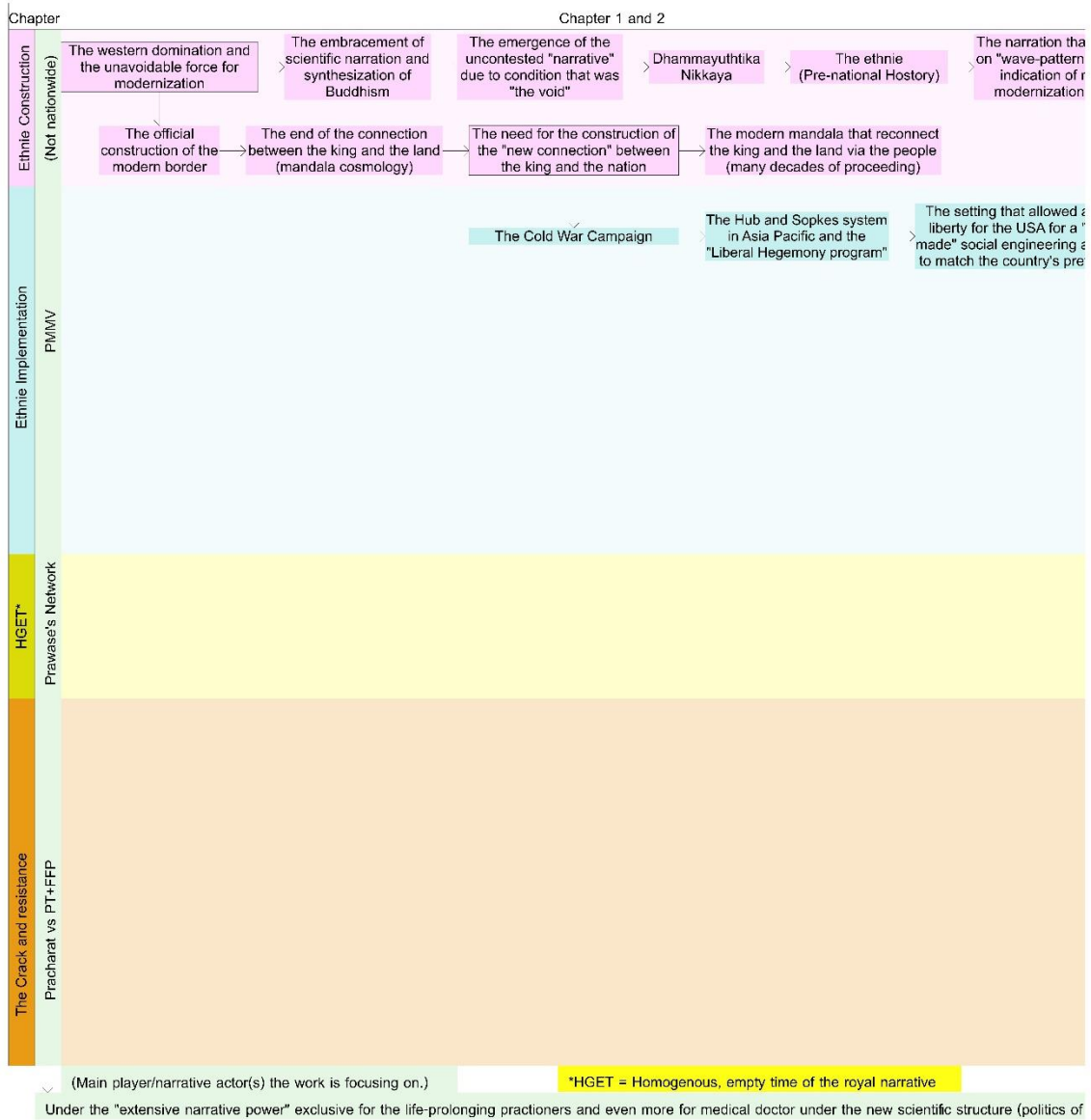
On the other hand, the Solace Route, like Thailand, began its modernization process by not only not separating the materialistic world and spiritual belief, but even intentionally embracing and blending them into one; this step is known as "dualistic dichotomy" or spiritual materialism, as opposed to the historical materialism developed in the west. Also, unlike some Islamic-led politics in some Arabian nations, the case of this Solace Route does not necessarily gravitate towards the weight of religious teachings and dogmas over other fundamental factors, but rather finds a tune and balance for the old belief and new narrative to function together almost equally under the guidance of the authority, in this case, the royal faction. Hence, the Trinity of storytelling was formed. Since material life and spiritual belief are designed to be inseparable, the way of conducting materialistic life has been guided by the spiritual logic, which in this case was synthesized to match with the modern narrative, limiting one's life choices to a singular path: revere and follow the structurally guided beloved king. If you reject this path, the punishment will be commenced. In this context, the modern mandala allows the king to become one with the whole nation itself, seemingly with the majority's consent, as the whole society was guided to perceive what was regarded as normality this way, this one singular choice of conduct. The modern mandala formulates the advantageous working environment for "modern autocracy" since society does not see the repressive orders and directions as awkward or wrong since they are a part of their accepted normality. Therefore, as long as the direction authored by the authorities is still within the scope given by the spiritual guidance, or at least backs up with the dominating spiritual belief, then it would not cause resistance from the populace, a political structure that should be named ascetic politics. This kind of political ecology is basically ripping people off of their choices, and for those who are aware of the abnormal normality, they will suffer from the lack of choices in their life. Hence, the name "Solace."



This is the path to modernity that I find Thailand en route to. A path which I personally do not want to see fruitfully settle down and continue to grow. Therefore, I wrote this lengthy work to examine every nook and cranny of the rationality that this route was built upon and the political ecology that allowed this route of modernity to happen. I hope that this work can serve as a stepping stone for anyone seeking retribution from this unjust structure, those who love their country enough to fight to make it a better place, and those who can no longer tolerate the solitude of freedom that this alternative modernity offers to gain a better understanding of the mechanism of the entire narrative politics that this structure is based on.

# Appendix IV

## Mapping the Transformation of the Structural and Conceptual Conditions



It is founded  
ed time"; an  
arrative  
process.

a more  
tailor-  
attempts  
ference

For the Thai case, using  
the established "ethnie" as  
a mean to fight USSR and  
communism

The Cold War monks were  
the prime example.

Post-democratic  
revolution society

New restriction for  
the weakened  
monarchic instituion  
that was no direct  
involvement in  
politics

Using the materialistic  
means to implement  
the "ethnie"

The rise of  
materialistic  
campaigns and  
infrastructural  
developments

Royal initiative projects,  
infrastructure under the  
royal name tags, and  
royal personal units,  
including PMMV

The systematic distribution of  
materialistic benefits and riding  
on the concept of Buddhist  
Parami in the implemented  
ethnie that revolving around  
one person (the King)

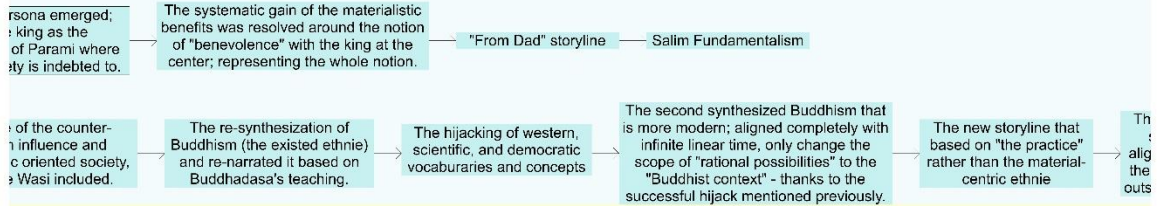
The cult of pe  
seeing the  
personification  
the whole soci

The rise of materialistic developments and  
western (USA) influence in Thai society  
resulted in the more materialistically  
focused society

The rise  
western  
materialist  
Prawast

impermanence).

Under the condition of "the Trinity of Thai Storytelling"; securing the politics of permanace for the 3 political-narrative devices t



hat are the monarchy, religion (Buddhism), and the scientific or materialistic narration

The rise of Sola Scriptura society and the movement of the Buddha to concept of Jewish god; idea of sense-perception.

The king was seen as the incomparable role model of "good practice" and everyone should follow.

The cult of dogma

"(Be) Like Dad" storyline

Progressive Salim

The rise of "Khon Dee Politics", from 1992 onward

The popular reception of the king had reached an unprecedented level: secured enough that the king did not need to directly operate or steer the politics

The new political and legal conditions had to be made to find tune with the newly emerged structural condition under the cultural domination of the "cult of dogma".

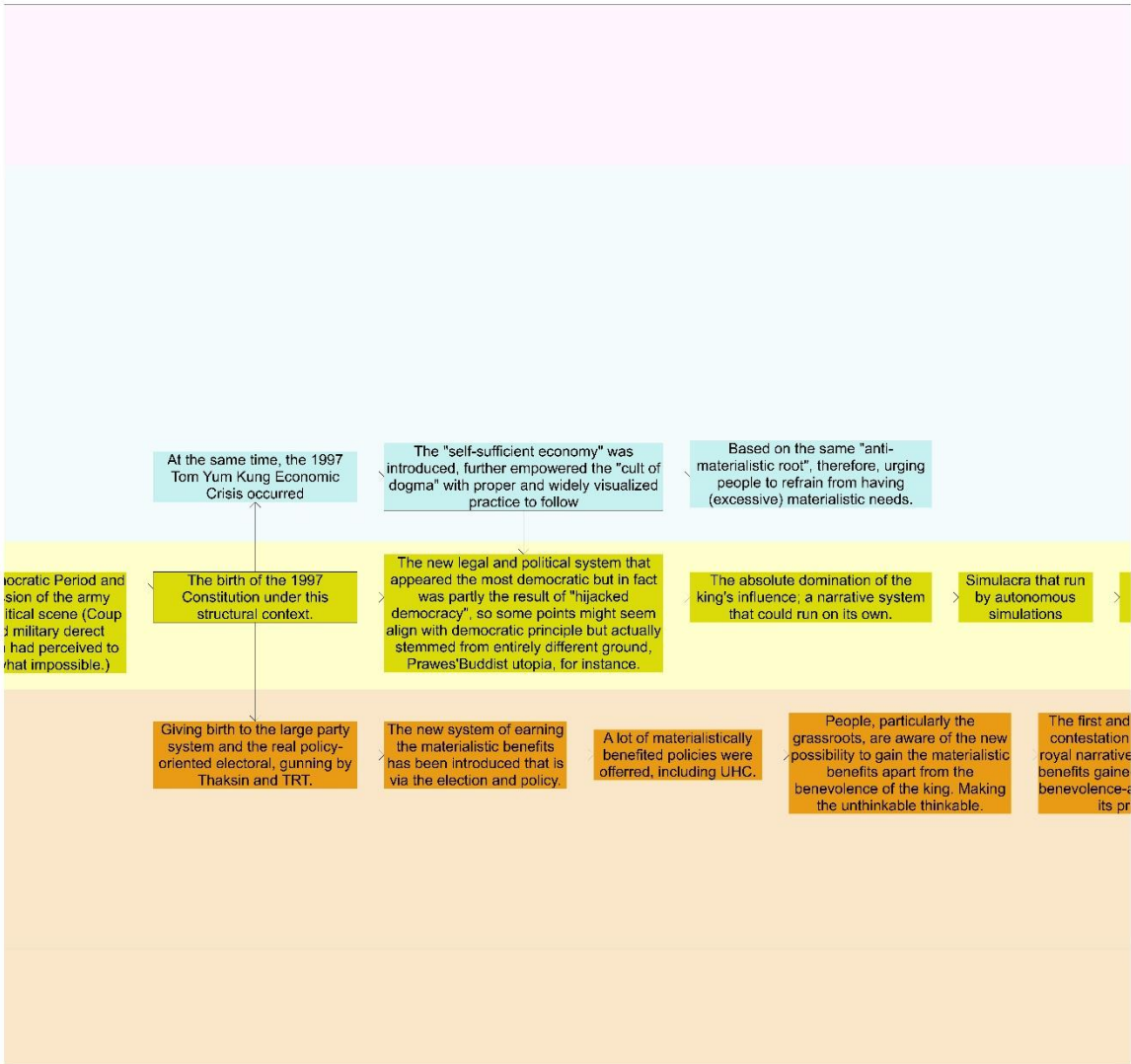
Civilian Dem... the regres... from the pol... d'etat and... intervention... be somew...

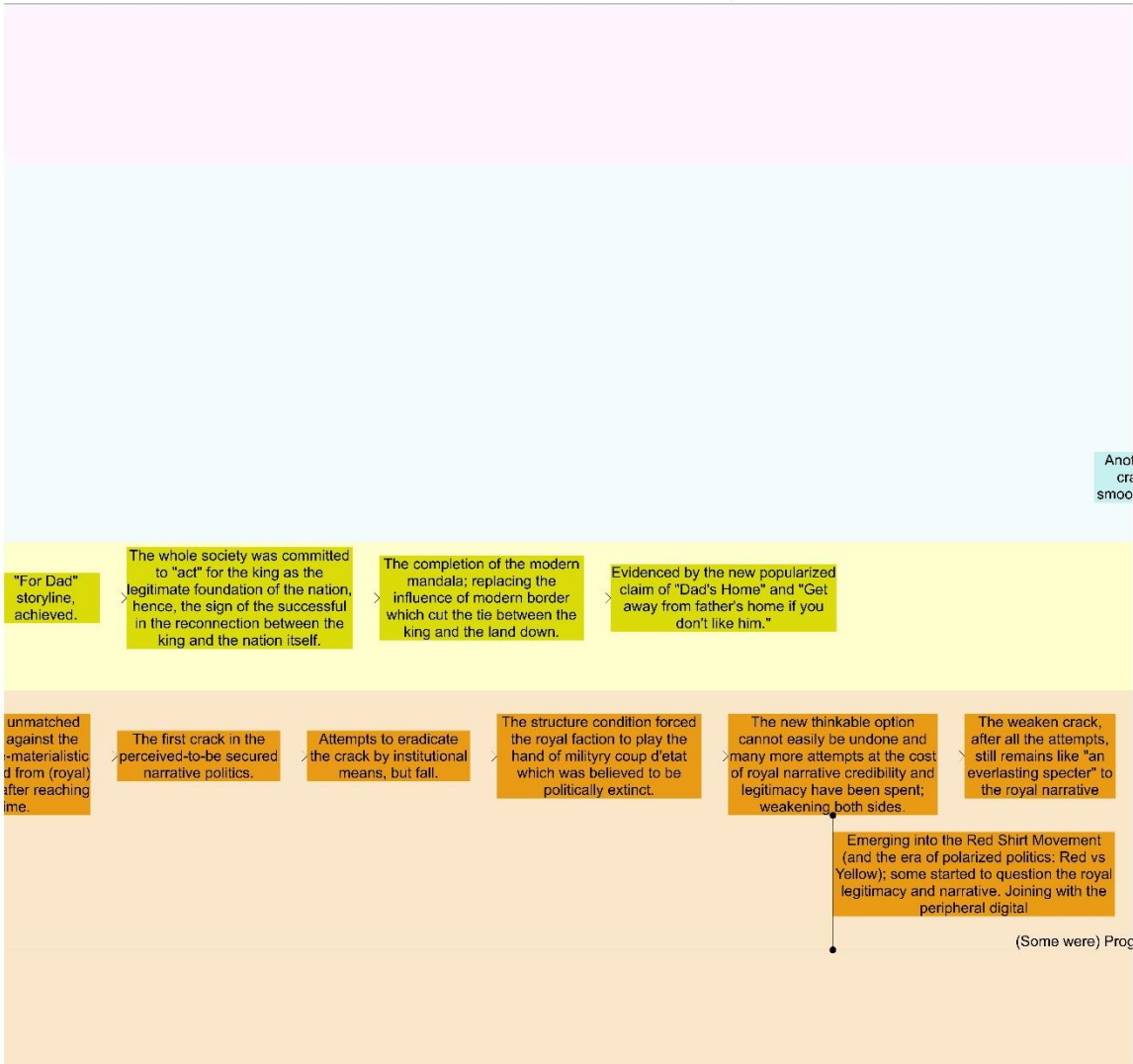
The start of "Internet Age" in Thailand

The first nationwide network for the people with critical stance toward the monarchy to communicate, albeit encryptedly.

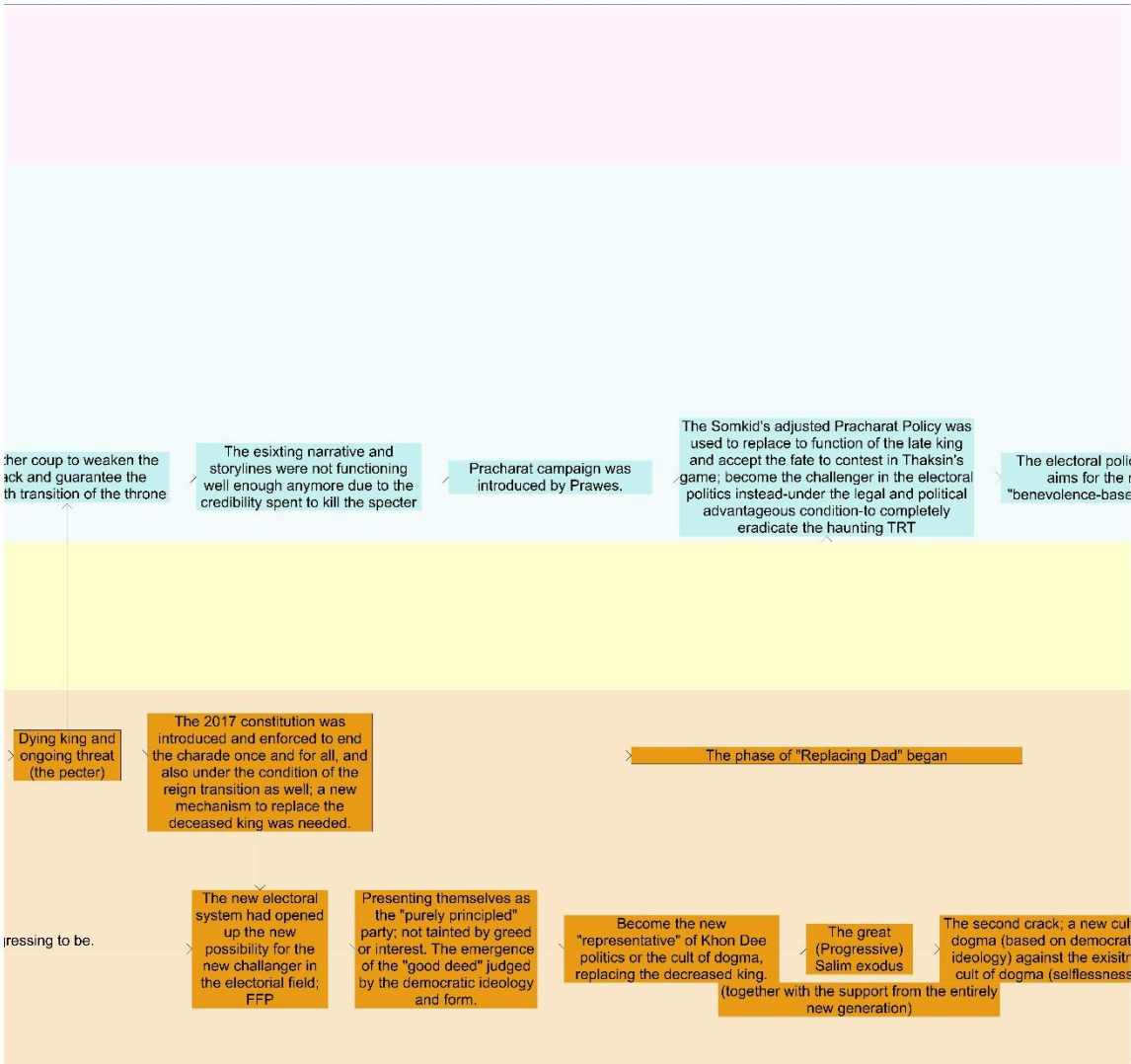
Samesky webboard and publisher, Prachatai, Nitirat, and so on

(Some were) Progressing to be.



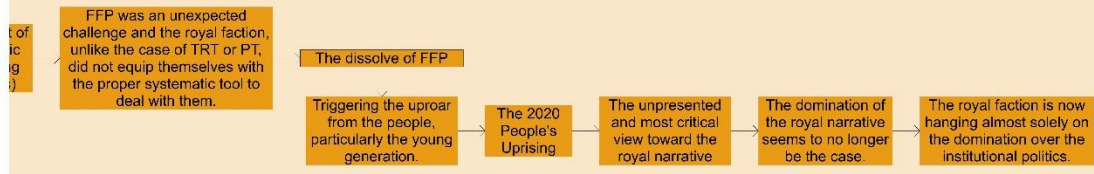


And  
or  
smoo





by that systematically  
reconstruction of  
and materialistic benefit"



## Bibliography

ADF web magazine. (n.d.). PANNAR Sufficient Economic and Agricultural Learning Center by Vin Varavarn Architects. *ADF web magazine*.

<https://www.adfwebmagazine.jp/en/architect/thai-pannar-sufficiency-economic-agriculture-learning-center-inspires-the-sufficiency-economic-philosophy-and-sustainable-agriculture/>

AKSORN. (n.d.). *Chood nangsue lae babfuek "cheewit dee tam roi por...reung lai chak nakrian toon"* [Books and practice books of "Good life as following the dad path...the story from the scholarship students"]. Retrieved 13 November, 2021, from

<https://www.aksorn.com/store/2/product-details-3147>

Albright, M. (2003). *Madam Secretary: A Memoir*. New York: Miramax Books.

Anderson, B. (1978). *Exploration and Irony in Studies of Siam over Forty Years*. Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University.

Anderson, B. (2016). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

Apaipat, T. (2017). *"Good People are the Most Important": Followers and Establishment of Acceptance of Buddhadasa Bhikku in Thai Society, 1932-1986* [Master Dissertation, Chulalongkorn University].

Apornsuwan, T., & Mektairat, N. (1986). Saneh jamrik kab sangkom "rachupatam" [Saneh Jamrik and "the Royal Patronage" Society]. *Thammasat Journal*, 15(4). 5-62.

Army News. (2019, January 18). *18 makkarakom ... wan kong tab bok* [18<sup>th</sup> January ... The Army Day]. *Army News*, 28(8).

Assawapahu [King Vajiravudh]. (1970). *Muang tai ching tuen terd and latti ao yang* [Thailand, please awake and the cult of following]. In Anusorn nai ngan chapanakij

sob kong nang prom kwanboonchan na mane wat makutkasartriyaram wantee 4 kumpapan 2513 [Remembrance booklet from the funeral of Miss Prom Kwanboonchan at the crematory of Makutkasart Temple, 4<sup>th</sup> February B.E.2513].

Association of Anandamahidol Scholarship Recipients. (2005). *Chobmai kao chomrom pu rab praratchatan tun anantamahidon* [The newsletter of the Association of Ananda Mahidol Scholarship Recipients], 1(2).

Attakorn, C. (2021). Nangsue Sadaeng Kitchanukij: Tamra wittayasart lem raek kong tai [Modern Buddhist: The first science textbook of Thailand]. *Journal of the Faculty of Art, Silpakorn University*, 8(2), 83-94. Retrieved from <https://so04.tci-haijo.org/index.php/jasu/article/view/250574>

Badiou, A. (2007). *Being and Event*. New York: Continuum.

Badiou, A. (2008). *Logic of Worlds: Being and Event, 2*. New York: Continuum.

Badiou, A. (2011). *Infinity and Set Theory: How to Begin with the Void* [Video]. In European Graduate School Video Lectures [YouTube channel]. Retrieved November 12, 2021, from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I1G\\_S11-W-4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I1G_S11-W-4)

Ban Kong Por: Self Sufficient Economy Learning Center. (n.d.). *Home* [Facebook page]. Facebook. Retrieved November 13, 2021, from <https://www.facebook.com/bankongpor>

Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra and Simulation*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

Bell, P.F. (1982). Western conceptions of Thai Society: The politics of American scholarship. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 12(1), 61-74.

Bennett, J. (2010) *Vibrant Matter*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.

Bird Thongchai. (n.d.). *Tam roi Paracha* [(Be) Like the King] [Video]. GMM GRAMMY OFFICIAL (YouTube channel). Retrieved 13 November, 2021, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVIgKfitIk4>

Bouton, T. (2007). *Taming Democracy: "The People," the Founders, and the Troubled Ending of American Revolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bowie, K. (1997). *Ritual of National Loyalty: An Anthropology of the State and Village Scout Movement in Thailand*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Brown, M.B. (2009). *Science in Democracy: Expertise, Institutions, and Representations*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Buddhadasa Indapanno Archives (BIA). (2020). *Pudtatadpikku nai kwam song cham sattachan kiattikun prawase wasi* [Buddhadasa in the memory of Professor Prawase Wasi] [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJljHQjkKxM>

Bunnag, K. [Chaopraya Thiphakorawong]. (2016). *Nangsue Sadaeng Kitchanukij* [The Modern Buddhist: List of Common Trees, Shrubs, etc. in Siam]. Bangkok: Ammarin Publishing.

Buruma, I. (2010). *Taming the Gods: Religion and Democracy on Three Continents*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Bush, S.S. (2015). *The Taming of Democracy Assistance: Why Democracy Promotion Does Not Confront Dictators*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Buzan, B., & Lawson, G. (2015). *The Global Transformation: History, Modernity and the Making of International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Campbell, D. (1998). *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policies and the Politics of Identity*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Canguilhem, G. (1991). *The Normal and the Pathological*. New York: Zone Books.

Carabao Official. (n.d.). *Tam roi por* [(Be) Like Dad] [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved 13 November, 2021, from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTD74jWe\\_VE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTD74jWe_VE)

Castano, E., Leidner, B., Bonacossa, A., Nikkah, J., Perrulli, R., Spencer, B., & Humphrey, N. (2011). Ideology, Fear of Death, and Death Anxiety. *Political Psychology*, 32. 601-621. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2011.00822.x>

Cha, V. (2016). *Powerplay: The Origins of the American Alliance System in Asia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Chaiching, N. (2013). *Kor fan fain ai fan un luer chuer* [To dream the impossible dream]. Bangkok: Samesky.

Chaiching, N. (2020). *Kunsuek sakdina lae paya insri: karn muang tai pai tai rabiab lok kong saharat amerika 2491-2500* [Warlords, elites, and the eagle: Thai politics under the American dominance B.E. 2491-2500]. Bangkok: Samesky.

Chakrabongse, C. (2020). *Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand*. Bangkok: River Books.

Chaloemtiarana, T. (1979). *Thailand: The Politics of Despotic Paternalism*. Bangkok: Social Science Association of Thailand and Thai Khadi Institute, Thammasat University.

Chanrojchanakij, B. (2017). *Karn muang tai ruam samai* [Contemporary Thai Politics]. Bangkok: King Prajadhipok Institution.

Chen, M.Y. (2012) *Animacies: Biopolitics, racial mattering, and queer affect*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.

Chitbandit, C. (2007). *The Royally-Initiated Projects: The making of royal hegemony (B.E. 2494-2546)* [Master Dissertation, Thammasat University].

Chokewiwat, W., & Juengsatiansab, K. (Eds.). (2013). *Roi waela: sen tang prawattisart sukkapab* [The path of time: The historical development of health care]. Nonthaburi: Society and Health Institute.

Chookiattichai, A. (2020). *Pudtatadpikku nai kwam song cham sarttachan kiattikun prawase wasi* [Buddhadasa in the memory of Professor Prawase Wasi]. Buddhadasa Indapanno Archives (BIA). [https://www.bia.or.th/html\\_th/index.php/site-content/65-archives/1056-20200726](https://www.bia.or.th/html_th/index.php/site-content/65-archives/1056-20200726)

Chttipalangsri, P. (2021, June 26). *Temporalizinf Thai Colonial Time: Decolonization in the Future Anterior* [Video attached] [Facebook Live]. The Integrative Center for Humanities Innovation, Chiang Mai University (Facebook page). Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/116624733646053/videos/229381238999153>

Collection of Artist. (n.d.). *Dern tam roi tao por* [Following dad's footsteps] [Video]. Kritayot Punseetha (YouTube channel). Retrieved 13 November, 2021, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gWOjuHjok6c>

Constitutional Court. (2021, November 10). *Tai tordsod: sarn rattatammanoon orknang picharana pue arn kam winijchai* [Live Broadcast: The Constitution Court is reading and declaring its verdict]. Office of the Constitutional Court (YouTube channel). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txE5EpAEb5c>

Copernicus, N. (1543). *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Damrong Rajanubhab. (1949). *Sadaeng banyai pong sawandard sayam* [Lectures on Siam Chronicle]. Bangkok: Kurusabha Publishing.

Darnyuttasil, S. (1991). *Karn satharanasuk babb main ai ratcha samai prabatsomdej pramongkutklao chaoyuhua (por.sor. 2453-2468)* [The modern health care in the

reign of King Vajiravudh (B.E. 2453-2468)]. [Master Dissertation, Srinakharinwirot University].

Dental Innovation Foundation under Royal Patronage. (2009). *Prawat kwam pen ma* [The history of the foundation]. Dental Innovation Foundation under Royal Patronage. <http://www.dent-in-found.org/newdesign/aboutus/detail?p=1>

Department of Health Service Support. (2019). *Koomue or sor mor mor pracham ban* [The manual for VHV (Village Health Volunteer)]. Nontaburi: Department of Health Service Support, Ministry of Health.

Department of Provincial Administration. (2017). *Dern tam roi por...sarn tor praratcha panitan hang karn bambadtuk bamroongsuk* [Follow the dad's path...continue his royal legacy of eradicating the sadness and fertilizing the happiness]. Retrieved 13 November, 2021, from [https://multi.dopa.go.th/tspd/work\\_manual/read15](https://multi.dopa.go.th/tspd/work_manual/read15)

Eoseewong, N. (1995). *Chat thai, muang thai, baep rian lae anusaowari: wa duai wathanatham, rat lae rup kan chitsamnuek* [The Thai Nation, Textbooks and Monuments: On Culture, the State and Forms of the Subconscious]. Bangkok: Matichon.

Eoseewong, N. (2005). *Pen and Sail: Literature and History in Early Bangkok*. Chiangmai: Silkworm Books.

Ewsakul, T. (2018). *30 pee karn sinsud kong raborb prammathippatai (2): 8 pee 5 deun kong naiyok prem pai tai karn muang sarm sao* [30 Years, the end of the Premocracy Regime (2): 8 years and 5 months of PM Prem under the 3-pillar politics]. The 101 World. <https://www.the101.world/premocracy-2/>

Ford, E. (2017). *Cold War Monks: Buddhism and America's Secret Strategy in Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M. (2003). *The Birth of Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*. London: Routledge.
- Gillespie, M. (2009). *The Theological Origins of Modernity*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Grant, C.B. (2010). Discursive Democracy as the Political Taming of Globalization?: On recent political essays by Jurgen Habermas. *Debatte: Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe*, 8(2), 133-148.
- H Focus. (2018). "Suka sala" satarn payaban nai adeed [Health pavilion, the past infirmary]. H Focus. <https://www.hfocus.org/content/2015/10/11092>
- Haberkorn, T. (2019). *In Plain Sight: Impunity and Human Rights in Thailand*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Hall, M.A. (2012). Chapter 8: The Safety-Net Role of Public Hospitals and Academic Medical Centers: Past, Present, and Future. In S. Rosenbaum & M.A. Hall (Eds.), *The Health Care Safety Net in the Post-Reform World*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Handel, A. (2018). Distance matters: mobilities and the politics of distance, *Mobilities*, 13(4), 473-487. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2017.1394681>
- Harari, Y. (2014). *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*. London: Harvill Secker.
- Harris, J. (2015). Who Governs? Autonomous Political Network as a Challenge to Power in Thailand. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 45(1). 3-25.
- Hobhouse, L.T. (1915). *Mind in Evolution*. London: Macmillan and Company.



- Holbraad, M., & Pedersen, M. (2017). *The Ontological Turn: An Anthropological Exposition (New Departures in Anthropology)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781316218907
- Holsti, K.J. (2004). *Taming the Sovereigns: Institutional Change in International Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hutton, R. (2011). Revisionism and Counter-Revisionism in Pagan History. *The Pomegranate*, 13(2), 225 – 256.
- Hutton, R. (2017). *Shamans: Siberian Spirituality and the Western Imagination*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- James, P. (1996). *Nation Formation: Towards a Theory of Abstract Community*. London: Sage.
- Jangraew, S. (2002). Khadi yutsap phrabatsomdet phra pokkloa [The Case of King Prajadhiphok's Seized Property]. *Sinlapa wattanatham* [Art & Culture], June, 63-80.
- Jeamteerasakul, S. (2001). *Prawattisart tee perng srang* [The Recently Made History]. Bangkok: October 6 Rumluek.
- Jeamteerasakul, S. (2006). Samnakngan sabsin suan pramahakrasat kue arai? [What is the Crown Property Bureau?]. *Fah Daew Kan* [Same Sky Journal], 4(1). 67-93.
- Jeamteerasakul, S. (2007a, January 20). *Panyachon tai mai keoy rian roo arai chak prawattisart* [The Thai intellectuals never learn anything from the history]. Prachatai. <https://prachatai.com/journal/2007/01/11328>
- Jeamteerasakul, S. (2007b). Panyachon 14 tula pantamit lae aktiwid “2 mai ao” [The October 14 Intellectuals, People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), and activists “2/Double Rejections”]. In T. Ewsakul (Ed.), *Rattaprahan 19 kanya: rattaprahan pue raborb prachatipatai an mee pramahakasart song pen pramuk* [The September 19

Coup d'état: The coup for the Democratic form of Government with the King as Head of State] (pp.382-431). Samesky.

Jeamteerasakul, S. (2012). *Mass Monarchy – Mass Market – Mass Products*.

Somsakjeamfacebooknotes.

<http://somsakjeamfacebooknotes.blogspot.com/2013/06/mass-monarchy-mass-market-mass-products.html>

Jeamteerasakul, S. (2021, June 22). *Pom dai kor sarup kaew kab sataban kasart korn kerb prakodtakarn “ta sawang” narn lai pee.....* [I have reached the conclusion about the Thai monarchy many years before the “awaken” phenomenon.....] [Images attached] [Status Update]. Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/somsakjeam/posts/4014270038626245>

Jongudomsuk, P. (2004). *Kwa cha pen lak prakarn sukkaparb tuan na* [By the time the universal health coverage settled down]. Nonthaburi: SPS Printing Press.

Jory, P. (2017). *Thailand's Theory of Monarchy: The Vessantara Jakata and the Idea of the Perfect Man*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Juengsatiansab, K., & Anupongpat, N. (2018). *Pakinnaka kadee 100 pee karn satharanasuk tai* [The miscellanea study of 100-year of Thai health care].

Nonthaburi: Society and Health Institute.

Juengsatiansab, K., & Suksut, P. (2007, October - December). Asa samak satharanasuk: sakkayaparb lae bodbad nai borribod sangkom tai tee plianpai [Village Health Volunteer: Potential and role in the changing social context of Thailand]. *Journal of Health Systems Research* [Warasarn Wijai Rabob Satharanasuk]. 3(3-4). 268-279.

Junko, K. (2002). King's Manpower Constructed: Writing the History of the Conscription of Labor in Siam. *South East Asia Research*, 10(1), 31-61.

Kaewnai, P. (2009). Pattanakarn sukka sala chak adeed tueng padchuban. *Suka Sala*, 2(8).

Kelly, D. (2019). *Politics and the Anthropocene*. Cambridge: Polity.

Kesboonchoo Mead, K. (2004). *The Rise and Decline of Thai Absolutism*. London: Routledge.

Kesboonchoo Mead, K. (2007). *Karn muang tai nai yuk sarit-tanom paitai kroangsrang amnaj loak* [Thai politics in the Sarit-Tanom Era under the global power structure]. Bangkok: Department of International Relations, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University.

Kesboonchoo Mead, K. (2009). *Kwam kad yang tang karn muang tai...karm pai hai pon ponlawat pai nai* [Thai political conflict...Going beyond the internal dynamic]. Bangkok: October 14 Foundation.

Keyes, C.F. (1967). *Isan: Regionalism in Northeastern Thailand*. Ithaca: Cornell University.

Kierkegaard, S. (1981). *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of the Hereditary Sin (Kierkegaard's Writings, VIII)*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kitirianglarp, K. (2009). Panyachon chumchon-chartniyom karb krabuankarn kortua kong klumkon tang prawattisart bab chumchon-chartniyom tee pramahakasart song pen poonam "lang 2535" [Intellectuals of Community-Nationalism and the formation of the community-nationalism historical bloc with the king as the leader after B.E. 2535]. *Rattasart Sarn* [Political Science Journal, Thammasat University], 30(1), 250-340.

Kitirianglarp, K. (2018). *Pantee srang chart: rat prachachart kab karn tam pantee moo barn tai nai yuk songkram yen* [Map-Constructed Nation: Nation-state and the village mapping during the Cold War]. Bangkok: Illuminations Editions.

KomChadLuek. (2013, December 10). *'Pu' namta klor bok toi chon mai roo cha toi yang rai laew* ['Pu' (PM Yingluck) tearily said that she had given way to the dead-end already]. KomChadLuek Online. <https://www.komchadluek.net/news/politic/174543>

KomChadLuek. (2018, November 2019). *"Rattamanoon desine ma pue puak rao" ???* ["This constitution was designed for us." ???]. Kom Chad Luek Online. <https://www.komchadluek.net/scoop/352831>

Kongkeerati, P. (2005). *Lae laew kwam kleun wai kor pra kod: karn muang wattanatam korng naksuksa korn 14 tula* [Then, the movement appeared: The cultural politics of the student and people's movement before 14<sup>th</sup> October]. Bangkok: Thammasat University Press.

Kongkirati, P., & Kanchoochat, V. (2018). The Prayuth Regime: Embedded Military and Hierarchical Capitalism in Thailand. *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia*, 6(2). 279-305.

Kongsawat, P. (2019, November 8). *Wittayasart puttasadsana kab krabuankarn srang rat hong tod long kong kasart tai* [Science, Buddhism, and the construction of experimental state of the Thai monarchy]. Prachatai. <https://prachatai.com/journal/2019/11/85072>

Kosri, S. (2014). *Thai State and the Dynamics of Boundary Line Formation According to the Concept of Modern State after the Franco-Siamese War* [Master Dissertation, Chulalongkorn University].

Kulabkaew, K. (2019). *The Politics of Thai Buddhism under the NCPO Junta*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

Kumpha, A. (2019). *Changes of the Thai Elite Network, 2495-2535 B.E.* [Doctoral Dissertation, Chiang Mai University].

Le Petit Robert. (2002). Natio. In *Dictionnaire Le Petit Robert*. (2002 edition).

Lertchoosakul, K. (2021). *Songkram yen (nai) rawang boe kaw* [The Cold War (in-)between the white ribbon]. Bangkok: Matichon.

Linde, C., & Labov, W. (1975). Spatial Networks as a Site for the Study of Language and Thought. *Language*, 51(4), 924–939. <https://doi.org/10.2307/412701>

Loeipittayakom School. (n.d.). *Karn rian roo settakij porpiang tam roi por* [The study of Self-Sufficient Economy: To be like Dad]. Retrieved 13 November, 2021, from <https://www.loeipit.ac.th/social1>

Looney, R. (2004). Thaksinomics: A New Asian Paradigm. *The Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies*, 29(1). 65-82.

McCargo, D. (2005). Network Monarchy and legitimacy crises in Thailand. *The Pacific Review*, 18(4), 499-519.

McCargo, D. (2006). Thaksin and the resurgence of violence in the Thai South: Network monarchy strikes back?. *Critical Asian Studies*, 38(1), 39-71.

McCargo, D., & Pathmanand, U. (2004). *The Thaksinization of Thailand*. Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies.

Mearsheimer, J.J. (2018). *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities (Henry L. Stimson Lectures)*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Mercier, H., & Sperber, D. (2018). *The Enigma of Reason: A New Theory of Human Understanding*. London: Penguin.

Mérieau, E. (2016). Thailand's Deep State, Royal Power and the Constitutional Court (1997–2015), *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 46(3), 445-466. DOI: 10.1080/00472336.2016.1151917

Ministry of Culture [Thailand]. (2019). *The Royal Coronation Ceremony*. Bangkok: Rung Silp Printing.

Mongsawad, P. (2010). The Philosophy of the Sufficient Economy: A Contribution to the Theory of Development. *Asia-Pacific Development Journal*, 17(1), 123-142.

Monteiro, N.P. (2014). *Theory of Unipolar Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Montesana, M., Chong, T., & Shu Xun, M.H. (Eds.). (2019). *After the Coup: The National Council for Peace and Order Era and the Future of Thailand*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

Mueller, T.B. (2012). The Rockefeller Foundation, the Social Science, and Humanities in the Cold War. *Journal of Cold War Studies*, 15(3), 108-135.

Na Ranong, V., et al. (2002). *Raingan wichai chud kroang karn tidtam lae pramernpol karn chad karn lak prakarn sukkaparb tuan na pee tee nueng (2544-2545)*[The research report on the outcome and review of the universal health coverage policy, year 1 (B.E. 2544-2545). Bangkok: Thailand Development Research Institute.

Na Ranong, V., et al. (2005). *Raingan wichai chud kroang karn tidtam lae pramernpol karn chad karn lak prakarn sukkaparb tuan na raya tee song (2546-2547)*[The research report on the outcome and review of the universal health coverage policy, second period (B.E. 2546-2547). Bangkok: Thailand Development Research Institute.

Nam, I. (2015). *Democratizing Health Care: Welfare State Building in Korea and Thailand*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Nam, I., & Nethipo, V. (2021). Building Programmatic Linkages in the Periphery: The Case of the TRT Party in Thailand. *Politics and Society*, (Online version), <https://doi.org/10.1177/00323292211039954>

National Health Security Office (NHSO). (2007). *Raingarn prachampee karn srang lak prakarn sukkaparb tuanna* [The annual report of the implementation universal health coverage campaign]. Nontaburi: National Health Security Office.

Neelands, J. (2007). Taming the political: the struggle over recognition in the politics of applied theatre. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 12(3), 305-317.

Nethipo, V. (2015). *Heeb Butr Gub Boon Koon: Karn Meung Karn Leuke Tang Lae Karn Plien Plang Krue Kai-U-Pa-Tarm* [Ballot and Gratitude: Dynamic of Electoral Politics and Clientelism in Thailand]. Chiang Mai: Center for ASEAN Studies.

Nittayarampong, S. (2005). *Bon sentang su lak prakarn sukkaparb tuan na* [The road to the universal health coverage]. Bangkok: Matichon.

Norris, C. (2009). *Badiou's Being and Event: A Reader's Guide*. New York: Continuum.

Office of the Educational Council. (2018, December). *Education in Thailand 2018* (Governmental Report). Bangkok: Office of Educational Council, Ministry of Education (Thailand).

Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council. (n.d.). *Praboromma rachawat lae praratcha damrat tam roi por* [The royal guidance and speeches on the

topic “(Be) Like Dad”]. Retrieved 13 November, 2021, from

[https://www.nesdc.go.th/more\\_news.php?offset=40&cid=599&filename=index](https://www.nesdc.go.th/more_news.php?offset=40&cid=599&filename=index)

Ouyyanont, P. (2007). The Crown Property Bureau in Thailand and the crisis of 1997. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 38(1), 166-189.

Parkin, J. (2007). *Taming the Leviathan: The Reception of the Political and Religious Ideas of Thomas Hobbes in England 1640-1700*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Parmar, I. (2015). The “Big 3” Foundations and American Global Power. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 74(4), 676-703.

Pawakapan, P. (2021). *Infiltrating Society: The Thai Military’s Internal Security Affairs*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

Phantprasit, P. (2022). *The Making of Honor and Masculinity of Siamese Army from the 1900s to 1932* [Doctoral Dissertation, Kyoto University].

Phillips, M. (2016). *Thailand in the Cold War*. London: Routledge.

Phongpaichit, P., & Baker, C. (2004). *Thaksin: The Business of Politics in Thailand*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.

Phongpaichit, P., & Baker, C. (2016). *A History of Thailand*. Bangkok: Matichon.

Pitakthanin, A. (2011, September-December). “Chon kwa rao cha kayeon phukao”: karn kor tua lae kard dern tang hang kwam kid tang sangkom karn muang kong nai pat prawase wasi korn por sor 2540 [“Until the mountain moves”: The formation and development of Prawase Wasi’s socio-political thoughts before BE 2540]. *Rattasart Sarn* [Political Science Journal, Thammasart University], 32(3), 82-127.

Plato. (2004). *Republic* (C.D.C. Reeve, Tran.). Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.



Pongtongchareon, P., and Attakorn, B. (1960). *Babrian wttayasart chan mattayom suksa ton ton mor sor 1* [The Science Textbook for the junior high school, Year 8]. Bangkok: Aksorn Chareontad.

Posttoday (2017, October 26). “*Srisa nee mor bhai prachao pandin*” *yorn fang kam pood off pongpat klah tueng por luang ror 9* [“This head is for the king” revisiting Aof Pongpat’s words for the royal father, King Rama IX]. Posttoday.

<https://www.posttoday.com/ent/news/522041>

Potjanalawan, P. (2019). *Tai pidok: Prawattisart karn muang sangkom ruam samai kong puttasartsana nai tai* [Thai-Tripitaka: The socio-political history of contemporary Buddhism in Thailand]. Bangkok: Illumination Editions.

PPTV HD 36. (n.d.). “*Wanchai Sornsiri*” *chaloey prissana tee ma sor wor 250 kon wote naiyok dai* [“Wanchai Sornsiri” unveiled the origin of the senate’s power to make the vote for appointing the PM] [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dpLxCzN9FAI>

Prachachart. (2017, October 13). *Pratab huang sruang sawarn: yorn kwam nai chai pat poo tawai ngan ram luek nai luang ror 9 tai tod kwam teun tan mi leum luen* [Residing in the heaven: King Rama IX in the undying memories of the medical doctors who had served him]. Prachachart Online.

<https://www.prachachat.net/rama9royalfuneral/news-54433>

Prachatai. (2016, October 15). *Kon puket ruam tua klang duek na ran nam tao hoo mai por chai pos fadebook salaitua lang chang kwam kadee 112* [The residents of Phuket had assembled in front of the soy milk shop; antipathetic to the Facebook’s post. They dispersed after suing the person who posted with article 112 (Lese Majeste Law)]. Prachatai. <https://prachatai.com/journal/2016/10/68370>

- Prasertkul, S. (1989). *The transformation of the Thai state and economic change, 1855-1945* [Doctoral Dissertation, Cornell University].
- Pueksom, T. (2007). *Churoak rangkai lae rat wetchakarm: prawattisart karn patt samai main ai sangkom tai* [Germ, body, and the medical state: The history of the modern medicine in Thailand]. Bangkok: Illumination Editions.
- Punpiamrat, J., et al. (2008). *Karn wikor lae pramermpol kong kroang karn lakprakarn sukkaparb tuanna* [The analysis and evaluation of the universal health coverage project]. Bangkok: Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI).
- Raffestin, C. (1984). Territoriality: A Reflection of the Discrepancies between the Organization of Space and Individual Liberty. *International Political Science Review/Revue Internationale de Science Politique*, 5(2), 139-146.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1600835>
- Raffestin, C., & Butler, S.A. (2012). Space, Territory, and Territoriality. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 30(1), 121-141.
- Rajchagool, C. (1994). *The Rise and Fall of the Thai Absolute Monarchy: Foundations of the Modern Thai State from Feudalism to Peripheral Capitalism*. Bangkok: White Lotus.
- Ratchakawee, N. (2013). *Thai Buddhist Beliefs in the Anti-Communist Campaigns, 1965-1976 C.E.* [Master Dissertation, Thammasart University].
- Ratchakijchanubeksa. (1973, October 15). *Prakard tangtung Nayok rattamontri* [The declaration for the appointment of the Prime Minister]. Volume 90 Section 132. p. 1.
- Roser, M., Ortiz-Ospina, E., and Ritchie, H. (2019). *Life Expectancy*. Our World in Data. <https://ourworldindata.org/life-expectancy>

Rothman, L. (2016, February 5). *Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders and the Real Definition of 'Progressive'*. TIME. <https://time.com/4209825/democratic-debate-hillary-clinton-bernie-sanders-progressive/>

Rural Doctor Foundation. (2021, November 13). *Prawat kwam pen ma* [Our history]. <https://ruraldoctor.or.th/about/>

Sakworawish, A. (2015). *Ongkarn Issara lae ongkarn ekkachon nai kruekai trakun sor: karn kawi tamnang lae larn kab kan hang polprayoad* [Independent Organizations and Private Organization in the Sor Family Network: The Cross over Position and the Conflict of Interest]. Manager Online.

<https://mgronline.com/daily/detail/9580000118009>

Sapolsky, R. (2017). *Behave: The Biology of Humans at Our Best and Worst*. London: Penguin Press.

Satian Dhamma Sathan. (n.d.). *Praracha nai nitan* [The king in a fairytale] [Video]. SDS Channel (YouTube channel). Retrieved 13 November, 2021, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yrwk3qFgzD4>

Sattayanurak, A. (1995). *Karn plian plang loakkatad kong chonchannam tai tangtae ratchakarn tee 4 – por sor 2475* [The change of Thai elites' conceptual framework from the reign of King Rama IV to B.E. 2475]. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press.

Sattayanurak, S. (2014). *10 panyachon sayam lem 1: panyachon haeng rat somburanaya sittiraj* [10 intellectuals of Siam volume 1: Intellectuals of the absolute monarchy state]. Bangkok: Openbooks.

Shinawatra, T. (2021, August 6). *Kantoak kwam kid ruam mit idea: kam paka tam ai tony torb* [Brainstorming of multitude of ideas: Kam Paka asks, Tony (Thaksin Shinawatra) answers] [Video attached] [Facebook live]. *CARE kid kluen tai* [CARE

idea moves Thailand] (Facebook page). Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/careorth/videos/2871147043140152/>

Simmons, J.G. (2006). A History of Public Hospitals in the United States: From City Almshouse to Medical Innovator – Two Centuries of Triumph and Trial. *The Safety Net*, 20(1), 6-13.

SME Thailand Club. (n.d.). *Tam roi por* [(Be) Like Dad]. Retrieved 13 November, 2021, from <https://www.smethailandclub.com/author-7469-id.html>

Smith, A.D. (1991). *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing.

Smith, C. (1985). *History of the Department of Medicine 1933-1985 University of Colorado School of Medicine*. Colorado: University of Colorado.

Sripenchan, S. (2013). *Liaw lang lae na 50 pee “sangkomsar paritat”* [Looking back and forth 50 years of Social Perspective Journal]. Bangkok Biz News.

<https://www.bangkokbiznews.com/news/detail/511031>

Srithamrongsawat, S. (2008). *Naewkid krabuankarn pattana samritpol lae pol kratob nayobai lak prakarn sukkaparb tuanna (30 baht hang klai roak)* [Framework, developmental process, outcome, and consequences of the universal health coverage policy (30-baht helps Thai stays afar from sickness). Nontaburi: National Health Security Office.

Streeck, W., & Yamamura, K. (Eds.). (2001). *The Origins of Nonliberal Capitalism: Germany and Japan in Comparison*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Student Association of Kasetsart University. (2021, November 13). *The royal guidance in the graduation ceremony of Kasetsart University 18<sup>th</sup> July B.E.2517*.

<http://www.sa.ku.ac.th/king-spku/2517-1.htm>

Subrahmanyam, A. (2013). *Reinventing Siam: Ideas and Culture in Thailand, 1920-1944* [Doctoral Dissertation, University of California (Berkeley)].

Suchira, S. (2007). *Einstein pobpraputtachao hen* [Einstein had found, the Buddha had discovered]. Bangkok: Ammarin.

SUJIPULI Film Production Studio. (2017, January 20). *My Father – King Rama IX* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwN9L-eyGNk>

Sundberg, J. (2014) Decolonizing posthumanist geographies. *Cultural Geographies*. 21(1), 33-47.

Suwannakij, S. (2013). *King and Eye: Visual Formation and Technology of the Siamese Monarchy* [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Copenhagen].

Suwannathat-Pian, K. (2003). *Kings, Country and Constitutions: Thailand's Political Development 1932-2000*. London: Routledge.

Taamtai, M. (2001). Karnpokkrong raborb prachattipattai unmee pramahakrasat soangpen pramuk [The Democratic Form of Government with the King as the head of the state]. *Witee Sangkom Thai* [The Thai Way], Vol. 2: Special Edition Academic Paper for 100 Years of Pridi Bhanomyong, 91-97.

Tangchareonsatian, V., et al. (2004). *Padchai nai karn tad sin chai cherng nayobai lae sing tatai kong nayobai lak prakarn sukkaparb tuan na* [The decisional policy factors and the challenges of the universal health coverage policy]. *Journal of Health Science* [Warasarn Wichakarn Satharanasuk], 13(6).

Tangsuksan, Y. (1999). *Midchannaree krub karn patt tai* [Missionary and the medicine in Thailand]. In K. Lokapattana (Ed.), *Hasib pee roang payaban krungteb Kristian* [50-Year's anniversary of Bangkok Christian Hospital]. Bangkok: Udomsueksa.

Tanmanthong, S. (2010). *Krong karn lak pralarn sukparb tuan na 30-baht raksa tuk roak pro sor 2545-2552* [The “30-baht treat all” universal health coverage scheme, B.E. 2545-2552]. Bangkok: Thammasart University.

Taweesak, S. (2019). *Prawase wasi kub karn mai pood tueng seripab* [Prawase Wasi and his self-censorship on the notion of liberty]. Prachatai.

<https://prachatai.com/journal/2019/08/83879>

Tejapeera, K. (2017). *Pummitad mai tang karn muang* [New political landscape]. Matichon Weekly. [https://www.matichonweekly.com/column/article\\_42308](https://www.matichonweekly.com/column/article_42308)

Thai Health Foundation. (2019, December 2). *Praratchakorraneeyakij dan kan pat lae sataranasuk* [The royal activities on medicine and health care]. Thai Health

Foundation. <https://www.thaihealth.or.th/Content/21634->

<https://www.thaihealth.or.th/Content/21634-%E0%B8%9E%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B0%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%8A%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%93%E0%B8%B5%E0%B8%A2%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%B4%E0%B8%88%E0%B8%94%E0%B9%89%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%81%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%A3%E0%B9%81%E0%B8%9E%E0%B8%97%E0%B8%A2%E0%B9%8C%E0%B9%81%E0%B8%A5%E0%B8%B0%E0%B8%AA%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%98%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%93%E0%B8%AA%E0%B8%B8%E0%B8%82.html>

Thai Health Foundation. (n.d.). *About* [Web page]. Retrieved November 13, 2021, from <https://en.thaihealth.or.th/?display=whoweare#about4>

Thailand Museum Pass. (n.d.). *Tam roi por sorn* [Be like what dad taught]. Retrieved 13 November, 2021, from

<https://www.museumthailand.com/th/4223/storytelling/%E0%B8%95%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%A1%E0%B8%A3%E0%B8%AD%E0%B8%A2%E0%B8%9E%E0%B9%88%E0%B8%AD%E0%B8%AA%E0%B8%AD%E0%B8%99/>

The Chaipattana Foundation. (2021, November 13). *Chud rermtan settakij porpiang* [The origin of self-sufficient economy].

[https://www.chaipat.or.th/site\\_content/item/3579-2010-10-08-05-24-39.html](https://www.chaipat.or.th/site_content/item/3579-2010-10-08-05-24-39.html)

The MATTER. (2021a, August 31). *"Pom suad mon tuk wan cha nan pom cha mai tam arai tee man pid"* [I pray every day; therefore, I will never commit any wrongdoings] [Image attached] [Status update]. Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/thematterco/photos/a.1735876059961122/2981920778689971/>

The MATTER. (2021b, September 27). *Longmue mai mairoo tae tee ru kue panom mue tukwan ruam panha tee naiyok prayud kaekai duay karn suad mon* [Doing anything or not, we don't know, but surely praying every day. The compilation of the problems PM Prayuth solved by praying] [Links attached] [Status update]. Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/thematterco/posts/3006202119595170>

The People's Information Center: April-May 2010 Crackdowns (PIC). (2017). *Truth for Justice: A fact-finding report on the April-May 2010 crackdowns in Thailand* (Online Version). <http://www.pic2010.org/en-report/>

The Power of Human Energy. (n.d.). *Ruam palang tam roi por kong pandin* [Collectively contribute to follow the way of the national father]. Retrieved 13 November, 2021, from <https://ajourneyinspiredbytheking.org/th/>

The Public Relation Committee of the Royal Coronation Ceremony [Thailand]. (2019). *The first royal command of King Rama X. The Coronation of King Rama X.* <http://phralan.in.th/coronation/newsdetail.php?id=1168>

The Standard. (2020, March 18). *Rattaban chad suad mon boad rattanasutr tukwad tua prated kachadpadpao pai kowid-19 prom taitordsod* [The government had arranged the collective prayer of Rattanasutr from every temple in order to eradicate

the Covid-19 thread with the national live broadcast]. The Standard online.

<https://thestandard.co/pray-for-covid-19/>

The Working Committee for the Development of Universal Health Coverage Policy. (2001). *Kor saner rabob lak prakarn sukkaparb* [The proposal of the universal health coverage system]. Nonthaburi: Health System Research Institution.

Thurs, D. (2011). Scientific Method. In M. Shank, R. Numbers, & P. Harrison (Eds.), *Wrestling with Nature: From Omens to Science*. Chicago: Chicago University Press. (pp. 307 – 336).

Tilly, C. (1992). *Coercion, Capital, and European States, A.D. 990-1990*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

Tiyavanich, K. (1997). *Forest Recollections: Wandering Monks in Twentieth-Century Thailand*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Todd, Z. (2016) An indigenous feminist's take on the ontological turn: 'ontology' is just another word for colonialism. *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 29(1), 4-22.

Tompkins, K.W. (2016) On the limits and promise of new materialist philosophy. *Lateral*, 5.1(Spring).

Tonsakulrungruang, K. (2019). *Toward a New Buddhist Constitution: Law and Religion in the Kingdom of Thailand*. [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Bristol].

Trungpa, C. (2002). *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*. Boulder: Shambhala.

Unaldi, S. (2016). *Working towards the Monarchy: The Politics of Space in Downtown Bangkok*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Unno, A. (2018). *"We Love Mr King": Malay Muslims of Southern Thailand in the Wake of the Unrest*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.



VHV. (n.d.). *Home* [Webpage]. Retrieved November 13, 2021, from <http://xn--y3cri.com/>

Wasi, P. (1974). *Srang San Sangkom Thai Khuen Mai* [Recreating Thai Society Anew]. *Social Science Perspective* [Warasarn Sangkomsart Paritat], 12(1), 58-71.

Wasi, P. (1993). *Padchim apat tan pudtad mahatera: bodrian tangtam karnpat lae sangkom wittaya* [The last breaths of Buddhadasa: The lessons in morality, medicine, and sociology]. Bangkok: Mor Chao Ban.

Wasi, P. (2011). *Bon sen tang cheewir: rueng roun cheewit kannan kan tor su kwam fai fan kong kon ban nok kon nueng tee kweaw kong kab la ikon* [On the life long road: The story of life, work, fight, and dream of a rural man which involved other several people]. Bangkok: Mor Chao Ban.

Wasi, P. (2019). *Kwam luem lam nai kroang srang amnaj rat* [The state's structural inequality]. King Prajadhipok Institution (KPI) Channel [YouTube channel]. Retrieved 13 November, 2021, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uuECU38hzkE>

Watcharasukpo, S. (2019, March 14). *Karn chad sue klum yar aka pang chak sor por sor chor soo krasuang satharanasuk* [The purchase of high-priced medicine from National Health Security Office (NHSO) to the Ministry of Health]. Matichon Online. [https://www.matichon.co.th/article/news\\_1402675](https://www.matichon.co.th/article/news_1402675)

Winichakul, T. (1994). *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Winichakul, T. (2011). *Mue kwamjing (niyai) doan dannern kadee nai yuk kasat niyom lon kern* [When truth (novel) was sued in the age of hyper-royalism]. Prachatai. <https://prachatai.com/journal/2011/12/38406>

Winichakul, T. (2016). *Choam na racha chatniyom* [The appearance of royal nationalism]. Bangkok: Samesky.

Winichakul, T. (2019a). *Thailand's Hyper-Royalism: Its Past Success and Present Predicament*. ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

Winichakul, T. (2019b). *Mue sayam plik pan: wa duay kroab manoatad kong sayam yuk samai mai* [Once Siam Altered: On conceptual framework of the modern Siam]. Bangkok: Samesky.

Winichakul, T. (2019c). *Ork nork kanob prawattisart tai: wa duay prawattisart nok kanob lae witeewittaya tang leuk* [Escaping from Thai History's Tradition: On the unconventional history and the alternative methodologies]. Bangkok: Samesky.

Wongnai. (2019). *Tiao tai tam roi por kab 10 kroang karn an nueng ma chak praratcha damri* [Traveling Thailand following the Dad's path with the 10 royal initiated projects]. <https://www.wongnai.com/listings/projects-initiated-by-his-majesty-king>

Wongpanya, T. (2019, July 18). *Mor noo mor tee pob sue* [Dr.Noo and Dr.Tee meet the press] [Video attached] [Facebook live]. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/tana.wongpan/videos/10215183068517119/>

Wongswangpanich, K. (2016). *Chao chong tuen klua: karn kor karn rai, kwam roonrang lae karn krobngam* [Thou shall fear: Terrorism, Violence, and Its Domination]. Bangkok: Matichon.

workpointTODAY. (2018, December 19). *Chad chad wanchai athibai kor sor chor mee laew 250 siang chak sor wor leuktang kor eek kae roi kwa siang pen naiyok dai laew* [It's clear now! Wanchai elaborated that the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) already had 250 votes in their pocket from the senators and only need 100-ish votes more to become the PM]. Workpoint Today Online. <https://workpointtoday.com/%E0%B8%A7%E0%B8%B1%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%8A%E0%B8%B1%E0%B8%A2->

[%E0%B8%AD%E0%B8%98%E0%B8%B4%E0%B8%9A%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%A2%E0%B8%84%E0%B8%AA%E0%B8%8A-%E0%B8%A1%E0%B8%B5%E0%B9%81%E0%B8%A5%E0%B9%89%E0%B8%A7-250/](#)

World Health Organization (WHO). (2007). *Evolution of Public Health Security*. World Health Report.

Yerkes, R.M. (1916). Hobhouse's mind in evolution. *Journal of Animal Behavior*, 6(6), 433.

Yimprasert, S. (2007). *Pan ching chart tai: wa duay rat lae karn tortarn rat samai chompol por pibunsongkram krang tee song (por sor 2491-2500)* [Scheming for Thai Nation: On the government and counter-government during the second office of Plaek Pibunsongkram (B.E. 2591-2500)]. Bangkok: October 6 Rumleuk.

Yoshifumi, T. (2001). Formation of a Modern State in Thailand. In S. Ikehata, Y. Ishii, Y. Ishizawa, H. Kano, K. Goto, T. Saito, Y. Sakurai, A. Suehiro, & Y. Yamamoto (Eds.), *Iwanami Lecture of Southeast Asian History (5): Reorganization of the Southeast Asian World*. Tokyo: Iwanami Books.

Yoshifumi, T. (2009). *Myths and Realities: The Democratization of Thai Politics*. Kyoto: Kyoto University Press.

Yunis, H. (1996). *Taming Democracy: Models of Political Rhetoric in Classical Athens*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.