

COMMITTEE IV
Modernization, Appropriate Values and
Education

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**CHARACTERISTICS OF MODERNIZING STATES IN A WORLD ORDER:
ASPIRATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES**

by

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In the course of writing this paper, I came to realize that the subject I was asked to speak on was infinitely larger than I had originally anticipated. I shall therefore content myself to initiate the discussion with the presentation of Thailand as a case in point. This country is chosen simply because it is one of the oldest nations in Southeast Asia, with the culture stretching back to several thousand years, which has been struggling to be intergrated into the modern world for decades with some successes and failures. I will not involved with conceptual and definitional problems of modernization, but will be concerned only with the study of the modernizing efforts of Thai governments to transform their traditional society into a modern state. Even if the modernization process is not the same in all developing nations, I am sure that the problems of modernization Thailand has been facing since the adoption of the modernization ideology from western countries in the 19th century are not confined only to this country, but can be found in many developing nations which have chosen westernization as the means towards modernity. Similarly, the desire of Thailand to find for herself, instead of the alien western models, some paradigms of development that are attuned to the indigenous culture and aspirations of her people will be shared by all these emerging nations.

Thailand could be said to have become fully exposed to the forces of modernization as of 1855 in the reign of King Mongkut or RamaIV (1851-1868) when the Browning Treaty was concluded with Britain. The Browning and subsequent treaties opened the country to the West making it more vulnerable to Western imperialism. In order to preserve national independence King Mongkut began to pursue a policy of modernization to accommodate Thailand to the modern world. Threatened by the Western powers the King was not interested in the conceptual and definitional problem of modernization. What was facing him was the concrete reality of how to catch up with western modernized countries to survive. He therefore equated modernization with westernization and used it as a means to reduce the disparity between Thailand and advanced countries in the West. The modernization process, initiated by him, involved the selective adoption of western technology, educational system, and administrative and economic organizations to replace traditional education, outdated administrative system and subsistent economy. Modern education was introduced primarily to acquaint the Thai elites with western technology and scientific knowledge, and to reform their attitudes and beliefs making them in tune with the ideology of modernization such as the use of rationality and scientific methods for the solution of problems rather than the reliance on magic and superstition. The educational and other reforms

were made along western patterns. The adoption however, was made with careful selection. Only those aspects of westernization that were conducive to the welfare of the nation were chosen to be assimilated in Thai culture. Most of Thai traditional culture was kept and only outdated customs that humiliated a sense of human dignity were abolished.

Apart from educational and cultural reforms King Mongkut's modernizing efforts resulted in religious modernization and socio-economic changes. His religious modernization advocated a return to the original Pali Buddhism which was more rational and scientific without the mythological and magical underpinnings of popular Buddhism. This initiative paved the way to subsequent effort towards the adjustment of Buddhism with the modern world. Social reforms consisted of administrative re-organization to consolidate the power of the central government and the improvement of transport and communication system to facilitate the new Thai economy which introduced, for the first time, to the World market system, began to be transformed from self-sufficient economy into a commodity production economy with rice as its specialization.¹

King Mongkut's modernization policy was pursued by his son, King Chulalongkorn or Rama V (1868-1910). Under his reign the goal of modernization was not only to avoid colonialism but also to make Thailand a strong modern state. As a result many modernization programs were launched. His administrative reforms, patterned on the French administrative system, put an end to the quasi-autonomous powers of provincial governors and thus consolidated the power of the king as head of the state. In line with western administrative model the 400 year old 4 ministries (i.e. Krom Wang: Palace Ministry, Krom Pra Klang: Treasury, Krom Muang: Ministry of Capital, and Krom Na: Ministry of Land) were replaced by the new 12 ministries each with a distinct function.²

Along with this institutional change King Chulalongkorn modernized the armed forces, the legal and treasury systems. He also introduced, for the first time, western technology to agriculture to raise its productivity, and created economic infrastructures such as communication network and transportation to facilitate economic development. His social reforms were steered towards the radical transformation of the traditional structure of Thai society into a new socio-economic structure. This was possible through the abolition of slavery institution and the Prai and corvée systems.

These two systems, developed at the time when neither modern tax system nor draft registration existed nor government officials were paid, had been used as a source of income and military strength of the government. Before the Reformation (1892-1910) Thai population consisted of the ruling elite (the King, members of the Royal Family and the noble families), Dasa (slaves) and Prai (bonded commoners),³ Between the ruling elite and the commoners there was a small number of traders of alien origin, mostly Chinese, Arabs, Indians and westerners. These traders were usually absorbed into the political system and became part of the ruling class (e.g. those who traded with China for the government were given feudal ranks and titles).

One result of this radical structural change was the rise of the middle class (business men) necessary to stimulate modern economy. The other was the introduction of the modernization ideal of social justice into Thai society through the distribution of rights and benefits to the commoners and by the equalization of social and economic opportunities. The King democratized the bureaucracy to a certain degree by extending the recruitment of its personnel outside the noble circle to the sector of the commoners

and by making the selection based on educational qualification and professional skills.

In his administrative and bureaucratic reforms King Chulalongkorn faced two crucial problems, i.e. the shortage of well-trained people to man the bureaucracy and the low rate of literacy among the people. Literacy is the necessary pre-condition for modernization. If the majority of the people are illiterate, it would be extremely difficult for the modernizers to launch any modernization program because written communication of the government policy is necessary for the modernization process. Literate persons are also needed for the bureaucracy to assure the success of the modernization programs.

The main objective of King Chulalongkorn's educational reform was to extend modern education, started by King Rama IV, to the commoners, so that the literacy rate would be increased; and also to produce trained personnel needed for the implementation of the administrative reforms and for the new tasks that had to be performed in the process of modernization. While educational reform was being undertaken, the King made a temporary solution to the man-power shortage problem by hiring competent foreigners of various nationalities to work at different government agencies. The long-term solution involved the sending of a large number of young Thai to study aboard

on his scholarship, and by the founding of formal training institutes for human development. This was culminated in the establishment of Chulalongkorn University, the first institute of higher learning along western models in Thailand.

By now it will be obvious that the first phase of the modernization process in Thailand was initiated by the ruling elite consisted of the monarch and a small number of members of the Royal Family and noble families. Modernization was understood in term of westernization and used as a means for national survival in the face of the colonial threat of western powers. It was the king who had the direct role in the formation and implementation of the modernization programs. The transition of Thailand to modernity has thus not originated by a "revolution" from below but by the ruling elite, i.e. the monarch, who, with knowledge of the west and with insight and foresight, brought Thailand into the modern age without strong resistance that would impede the modernization process. The success of King Chulalongkorn could be attributed to his strong political leadership (i.e. his ability to consolidate political power), and to his persuasive skills which enable him to induce the noble elites and the population to the course of modernization. Not being subject to the colonial rule, he was free to sort out those

aspects of westernization that could most easily and profitably assimilate into Thai culture.

Many of King Chulalongkorn's modernization programs were carried on by King RamaVI (1910-1925) with emphasis placed on nationalism and national consolidation, and by King RamaVII (1925-1932) with more concentration on political development. Under these two kings education was the main base of all modernization programs. One result of modern education and western influences was the rise of a new middle class of commoners mainly employed in the civil service and the military. Despite the democratization of the bureaucracy, in the reign of King RamaVII most top positions in the bureaucracy and government were still reserved for members of the Royal Family. Ambitious members of the new middle class wanted a share of power. Even King RamaVII's modernization program for the democratization of the political structure, which aimed at gradual change rather than rapid change, could not satisfy this dissident bureaucratic elite. Thus while in 1932 the country was suffering from a world-wide economic recession, a group of young army officers and civilians launched a successful coup d'état that replaced the absolute monarchy by a constitutional monarchy. The change came as no surprise, because King Chalalongkorn, King RamaVI and RamaVII had already paved the way for the adoption of the western ideology

of democracy. Their work served as a seed that eventually reaped out at late date, and by denying the god-status to the person of the monarch, they implicitly removed the legitimate title of the absolute monarchy.

The overthrow of the traditional kingship system created a power vacuum which was eventually filled by the military and civil bureaucracy. With the replacement of absolute monarchy by bureaucratic-military government, the 1932 coup d'état was thus a move from autocracy to oligarchy. Due to a continuous struggle for power between various factions within the elite, democratic governments after the 1932 coup d'état do not last long. Every year or at most every few years a government falls because of internal splits or because of coup d'état. The failure of the democratic governments and the lack of "mature extrabureaucratic political institutions" has transformed Thailand into a "bureaucratic polity", where power is entirely in the hands of the military and civil bureaucratic elite.⁴

The new ruling elites after the 1932 coup were the product of western education and committed to the ideology of modernization. Therefore they assumed the role of modernizers and launched many modernization programs in education, health, and economic realms.

Modernization thus continued despite the long sequence of coups and counter-coups in Thai politics.⁵ This is possible, as observed by many social scientists, because in the midst of all this change of government there always exists a kind of political stability, "a paradoxical stable instability" a persistence of the same kind of leadership, much of the same law, and most of the same institutions. The coups are not socially revolutionary and continue to bring to power protégés or the associates of former leaders. New constitutions tend to repeat much of the old and are mostly aimed at legitimatizing the regimes in power.⁶

In the last three decades the modernization process was rather slow, mainly because the political elites were not secure in their positions of power. Consequently, when there was a resistance from a faction within the ruling elite, political leaders had to slow down the modernization process lest it should lead to great cleavage among the elites. This lack of political security was most apparent during the so-called "democratic period" (1973-1976), when the split of political parties collapsed the coalition government and also in non-democratic periods, when the breaks between factions and new coalition within the military were the main causes for frequent changes of government and coup d'état.

Major modernization programs were launched during the period of Field Marshall Sarit's military rule (1957-1961) under whose strong political leadership the modernization policy was pursued more energetically and fruitfully. Sarit was a charismatic, progressive military elite who could unite all factions within the military and civil service. His government consisted of military and civil bureaucrats. He also sought the service of the educated bureaucrats and designated them to be responsible for modernization programs.⁷

Perhaps the most important modernization program during his time lied in the formation of the national economic development plan. Until 1958 Thailand was without a central mechanism of a rationally co-ordinating system of policy measures that can bring out development. Comprehensive state planing to effect economic development is one of the most important concept of modernization ideology. The establishment of the National Economic Development Board (NEDB) in 1958, later changed to National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB), charged with central economic planning function, implies Thai government's decision to take a leading and decisive role in economic development. The rationale for such decision is founded on the assumption that in Thailand (and other Third World countries), only through the state's active

participation and intervention in stimulating economy can development be accelerated to achieve some measures of progress.

In co-operation with various ministries, the First Six-Year Plan (1961-1966), the Second-Five Year Plan (1967-1971), the Third Five-Year Plan (1972-1976) and the Fourth-Five Year Plan (1977-1981) were formulated by the NESDB and implemented by various government agencies. The Fifth-Five Year Plan was started in 1981 and will end in 1986.⁸ In all these Plans priority was given to economic development aiming at stimulating the economy of the country to bring about growth, productivity, investment, efficient utilization of man-power and the application of science and technology for industrialization, agricultural development and the exploitation of natural resources. To this end economic infrastructures are to be established to facilitate economic development and education be improved to produce sufficient man-power in response to the nation's new needs.

All modernization programs have been based on these Plans. The Plans put special emphasis on economic development mainly because the NESDB's civil bureaucrats who engineered them are with strong backgrounds in economics.⁹ The Plans were also drafted under the pressure of population growth. Besides, they seem to believe that only economic development could help solving the nation's problems.

With economic growth the levels of living of the people could be much improved, and thus Thai people would be able to enjoy a substantially high standard of living and comfort as people in the western modernized countries. This ideal to reduce the disparity between modernizing countries and developed nations by means of economic development is in line with the modern trend. The emphasis on economic development and other related areas such as education has become a contemporary modernization strategy for the developing countries throughout the world. It has also become a world-wide government policies and has been supported by world powers that give foreign aid and has been encouraged by the U.N. One should not forget the fact that in Thailand economic development program was first suggested by a group of experts from the World Bank which recommended the establishment of the NESDB to plan for economic development in Thailand.

The impact of The national Plans has been limited, mostly because The governments do not want to fix their policies for 5 years. Political leaders usually prefer ad hoc policies which give them more flexibility to response to new challenges and crises such as drought and to compete with rival groups. However, it would be wrong to conclude that the Plans have no role to play at all; or that the role of the NESDB is becoming weaker. To some extents the

Plans are still used as reference for government activities and the NESDB is involved in the preparation of various large scale projects for national development.

Economic development Thai governments have been stimulating for decades involves the modernization of rural economy. 80% of the Thai population is in rural areas. The modernization process since the 19th century has created an absence of equilibrium between urban and rural growth. There are prosperous urban areas and poor rural areas. To bridge the gap between these two sectors the governments since the time of Sarit have put efforts to raise the levels of living of rural people. The Third Plan set special priorities of reducing the increasing disparities between urban and rural areas. This shift reflected a growing awareness among NESDB planners of the increasing problems of regional disparities and poverty in rural areas. The Fourth Plan was preoccupied with the distributive aspect of growth, direct assistance to poor peasants. This was again emphasized in the Fifth Plan.

Rural development programs are used to bring modernization to the rural populace aiming at the reduction of hardship and poverty. According to a report prepared by the World Bank in 1977 in terms of absolute poverty the report estimates the number of people subsisting in poverty to have been as many as a million in 1976.

This include roughly one-third of the rural households in the north and south, and about two-third of the rural households in the north-east. According to this estimate, one in every five Thais was considered to be poor.¹⁰

Government's development policies in the past mainly emphasized the development of infrastructures such as roads, power supplies, irrigation; promotion of industry and investment; decrease of unemployment and income disparities; and modernization of agricultural development. Policies to construct infrastructures such as roads, power supplies in rural areas were implemented and proved partly successful, but policies to promote employment and more equal distribution of income appeared hard to implement and little has been achieved. The policy of agricultural development increased non-rice production, partly for export (e.g. maize, jute, cassava, and rubber) and partly for domestic consumption (e.g. cotton, coconut, sugarcane, fruits and vegetables). This government's policy has had the effect of bringing the market place to the peasants and changing the way of life of the majority of poor peasants from a relatively self-reliant system of production to a system of production for world and local market.

The effect of most government measures are difficult to assess, because of the complexity of social processes. The direct effects

of construction of roads or dams are the roads and dams themselves, but it is hard to say what the indirect effects are. Nevertheless generally speaking one has to admit that the government is successful enough to raise the level of living of the rural people (e.g. better sanitation, a soft water supply, health care etc.) and the economy is growing. The total number of people under the absolute line of poverty is decreasing. It is not true in Thailand that in the development process the poor people get poorer and the rich get richer. Overall capita incomes in the rural areas has been risen.

It is obvious that the government's rural development programs would have yielded much more benefits to the rural people had they been planned more realistically and implemented efficiently.

Development policies and plans usually reflect what the bureaucratic elites see as necessary and desirable for the national interest and for the rural people. Bureaucrats and politicians mostly presume that the common man is incapable to make real change and to achieve progress. It is the task of the elites to plan and initiate change. Thus it is considered unnecessary to spend much efforts on communication with the rural population in order to find out their needs. The information the bureaucratic elites in Bangkok get usually is filtered from rural areas through bureaucratic channels and is mostly incomplete, and biased towards the interest

of the bureaucratic and rural elites. Development policies and projects are therefore irrelevant to rural community and extremely difficult to be implemented with the co-operation of local people.

The government has pushed rural development programs in a hurry for security reason (here modernization is used as a means to fight against communism) without sufficient number of competent officials to work in the field. Many local officials do not yet understand the concept of modernization or development. They are used to governing the people than working with them letting the people tell them what should be done. Besides many of them are incompetent in their work. For example in one agricultural development project in northern provinces the officials' knowledge of farm and farm practice is so limited that they cannot help the peasants to improve their productivity properly. Most of officials have no education and training in farming, rural institutions and working with peasants. Consequently, one should not expect that their advice to be seriously considered by poor peasants.

Apart from the inefficiency of government officials working in rural areas the failure of the government's rural development programs to yield full benefits to the rural population is caused by the functional duplication and the inefficiency of the implementing agencies. In Thailand implementing agencies (i.e. departments

and ministries) are always involved in continuous struggle for power and budgets. Each has the freedom to exercise as it likes. Implementing agencies may obstruct or modify government policies, as responsible ministers and high-ranking officials lack time to supervise the implementing agencies. As a result there may be considerable difference between actions taken by implementing agencies and formal policies. Sometimes implementing agencies lack the capacity to execute government policies, sometimes they do not want to, and sometimes they implement their own policies because of the lack of control and policy guidelines from the top.

Duplicating and overlap of tasks among implementing agencies is the other cause for the weak impact of government's rural development programs on the rural people. At present there are many government agencies involved in rural development such as the Forest Department, the Land Reform Office, the Land Development, the Public Welfare Department, the Office of the Accelerated Rural Development, and the Department of Local Administration. Accordingly 10 agencies are involved in the construction of rural roads, and 6 agencies provide water supply to rural areas.

These agencies do not want to co-operate with one another, because the co-operation will lessen their budgets and powers to make decision, and delay their work. In theory the ministries, the Budget Bureau and the Cabinet have the authority to co-ordinate

activities of departments. However, these central agencies do not have the effective means of co-ordination, and in the field they have no personnel to assume a co-ordinating role. This problem is long recognized and many solutions have been tried without good result. The ad hoc committee consisting of representatives of various departments do not work. At present a central committee has been formed to co-ordinate all government agencies involving in rural development. The committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, assumes the co-ordinating role for large scale projects through the control over budget allocation. The other recent development is the set up of provincial planning offices to act as a co-ordinating agency and more money is channeled by the central government through them. They are, however, responsible for small scale projects.

All the factors we have discussed have hindered the progress of government's rural development programs from fulfilling the expectations set up in the national Plans.

Economic growth and the improvement of the levels of living in the rural areas is made possible not only by government agencies but also through the efforts of non-government agencies such as the noble elite, consisting of the King and members of the Royal Family, the sangha (the Buddhist monks) and non-government organizations.

A discussion on the roles of these agencies will help us understand the socio-economic change in the rural areas brought about by the modernization process.

The 1932 coup d'état did not abolish the institute of kingship. It only limited the latter's political power. The King becomes a constitutional monarch and loses his sovereign power, but still remain as the basic pillar of national virtue and integrity. Since his coronation in 1950 King Bhumipol or RamaIX has been playing a significant role in rural development bringing the modernization process to the poverty-stricken areas. Through the formation and implementation of the Royal Development Project he helps raise the income of the rural people and provide them with health care service and other infrastructure facilities. The Royal Development Project consists of many development programs and are implemented with the full co-operation from all government agencies concerned. Up to now there are 829 projects undertaken by royal initiatives. They include projects in fish culture and fish farming, water resource development, land development, reforestation, and co-operative community development. The King and members of the Royal Family usually visit various development programs in all regions of the country to supervise and to give moral support to government officials for their work. By this way the Royal Development Project renders assistance

to the government's efforts to raise the productivity and the levels of living of the rural people. His occasional visits to development sites help lessening the resistance of villagers to government's modernization programs that are diametrically opposed to their accustomed modes of life. In a society where the king is regarded by the large majority as Father and as the embodiment of the dharma (ideal order, righteousness), it is natural for the people to look up to him and seek his guidance.

The involvement of the Buddhist monks in rural development is possible because Thai Buddhism is characterized by this-worldliness orientation. Thai monks have been actively participating in secular activities particularly in field of higher education and community development for centuries. The wats (monasteries) usually serve as a center of community life, and the monks have assumed many social roles such as educator; sponser of co-operative work, personal and social counselor and ethical mentor. Since the last two decades social activities of the monks have included many "modern" activities such as literacy campaigns, modern and technical education, agricultural extension and community development. The participation of the monks in the modernization process involves the re-interpretation of the teaching of Buddhism in relevance to the modern world and the implementation of development projects either in co-operation

with government agencies or through working on their own initiatives. Encouraged by the Sangha, the governing body of monks, the two Buddhist universities for monks, Mahamongkut and Mahachulalongkorn, included "modern" subjects such as electricity, health education, social change and social institutions in their curriculum. Most significantly the two universities have been co-sponsoring since 1966 a training program in community development to produce Prapattana (monks for development) for working in the rural areas. Courses in this program are taught by both laymen and monks typically including the chief monks of selected development areas, educational, agriculture experts, public health officials. The curriculum is geared to deal with specific problems of public health, sanitation and hygiene, farming, construction, civil rights and duties, educational and recreational facilities, and problems of co-operation with villagers. So far several hundred monks have participated in this program. Most of the graduates return to their local communities and apply their knowledge to social realities of villagers. Others join development teams assigned to specific villages for a period of time. The result of these initiatives have been generally satisfactory. The success of the Prapattana Program to secure participation from the villagers is due mostly from the warm relationship between the villagers and the monks. While trying

to avoid contact with government officials, whom the villagers look as their "masters", who are embodied with power, greedily demanding taxes, fees, and bribes for which they feel there is no worthy return, the villagers like to come to the monks for counseling and in many cases, to have their disputes settled through the latter's mediation. They respect and trust the monks and regard their judgements as fair and impartial. The villagers' experience with government officials is generally one of frustration, red tape, abuse of power, and corruption. The abbot usually gains the confidence of the villagers and his influence is far greater than that of government officials. Where the abbot is actively engaged in village affairs, his position tends to carry most weight and his person wields the greatest motivational power. Being the most respected leader in the village, the abbot qualifies best as an effective intermediary between the government and the villagers. He thus becomes an indispensable agent in the implementation of the rural development programs.

At present in almost every part in rural areas monks are participating in the modernization process some by working with government officials to implement the government projects, and some by carrying out their own initiatives to meet the villagers needs. The modernizing activities of the monks include vocational training program

(e.g. electricity, mechanics, carpentry, cloth-weaving), public health and hygiene, nutrition, modern medicine, agriculture (e.g. the proper use of insecticide, crop planting), building bridges and roads, water reservoir digging, orphanage and building hospitals. The most recent activities of a small number of progressive monks are undertaken in co-operation with development agencies, governmental and private, are related to family planning and the establishment of Rice and Water Buffalo Banks in the Northeastern provinces. There is no doubt that in the present crisis of transition to modernity, when there is still a shortage of competent government officials and the villagers still have negative feelings towards government officials, the sangha is playing an important role in the modernizing Thai society. Even though the sangha unlikely will not effectively lead and sponsor on a longterm project which requires highly trained people, its participation in the modernization process is valuable help to overcome the villagers' resistance to change and to secure the latter's participation in the implementation of government's modernization programs.

Besides the royal elite and the sangha Thai government gets assistance in their efforts to modernize the rural population from non-governmental organization. At present the non-governmental organizations that are actively involved in rural development in Thailand

consists of nearly 200 organizations such as the Catholic Council of Thailand for Development, the Water Resource Development Foundation, and the NGOA. These organizations usually take the same role as government in rural development i.e. concentrating on the economic aspect of the modernization such as the improvement of health and sanitation, the development of water resources, the increase of agricultural productivity, and the establishment of rice banks and co-operative villages. But they are generally tend to carry out their work in a more efficient way, due to less bureaucracy and greater scope of innovation though on a much smaller scale.

Perhaps the most significant contribution of the non-government organizations is the implementation of one specific modernization ideal—the propagation of birth control as an essential element of population planning policy. The program was started in 1960s and the government instituted policies of voluntary family planning in 1970s when family planning has already spread rapidly mostly in urban areas. The Fourth and Fifth Plans only show the government's efforts to make family planning facilities available throughout the country as an effective means to reduce the population growth rate. Due to the co-operation of non-government organizations the population growth rate has been reduced from 2.1 per cent in 1977 to 1.5 per cent in 1981. The government has set a target of reducing the

population growth rate from 2 per cent per year at the beginning of the Fifth Plan (1981) to 1.5 per cent per annum at the end of the Plan (1986). If the target is achieved, the country will have appropriately 52.2 million people at the end of the Plan.¹¹

From the above discussion we may conclude that when the absolute monarchy was overthrown in 1932, vacuum which had not been filled by other political organizations was filled by the military and civil bureaucracy. The failure of the development of extra-bureaucratic political institutions has turned Thailand into a "bureaucratic polity". The Thai civil bureaucratic elite together with the military elites, have played a very significant role in Thai politics especially in regard to modernization of the country. Over the past decades, the most significant modernization program was the establishment of the NESDB to serve as the central planning agency for national development. These national plans engineered by the civil bureaucrats of the NESDB have been used as the base for the government's modernizing programs. An examination of the plans shows that these modernizing efforts have been concentrated on economic development to increase the gross national product and to reduce the problem of hardship and poverty in the rural areas.

Rural development projects have been used by Thai government to bring modernization to the 80% of the population which is in the

the rural areas. Despite the considerable amount of annual budgets allocated for rural development, the government has not yet fully achieved its goal, mostly because of the inefficiency of the implementing agencies to initiate development programs attractive to the villages and to have sufficient number of trained officials in the field. Nevertheless, apart from creating infrastructure facilities the government's modernizing efforts have yielded some benefits to the villagers. In most part of the rural areas there is general improvement of the quality of life particularly in regard to health, nutrition, education, transport and communication.¹² The economy is growing and the gross income is higher. In many areas the poor peasant can now perceives an improvement in the quality of his daily life and a reduction of poverty, unemployment and inequality or oppression. Part of the government's success is attributed to the work, in great extent, by the royale elite, and, in lesser extent, by the progressive Buddhist monks and by the non-government organizations.

What was lacking in the government's modernization policy over the last decades was the plan to develop the political structure of Thai society especially in regard to popular participation in the political decision-making process both at the national and the local levels. Neither was there any mention in the national plans

of the ultimate goal for the society and the people except the broad and general emphasis on improving the welfare and well-being of the people by having a better income distribution. The 1932 coup d'état was claimed to be in the name of democracy. But until now there have only been short periods with an elected parliament. Since 1932 Thailand has had 13 constitutions. New governments often abolish the previous constitutions and draft a new one. To legitimize their coups. In this process constitutionism became the new source of legitimation of authority of the ruling elites.

The deappreciation of political development in the national plans indicated the negative attitude of the military towards democracy. Since 1932 the military has gained a significant role in Thai politics and development policy. The powerful military elites preferred economic development to political development which, in their view, brought instability and greedy elected politicians. For them until the problem of poverty and hardship had been solved one should not plan to implement the modernization ideal of democracy. Economic growth will bring about a better income for the people which will make people more equal, and thus it will increase the likelihood of having social equality and political participation. Besides, the military, because of their training which emphasizes discipline, law and order and decisiveness, preferred decisiveness and absoluteness to a slow democratic process in solving national problems,

and thus for them the answer to political crisis which characterizes a newly established democratic system was to seize power to restore stability. Under this situation it would be impossible to expect a program of modernization which includes political participation to be adopted in the national development plans.

It is now realized by the military and civil bureaucrats that economic growth does not necessarily lead to social equality. This is evidenced by the existence of a big gap between the small, rich urban sector and the large, poor rural sector. This gap will still remain despite economic growth. It is because economic growth will not automatically lead to a more equal income distribution. On the contrary economic growth will make it more difficult to develop a participating political system. And as time progresses, the magnitude of the difficulty will only increase. Therefore the present government, strongly supported by the military, has tried to keep the elected parliament system at all cost, for it is the means by which people can participate in political decision-making through their representatives.

It is important to watch how long the government will be able to keep this parliament system. At present the powerful military elites express their support for democracy. They have issued a number of policy statements pledging this support such as order of

the Prime Minister's office No. 66/2523 (April 1980) and order No. 65/2525 (April 1982) They, however, understand democracy in terms of national stability and security. Mass participation in politics is regarded as desirable, but also dangerous. Being solely concerned with national stability and security which it is legitimate guardian, the military wants to promote political participation only within organizations ~~under~~ controllable as district councils and co-operatives. Activities of pressure groups which are accepted in the western democratic countries are to be regulated to ensure that they are constructive. This understanding of democracy may not be in line with western understanding. Developing countries like Thailand are much more concerned with the establishment of authority and powerful central government to create political stability and order than with democratic ideals such as freedom and popular participation. Without stability modernization programs cannot be launched to transform the nation. It has been found out that borrowing western style democracy may look impressive in form but in practice is unworkable and unsuitable to local needs and conditions.

After five decades of political instability and the traditional means of solving conflicts by coup d'état, there seems to be an understanding that a military coup is no longer a solution to the national problems. In the 1980's national problems are no longer purely

political issues such as leadership succession and constitutional provisions, the issues are essentially economic. Under this situation it is interesting to see whether the military will reduce itself to a professional group or readjust its role to cope with the new situation.

With regard to political development the policy of the present government under Prime Minister Prem Tinasulanond is "to promote people of all groups and all professions to be able to govern themselves, promote and support people at all levels and all professions to engage in political participation, stipulate ways to determine the Problems of the people, uphold the needs of the people when prescribing directions for policy implementation in order to respond to those needs" and to "promote establishment of all democratic movements by upholding the justifiable rights and interests of all groups".¹³ To this end the government is beginning to decentralize its power and to democratize at the grassroots level as a means to promote self-government and political participation in the rural areas. Part of the failure of the rural development programs undertaken by government agencies is caused by high centralization of decision-making and finances and by the lack of people participation. Development programs are usually initiated by the bureaucrats and most of the programs are not attractive to villagers. The implementing agencies

usually spend much of development budgets in institutional building more than in rural development. It is now realized that if the masses are not responsive to the government's development programs, it is unlikely that the modernizing efforts of the government will yield desirable results. Modernization means the mobilization of human and national resources to meet new needs. In the process of modernization the government must therefore mobilize the masses to participate in the process.

In 1975 the democratic government of Mr. Kukit Pramoj attempted, through the Deployment Fund Program, to mobilize the masses to participate in political decision-making process at the grassroots level by the formation of tambol (village) council consisted of elected members and charged with the initiation and the implementation of development projects. It was the first time that the grassroots were provided with the opportunity to decide by themselves what kind of development project they wanted to implement in their community. Opponents of the government criticized this program for its alleged inefficiency and local corruption. But most of those who studied the effect of the program believed that the benefits outweighed the disadvantages. The main weakness of the program was the poor preparation. But it was not the local level that was responsible for it. The government pushed the program in a great hurry for political gain and gave the local level insufficient time to prepare good projects.

The most interesting experience is perhaps the proven ability of local leaders to plan and implement useful projects suitable to local needs and conditions, despite the lack of preparation, insufficient administrative and technical support and lack of experience.

One of the effective means to implement the present government's policy of the promotion of political participation is to revive the tambol council and use it as the main institution for the promotion of participation in rural development and as the basic institution of democratic development. Through this council opportunities are given to the villagers to participate in the decision-making process at the grassroot level. They can express their needs and what they want to develop and what their priorities are. But in order for the tambol council to serve this end, the council must be given a legal status with the rights to carry out administrative affairs and to initiate and implement its own development projects. This effort will lay the foundation for political development to bring a successful democracy to the country. Only by means of the tambol council will opportunities be provided and capacities be enhanced for people to govern themselves.¹⁴

To sum up, the most significant contribution of the present government under Prime Minister Prem Tinasulanond to political development is its strong commitment to the representative system in which people can participate in the political process. Though the government

has not yet initiated a modernization strategy for political development, within the ruling elite there is a trend to change the strategy for modernization from the present one which emphasizes economic development to include political participation both at the national and local levels.¹⁵ If this is done, the government will have a broader base of support and economic growth be sustained in the long run. Political democratization cannot occur overnight, and it will take a long time for Thailand to have a successful participatory democracy.

Apart from political development what is badly needed in the modernization process in Thailand is cultural development. Modernization requires basic changes in attitudes and behaviours. Despite economic growth "modernity" cannot be assured without attitudinal and behavioural transformation of the people. Since the time of King Chulalongkorn in the 19th century modern education has been used to reform attitudes and behaviours of the Thai to be in line with modernization ideals. Some of these ideals are efficiency, rational in decision-making, punctuality, diligence, enterprise, preparedness for change, self-reliance, cooperativeness and a willingness to take a long view. Nearly all of these ideals are inherent in the teaching of Buddhism, the foundation of Thai culture, and thus as the country moves towards modernity it will not be too difficult for the Thai to adopt these values to guide their actions.

As mentioned earlier the 1932 coup d'état transformed Thailand into a bureaucratic polity and since that time the key role of national development has fallen into the bureaucracy. Despite the increasing influence of the new power group (the new middle class consisting of bankers, businessmen and industrialists) in Thai politics, the bureaucracy still continues to play a dominant role in the development of the nation it is therefore not exaggerated to say that in Thailand the success or failure of the modernization programs depends mostly on the efficiency of the bureaucracy.¹⁶

The conclusions made by many writers on Thai bureaucracy are that the system is corrupt and inefficient.¹⁷ Many bureaucratic reforms were made in the last decades, but with little results. A new administrative reform committee has been set up by the present government to study the ways and means for the improvement of the bureaucracy so that it would be more effectual and efficient. As a result training of the bureaucrats and re-organization of government services are advocated as remedies. These remedies, however, rarely work. Thousands of Thai bureaucrats have been trained in the capital and in other advanced countries, but the bureaucracy is still maligned and unable to cope with new responsibilities and new problems. In fact training abroad has become a major goal for Thai bureaucrats and appears to be an important factor for making a career. The training, in Thailand

and aboard, has little influence on the attitudes and behaviours of the bureaucrats who still retain their old unhealthy cultural values, despite their training in modern management. What is needed now is a national plan for cultural development to transform the old culture of the bureaucrats into a new one so that the bureaucrats will become more modern in their thinking and working.

The main cultural values shared by the bureaucrats are the low appreciation of technical and professional skills and the high value of status and power. The most necessary skill in the bureaucratic polity is the capacity to influence the budgetting process. This requires political skills and the ability to establish relations with powerful persons. People who have "good connections" with many factions can make a quick career. Technical and professional skills are of secondary importance in the bureaucracy. Thailand has many technicians and professionals in the government service. Large number of them have studied aboard in U.S.A., Europe and Australia, and many with Ph.D degrees. However, these qualities are poorly used in the Thai system. Researches and professional work are regarded of low importance, and usually the execution of research plans is hampered by lack of funds. Young professionals and technicians in government services can rarely make a career in their field of expertise. If they want to make a career, they have to become administrators. As

a result many of them left the government for the private sector, and thus the bureaucracy is deprived of the highest skilled people. The replacement of the traditional bureaucratic system by the new Position Classification (or PC) system to promote technical and professional skills in the bureaucracy does not solve the problem, because operated within this cultural framework, only the most socialised persons get the top positions.

The striving for status and power is another dominating cultural value in Thai bureaucracy. The use of power seems to be a major goal of the bureaucrats. Power implies possession of status. It can be used to acquire priviledges, benefits, and wealth which indirectly lead to an increase of status. Bureaucratic status implies authority and it sanctifies the use of power. Thus in carrying out their functions the bureaucrats tend to be much more concerned with activities that enhance status. It is not considered prestigious to work hard for abstract goals, for it does not enhance chances for promotion. To make friends, to create a pleasant atmosphere and to be always ready to carry out ad hoc tasks for the boss, are more important factors. Consequently the pace of work in lower and middle ranks is slow. The main concern is to keep peace with powerful persons. Hence lower ranking officials will not make decision on matters that are sensitive and disputable, even within their authority. In such

cases the problems can be sent to committees or to superiors for consideration, where perhaps no decision is taken either. In other cases the implementation of measures and policies can be delayed because of obstruction and conflicts. The result is that official rules are used to prevent or delay the execution and the top is overloaded with problems to be solved.

These two values are cultural barrier that has impeded the government apparatus to function effectively for modernization purposes. The Thai public sector has produced many goods and services to the people, but its efficiency is low and its organization is not suited for modern tasks. As the country moves forward to the goal, new responsibilities and new problems are arising, and surely these must be solved by new ideas and modern methods. But as it exists, the bureaucracy cannot be expected to speed the pace of modernization. Perhaps, a real change is possible only if it is initiated within the bureaucracy. At present many young liberal bureaucrats in various departments are dissatisfied with the present bureaucratic situation and have been striving for new policies that will replace the old outworn attitudes by the new modern values of efficiency and achievement orientation. But it would be erroneous to think that a significant change will happen in the near future. These indissident officials are lower rank and are still without power. In the future as they grow older they may adapt

themselves to the existing realities or to give up the post and work in the private companies. Or perhaps, it may happen that in the future these liberal officials will gradually will obtain a share in power and thus are able to transform the existing traditional way of thinking and working of the bureaucrats into modern thinking and behaviour that would be in line with the modern functions of government either in terms of efficiency or democracy.¹⁸

Equally important is the reform of the pernicious attitudes and beliefs of the masses of the people. Modernization cannot happen unless the masses are willing to change their attitudes and beliefs which are no longer relevant to new condition of life. The basic problem in Thailand is how to bring about rapid change in people's way of thinking and living, so that the pace of modernization is accelerated. The government has recently established the office of the National Culture Commission within the Ministry of Education as an agency to find the ways and means to preserve Thai cultural heritage and to rectify cultural values within the context of modernization.

It has been found out that the bulk of the population in the rural areas is receptive to change as evidenced by its willingness to use modern technology in agriculture, its co-operation with government agencies in family planning to reduce the large size of their families, and by its support of the co-operative and other modernization programs.¹⁹

The resistance of the masses is usually caused by the failure of government officials to communicate with them. Once government policies are made clear-cut and the people know what and how they are going to modernize, they will follow the government's guidelines. Of course, when it requires them to repudiate their cherished customs they will not put serious efforts to change their attitudes and practices. For example, it is extremely difficult to persuade the people to adopt the modern value of rationality in place of superstition (e.g. the casting of the horoscopes) which they rely on for the solution of problems. Similar difficulty is also found in regard to the repudiation of the unproductive use of surpluses-i.e. the customary way of saving in the form of hoardings or acquisition of gold ornaments which is diametrically opposite to the modern concept of saving through investment in government bonds, saving banks, stocks and shares. These attitudes and practices must be changed to cope with new situation and circumstances.

By now it is obvious that the western models of development which the ruling elite has been using since the 19th century to modernize the nation has brought drastic social and economic changes in Thai society. In this long process of westernization a higher degree of modernity has been achieved in economic realm and other related areas but in political and cultural development the degree is much lower.

After a long period of modernization along western pattern there is an increasing awareness that though it has provided Thais with greater choices and options modernization could not be operated successfully within Thai culture. Such development, originated in western culture, can only succeed if Thai traditional values are replaced by the western values. But this will eventually lead to the destruction of Thai cultural,

identity and the turning of Thai's into second class copies of western man. By adopting the western models Thailand has been chasing after the western development dream, which the West itself is questioning, and has been ~~p~~ facing many new massive problems of modernization similar to those in the West. For the West it may be that western societies are strong, resilient and wealthy enough to survive⁴¹ and even to reinvigorate despite these problems. But for Thailand she may not have the same capacity to survive.

Due to such realization a number of Thai bureaucratic elites have been looking for alternative ways to transform Thailand from existing conditions to modernity with less suffering of the negative effects of modernization witnessed in the West. This desire to turn away from the West did not arise from anti-western feeling. Rather, it came as a result of self-assessment and the desire for self-determination of the goal of the nation. The call for the new paradigms of development is justified on the ground that the difference between Thailand and the West demands differences in the process of modernization. It is erroneous to assume that Thailand will become a modern state by copying the West in its societal transformations. The West, too, after a period of relative confidence, is uncertain of the goal of modernization, and is itself struggling to give new directions to the modernization process. The West is therefore inadequate as a model. There is no doubt that Thailand can learn a great deal from the West, but not what Thailand's modernization process is to be. In the early stage of national development it seemed legitimate for Thailand to look to the West as a model to follow so that the nation would be able to transform itself to meet the requirements of modernity. But after a long period of westernization the time is now overdue for Thailand to turn away from the alien western models and to look for a new model of development that is attuned to the cultures and aspirations of her people and, at the same time, reflects

the global ideals that all of people can jointly approved. The inclusion of these ideals is necessary, because it universalizes the goals of modernization in Thailand, and thus enables the nation to be intergrated in the global community and to participate in the on-going process of modernization in the world. Whether this new paradigm could be found and implemented successfully or not is up to the Thai themselves.

NOTES

1. For further discussion, see Abbot L. Molfat, Mongkut The King of Siam (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1961)
2. For a discussion on the duties and functions of these ministries, see H.G.Q., Wales, Ancient Siamese Government and Administration (N.Y.: Paragon Book Reprint Corps, 1965)
3. This is a broad division. In fact there were many categories of people including the monks, the Brahmans, and the foreigners. See Wales, *ibid.*, Chap.111.

The prai or bonded commoners were not free because they were subject to the corvée system. Between 18 and 60 years of age they had to work for the government for certain period of time. During King Narai (1656-1688) the period for the royal corvée was 6 months. This was reduced to 4 months in the Dhonburi period and 3 months in the Bangkok period until it was abolished by King Chulalongkorn. See Wales, *ibid*, pp.53-56.
4. Fred Riggs, Thailand: The Modernization of a Bureaucratic Polity (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1967)
5. For example from 1932 to 1971 there were 6 coups d'état.
6. For a further discussion, see David A. Wilson, "The Military in Thai Politics", in John J. Johnson, (ed. The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962)
7. See Sombul Worapong, Chompol Sarit Thanarat (Field Marshall Sarit Thanarat; Bangkok: Kasem Sunpon Karnpim, 1964)
8. Each of the National Plans is distributed to various government agencies by the NESDB.

9. See Somsakdi Xuto et al. (ed.), Strategies and Measures for the Development of Thailand in the 1980s (Bangkok: Thep Ratana Printing Ltd., 1983)
10. World Bank, Thailand: Toward a Development Strategy of Full Participation, unpublished 1978, p.55.
11. See Suchart Prasithrathsin, "Thailand in the 1980s: Strategies and Measures for Social and Population Development" in Somsakdi Xuto (ed.), *opcit.* pp.7-74.
12. For there are many books on rural development in Thailand. They are such as Ingle, Marcus, Local Governmance and Rural Development in Thailand (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974j, Oey Astra Meesook, A Study of Disparities in Income and Social Services across Provinces in Thailand (Bangkok: Thammasat University Press, 1978). Anand Anatskoon, Accelerated Rural Development Program in Thailand (Bangkok: office of the Accelerated Rural Development, 1977).
13. For details, see L. Dhiravegin, "Political Parties and Political Development in Thailand", paper presented at the seminar "Strategies and Measures for Thailand's Development in the 1980s" held by TURA, 26-28 November 1982 at Pattaya. See also T. Nakata, "The Thai Political System in the 1980s: Significant issues, Problems and Prospects", in Somsakdi Xuto(ed),Thailand in the 1980s: Significant Issues, Problems and Prospects (Bangkok: TURA, 1981)
14. Prime Minister's Executive Order 66/1982, item 4.4 and 4.5.
15. For detailed discussion, see Thinapan Nakata "Thai Political and Administrative Development in the 1980s" in Somsakdi Xuto,(ed.), *ibid.*, pp.119-174.

16. This emergent business class is no longer a docile group subservient to bureaucratic and military elites. The continuity of parliamentary politics has enabled members of this class to build their power base and exert their influences and power through political parties.
17. See Riggs, Fred W., Thailand: The Modernization of a Bureaucratic Polity, op.cit.
18. For further discussion, see Likhit Dhiravegin, Political Attitudes of the Bureaucratic Elite and Modernization in Thailand (Bangkok: Thai Watana Panich Co., Ltd., 1973)
19. See Suchart Prasithrathsint, op.cit. pp.7-74.