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นาย ฟิลิป เอ. บาซโทลด์

FROM SUBJECTS OF A KING TO CITIZENS OF A NATION
: THE ATTEMPT OF FIELD MARSHAL P. PHIBULSONGKHRAM TO CHANGE THE MIND AND THE BEHAVIOR OF THE PEOPLE DURING HIS FIRST TERM (1938-1944)
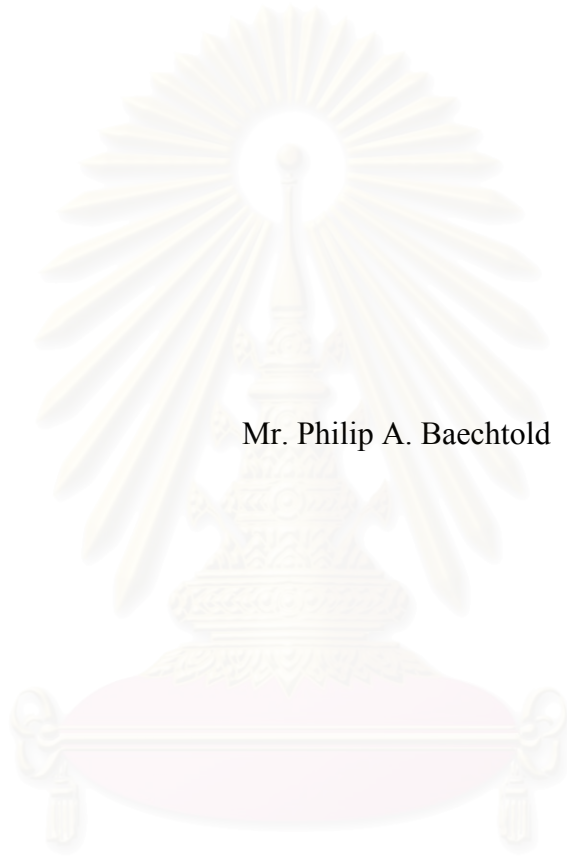
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นาย ฟิลิป เอ. บาชโทลด์: จากข้าแผ่นดินเป็นพลเมือง ความพยายามของจอมพล ป. พิบูลงครามใน การเปลี่ยนแปลงความคิดและพฤติกรรมของประชาชน ระหว่างการปกครองสมัยแรก พ.ศ. 2481 — 2487 (From Subjects of a King to Citizens of a Nation: The Attempt of Field Marshal P. Phibulsongkhram to Change the Mind and   Behavior of the People During His First Term (1938-1944)) อ. ที่ปรึกษา: อ. ดร. กุลดา เกษบุญชู มี้ด จำนวนหน้า 86 หน้า. ISBN 974-17-4475-7

วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้ ศึกษาเกี่ยวกับความตั้งใจของจอมพล ป. พิบูลสงครามที่จะเปลี่ยน ความคิดและ พฤติกรรมของประชาชนชาวไทย   เพื่อให้ทันสมัยขึ้น   ระหว่างสมัยแรกที่เข้ามาเป็นผู้นำประเทศในฐานะ นายกรัฐมนตรี   โดยพยายามเปลี่ยนระบบความเชื่อแบบโบราณมาเป็นความเชื่อในสิ่งที่มีเหตุผลสามารถ อธิบาย ในการเปลี่ยนจากระบอบสมบูรณาญาสิทธิราชย์เป็นชาตินิยม ประชาชนต้องผ่านการปรับเปลี่ยนจาก สถานะความเป็นข้าแผ่นดิน มาเป็น พลเมืองของประเทศ การศึกษาวิเคราะห์นี้ ชี้ให้เห็นถึงความพยายามเป็น อย่างยิ่งของจอมพล ป. ที่จะโน้มน้าวความคิดของประชาชนให้เลิกยึดติดในระบบสมบูรณาญาสิทธิราชย์ มา เป็นชาตินิยม ด้วยการเปลี่ยนจากความเป็นข้าแผ่นดิน มาเป็นพลเมืองของประเทศ จอมพล ป. ใช้วิกฤตให้ เป็นโอกาส เมื่อมีเหตุการณ์ที่ทำให้ระบบสมบูรณาญาสิทธิราชย์รวมถึงสถาบันอื่นที่เกี่ยวข้องอ่อนแอลง โดย ได้มีการยกสถานภาพของกองทัพในการปกป้องประเทศขึ้นมา ริเริ่มระบบ ผู้นำ มาทดแทนผู้นำแบบเดิม โดย ที่ผู้นำใหม่มาจากบุคคลธรรมดา และเสริมสร้าง วัฒนธรรม ประจำชาติขึ้นมาใหม่ โดยการกำหนดค่านิยม อย่างใหม่ในสังคม เพื่อป้องกันปัญหาการแยกดินแดนและจัดให้มีระบบประชาธิปไตย โดยมีรัฐธรรมนูญเป็น รากฐานใหม่ทางการเมือง และเสริมสร้างให้มีความเป็นชาตินิยม แทนระบบกษัตริย์

อย่างไรก็ตาม จอมพล ป. ไม่ได้เปลี่ยนแปลงสถานะความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างบุคคลต่อรัฐ แต่กลับ ส่งเสริมให้ประชาชนอยู่ใต้อำนาจรัฐแทน และไม่มีบทบาททางการเมือง และสิทธิมนุษยชน จอมพล ป. พยายามบังคับใช้กฎสังคมที่เคร่งครัด เพื่อให้เกิดความสามัคคี และความเป็นอันหนึ่งอันเดียวกัน และได้ พยายามที่จะให้บทบาทแก่ผู้เสียเปรียบในสังคมมีจุดยืนให้ชัดเจนขึ้น ตัวอย่างเช่น ความไม่เท่าเทียมกันที่แผ่ ขยายออกไปในวงกว้าง เช่น ธรรมเนียมที่สตรีจะต้องเป็นแต่ผู้ตาม ความไม่รู้หนังสือที่มีอยู่เป็นจำนวนมาก ผู้ ที่อ่อนแอและยากจน ตลอดจนการสร้างสังคมที่มีแบบแผน และวัตถุประสงค์ เป็นต้น ซึ่งล้วนแต่เป็นความ มุ่งมั่นที่จะสร้างสังคมแบบใหม่ขึ้นมา ความพยายามของจอมพล ป. พิบูลสงคราม เป็นตัวอย่างของคนในยุค นั้นที่จำต้องเลือกระหว่างสังคมเก่าที่ถูกปกครองแบบเดิม หรือ ประเทศในยุคใหม่ โดยมีจุดประสงค์ที่จะนำ ระบบการเมืองบนรากฐานของกฎหมาย เข้ามาแทนที่ระบบสมบูรณาญาสิทธิราชย์ ซึ่งจำเป็นต้องใช้ความ พยายามอย่างสูงและระยะเวลาต่อเนื่องยาวนาน

สาขาวิชา ไทยศึกษา   ลายมือชื่อนิสิต..

ปีการศึกษา 2548   ลายมือชื่ออาจารย์ที่ปรึกษา..

PHILIP A. BAECHTOLD: FROM SUBJECTS OF A KING TO CITIZENS OF A NATION: THE ATTEMPT OF FIELD MARSHAL P. PHIBULSONGKHRAM TO CHANGE THE MIND AND BEHAVIOR OF THE PEOPLE DURING HIS FIRST TERM (1938-1944). THESIS ADVISOR: KULLADA KESBOONCHOO MEAD, PH.D., PP. 86 ISBN: 974-17-4475-7.

Field Marshal P. Phibulsongkhram's attempt to change the mind and behavior of the Thai people during his first term is examined in this thesis in the context of modernity, which tended to displace primordial notions with rational ones. As absolutist states changed into nation-states, people underwent a metamorphosis from being subjects of a king to being citizens of a nation. This thesis shows that Phibul's underlying effort to shift the focus of the people's allegiance from being associated with the monarchy to being associated with the nation-state was partly commensurate with changing the people from being subjects of a king to being citizens of a nation.

Phibul used the weakness of the monarchy and the regional crisis of hegemony to displace the monarchy and its institutions. In their place, he elevated the military to guardian of the nation, invented the *Phunam* or leadership persona as new leadership figure, created *Watthanatham*, or purposeful culture, as a new edifice of national identity and progress defined from within society, positioned the nation as valuable new prize to defend with irredentism, and established democracy and the constitution as new sacred foundation of political legitimacy. This was commensurate with undoing the monarchy as focus of the people's allegiance and replacing it with the nation. However, Phibul did not attempt to change the relationship of the individual with the state. He upheld the primordial notion of the individual's subordination to the nation and did not implement political or civic rights. Instead he tried to impose strong social regimentation to achieve unity and uniformity. However, he did attempt to impel the individual to take a more active role in and seek a closer identification with society, and he addressed widespread inequalities, like the traditional subordination of women and the lot of the illiterate, weak and needy, to make society more uniform and purposeful, which was an effort that met the criteria of a more modern society.

While Phibul's attempt was typical of a man and a society at the threshold of modernity torn between primordial and modern notions, his attempt to displace the monarchy with a more rational foundation of political legitimacy was his central objective, which he pursued consistently, coherently, broadly and over the long-term.

Field of Studies	Thai Studies	Student's Signature:
Academic Year	2005	Advisor's Signature:

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ABBREVIATIONS

BE   Buddhist Era (equal to Common Era [CE] plus 543 years)

DFI   Department of Foreign Interests (Ministry of Political Affairs, Berne)

DODIS   Swiss Diplomatic Documents Online

GDP   Gross Domestic Product

HRH   His Royal Highness

HSH   Her Serene Highness

RF   Royal Family of Thailand

SFA   Swiss Federal Archives (Berne)

SLL   Swiss Legation London

SLW   Swiss Legation Washington

TLB   Royal Thai Legation, Berne

Tlg   Telegram

TMoFA   Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the attempt of Field Marshal P. Phibulsongkhram, or "Phibul", to change the mind and the behavior of the people during his first term (1938-1944). It asks whether and how his attempt contributed to the Thai people's long-term metamorphosis from being subjects of a king to being citizens of a nation.

The era of the 1930s and 1940s was a period during which Thailand experienced a fundamental shift in sovereignty from an absolute monarchy to the nation-state. However, this shift of 1932 neither entailed the immediate introduction of widespread political rights nor a broad or immediate change in the people's sociopolitical perceptions. It fell on later governments to seek ways to fulfill the shift of sovereignty. It is in this context that Phibul's attempt stands out as a consistent, coherent, broad and long-term effort to change the people's allegiance from being associated with the monarchy to being associated with the nation-state.

Phibul's attempt coincided with a number of occurrences that provided him with a unique opportunity. On the one hand, the era signified the end of the age of colonialism, which culminated in World War II and led Japan and the United States of America to join in the competition for regional hegemony in Asia. On the other hand, the end of absolutism in Thailand was rooted in a profound weakness of the monarchy, which allowed Phibul to attempt to displace and marginalize the monarchy to a previously – and even subsequently – unknown degree. As a result, Thailand, between 1933 and 1944 was laid bare of her customary royal veil, providing a unique window for the study of Thai society's hierarchical, cultural and sociopolitical systems divested of their usual monarchical embellishments – an opportunity this thesis sets out to capitalize on.

Thailand's demeanor in the context of the hegemonic and monarchial crises looks ambiguous on the face of things and mirrors the condition of a nation torn between tradition and modernity, between East and West and between absolutism and

democracy. But it is also this unique set of circumstances that put Thailand at the threshold of modernity and that gives rise to the question whether this situation provided a favorable context for a metamorphosis of people from being subjects of a king to being citizens of a nation.

To a degree the question implies that this thesis takes a positive look at Phibul's attempt and thus takes an approach that stands in contrast to rather negative perceptions of Phibul's legacy as a dictator. The positive aspect this thesis starts out from is that Phibul tried to change the nation's sociocultural fabric in a progressive way. Ortega y Gasset (1941) suggests "progress is only possible for one who is not linked today to what he was yesterday". In a sense this applied to Phibul, for as a commoner he was detached from any personal political heritage. He had all the reasons to seek a change in primordial sociopolitical perceptions and to try to establish a new foundation of political legitimacy. Given the traditional supreme position of the monarchy, such an attempt required resolve, daring, skill and distinct methods, and indeed, Phibul's endeavor was marked by an impressive array of changes. However, any esteem for the difficulty of Phibul's attempt does not extend to condoning the way in which he carried through his attempt.

The transformation of people from being subjects of a king to being citizens of a nation typically unfolds at the threshold of modernity. This transformation is not only a matter of a change of sovereignty. Rather, it entails a process that leads to a change in the people's perceptions, conduct and abilities. To define some of the complexities involved in this "metamorphosis", Chapter Two establishes a conceptual framework. It examines the shift that was brought on by modernity. This shift signified the displacement of primordial notions by reasoned ones and took place in the context of the displacement of old governments, which based their political legitimacy on dynastic lineage and primordial notions, by new governments that established their legitimacy on constitutional and utilitarian grounds. The metamorphosis further entailed a change in the people's consciousness, attitudes and abilities and a shift in their focus of allegiance, typically from a monarchy to the notion of a purposeful nation, which newly they were made to feel as part of and to the progress of which they were newly disposed to actively and consciously contribute. Chapter Two thus confirms that the people's transformation typically was

not a sudden one and it examines what components in the people's attitude, ability and behavior typically needed to change in the process.

Chapter Three turns to the sociopolitical situation in Thailand prior to the shift of sovereignty of 1932. It looks at the roots of Thai sociohierarchical kinship-relations and at how in pre-modern Thai society these notions were translated and used for sociopolitical purposes. In a second section, Chapter Three examines how the position of the individual changed under the absolute monarchy and how in particular King Chulalongkorn introduced modern notions, such as *Chat, Nathi* and *Siwilai*, while using them to strengthen the supremacy of the monarchy. And finally, the chapter turns to the reign of King Vajiravudh, who attempted to defend absolutism with a strong brand of royal nationalism, which joined the notions of nation, religion and king in a single entity to which the individual was subordinated.

Chapter Four examines the context of political change in 1932. It looks at the nationalistic and anti-colonial inspiration that radiated from Japan in the 1930s and at the coherent political alternative the *coup*-leaders of 1932 formulated on the basis of the nation-state. It asks what did and what didn't change with the fundamental shift of sovereignty in 1932. The chapter then focuses on Phibul's rise to power after the second *coup* of 1933 and on his early attempt, between 1933 and 1938, to marginalize and displace the monarchy and remove the royalist opposition. The chapter then sets out to analyze how Phibul consistently tried to establish new national edifices in place of the old monarchial ones and to fill the leadership gap left by the marginalization of the monarchy. In this context it looks at *Watthanatham*, the *Phunam* persona, the elevation of the military's role to national guardian and the redirection of the legitimizing force of the *Sangha* at the constitutional government.

Chapter Five turns to Phibul's critical attempt at changing the collective psyche. It examines how the elements of his attempt correlated with his fundamental political, military, economic and social objectives. It first examines how he tried to displace the monarchy, establish new foundations of political legitimacy and undo the legitimizing functions of age-old institutions. It studies his ideological project, his nation-building policy and in particular his new blend of nationalism as well as its central elements and edifices. It asks what kind of a state Phibul envisioned and what

kind of a role he foresaw for the people. The chapter then dissects Phibul's policies and measures to find whether and to what degree they were commensurate with changing people into citizens of a nation.

Chapter Six offers the conclusion and is followed by recommendations for further research.

The methodology applied in this thesis comprises a literature review, personal interviews, a research of archives and personal observations. The interviews were conducted with seven people who lived during the Phibul era and who remember Phibul and his policies. The archives researched are the Swiss Federal Archives in Berne. This thesis probably represents the first time these archives have been used in Thai Studies. The relevance of the Swiss archives is that one, from 1942 to 1945 Switzerland acted as Protecting Power for both Thai and Allied interests during the Pacific War, and two, from the 1930s to 1951 Switzerland hosted the Thai Royal Family, in particular King Ananda Mahidol and King Bumiphol Aduljadej, as well as their mother and sister, while they were absent from their kingdom for over a decade. Finally, the personal observations focus on the Democracy Monument built under Phibul's orders in 1939 and on his personal monument in Saraburi province erected by the Chatichai government in 1990.

Contrary to many previous works on Phibul, the contribution this thesis attempts to make is to find the motives for what Phibul did, rather than to simply ask what he did. In this aim, this thesis sets out to find the patterns of Phibul's ideas and behavior, which he developed as a leader and as an agent of sociocultural and political change. This thesis thus hopes to contribute towards a better understanding of a unique era in Thailand's political history under an unusual leader, Field Marshal P. Phibulsongkhram, to make Phibul more readable as a leader and to shine more light on the complex transformation of Thailand's sociopolitical system in the context of its transformation from an absolute monarchy to a nation-state and on the accompanying metamorphosis of people from being subjects of a king to being citizens of a nation.

CHAPTER II
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The fundamental question this study asks is whether Phibul's attempt to change the mind and the behavior of the people resulted in a shift that was commensurate with changing people from being subjects of a king to being citizens of a nation. The underlying premise is that such a shift was not only a matter of a *de jure* change of the state form as it occurred in 1932 and which signified, at least in the abstract, a shift of sovereignty from the monarchy to the people, but also a matter of a change in the collective psyche. This latter aspect involved a gradual process of change – a metamorphosis – in the people's consciousness, behavior and ability.

To substantiate this premise this chapter establishes a conceptual framework based on the works of Gellner (1987), Geertz (1963), Heilbroner (1967) and Berger (2004). Gellner is a philosopher and social anthropologist who specializes on theories of modernity, especially on the transformation of states and the role of nationalism. Geertz, as a cultural anthropologist and a leading proponent of symbolic anthropology, focuses on the role of thought and symbols in society. Heilbroner traces the transformation of society from its traditional form to modernity under the influence of capitalism, and Berger is focused on studies of the nation-state, geo-politics of development, nation building, historiography and theories of colonialism.

The metamorphosis of people from being subjects of a king to being citizens of a nation typically accompanied a nation's transformation under the influence of modernity, which was driven by capitalism, or the prospect of wider and more rapid economic growth. Because modernity emerged first in the West and triggered a global sociopolitical transformation between the 1850s and 1950s, the changes it inflicted on non-European nations was often associated with Westernization. Prior to these changes, traditional societies in Asia and elsewhere were basically self-sufficient economies, in which some form of hierarchical sociopolitical order was in place, dominated by an aristocratic class, which had a monopoly on education, social ranks, control of force, political rule, ideology and the extraction of economic surplus.

The majority of people lived in social bondage, subordinate to the aristocracy and steeped in primordial notions, which typically were interpreted to substantiate the existing sociopolitical and hierarchical order. The individual's relationship with state authority was defined in terms of duties and the absolute allegiance of the individual to a sovereign, whose legitimacy was based on dynastic and mythical authority.

With the emergence of modernity during the 19th and 20th centuries, dynastic authority was increasingly displaced by the modern political system of the nation-state. Accordingly authority, which had stood outside or above society and which had acted upon society "arbitrarily", moved to the center of society and became newly dependent on rational consent, or legitimacy sought on the basis of "reasoned sets of notions" (Geertz 1963: 120). Though leadership often ended up in the hands of an oligarchy, leaders newly invoked progressive, purposeful and rational notions to establish legitimacy (ib.). It is in this context that the individual's position in and relationship with the state changed from subject to citizen (Heilbroner 1953: 30, 31).

As nation-states developed into more dynamic societies under the influence of capitalism, which brought innovation and change, hereditary hierarchies and favoritism were displaced by functional, task-specific and temporal hierarchies and meritocracies. Individual mobility, ability and attitude became more important than narrow identities of ethnic belonging, and modern merit-based skills, which made people formally more equal, became the "real entrance-card to full citizenship … human dignity [and] social participation" (Gellner 1987: 9, 15, 16). However, because this transformation was accompanied by the break-up of traditions and social bonds, it created insecurity and fear, and gave rise to new ideologies and constructs of identity that redefined notions of belonging, allegiance and identity on the basis of more rational but imaginary notions.

A new ideology that overcame discontinuities and provided a new framework to which to attach purpose, sense and identity was nationalism (Geertz 1963: 109). Nationalism typically picked up on old notions, beliefs, values and mannerisms, or "primordial attachments", and internalized them as sociocultural notions. It also magnified them for political purposes to support a new sense of national unity and to provide a new basis of political legitimacy. Primordial or narrow ethnic identities

were displaced, to an extent by extortion, by constructs of "assumed kinship", which included created notions of a common land, a common language, and a common race, as well as by the construction of a common culture, which typically was institutionalized in form of national theaters, museums and universities. At the same time, nationalism endeavored to displace supreme primordial institutions with the nation as sovereign and "valuable new prize" to defend (Geertz 1963: 109-113, 120).

In redefining culture, court-and-capital cultures were initially elevated to national or "high" cultures, while popular cultures were marginalized and downgraded. Capitals became "exemplary centers" or microcosms of state and political order, which were considered as "civilized" and as superior to their backwards and apolitical national environments (Geertz 1973: 332; and 1963: 113).

To an extent, nation-states continued to behave like their predecessors, carrying forward old state apparatuses and mannerisms. But new leaders were inclined to impose new ideologies and to profile themselves as agents of modernity to substantiate their legitimacy. As a result, mixed signals emerged, on the one hand suggesting that governments were "escaping the past", while on the other suggesting they were "captives of the past". As primordial sentiments were reconciled with new sociopolitical notions and disentangled from their old legitimizing force, government policies and measures were often marked by frantic opportunism and confusion (Geertz 1973: 338-341).

In this transformation not only the state's but also the individual's identity underwent a split in its allegiance between old and new systems. Wide social and political rifts accompanied the rise of capitalism and gave rise to centralized absolute states, which "transcended and mediated rival social forces, providing a partial solution to the social and political crisis connected to the rise of capitalism" (Berger 2004: 7-10). Special complexities that permeated nationalism were "Eurocentricity" associated with modernization, and thus the perception of the "Westernization" of social and traditional forces, as well as the emergence of "aristocratic obligations" to uphold traditional key values, including hierarchy and authority, for the "common national good" (ib.). In other cases, fascist ideologies were invoked to link "the state

to the people in ways radically different from what had existed before" (E. B. Reynolds 2004: 100).

Nevertheless, the underlying tendency brought on by modernity was to move the nation forward into a more "self-conscious" dimension with a new sense of purpose and hope (Geertz 1963: 128). Governments began establishing new building blocks in an attempt at "nation-building" on the basis of more "reasoned sets of notions", such as constitutions, new government institutions and new doctrines that projected a new "image" by which the nation-state could be grasped, judged and guided (Geertz 1973: 340, 341). The emergence of the sovereign nation-state was a global trend. From the 1940s until the 1970s, the nation-state became the "primary, if not exclusive vehicle for achieving progress" (Berger 2004: 1). Yet, nation-building also entailed other notions than those of economic progress, in particular notions of egalitarianism and equality. While this signaled a new and more horizontal relationship between citizens, it also indicated new and equally more horizontal relationships between nations, as Berger (2004: 18) suggests:

> The global spread of nationalism involved the universalization, in theory, of the idea of the equality of all nations and the equality of all citizens within all nations. The idea of nationhood carried with it a commitment, at least in the abstract, to democracy, human rights and universal suffrage.

The transformation of sociopolitical systems and the metamorphosis of people from subjects to citizens was not only a matter of a *de jure* shift of sovereignty. Citizenship entailed new attitudes and abilities that allowed an individual to identify with, be part of and interact with a national rather than an ethnic community in a new way. It implied new shared life-styles, behavioral forms and values, in particular an individual engagement to recognize and contribute towards an overriding national community and towards the well-being of every member in that community. It also implied a shift of the individual's allegiance from a monarchy to a nation-state, which typically was a new construct based on reasoned rather than traditional notions, and it implied greater individual and national self-consciousness and a sense of more formal equality, dignity and social participation.

CHAPTER III

PRIMORDIAL KINSHIP-RELATIONS AND SUBORDINATION UNDER ABSOLUTISM

This chapter looks at how the individual's notion of being a subject of a king was ingrained in pre-modern and absolutist Thailand. The first section examines primordial kinship-relations and the second looks at how the people became direct subordinates to the king under the absolute monarchy.

3.1. Primordial Kinship-Relations

In traditional "Thai" society relations were fundamentally hierarchical. They built on kinship-relations both in the family and in society, which prescribed that in younger-elder (*Phi – Nong*) or superior-inferior (*Phu Yai – Phu Noi*) relations the younger or inferior had to treat the elder or superior with respect, whereby this respect entailed near absolute obedience (Akin 1969: 12, 92, 93, 121). These notions of social hierarchy were mirrored in religion, society and politics. Buddhism in particular contained notions that lent themselves to being interpreted in support of sociopolitical hierarchy or social inequality, most particularly the concept of *Bun* or merit, which Akin (1969: 179) puts into context as follows:

> The concept of *Bun*, which was used to justify a person obtaining high position, served to link status hierarchy with the doctrine of cause and effect in Buddhism. In itself, it supported the importance of hierarchy in the organization of the society. The stringent code of behavior regarding the ceremonial show of respect to be given to people of different ranks suggests that there existed a religious element in differential statuses. The position of the king as the representation of the Dharma, by which order in the state was kept, was … religious in nature.

Bun was thus used to support the king's supreme position, an approach that found expression in the *Trai Phum*, an interpretation of the Buddhist cosmology that was formulated for political reasons in the 14th century by King Lithai (F. E. Reynolds 1982: 10). The secular system that institutionalized hierarchy in pre-

modern Thai society was *Sakdina*. It stratified society by precisely ranking every member of society and it regulated etiquette for interaction among members of society accordingly. It provided hereditary and honorific titles for the elites and gave the nobility and princes the right to extract economic revenue, produce and labor from the lower classes, primarily on the basis of an underlying system of social bondage (Akin 1969: 23, 113, 114). *Sakdina* redistributed the king's authority to the aristocracy and left over 90 percent of the people locked into the servile ranks of *Phrai* and *That* serving the nobility and the princes (Nidhi 2005: 107). Under *Sakdina*, the rapport between ordinary people and the state was limited to *corvée* duties, to the people's obligation to render military service to the king and to paying taxes, mainly by delivering a proportion of their produce to the upper classes (ib.: 6). While *Sakdina* gave society a militaristic structure and left individuals with limited personal freedom or little room for social mobility (Akin 1969: 173, 174), it also left only residual revenues from taxation trickling up to the monarchy.

3.2. Direct Subordination to the King under Absolutism

The kingdom's sociopolitical structure changed after the conclusion of the Bowring Treaty, which Siam signed with Great Britain in 1855 at King Mongkut's (1851-1867) behest and which interlinked Siam more closely with the British dominated world economy. While the treaty stimulated growth, it also represented a "substantial surrender of sovereignty" for Siam because it set low limits for taxes on trade and forbade any new taxes, thus curtailing the Siamese state's ability to increase revenue other than by growth (Ingram 1955: 34, 177, FN 7). The provisions also made imports cheap, which turned Siam into an importer and consumer of manufactured goods, leaving her with little incentive to develop her own industries. This in effect locked Siam's agrarian population into a subsistence economy, while allowing primarily the state, the elite and merchants to benefit from modernization. It also allowed Britain to fulfill her economic goals in Siam "without the administrative cost of running a colony" (Kullada 2000: 306, 307) and 80 to 90 percent of Siam's external trade became dominated by Britain (Somsakdi 1959: 249).

However, the economic boost provided an essential stimulus for King Chulalongkorn (1867-1910) to seek sociopolitical and economic reform – not least with British support. Along with the centralization of the state and with administrative reform, Chulalongkorn ended social bondage, releasing 90 percent of the population into farming. Combined with the termination of *corvée* duty, this allowed the majority to become more effective producers of Siam's new primary export commodity, rice. In social terms the shift turned people from being slaves and subordinates of the aristocracy into being direct subjects of the king. The new sense of direct subordination to the monarchy was in effect formalized by an individual head tax payable directly to the absolute government.

To create a new sense of unity, Chulalongkorn began to invoke the modern notion of nation, or *Chat*, to define the kingdom, which newly was also becoming a territorial state. However, *Chat* had a connotation different from the western meaning of nation. Phatsakorawong, Chulalongkorn's secretary, defined *Chat* as an organization of people loyal to the king, whereby the members conveyed full powers on the king by following his every advice and by renouncing their private and public natural rights (Murashima 1986: 19). *Chat* thus signified a group of people linked through lineage, caste or ethnicity, who distinguished themselves from others on the basis of their loyalty and allegiance to their king (ib.: 1-42). Hence *Chat* did not conflict with the idea that the individual owed the king – and the nation – loyalty and sacrifice (Kullada 2004: 85-90). Instead, *Chat* reaffirmed the notion that people were subjects of a king. In 1903, Phraya Wisudhisak, in his publication *Nathi Phonlamuang*, or "The Duty of Citizens", defined the individual's relationship with the state on the basis of the primordial hierarchical relations, but he cast this subordination in the modern and utilitarian notion of duty, which was owed by each individual to the state, to the nation and hence to the king (Nakharin 1986: 76).

There were further notions that supported the supremacy of the monarchy. First and most importantly there was a symbiosis between the monarchy and Buddhism, in that Buddhism conferred legitimacy on the monarchy and confirmed its sacredness and supremacy, while the monarchy provided for social stability and protected Buddhism (Somboon 1993: 27). Chulalongkorn undertook to reinforce this notion with a revival of rituals in the 1890s and by reforming the *Sangha*, the

Buddhist institution. The *Sangha Act* of 1902 strengthened the king's supreme position as protector of religion. The king increased the influence of the smaller *Thammayutika* order, or *Thammayutikanikai*, which was closely associated with the crown, but which comprised only about 3 percent of the Buddhist brotherhood (Ishii 1986: 106), thus curtailing the influence of the *Mahanikai*, which comprised the remaining 97 percent of monks (Murashima 1986: 22). The appointment of supreme patriarchs from the *Thammayutikanikai* and the division of the national *Sangha* administration into two parallel lines – one for each order – signified the predominance given to the *Thammayutikanikai*.

Furthermore, the king expanded the armed forces, both as a defense against threats from the outside and as a protecting force for the king against political challenges. However, because of the overwhelming power of colonial forces, indicated by the continual encroachment by foreign forces on Siam's perceived regional sphere of influence, the military's role as protector of the nation's safety and independence became more linked to defending the kingdom's moral, religious and traditional values and institutions, rather than its territory.

Prince Damrong Rajanuphap wrote a royal historiography, which cast the monarchy in the role of prime defender of the kingdom's long struggle for unity, independence and progress. Hand in hand with the suggestion of a consistent role of the monarchy that stretched from Sukhothai to Bangkok went the suggestion of the capital's role as the kingdom's "exemplary center", which was accentuated by the imposition of the capital's language as national language for the sake of unity and centralization. Court-and-capital culture – or the traditional "high" culture (Nidhi 1982: 100-106) – was increasingly exposed to foreign influence. The term *Siwilai*, or civilized, became a measure for progress based in essence on Western customs. Bangkok was seen as *Siwilai* or "enlightened space", whereas the peasantry continued to be perceived as uneducated, backward, superstitious and ignorant, and thus as less *Siwilai* (Thongchai 2000: 535-537). To represent Siam in a "civilized" way and to portray the kingdom as modern, the king posed in diverse Western attire.

Meanwhile, the majority of the population remained "steeped in traditional religious modes of thought" (Somboon 1993: 3, 61). Though modern notions were

added into the wider curriculum, broader education remained disseminated through religious channels and infused with traditional and religious notions. Even among the urban working-class, traditional master-servant relations persisted, as was indicated during the tramway strike of 1922-23, when both workers and the official labor paper, *Khana Kammakon*, conceded that worker's rights were subordinate to the duties the workers had vis-à-vis the master class (Kanchana 1988: 49-53).

In economic terms the majority of people remained at subsistence level and did not enjoy any notable degree of development (Ingram 1955). From the late 19th century until World War II the development of Siam's economy fell behind other Southeast Asian nations. Neither did per capita income nor agriculture's share of GDP change between 1913 and 1938, unlike in most other Southeast Asian nations where industrialization began to take in a growing part of the population. Even as late as 1950, only 2.2 percent of Thais worked in industry compared to 10 to 12 percent in Burma, Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaya, and Siam's growth of government revenue per capita fell behind most other nations in the region. Yet, in absolute terms the revenues of the monarchy and the state grew with the near ten-fold increase in foreign trade and the doubling of the population between 1850 and 1930. However, over 50 percent of state revenues went for defense and the crown, while only 10 percent was invested in capital expenditure (ib.: 177, 193).

The major structural challenge to the absolute monarchy emerged from the growing number of commoners the bureaucracy began to absorb and that gradually formed into a new "bureaucratic bourgeoisie" (Kullada 2004). Although the king tried to give priority to educating members of the upper classes, their apathy forced him to open up more opportunities to commoners, and they began to fill the lower and middle echelons of the civil and military bureaucracy (ib.: 85-90). Educational reform began to put more emphasis on modern and rational thought and to move the individual from an ethical to a utilitarian world, as evidenced by new educational material as the *Thammachariya* (ib.). The bureaucratic bourgeoisie increasingly associated its interests with the bureaucratic institutions rather than with the monarchy (ib.: 84, 85). From this new group calls for more political participation and treatment based on merit rather than favor began to be heard, which tended to undermine the strength and the structure of the absolute monarchy (ib.: 180).

Two years after King Vajiravudh (1910-1925) ascended the throne, the Revolt of 1912 exposed a rift between the absolute monarchy and young officers and brought out calls for more equality and for an end to people being treated like "servants", "slaves" and "animals" (Kullada 2004: 84, 85). Although after the revolt only 91 conspirators were put on trial, it was estimated that support reached the thousands (ib.: 156-158). Nevertheless, the revolt failed for lack of a coherent political alternative and because the rebels feared they would not gain sufficient support from among the public (ib.: 154-178). This pointed to continuing widespread loyalty to the monarchy. Vajiravudh despised the bureaucratic bourgeoisie for the challenge it posed to his régime and he began a concerted effort to defend absolutism with nationalism, as Kullada (2004: 144) succinctly sums it up:

> King Vajiravudh established a nationalist organization, which was an attempt at an end-run around the bureaucracy and its ideology of modernity and meritocracy, justifying royal pre-eminence in terms of the nation.

The king's ideology was intended to revive social coherence on the basis of loyalty to the king. For this purpose, the king fused nation, religion and king into a triad that became a single entity with the king as "the political embodiment of a nation of Buddhists, and the protector of both nation and religion" (Baker/Pasuk 2005: 107). The argument went that as the nation was the body and the king the brain, people were obliged to subordinate their interests and their lives to the king who was the head of the nation. In an attempt to bypass opposition among the middle and lower ranks of the bureaucracy and to disseminate his ideology to the wider population, Vajiravudh founded the Wild Tiger Corps and wrote plays, books and articles, which spoke of the kingdom's need to defend itself against foreign enemies. However, with the stabilization of hegemony in the region foreign threats had become imaginary. The only real threats were posed by the resident Chinese, who tended to be stimulated by the emerging nationalist movement in China, and by the bureaucratic bourgeoisie.

The bureaucratic bourgeoisie increasingly felt alienated and marginalized by the king's ideology and came to see the absolutist government as an obstacle to progress that needed to be removed. In tandem, voices emerged in the press and in intellectual circles that called for society to newly embrace values associated with merit, equality and gender rights (Baker/Pasuk 2005: 107-110). Meanwhile business

circles called for an end to the unequal foreign treaties and for the protection of local industries. Though most treaties were adjusted or eliminated in the 1920s, Britain managed to secure a ten-year extension of her privileges (Ingram 1955: 180, 181). However, the worldwide depression took its toll on the state's ability to finance its bureaucracy and as the aristocracy fiercely defended its prerogatives the cuts in finances and personnel began to take a heavy toll on the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, setting the stage for a new wave of revolt rooted in the dissatisfaction of and the discrimination against the growing bureaucratic middle-class.

3.3. Conclusion

This chapter examined primordial kinship-relations and the ideologies that ingrained the individual's notion of being a subject of a king in pre-modern and absolutist Thailand. Hierarchical relations were rooted in the notion of primordial superior-inferior relations, which entailed notions of respect and obedience. These principles were invoked for political motives in Lithai's *Trai Phum* and in the *Sakdina* system, which subordinated the masses to the aristocracy. Chulalongkorn centralized the state and ended social bondage to turn people into better producers for the export economy. However, he upheld the primordial role of the monarchy as supreme authority. When he introduced the modern notions of *Chat*, *Nathi* and *Siwilai*, he defined them so as to reaffirm the individual's subordination to the absolutist state. Meanwhile, a new class of bureaucrats began to call for sociopolitical changes, however, Vajiravudh defended absolutism with a distinct form of royal nationalism, which fused the monarchy in a single entity with religion and nation and which thus reaffirmed the individual's subordination to the monarchy. However, growing dissent and dissatisfaction led to increasing criticism from bureaucratic, economic and intellectual circles and to calls for the absolute monarchy to be removed.

CHAPTER IV
1932 SHIFT OF SOVEREIGNTY

This chapter examines to what consequences the shift of sovereignty that occurred in 1932 led and why, especially at how the context for the individual's relationship with the state and society changed and at how the context for the nation's relationship with other nations changed. The first section looks at the ideological and political background to change and in particular at the specific role Japan played in supporting this change. It looks at who was involved in forming a coherent alternative to absolutism and it asks what happened to wide sociopolitical perceptions as a first conservative constitutional government upheld the monarchy as symbolic source of authority, leaving traditional notions of subordination to the king unbroken. The second section examines how Phibul, as most powerful man under Phahon, between 1933 and 1938 set out to strengthen the shift of sovereignty by building up alternative bases of power and legitimacy in displacement of the traditional roles and functions of the monarchy, in a prelude to his attempt to change the mind and the behavior of the people during his first term from 1938 to 1944.

4.1. Ideological and Political Background to Change

4.1.1. Ideological Inspiration from Japan

While much attention has focused on the political inspiration a group of young bureaucrats imbibed during their stay in Europe in the 1920s, the external stimulus for change that emanated from Japan has generally been given less attention. Following her victory over Russia in 1904/05, Japan had gradually turned towards securing a sphere of co-prosperity and co-existence in Asia. In support of this quest, Japan formulated an ideological premise that called for an end to Western colonial domination in the region, a premise that struck a chord with the young Thai radicals. Meanwhile Siam, as the only country spared colonial rule in the region, caught

Japan's notice as an alternative source for raw materials and as a potential forward strategic base. When Japan posted Minister Yatabe Yasukichi to Bangkok in 1928, his specific mandate was to find ways of luring Siam away from Western influence and to this end he began supporting the Thai nationalist movement.

According to cryptic notes found by Flood (1967: 24) the members of the *People's Party* may have been in contact with the Japanese legation in Bangkok prior to the *coup* of 1932. Apart from the ideological premise, Japan's military power and technology offered tempting prospects to those who hoped to gather the support of the armed forces and displace the old régime. Phahon Payuhasena was in the most privileged position among the *Promoters* to foster better relations with Japan, as he had spent two years in Japan between 1919 and 1921 (Charnvit 1974: 51, 52; FN 52). While specific Japanese assistance did not materialize in the prelude to the political change of 1932, Japan certainly stimulated the group of Thai bureaucrats that was seeking change. In particular some of the more radical *Promoters*, to which Phibul belonged, leaned towards Japan for ideological and political inspiration, although generally their pro-Japanese proclivity remained subordinate to the political thought the group had been imbued with during their stay in Europe.

4.1.2. Formulation of a Coherent Alternative

In the 1920s a group of bureaucrats who named themselves the *Promoters* of the *People's Party* developed a plan to overthrow the absolute monarchy. Pridi Banomyong was decisive in formulating a coherent political alternative to replace absolutism with a nation-state and which called for a shift of sovereignty from the monarchy to the people. He also formulated an economic plan, which was intended to address the plight of the majority. His ideological intent was to implement a "different relationship between citizen and state to that prevailing under the absolute monarchy" (Pridi 2000: x). He summed up his strategy in *Six Principles*, which prioritized national and economic interests and security, but also provided for the development of equality, education, liberty and personal freedom. However, he basically did not believe that the people were ready for political rights and hence he

first foresaw to replace the old elites with a new ruling oligarchy from within the *People's Party*, while people's power would have to wait.

4.1.3. Overthrow of the Absolute Monarchy

To end the absolute monarchy in 1932, the ideologues led by Pridi teamed up, on the one hand, with the "Four Tiger Soldiers", *Sii Thahan Suea*, Phahon Payuhasena, Song Suradej, Ridthi Akaney and Prasart Pitthiyayuth, who all had their eyes on the illustrious positions held by the princes and nobles, and on the other, with a conservative group of civilian bureaucrats, who could ensure the continued functioning of the state apparatus. In a military-led rebellion they overthrew the old régime and instantly condemned it for treating people "as slaves and as animals" and for "not considering [the people] as human beings" (Pridi 2000: 70-72; People's Party Announcement No. 1: 24 June 1932). They further proclaimed, "our country belongs to the people, not to the king" (ib.: 71), and the first constitution of 27 June 1932 stated in Clause 1 "the supreme power in the country belongs to the people" (ib.: 73). *De jure* the *coup* therefore signified a fundamental shift of sovereignty.

However, in political terms the *coup*-group immediately moved to secure political control in its own hands. To quell opposition, the constitution forbade the formation of political parties (Charnvit 1974: 27). A transitory clause postponed political control by election by ten years and enshrined the *People's Party* as "guardian of democracy" (Murashima 1991: 9; Minutes of the National Assembly: 27 November 1932). Clause 10 of the first constitution specified that the military was the protective force of the seat of the *People's Party*, stating:

> The People's Party, which has a military force protecting the capital, has the power to appoint [all] seventy persons as provisional members of the Assembly (Pridi 2000: 74).

While the overthrow of the old régime shifted the locus of political power and secured legal, political and military instruments in the hands of the bureaucracy, it did not instate broad political rights and broad sociopolitical perceptions did not immediately change. The new government headed by Manopakorn Nithithada ("Mano"), who as senior bureaucrat was made prime minister to ensure the continuing

functioning of the state's key institutions, moved to avert a crisis of legitimacy by reinstating and confirming the king in his supreme figurehead position. In an important departure from the strong rhetoric of 24 June, the *People's Party* apologized to the king and allowed him to get involved in rewriting the constitution, closing some of the ambiguities that had cast doubt over the king's spiritual supremacy in the state. The king's role was again enshrined "as the symbolic embodiment of the national tradition of the state", which included his supremacy over and symbiosis with the Buddhist institution (F. E. Reynolds 1973: 49). Accordingly, it was still the king who symbolically conferred legitimacy on the government.

The Mano government was not inclined to change this perception. In September 1932 it took a firm and oppressive stance against a petition by a group of monks who called for changes to the *Sangha*'s social hierarchy and had many of them disrobed (Ishii 1986: 101). The first constitutional government thereby signaled concord between the ecclesiastical and secular authorities along traditional lines and neither cast the *Sangha*'s absolutist structure, nor the strong role of the royally favored *Thammayutika* order, nor the legitimacy the *Sangha* continued to confer on the monarchy in doubt.

The governing faction's conservative leaning raised fears that Mano might hand power back to the king (Ray 1972: 70, 71). Mano and Song appeared unable to cast off their old loyalties (Flood 1967: 744) and invited "high-ranking officials from the absolute monarchy … to join the national assembly and put [them] in charge of the different ministries, which … retained most of their old staff" (Barmé 1993: 69). The growing rift between conservatives and radicals became apparent in cabinet debates, which centered on the question whether the constitution considered the king "under the law" (*Tai Kotmai*) or "by the law" (*Tam Kotmai*) (Nakharin 1986: 59). Phibul and Phahon were passionately opposed to any notions that suggested the monarchy had extra-constitutional privileges, unwritten and traditional powers or divine and mystical qualities. Tension rose as personal rifts added to political ones and finally a debate over Pridi's utopian economic plan led to a crisis. In mid 1933 Mano decided to reshuffle the cabinet. However, the radical faction got wind of the impending reshuffle. Fearing that they might be excluded from a next government, the radicals decided to attempt a preemptive second *coup*.

4.2. Rise of Radical Military-Based Rule

The first government's time had been short and occupied with running the state and avoiding a legitimacy crisis. The king's role as symbolic head of state and source of legitimacy had been upheld and traditional institutions had continued to confer legitimacy on the monarchy. Despite the shift of sovereignty the people's old sociopolitical perceptions had not been addressed. The radicals realized that royalist feelings could be brought into play against them. The Phahon-Phibul faction therefore began to wage a resolute and consistent battle against royalists, the monarchy and old perceptions, in an attempt to build a new base of power and legitimacy and to prevent a return of the old régime.

4.2.1. Neutralizing the Royalists and the Monarchy

Four days before the anticipated cabinet reshuffle, Phahon and Phibul decided to move against the conservative faction. On 20 June 1933 they staged a second *coup* and removed Mano and Song from power. Prior to this *coup*, Phibul and Phahon had sought support from Yatabe Yasukichi, Japan's minister to Bangkok (Flood 1967: 48-52). Yatabe did not give them any assistance for fear of a Western backlash, but after their successful *coup* Phahon and Phibul met Yatabe again and pledged that from now on they would treat Japan "as the equal of Britain" (ib.: 59-64). This represented both a principle shift towards a more balanced foreign policy and an attempt to reposition Thailand in the international order as a more independent nation.

However, the Phahon-Phibul government's position was by no means secure. A few months after the second *coup*, Prince Boworadej staged an armed rebellion against the radical régime, calling for a more democratic government and a stronger political role for the king (Barmé 1993: 85). Phibul crushed the rebellion with military power, denouncing the rebellion as a move against the constitution. Just over a year later Prajadhiphok abdicated, further challenging the government by publicly accusing the radicals of being "autocratic" and averse to "the voice of the people" (Wyatt 1984: 249; Batson 1977: 102). The government swiftly replaced Prajadhiphok by a nine year-old, King Ananda Mahidol (1935-1946), who was living abroad with

his family, while in Bangkok regents pliant to the military were installed (Kobkua 1995: 84). However, despite the king's physical absence and lack of influence, warm sentiments for the king prevailed among the population. When in 1938 Ananda Mahidol – fourteen years old by then – returned for his first visit to Thailand as monarch, he was cheered by the public, as an eyewitness (Dr. Sribhumi Sukhanetr, interviewed for this thesis on 16 August 2005) vividly remembers:

> People came out to greet him… That means that people still loved the king, even though he was away. Especially the grown up people; for the younger people, they were partly under the influence of the new nationalist policy.

The king's popularity disturbed Phibul who by then was newly appointed prime minister (Thak 1979: 310). Shortly after the king's departure Phibul cracked down brutally on the remaining royalist faction. His austerity unfurled in the wake of two attempts on his life, allegedly from royalist quarters (Murashima 1991: 53, 54). He ordered Police General Adul Aduldejarat to arrest 51 soldiers and assembly members connected to Song's faction on charges of a conspiracy. In a trial that was clearly political, as no firm evidence against the accused was presented (ib.), a special court headed by Colonel Phrom Yothi sentenced 18 men to death, exiled several members of the royal family and sent the rest off to prison (Ray 1972: 57).

But Phibul's effort was not limited to reducing the power and visibility of the monarchy and royalists only. Rather, he set out to strengthen the military as his own power base in an effort to displace the monarchy's perceived role as guardian of the nation and he moved to take control of the assembly and establish his legitimacy also in foreign relations.

4.2.2. Building up Military Power

Phibul was a man with full military training and background who had advanced on account of his personal discipline and skills – qualities that soon became characteristic of the behavior he attempted to impose on the entire population in his effort to move the nation forwards. Among the original *Promoters* Phibul represented the military, meaning the only institution that had direct command over physical

power in the state. Wilson (1962: 258) writes about how Phibul, having removed his royalist challengers, went on to secure his influence in the army:

> During his tenure the budget of the defense establishment doubled. He also undertook a campaign of public relations, which emphasized the indispensability of the military to the nation. He made speeches comparing his administration favorably with the royal administration and saying that a strong military was necessary to prevent other countries from oppressing the kingdom. By his activity he constructed a solid constituency in the army.

Praphan Hutasingh (the nephew of Manopakorn Nithithada, interviewed for this thesis on 22 July 2005) agrees that the military served Phibul as power base, but he disputes the idea the that military was Phibul's constituency:

> No, not really; the military was something Phibul had control of, based on the benefit of discipline. The military was the source of state power. It was the power of the gun. Phibul used it to protect himself. The function of the military as a defense against the outside was the smaller part of its function; the main purpose was to defend the position of the ruling party internally.

Using the military as protection against political challenges conformed to the way Chulalongkorn had used the forces, however, Phibul denied that the military build-up was for the benefit of any particular group. Instead he began to invoke patriotic and nationalist feelings to generate support for his quest:

> All patriotic Thais should be happy in the knowledge of their secured safety. The Army, Navy, and Air force are all fighting forces of the nation because they represent the power of the people of Siam. They do not in any way belong to any individual… People should never believe in sinful rumors that the modernization of the country's fighting forces are [sic] for the Party's purposes or for a particular system of administration (Kobkua 1995: 89, 90; FN 15; Phibul's Radio address: 24 June 1934).

Instead he gave credit to the Phahon government for modernizing the forces and hence used the effort to lend additional legitimacy to the new government, thereby implying that the government led by the Phahon-Phibul faction was finally doing what the absolutist government had long neglected. At the same time he emphasized the military's vital role in protecting the country, thereby lending support to the notion that the military was the new guardian of the nation. He said:

> … within a period of only two years, the Constitutional Government has been able to affect a change in respect to the fighting forces. Now we possess up-to-date weapons in the Army, such as fighting tanks, anti-aircraft guns, and light and

heavy types of machine-guns in large numbers. We have modern planes properly equipped with aerial machine-guns; steps are being taken to increase the defensive strength of the Navy as well… [All these are to] ensure our protection and to preserve the independence of the nation… (ib.; FN 12).

Phibul, while fundamentally constructing his legitimacy, was beginning to position the nation as the "valuable new prize" to defend, and the military as the nation's supreme defender. He used the growing crisis of regional hegemony to magnify the need for stronger armed forces and began to associate a stronger army with the prospect of recovering Thailand's lost territories. Phibul further managed to get more military people into the appointed assembly and thus to reduce the influence of other factions, which in turn allowed him to get more funds allotted to the military (Ingram 1955: 191). Between 1933 and 1937 the military absorbed one quarter of the state budget and the number of soldiers doubled (Pasuk/Baker 1995: 272). The military build-up caused the state to run a deficit for the first time since the mid 18th century. In 1938 expenditures per capita exceeded per capita government revenue by 50 percent, a development that was atypical in the region, where most countries remained under colonial control. However, in economic terms Thailand remained the economic laggard with the lowest ratio of exports over imports and one of the lowest GDPs in the region (Booth 2005: 1-44). This helps to explain why Phibul's economic interests remained tied up with the military, which had the benefit of receiving the giant share of state funds.

But vitally, Phibul managed to sway Thailand's foreign partners and the public. Baxter, the British financial advisor in Bangkok, believed that Siam's safety depended on Phibul prevailing as leader (Aldrich 1993: 108, 109, 132). The reason for this might be that as Pasuk (1980: 36, 37) suggests in a review of Phibul's era, that Phibul managed to help the people to overcome a sense of insecurity that had arisen with the break up of traditional social bonds, to inspire "confidence among broad sections of the public" and to "rebuild the connections between the state and the ordinary individual". This indicates that Phibul's approach responded to a collective demand for security and strong leadership that will be examined in Chapter Five.

However, meanwhile Phibul was also building up his political power in the assembly.

4.2.3. Building up Power in the Assembly

Phibul set out to fill the assembly with his political supporters, to foil any attempts at introducing more political participation, to cleverly balance and use the differing factions and to build up the assembly as a source of political legitimacy.

In his aim of putting more supporters in the assembly, Phibul deployed his masterly ability for intrigue, persuasion, distortion and intimidation. He used Adul for harassing legislators until they fell in line with his ideas (Ray 1972: 73). He refuted calls for allowing political parties and elections. Murashima (1991: 44-46) chronicles several motions by first-class assemblymen, which were launched between 1935 and 1938, that called for allowing political parties and for an end to the *People's Party's* "monopoly on power". Representatives from the northeast took issue with the centralization of power. They lamented the condescending treatment of their constituency and demanded more equality and consideration for their people (Pasuk/Baker 1995: 281). In his answers, while upholding his democratic rhetoric, Phibul refuted these calls on the argument that the public was still politically immature and that parties or elections could bring the state to fall. He argued that after centuries of monarchical rule, more time was needed for the electorate to understand democracy and any haste could lead to rebellion and unrest (Murashima 1991; 59-60). Both Phibul and Pridi basically agreed that the constitutional system needed to be stabilized before power could be given to the public (Barmé 1993: 69-71). Evidently, they saw elections and a potential return of the old régime as major threats, ostensibly to the constitutional system, but in particular to the grip of the *People's Party* on power.

However, Phibul was a master politician and well understood how to balance power in the most purposeful way. He maintained members of varying geopolitical allegiances in his cabinet, not least to handle external relations but also to appease anti-Japanese sentiments among the public. The more outspokenly pro-Japanese group included Vichit Vadhakarn, Prayoon Pamornmontri, Sindhu Komonawin and Wanit Pananon, while Pridi Banomyong, Direk Chainam, Adul Aduldejarat and Phrom Yothi belonged to the more pro-Western faction. Once the war started Phibul removed the more pro-Western assemblymen. In December 1941 he pushed Pridi,

who was finance minister, out of the cabinet for opposing financial support for Japanese troops in Thailand, and made him the third Regent next to Prince Athit and Chaophraya Pitchaien. Phibul further made Vilas Osthanom minister without portfolio and he demoted Direk, formerly minister of foreign affairs, to the position of ambassador to Tokyo. In Direk's place he appointed Vichit as foreign minister, as Vichit was propagating a closer alignment with the Axis. Shortly after this reshuffle, Phibul signed the historic Thai-Japanese treaty in front of the Emerald Buddha (Ray, 1972: 79, 80). Wanit Pananon, Phibul's wild card, led many of the negotiations with Japan. He was the brother-in-law of Sindhu Komonawin, also known as Sindhu Songkhram. Wanit was head of the Thai Commerce Department and in charge of the foreign ministry's trade bureau. However, he was a dubious figure and incidentally, not all of his pro-Japan deals got cabinet approval. He was accused of being corrupt and finally ditched by Phibul (E. B. Reynolds 1988: 220-227). The case of Wanit helps to illustrate that while Phibul embraced scheming tactics, he did not allow them to go against patriotic interests.

Meanwhile, Phibul consistently presented himself as a champion of democracy and its institutions, and he unwaveringly stuck to the rhetoric – but not the functions – of democracy as a modern foundation of political legitimacy. A further opportunity for him to prove his political skills and strengthen his legitimacy was diplomacy and in particular his tactic of emulating Chulalongkorn's diplomacy of playing one power against the other.

4.2.4. Managing Foreign Relations

Japan's contention for regional hegemony presented Phahon and Phibul with a key opportunity to use a closer association with Japan in order to build ideological and military thrust, to break Britain's predominance on trade, to balance other foreign influences and ultimately to support Thailand's military ambitions. Accordingly, Japan's strategic role in Phibul's advancement was vital. Phibul's post-war declaration that everything he did was aimed at obstructing Japan, contradicts Japan's stimulating influence on his rise to power and on the formulation of his policies and strategies.

Japan's erstwhile interests were to obtain more supplies of raw materials from Thailand. On account of the closer relations fostered by Yatabe, Thailand began to make an effort to free up supplies for Japan. Britain's predominant role in Thailand's external trade was already diminishing and Bangkok welcomed the opportunity to generate export revenue from sources other than Britain. But for strategic reasons Britain was opposed to Thai trade that fed the Japanese pre-war economy. Also Chinese traders tried to boycott exports to Japan in protest against Japan's hegemonic drive in China. To bypass this opposition the Thai government set up state enterprises in rice milling, tin and salt processing. Trade with Japan grew and already by 1936 accounted for one quarter of Thailand's external trade, mainly on account of Japan's demand for rice, rubber and tin. To Japan Thailand was the leading trade-partner in Southeast Asia and trade continued to grow through 1941, while the number of Japanese nationals in Thailand grew to 7,000 (E. B. Reynolds 1988: 206, 207).

Strategically, Japan was interested in using Thailand as a forward base for her southern advance, however, at the same time Japan understood that Siam could not be removed from Britain's clutches without the risk of a military backlash. Moreover Japan wanted to avoid "cultural aggression" and instead use Siam as a model of independence in Southeast Asia (E. B. Reynolds 1991: 102-108). Accordingly, Japan did not push the matter when prior to the war Bangkok resisted signing a joint military agreement with Tokyo. However, in September 1940, although he later always denied having done so, Phibul secretly offered Japan the prospect of free passage for her troops on condition that Japan respect Thai sovereignty and in the hope that Japan might support his irredentist ambitions. Clearly, knowledge of such an offer would have hurt Phibul's popularity. However, Aldrich (1993: 270) does suggest that with this offer Phibul attempted to contract "out of, rather than into, a wider war in South-East Asia". It certainly represented an attempt by Phibul to limit damage, while addressing the growing prospect of a military confrontation in Southeast Asia. Gilchrist (1982: 252), Crosby's right-hand man at the British legation in Bangkok, credits Phibul for having cleverly kept Japan at bay and prevented her from deploying her forces in Thailand prior to the outbreak of war:

> All through 1941 [Phibul] stood firm, so that the only way for the Japanese if in mid-41 they found it essential to move into Thailand would be to use force. If

they did that, of course, they risked alerting their enemies prematurely.

Set against Japan's advances, Britain was keen to uphold her colonial influence and to prevent Siam from becoming a strategic base for Japan. However, Crosby treaded carefully so as not to irritate the military government, and he showed himself sympathetic to Phibul's claim to recover lost territories, as long as this did not infringe on British colonial possessions. Crosby was also helpful in trying to alleviate Thailand's increasing difficulties to obtain oil supplies. All in all, Crosby tried to give Thailand as little reason as possible to lean towards Japan, however, he found himself increasingly in conflict with the US position.

The United States had been alarmed by rumors about the nationalization of Siam's fuel distribution, which began circulating in 1934 and which came to overshadow Thai-US relations for the rest of the decade. Although Siam did gradually take some steps to weaken the erstwhile US-British monopoly on oil marketing by constructing a refinery with Japanese help, the threat of full nationalization did not materialize before the war (Aldrich 1993: 121-168). But America was aggravated over the issue and overly interpreted it is as a sign of Thailand's leaning towards Japan. As a result, the US Secretary of State Cordell Hull took a rather resolute and rigid stance against Bangkok, which was amplified by the posting of Howard Grant, a brusque US minister, to Bangkok (ib.). The Thai-US controversy was unfortunate. Greater American and Thai interests would actually have tallied, as both nations wanted to see an end to colonialism. However, America remained reserved because she rather rashly took the stance that Thailand was already fully in Japan's court, and when Phibul revved up his irredentist ambitions, he completely lost any further chance of American cooperation.

Ultimately Britain and the US found themselves in a rare deviation of policies over Thailand on account of different viewpoints and objectives. However, all things considered, Thailand by the late 1930s came to face a generally reticent Western block, while Japan increasingly offered her an open hand.

Although after 1936 Japan's military objectives took priority over all her considerations, Phibul tried to see Thailand and Japan as equals, although the same

can certainly not be said of Japan. But Phibul clung to every indication that seemed to confirm his idea, as Charnvit (1974: 58) writes:

> [Phahon and Phibul] believed that they could stand together [with Japan] as equal partners in overthrowing Western domination in Southeast Asia. The Japanese government took a number of actions, which seemed to confirm this belief. Japan was the first nation to raise diplomatic relations with Siam from ministerial to ambassadorial level. This move was psychologically extremely important and helped convince many Siamese leaders that only Asians would be willing to recognize the equal status of other Asians. (...) The fact that all Siam's diplomatic relations with the rest of the world were conducted at the ministerial level was deeply resented as a sign of international discrimination.

Despite Phibul's delusion, he understood the risks of Japan's expanding hegemony. Moreover compared to Britain's historic colonialist view, Japan prior to the war did take a somewhat more sensitive approach. Meanwhile on another level, Phibul's notion of more equal relations with foreign states did not extend to Thailand's neighbors. Instead he saw Thailand as a regional "champion" (Charnvit 1974: 59). Rather than trying to inspire nationalist movements among his neighbors he took the crisis of hegemony as an opportunity to fulfill his territorial ambitions.

Nevertheless, before the war Phibul cleverly balanced Eastern and Western influences and interests to Thailand's best advantage. At times he confused both Western and Japanese diplomats and governments as to where Thailand stood. However, to Phibul the stance was clear, as he told Seni Pramoj on the eve of Seni's departure as minister to Washington, when Phibul said that Thailand was "not pro any other country in particular... [but] pro-Thailand" (Haseman 1978: 9). Indeed, while Phibul certainly took an anti-colonial stance, this did not necessarily imply that his stance was anti-Western – a differentiation that perhaps still needs to be more clearly understood. He was touched by the fall of Paris to German forces and despite Japan's strong lobbying, Phibul kept his children in Western schools.

Phibul fundamentally was patriotic and his diplomacy largely served Thailand by keeping her out of the war. Yet his effort showed his resolve to move Thailand from a position of structural inferiority vis-à-vis the West to a new level of equality with Western nations. As Chapter Five will show, he tried to elevate the standard of behaviour and attitude among his country-men so that Thailand may match up to her new equal partners, and he became obsessed with also achieving equality vis-à-vis

Japan. Meanwhile the tightening military situation allowed him to pursue his nationalist and irredentist policies and to support his legitimacy as strong leader also in foreign relations.

4.2.5. Warpath: Between Imperatives and Fulfillment

No Thai leader could have seriously contemplated a stance against the Japanese war machine when it attacked Thailand and the US simultaneously on 8 December 1941. But controversy has centered on Phibul's compliance with Japan when he signed the treaty of alliance, joined the Burma campaign and declared war on the Allies on 25 January 1942. However, Phibul's acts were also the logical fulfillment of a decade-long ideological, political, diplomatic and military campaign to end Western domination and foster national self-determination. The beginning of the Pacific War gave Phibul the opportunity to fulfill his attempt to reposition Thailand in the international order, at least symbolically, and to demonstrate that the era of Western superiority in the region had come to an end.

Phibul was more determined in delivering the declaration of war than is generally assumed, as is evident from the records in the Swiss Federal Archives (SFA/BKK 4: TMoFA 25 January 1942). Phibul delivered the declaration simultaneously through Swiss diplomatic channels, via shortwave radio and through his renegade minister in Washington, while at the same time recalling Seni in the strongest tones because of his defiance against his home government. The following message relayed through the Thai legation in Berne mirrors the intensity of the recall:

> By order of His Excellency the Premier, all Thai subjects in U.S.A. and Canada are to return Thailand on the first exchange vessel, the penalty for their disobedience in the official case is instant dismissal from the service and in contrary case they will lose their Thai nationality and will be barred for ever from entering Thailand (SFA/FI 62: TLB: 9 June 1942).

Seni was unwavering and refused to give up his diplomatic status in Washington (Songsiri 1981: 260). The Swiss Consul in Washington, acting on Bangkok's behalf, visited Seni, who, however, refused to comment or hand over his legation (ib.: Tlg. SLW No. 33: 31 January 1942). Bangkok insisted to Washington that it wanted to replace Seni with Switzerland's good offices (ib.: DFI, A.357, 9

February 1941), but Washington instead acknowledged Seni as representative of the Free Thai Movement and brushed Bangkok's declaration of war aside as not representing the free will of the Thai people.

Britain immediately reciprocated Thailand's declaration of war. London also brought South Africa, New Zealand and Australia to follow suite, which was a move that took Phibul by surprise and which in turn he tried to brush aside by not taking "cognizance" of these declarations of war ((SFA/BKK 2: A28/2, Notes 24, 29 & 69; replies 2061/2485, 2344/2485, 3009/2485 of 26 February, 6 and 23 March 1942).

Meanwhile Washington, throughout the war, considered Thailand as a country under enemy occupation, a position that while commensurate with America's post-Pearl Harbor perspective, was certainly not without the ulterior motive of precluding a return to Britain's dominant influence over Thailand. The difference in positions between the US and Britain crucially became apparent when Thailand was in a position of surrender at the end of the war. In 1945, the British Allied supreme commander for Southeast Asia, Louis Mountbatten, tried to impose a peace-agreement on Thailand, which would have put her under indefinite British military and economic control. Pridi was ready to accept such drastic measures so as not to alienate the Allies. However, Washington rejected Britain's plans and insisted on a peace-deal, which was signed on 8 September 1945 and which reinstated Thailand's full sovereignty (Songsiri 1981: 205-215), opening up Thailand to US access on terms equal to Britain's and heralding a new era of US influence over Thailand's economic and political development.

By mid 1943, Phibul realized he had backed the wrong horse. Moreover, the fact that Japanese troops were swarming all over the country was embarrassing and Phibul increasingly turned to invoking the more superficial measures of his sociocultural reform – like the wearing of hats – as symbol of national independence. He remained distrustful of the Free Thai Movement (E. B. Reynolds 2005: 214) and was increasingly seen as an impediment to Thailand finding a way out of her predicament of being on the loosing side of the war. The fall of the Tojo government in mid 1944 led to Phibul's fall and to his replacement by Khuang Aphaiwong as new prime minister, who was charged with seeking rapprochement with the Allies.

Nevertheless, Phibul's diplomacy, although spiked with controversy and deception, kept Thailand out of major war hostilities. Moreover Crosby (1945: 96, 97), with hindsight and well aware of Britain's staunch colonial attitude, gives credit to Phibul for attempting to emancipate Thailand in the international order and for seeking a more equal relationship with other nations:

> It was only natural that the enthusiasm … should have been accompanied by … a more fixed determination to vindicate in all respects the right of Siam to be classed upon equal terms with the sovereign nations of the world.

Hence, Phibul's war-time stance was not only a matter of him yielding to imperatives; it was also the fulfillment of his decade-long ambition of achieving national self-determination and a more equal relation with the major international powers. As such, his stance was a precursor to the global emergence of nationalist movements that unfolded after the war.

4.3. Conclusion

This chapter has examined how despite the 1932 shift in sovereignty the majority of the people remained imbued with primordial sociopolitical perceptions, while the group that overthrew the absolute monarchy used its success to secure its own political interests. To avoid a legitimacy crisis, the conservative first constitutional government reengaged the king as political figurehead and as symbolic source of authority, and upheld the legitimacy the *Sangha* conferred on the monarchy. The individual's relationship with the state and society remained largely unchanged

In the second *coup* of 1933, Phahon and Phibul grabbed power and Phibul went on to build up the military as his power base, aimed at keeping him in power and allowing him to further pursue his plans to undo old attachments to the monarchy and notions of the monarchy's symbolic role as source of state authority. Phibul's radical *coup*-group, was clearly opposed to any suggestion of the monarchy's unwritten or mythical powers, and he used the weakness of the monarchy and the emerging crisis of regional hegemony to eliminate the royalist opposition and to neutralize the king's visibility, presence and power. In their place, Phibul turned the military in to the

nation's most powerful institution, while he used his influence, intimidation and persuasion to establish his control over the assembly. Although he refuted calls for more political participation, Phibul clung to democracy in his rhetoric and upheld its institutions, as the notion of democracy provided him with a new basis of political legitimacy detached from the monarchy. Meanwhile he used Thailand's external relations to affirm his competence as leader and to balance external and internal forces. He thereby also endeavored to reposition Thailand in the international order and to emancipate the nation to be on a more equal level with both Western and Eastern powers.

The following chapter examines how he attempted, by changing the mind and the behavior of the people, to fulfill the political shift of 1932 and to turn it into a wider reality, by completely displacing the monarchy as perceived source of political power and legitimacy and as an agent of progress and unity in the nation, and by establishing new notions and institutions in its place. This came to an effort to undo the people's old attachments to the monarchy, as far as they posed a political threat, and to fill the ensuing gap with a new strong notion of leadership, a new array of political and social edifices and a new nationalist agenda, which was pointedly aimed at "reconstructing" the nation and which the next chapter examines in detail.

CHAPTER V

PHIBUL'S ATTEMPT TO CHANGE THE PEOPLE'S MIND AND BEHAVIOR

As a founding member of the *People's Party* Phibul was determined to ensure the long-term fulfillment of the 1932 shift of sovereignty and the displacement of the monarchy and the old elite, which the *Promoters* saw as obstacles to the nation's progress. The first section of this chapter examines how in place of the monarchy Phibul tried to establish modern notions, symbols and institutions that conferred legitimacy on his régime, in an attempt to undo the people's sense of allegiance to the monarchy and to redirect it at his régime. The second section looks at Phibul's ideological project, the basis of his nation-building policy and in particular at his ideas on the role of the state and of the people within the state. The third section studies his attempt at changing the mind and the behavior of the people through sociocultural reform. The chapter asks whether the new notions and structures Phibul tried to introduce contributed to transforming the people into citizens of a nation.

5.1. Displacement of the Monarchy

Phibul's effort to displace the monarchy, its presence, visibility, structure and base of political legitimacy with a new legitimacy in support of his régime runs like a red line through his attempt to change the mind and the behavior of the people.

The underlying premise for this attempt was that the régime-change of 1932 did not undo widespread primordial notions that supported the monarchy and its political authority, nor did it divest in particular the *Sangha* of the legitimacy it conferred on the monarchy. Although in 1932 there was noticeable public support in Bangkok for the power shift, the general population remained imbued with traditional and religious thoughts. The prevailing of strong sentiments for the monarchy is confirmed by Princess Karnika (interviewed for this thesis on 20 August 2005) who

says of the situation after 1935 that the king "was missed… we still had him in our mind; wherever he was he was our king. Most people felt like that". Also Sribhumi corroborates the people's continuing strong sentiments for the king. While these sentiments did not necessarily signify a political attitude, they reflected the people's collective state of mind, which could potentially be used for political purposes by royalists and conservatives.

Phibul's grandchild and this person's close friend (interviewed for this thesis on 12 March 2005) say of Phibul's attempt:

> The change was not easy; it was very difficult. That is why the Thai people were divided into many groups. (…) If things had remained as they were [under the absolute monarchy], no one could have changed the situation of the Thai people. Society paid respect to the royal family. No one dared to touch [the king]. Society saw the king as a god, as super-human. Phibul and many of his followers … loved their country and their king. However, at the same time if no one dared to touch the king, then no one could have changed the style of rule in the country.

Denying the monarchy its traditional supreme position and superior rights went against one of the most deeply ingrained sociopolitical principles and needed resolve, daring and skill. While Phibul was opportunistic in exploiting the weakness of the monarchy, the magnitude of his attempt required a consistent, coherent, broad and long-term approach marked by determination rather than by opportunism.

5.1.1. Undermining the Monarchy

Phibul undertook to undo most notably the king's profile and presence, as the appointment of a nine-year old as king in 1935, who was living with his family in Switzerland, indicated. To undermine the king's status, Phibul, following Prajadhiphok's abdication, accused the ex-king of the misuse of state funds and by court order had much of the monarch's property confiscated. In 1934 Phibul dropped the celebration of the king's birthday and declared that 24 June would be celebrated as National Day instead (Stowe 1991: 123). After 1938 Phibul ordered all of the ex-king's pictures to be removed from government buildings (Terwiel 1980: 12, 13). When the 14 year-old king visited Thailand in late 1938, Phibul was clearly disturbed by the young king's popularity and restricted his movements (Anderson 1998: 164). After the king's return to Switzerland, Phibul carried out his harshest purge against

his royalist opponents. In early 1939, a special court handed down death sentences on 18 opponents who were shortly thereafter mercilessly executed. Later the same year Phibul publicly reiterated some of the *Promoters*' anti-royal rhetoric, reminding the people that in the past they had been "unable to progress because of the kings' whims" (Kobkua 1995: 71; Phibul's National Address: 24 June 1939).

Even while the royal family was in Switzerland, Phibul tried to tighten his control. In May 1940 he tried to move Ananda Mahidol out of Switzerland for reasons this thesis has not been able to corroborate. The Swiss government, alerted to rumors about the Thai king's departure, asked the *Police de Sureté de Lausanne* to investigate the situation. Inspector Fellay who visited the royal family found the princess mother, Princess Mahidol of Songkhla, categorically refusing to leave or follow Bangkok's orders. She told Fellay she would only depart Switzerland "as a very last resort" on the advise of the Swiss authorities (SFA/RF 284: Fellay 11 May 1940) and argued for a continuing stay of the Thai king in Switzerland, saying that his presence was a certain guarantee for Switzerland's security during war times (ib.: Fellay 22 May 1940). As it was, the royal family remained in Lausanne until 1951. Documents in the Swiss Federal Archives indicate that the royal family suffered from financial restraints while in Lausanne, which the Thai government only began to address after Phibul's fall in 1944 (SFA/RF 284: Telegrams 51, 60, 74, 24 August - 9 November 1944; and DODIS: C.46.Siam.205.0-BK 3 October 1946).

Phibul's efforts at marginalizing and tarnishing the image of the monarchy, and his efforts at controlling the royal family's whereabouts, show that he was on adverse if not antagonistic terms with the Chakri monarchy and that his efforts were at least aimed at diffusing any latent political risk the monarchy's old status entailed. This observation does not tally with suggestions that Phibul "loved" the king (interview 20 March 2005) or that he wasn't "anti-royal" (Kobkua 1995: 67-81). If indeed Phibul had positive sentiments for the monarchy, they are hardly discernible in the context of his first term's attempt to displace the monarchy.

The following subsections examine how Phibul tried to fill the gap created by the displacement of the monarchy.

5.1.2. Democracy: A new Symbol of Political Legitimacy

To replace the monarchy as edifice of political power, Phibul used the symbols of democracy and the constitution to such an intense degree that he ultimately used this feat to claim he had not been a dictator. After the war he said:

> Is there any dictator who upholds democracy as much as myself? It is me [sic] who built the Democracy Monument. It is me who constructed Democracy Avenue. It is me who ordered citations of constitution on the air every night. It is me again who minted Democracy coins. I am not a dictator. A dictator must be much more ruthless (Thamsook 1978: 242; Records on the Field-Marshal 1946: 58-59).

But of course Phibul was a dictator. Although he allowed debates in the assembly, he neither allowed political parties to be established nor the composition of the assembly to be determined by elections. Nevertheless, he did elevate democracy to a quasi-sacred symbol of political legitimacy, as is evident from the Democracy Monument on Rajadamnoen Avenue, which Phibul ordered to be built in 1939. This monument is an edifice to Phibul's democratic idealism. At careful observation (conducted for this study on 24 August 2005) the monument reveals itself as an effigy to a new social order. The reliefs by Silpa Bhirasri show images of a modern society and a new social order with all people, irrespective of their task, gender or hierarchical position at equal level. This suggests a horizontal society with functional rather than hereditary hierarchies, with people in the role of citizens rather than subjects. However, the military is given much importance in the monument. While notably there is no reference to the monarchy, the monument is encircled by a ring of 75 cannon heads, symbolizing the army's role as fence of the nation and as guardian of the constitution, which rests high on a pedestal above its surroundings.

The monument has distinct sacral features. Its layout has a close similarity to the traditional depiction of the Thai cosmology with Mount Meru at the center surrounded by four continents, one in each cardinal direction. This quasi-religious staging of the constitution seems to echo an observation Crosby made in 1934 at a celebration in Lopburi, where he noticed that in a ceremonial shrine a third altar had been erected for the constitution next to effigies of the Buddha and the king; he guessed that the intent was to induce similar devotion for the constitution as "had

hitherto [been reserved] for the monarch" (Barmé 1993: 112). This notion tallies with the impression Sulak (1999: 26) got in 1940, when he saw a facsimile of the democracy monument and got the idea that the constitution was something divine:

> … as a young boy, I remember visiting a constitution festival. I saw soldiers and police officers solemnly guarding the pedestal tray supporting the constitution. This misled me to believe that the constitution and democracy were divine and transcendental things in the manner of religion and the kingship.

The way the military ideologues staged the constitution in a quasi-sacral manner reflects their use of democracy as a symbol rather than as a functioning political system. Strong signs of militarism permeate the images on the monument, which show everyone engaged in active pursuits, indicating that society needed to be progressive and that people needed to be disciplined and orderly. In political terms, the layout shows people physically under the constitution, similar to their position under a king. Barmé (1993: 184) pointedly concludes that Phibul portrayed democracy as a new cosmology, which substituted the *Trai Phum*, a contention to which the monument is indeed an epitaph. Nevertheless, the monument strongly reflects the kind of idealism and symbolism apparent in many other monuments and images that permeate Thai society and in this quasi-familiar guise, it does fundamentally propose an alternative source of political legitimacy, the notion Phibul basically was trying to establish.

Anderson (1989: 164; FN 77) calls the monument "one of the oddest ironies of modern Thai political history" because it was built by "Siam's most durable dictator". However, the monument candidly reflects Phibul's democratic idealism. Conversely, it seems ironic that there is no reference to Phibul at the monument, while a plaque by the ministry of culture assigns the edifice to the "reign of King Rama VIII" – a subtle reminder that official Thai historiography remains centered on the monarchy, leaving Phibul's legacy as the one that has been displaced.

5.1.3. *Phunam*: A New Leadership Profile

A further new symbol Phibul attempted to create to fill the gap left by the absence of the king, was the *Phunam* leadership persona. The *Phunam* had the profile of a visionary leader who was set to lead the nation towards a better future. Although

Phibul was an admirer of Napoléon Bonaparte, he molded the *Phunam* persona on two of his contemporaries, Italy's Benito Mussolini and Germany's Adolf Hitler.

Phibul's *Phunam* principle and military rule were based on his belief that the country needed strong leadership and that people needed to become more disciplined and orderly in order to advance. In 1934 he said that people needed to be led, like "an animal herd needs its leader" (Charnvit 1974: 35; FN 21; Thian Prathipasen 1964: 53) and two years later he declared his dictatorial ambitions saying that to correct the weaknesses of the Thai nation, "it is essential that discipline be maintained; to be quite blunt, one must employ the methods of dictatorship" (E. B. Reynolds 2004: 104). This indicates that Phibul's view of the role of the people was a militaristic one, which aimed at creating a disciplined and orderly citizenry that took a favorable attitude towards being led in a paternalistic manner. An eyewitness (Walter Meyer, interviewed for this thesis on 2 March 2005) suggests that Phibul tried to create a leadership profile that emulated a traditional patriarchal and benevolent approach:

> [Phibul] brought the Thai people together, he created real patriotism and he was the Father of all. (...) If one were to say that we didn't have any democracy during the war, well, then this was perhaps so, but I'd have to say that the military régime was very benevolent.

To prop up his and his entourage's status, Phibul structured the military in a way commensurate with the military's new role as institution at the apex of society and he increasingly began awarding military decorations. In 1941, following his irredentist "victory", he awarded himself the highest military rank of field marshal, while handing out over 8,000 decorations and appointing thirty generals (Thamsook 1978: 244; FN 41). Elliott (1978: 87, 88) suggests that Phibul substituted the military for the old aristocratic hierarchy and became "the agent (albeit ostensibly bourgeois) of the *Sakdina* structure". However, while the military hierarchy reflected primordial hierarchical notions and was related to an effort to impose militaristic values on the entire population, ranks were preeminently functional, temporal and task-specific. Although primordial hierarchical notions weighed on Phibul's idea of authority, the term *Sakdina* also encompasses hereditary rights, forced labor and the lack of mobility from below, which were not characteristic of Phibul's régime. Hence, the

comparison to *Sakdina* entails much reservation. Instead Phibul's system of hierarchy must be examined against the absolute monarchy and in particular against fascism.

Phibul's leadership spilled over into a personality cult, which came close to emulating the absolute monarchs. He adopted a personal emblem (observed for this thesis at *Anusawaree Joomphon Por. Phibulsongkhram* [Monument of Field Marshal P. Phibulsongkhram] in Phraphutthabat District, Saraburi on 23 July 2005), which featured a crown and under it a *Trisoonkhatha*, a scepter with three spikes, a sword, five stars depicting his rank, and his personal zodiac, a rooster. This emblem "appeared everywhere in the government house – carved on the backs of chairs, on doors and windows, and along the fence" (Thamsook 1978: 237). Meanwhile, people were encouraged to hang Phibul's picture in their homes, and before public performances his image was screened and people were asked to stand and pay respect. When Phibul became field marshal, Pridi had to stop him from using Vajiravudh's royal baton (Ray 1972: 74). Nevertheless, Phibul tried to point to the difference between his position as prime minister and leadership based on royal dynastic lineage, saying that in contrast to a monarch he was only a temporary leader (Kobkua 1995: 83), which arguably did not diminish the need for strong and charismatic leadership, as he emphasized in his address to the cabinet in 1942:

> The Japanese have the Emperor … We Thais have nothing. What we have are Nation, Religion, Monarch and Constitution. Nation is still a vision; Religion is not yet sacred enough; Monarch is just a child whom we can see only in picture and Constitution is merely a notebook. (…) That is why I want you all to follow me – the Prime Minister (Thamsook 1978: 237; Minutes of Cabinet Meeting 20/2485, 25 April 1942).

Praphan offers a direct motive and a reason for Phibul's *Phunam* persona and personality cult, saying that in part he aimed to create a personal following and in part to satisfy his ego:

> … that he did it to establish a kind of a mandate with the population to make himself less vulnerable to others who wanted to challenge his power, is only part of the reason. The other part is that you know that the 'Ego' is a very important factor in Asia. He wanted to look good. It was about gaining "face". However, he got carried away.

This thesis finds that a widespread notion prevails that Thailand needs a strong leader. Although this observation is not conclusive, Sribhumi, Praphan and Meyer express opinions to this effect, though they differ on how strong leadership should be defined. Both royal and non-royal historiography painted images of strong, heroic and brave leaders. It is therefore conceivable that in the absence of a king, collective opinion expected some other figure to fill the gap and lead the country in an inspiring and decisive way. To an extent this was made necessary by the fact that the nation had not evolved in an organic fashion (Thongchai 1994: 131) and thus the idea of unity needed to be suggested by a cult of leadership and nationhood. Phibul's *Phunam* responded to that need in a similar way the absolute monarchy had done, however, Phibul's was more of an *ad hoc* role that needed to be made up as he went along in a manner similar to how Leon Trotsky, cited by Silone (1968: 535), suggests in 1934 at the height of the totalitarian era:

> The difference between a leader of divine lineage and one whose power is conferred by the people is that the latter depends on making his own way or at least on creating the circumstances that allow him to discover his own way. Yet, every leader is a relationship between people – an individual offer to a collective demand.

Conceivably, also Phibul responded to a collective demand, and while on the one hand he tried to mold this demand, he on the other also skillfully responded to existing perceptions. Arguably, Phibul managed the complexities of a society under transformation in the most workable manner, as his long tenure of over two decades at the helm of Thai politics indicates. This does not mean that he managed Thai sociopolitical transformation in the most desirable way, but he did manage it in a realistic way. Clearly *Phunam* was newly a functional position rather than a hereditary or dynastic one, and though it comprised a mix of old and modern features, it emerged at a time also society was split between old and new allegiances.

5.1.4. *Watthanatham*: New Purposeful Culture

Vajiravudh created the triad "Nation, Religion, King", which combined to symbolize one and the same entity: the monarchy. Phibul attempted to untangle nation and religion from the monarchy. To replace the monarchy, he established

culture as a new focus of allegiance in the nation. *Watthanatham* was invented as a new term for culture, based on primordial and modern notions, but to a purposeful and progressive end. In a modern development, the National Cultural Maintenance Act of 1940 conceptualized culture:

> Culture means qualities which indicate and promote social prosperity, orderliness, national unity and development, and morality of the people (Thak 1978: 255, 256; National Cultural Maintenance Act 1940 Section 3).

The following year, in an address to the cabinet, Phibul explained how culture was central to the foundation of his nation-building effort. He said that the nation and "various aspects of society" had to be reconstructed to build an "everlasting foundation", indicating that the old monarchical foundation had to be replaced and that in order to do that the fabric of society needed to be rebuilt. He said:

> In an effort to build a nation with a firm and everlasting foundation, the government is forced to reform and reconstruct the various aspects of society, especially its culture, which here signifies growth and beauty, orderliness, progress and uniformity, and the morality of the nation… [Culture] is an important instrument for the acceleration of the nation-building process so that it achieves the targets set… No matter how beautiful and numerous our buildings and infrastructural facilities are, or what great wealth our country may boast, if the people remain poor in culture and exhibit ignorance about hygiene, health, clothing, and rational ways of thinking, our country could never claim to be civilized, neither could it survive [as a nation] as it possessed no firm foundation (Kobkua 1995: 102; Phibul to cabinet: 16 October 1941).

Phibul was thereby setting up culture as the central utilitarian purpose and instrument of the nation, and as a national focus of identity that displaced kingship from one of its roles. The new cultural identity was constructed from sets of notions based within society, which was a sign of modernity, as was the fact that the purpose of society was defined from within rather than from above society. It was also typical that new abstractions such as notions of an assumed kinship emerged and that culture was institutionalized in theaters, museums and institutions.

Accordingly, under Phibul cultural components from within regional folk customs were taken up and translated into national versions, as typified by *Ramwong*, an upgraded version of a northeastern folk dance, which was made popular in all parts of the country. However, *Watthanatham* went far beyond dance and custom; it signified progress and involved the entire population.

The internalization and institutionalization of culture stood in contrast to the way the kings had used court-and-capital culture as representative of the nation, or the notion of *Siwilai* as comparative measure of progress based on Western norms. Moreover, while *Siwilai* had been used to vertically segment society, *Watthanatham* was used as a unifying notion that attempted to actively involve the entire population in building the nation. The National Cultural Maintenance Act of 1940 stated:

> It is the duty of Thai people to practice national customs and promote prosperity of Thailand by conserving and revising existing customs.

Cultural practice was thus defined as a duty and culture conceptualized to include the culture of the mind, crafts, literature, art, and women, as categorized by the National Cultural Council in 1942 (Thamsook 1978: 237; Royal Gazette: 1 January 1943):

(1)   The Department of Spiritual Culture;
(2)   The Department of Traditions;
(3)   The Department of Fine Arts;
(4)   The Department of Literature;
(5)   The Department of Women.

Watthanatham thus was a new central and imaginary edifice to an identity that was structured and defined from within, a motivational rallying point with the purpose of getting everyone to focus on contributing to the prosperity and progress of society. *Watthanatham* also became central to delineating and protecting the nation and for measuring Thailand in an international context. "Cultured", in the sense Phibul used the term, meant a mix of internal and external values that found expression in his sociocultural reform. In 1939 he said:

> We must be as cultured as other nations otherwise no country will come to contact us. Or if they come, they come as superiors. Thailand would be helpless and soon become colonized. But if we were highly cultured, we would be able to uphold our integrity [and] independence (Thamsook 1978: 234; Phibul to cabinet: 30 August 1939).

Phibul was establishing culture as a benchmark for the country's right to self-determination. Phibul's correlation between the nation's position in the international order and national cultural unity signified that Phibul saw it as central to the nation's right to exist that the Thai people identify with the nation-state, rather than with their

traditional ethnicity. During the war Phibul used *Watthanatham* as a last line of defense of Thailand's sovereignty and independence, signifying that the nation was not defined by its territorial integrity but by the people's sense of cultural unity. The absolute kings had used Buddhism and the monarchy as ultimate sanctuaries of sovereignty and independence when the kingdom's economic, fiscal and judicial autonomy was compromised by the treaties. The difference was that Phibul made the people's commitment to the country's cultural purpose central to the nation's integrity, which indicated that the nation's self-determination depended on everyone.

The importance of culture as a benchmark of national integrity was confirmed when Japan signed a cultural agreement with Thailand in 1942, which declared mutual respect for each other's cultures. Phibul used it to support his contention that Japan recognized Thailand on equal terms, an accomplishment that "had never been forthcoming" in Thailand's relationship with the West (Charnvit 1974: 58).

To Thai society *Watthanatham* was a modern purpose and instrument for progress. With it Phibul detached *Chat* from the notion of the people's allegiance to a king and instead defined the nation around a purpose that involved everyone and that was positioned inside rather than above society. This fundamentally changed the individual's role in the nation and his or her relationship with *Chat* from being focused on a passive allegiance to a monarch, which reflected the position of a subject, to being an active and involved member of society, who was expected to contribute to society, the economy and the well-being of everyone, a relationship that was commensurate with that of a modern citizen. However, the individual's relation with *Watthanatham* was not one of choice, but one of duty, and hence the new sense of progress and purpose remained embedded in a primordial submissiveness of the individual to the national cause.

5.1.5. Military: New Guardian of the Nation

Traditionally the monarchy was the most important institution upholding the security and independence of the kingdom. Phibul proceeded to elevate the military, which newly acquired this function, to be the most important institution in the nation. He declared that the military was the "fence" of the nation (Thamsook 1978: 220). In

contrast to Vajiravudh, who had built up his military forces against an imaginary enemy, Phibul was able to correlate his military build-up with a real threat posed by the regional competition for hegemony (E. B. Reynolds 2004: 106) and with an attempt to correct past injustices brought on by Western colonial expansion.

Phibul turned the nation into the new "prize" to defend and thus raised the military to supreme national institution and "public custodian of the nation's interests" (Anderson 1998: 163). This shift was enshrined in a decree in 1939, which ordered that the Thais "should have the highest esteem for the nation above all else" (Thak 1978: 245; *Ratthaniyom* No. 2, Prevention of Dangers to the Nation: 3 July 1939). By conjecture this gave the military guardianship over social and political matters and affirmed the subordination of the individual under the nation's interests. *Ratthaniyom* No. 2 made it mandatory for every "citizen of the nation to uphold and protect the nation" and thus gave the citizen a role in the defense of the nation.

To infuse the people with martial values from a very young age, Phibul set up the paramilitary youth organizations *Yuwachon Thahan* and *Yuwanari.* Prayoon Pamornmontri, who was of half-German parentage, spent one year in Germany studying the militaristic movement of the Nazis and returned to Thailand in 1938 (E. B. Reynolds 2004: 108, 109). He was instrumental in molding the *Yuwachon Thahan* on the model of Germany's *Hitler Jugend* (ib.) and successful in displacing the traditional sense of allegiance to the king with a new spirit of nationalism especially amongst the young, as Sribhumi recalls. However, Phibul's success in displacing the monarchy perhaps unwittingly left it with a mostly sacral role in society, as Anderson (1998: 163) suggests:

> Much more clearly than hitherto, nation and monarchy became intellectually separable ideas with the state (essentially the armed forces) as representative of the one and guardian of the other. In important ways this development helped to enshrine the monarchy as a sort of precious palladium of the nation.

Therefore, while Phibul constructed a framework for the individual to develop a modern allegiance to the nation-state, the continuance of the monarchy, even in a weakened or in an increasingly symbolic form, allowed people to sustain their traditional feelings for the monarchy. This opened the possibility for the individual to develop a double allegiance, on the one hand to the nation-state and on the other to

the monarchy, whereby the allegiance to the nation-state entailed many primordial notions, such as submissiveness and duty, which also the individual's position under the monarchy had entailed. However, this thesis, while pointing to the possible complexity of feelings of allegiance, does not further pursue this aspect. If Phibul at all tried to contend with the problem of double allegiance, it was by relentlessly pursuing his creation of an alternative and by keeping the monarchy marginalized.

5.1.6. *Sangha*: A New Symbiosis with the Nation-State

In the traditional Buddhist state the king's role as "defender of Buddhism" and in turn the *Sangha*'s ability to confer legitimacy on the ruler as a result of its role as "transmitter of the *Dhamma*", established the monarchy's and the *Sangha's* symbiotic relationship (Ishii 1986: 40-47). This relationship was further enhanced by politically interpretative constructs, most explicitly by Lithai's *Trai Phum*. Because the first constitutional government maintained the king as symbolic source of authority, it did not cast in doubt the legitimacy the *Sangha* continued to confer on the king.

Earlier studies – such as by Tambiah (1976), Ishii (1986), Somboon (1993) and Kobkua (1995) – have identified Phibul's reform of the *Sangha* in 1941 as an effort to divest the *Sangha* of the political legitimacy it conferred on the monarchy. This thesis goes a step further and identifies Phibul's effort as an attempt to redirect the *Sangha's* legitimizing force at his régime. The ability of the *Sangha* to confer legitimacy on any form of government, not only on monarchical or absolutist ones, is asserted by Jackson's (1991: 157) concept of "interpretative plasticity", which suggests that because the *Sangha* depends on society for its existence, the *Sangha* to a degree allows its structure to be interpreted for political reasons. Moreover Piker (1973: 64, 65) contends that the *Sangha*'s legitimizing force is both rooted in structural notions and in the respect and veneration leading Buddhist monks can generate for themselves and for the religious institution, in turn allowing the *Sangha* to transfer this respect and veneration "in some measure to the régime".

The contention that Phibul attempted to redirect the *Sangha*'s legitimizing force at his régime has never been identified, yet it is evident from the fact that while the *Sangha* Act of 1941 gave the *Sangha* an apparent democratic structure, it in fact

established the supremacy of the nation-state over the *Sangha*'s decisions and motions. Thus the supposedly democratic structure was a facade that could only have political motives. Similarly, the democratic structure and terminology used in naming the three branches of the new tripartite structure – *Sangha Sabha* (Ecclesiastical Assembly), *Khana Sangha Montri* (Ecclesiastical Cabinet) and *Khana Vinayadhara* (Ecclesiastical Courts) – and the political terminology used for the position of the executive monks – *Sangha Montris* (ecclesiastical ministers) and *Sanghanayaka* (head of the cabinet) (Act on Buddhist Brotherhood 1941) – could only be intended to support the new political structure of the state and political ranks within the state.

Also, the petitions and movements of monks in the 1930s in favor of a less hierarchical structure of the *Sangha* appear to have inspired the leading politicians to attempt to win over the brotherhood for political purposes. Given the central role Phibul attached to Buddhism in his nation-building policy, it is obvious that he needed to win over the Buddhist brotherhood. However, his reform left him with the problem of an influencial minority, the *Thammayutikanikai*. To appease the *Thammayutika* order, which stood to loose from Phibul's restructuring, Phibul allowed a transitory provision – Section 60 – to be included in the act. It decreed that for eight years no rule was to be issued that defied the "doctrines which [had] long been popularly respected and practiced" (Ishii 1986: 108). This at least formally precluded the new act from being implemented to the full spirit of the letter and it certainly served to appease the royally favored *Thammayutikanikai*, allowing Phibul to maintain a degree of unity within the *Sangha*.

The act helped to showcase the government's care for the *Sangha* and in itself carried legitimizing value, as it could be perceived as an attempt to "purify" the *Sangha*, similar to the way the kings had often done. Indeed, the act followed an effort by the Phibul régime to translate the *Tripitaka* into Thai, which was expressly "aimed, in the authorities' own words, 'to spread the name and uphold the honor of the Constitutional Government'" (Kubkua 1995: 131; Announcement, Prime Minister's Office, Royal Gazette 57: 2 August 1940). This effort allowed the "government [to claim] the traditional honor of the most meritorious kind through its meritorious act" (ib.), hence to gain legitimacy from supporting the *Sangha*.

But the new structure imposed by the *Sangha Act* of 1941, while contributing to upholding democracy as an icon, was hardly democratic. Rather, it gave the minister of education autocratic control over the decisions and motions of the ecclesiastical assembly, the cabinet and the supreme patriarch. The two persons who served as ministers of education from 1941 to 1944 were Sindhu Komonawin, who held the post until 1942, and Prayoon Pamornmontri, who served in the position until 1944 and who simultaneously oversaw the *Yuwachon Thahan*. While the reason for subordinating the *Sangha* to the ministry of education apparently was that the *Sangha* served as a channel for spreading education, it is hard to imagine that its doctrines remained completely untainted by the new state ideology. In parallel an effort was underway to detach the education system from the *Sangha*, as is indicated by the five-fold increase in secular schoolteachers between 1928 and 1943, from 10,983 to 55,856 (Paitoon 1988: 103, 104). The question of the penetration of state ideology in the *Sangha's* doctrinal curriculum, however, remains a topic for further research.

With the *Sangha Act* Phibul tried to divest the *Sangha* of its traditional link with the monarchy and to redirect the *Sangha's* legitimizing force at his régime, in the process trying to establish a new symbiosis between the *Sangha* and the nation-state. This move underlines the profundity and the breadth of Phibul's attempt.

5.2. Phibul's Ideological Project

Phibul's ideological project, which comprised nationalism, militarism as well as new political and social ideologies, was based on the idea that the nation and society needed to be rebuilt on a new and permanent foundation, and that the nation's central cause should become the new focus of allegiance and be shared by everyone. Phibul therefore identified the reshaping of the mind and the behavior of the people as a key objective. His ideological project included giving society a new purpose, a new orientation, a new spirit, new opportunities, a new way of life and a new active and binding relationship between the individual and the community, as well as giving the individual a new central role in fulfilling this cause. The effort followed on from the political change of 1932, which had introduced the nation-state, but which ostensibly

had not been accompanied by a concerted effort to change the people's sociopolitical perceptions. Vichit Vadhakarn, who became Phibul's chief-ideologist and who had an unusually free hand in ideological matters, in 1952 explained the ideological background that underlay Phibul's all-out attempt to change the collective psyche:

> Revolution does not only mean the change of ruler but it means the change which is important to the lives and the hearts of the people. It is an improvement in the social, political and educational aspects of life including the improvement of human behaviour. Revolution may have to begin as a *coup d'état* or riot. But if the successful instigators capture power and do not do anything revolutionary to improve society, the economy, education, public morality and well-being, or the public character, then they are merely usurpers of authority and villains in history who made life worse for mankind (Thak 1978: 802, 803; Vichit: 1 January 1952).

Accordingly, Phibul's project was aimed at changing the mind and the behaviour of the people. Different scholars have described it as intended to create "selfhood among the citizenry" (Manas 1995: 29), shape "a new Thai consciousness" (Chai-Anan 2002: 70) and create a new Thai identity and society "through the improvement of the mind" (Thamsook 1977: 214, 204). Phibul himself referred to his plan as "Nation-Building Policy", or *Nayobai Sang Chat*, because it was intended to "reconstruct" the nation and the sociocultural consciousness of the entire population.

5.2.1. Nationalism

The core ideology Phibul applied in his effort was nationalism. Vichit invented a Thai word for nationalism, *Lathi Chu Chat*, which Barmé (1993: 102; FN 147) translates as "belief system + boost/uplift + nation/race". The term mirrored the plan of establishing a new consciousness to rebuild the nation and the Thai people.

Nationalism was made part of the Thai ideological construct by Vajiravudh, and indeed Phibul borrowed many central aspects from royal nationalism, however, he divested them of any reference to the monarchy. Among the core themes Phibul adopted were loving one's country and Buddhism more than one's life, and being grateful, disciplined and subservient to the leader. To a significant degree these primordial notions found expression in the Code of the Brave, or *Wiratham*, which Vichit adopted from the Japanese *Bushido* code and which was announced by the

prime minister's office in May 1943 (Charnvit 1974: 57; FN 64). It likened a blueprint on how Thais were to feel and behave from the state's point of view:

(1)   The Thais love their nation more than their life;
(2)   The Thais are excellent warriors;
(3)   The Thais are good to friends and bad to enemies;
(4)   The Thais love Buddhism more than their life;
(5)   The Thais are sincere;
(6)   The Thais are peace loving;
(7)   The Thais are grateful;
(8)   The Thais are industrious;
(9)   The Thais are an agrarian nation that grows its own food;
(10)   The Thais bequeath good things on children;
(11)   The Thais enjoy a good life;
(12)   The Thais are well dressed;
(13)   The Thais have respect for children, women and the elderly;
(14)   The Thais are united and follow the nation's leader.

While the code mixed new sociocultural concepts, militaristic virtues and traditional notions, the key point was that it attempted to regiment every aspect of life and to create orderly, disciplined, obedient, hard working and conciliatory citizens.

As a new edifice of national unity and independence, Phibul invented *Watthanatham*, or the notion of purposeful culture. The community that supported this culture was no longer defined by its allegiance to the monarchy, but by its cause, for which a foundation was created in an imaginary historiography, which centered on just a few sets of ideas. These included (one) the depiction of the Thai race as a race of great warriors, (two) an allusion to an ancient homeland, *Nanchao,* from where the Thais allegedly had been evicted, (three) the suggestion of the nation's long struggle for unity and independence, and (four) the profiling of Thailand as "Great Nation", or *Maha Prathet,* which was alluded to extend beyond the existing territorial boundaries (Thongchai 1994: 156, 157). In rationalizing the concept of *Maha Prathet* and putting it into a contemporary context Phibul told the press in 1940:

> … in the future, there are only two choices for every country, namely, a *Maha Prathet* status, or that of a slave status. There exists no middle-of-the-road solution. As for a *Maha Prathet* status, … [it means] an ability to protect oneself and to sustain oneself in all aspects – economic, military, and others… As for our nation, we have no alternative but to strive together and endeavour in all undertakings to increase our income to enable us to be self-sufficient (Kobkua 1995: 106; Phibul's press interview: 13 September 1940)

Phibul was framing the nation, its right and its need to self-determination on the basis of the "Great Nation" doctrine. In contrast to royal historiography, the new doctrine sidestepped the monarchy and newly attempted to engage the entire population in building the "Great Nation" based on the central premise that to survive the nation needed to progress. Phibul, in a cabinet directive in 1939, also linked the new political system to the people's new consciousness and conduct:

> In order to have the Thai people progress as a civilized nation and to make the advancement of the present system of democratic rule permanent, it is our objective to bring about good habits among the people (Murashima 1991: 12).

In social terms, Phibul's ideology was intended to get all people to take an active role in building the nation, an idea that found expression in *Ratthaniyom* No. 7, which decreed that all Thais should work together to reconstruct the nation for "the gradual improvement of everyone's condition" (Thak 1978: 250; Ratthaniyom No. 7 Calling on Thais to Join Hands and Build their Nation: 21 March 1940). It specified:

> …nation-building is a great task, requiring concerted effort. If all Thai brethren try to seek honest occupations … and work hard … to support and create greater prosperity for their families, this will doubtlessly help towards the rapid growth of our nation. (…) All Thais must join together to help build the nation, that is, all strong people must work and have steady occupations. One who has no steady occupation is considered to be of no help to the nation and merits no respect from other Thais (Thak 1978: 250; *Ratthaniyom* No. 7).

Phibul was casting the people as a national resource, which his decrees were aimed at mobilizing, by getting the people to subordinate themselves to the nation and to work for the nation in a new committed manner, in particular to displace foreign – primarily Chinese – nationals and businesses from the grip they held on the economy. Phibul indicated as much in a speech to the nation in 1939, when he spoke of the need for the Thais to compete with the Chinese and other foreigners (Kobkua 1995: 161). A grandchild of Phibul and this person's close friend confirm this motive:

> I think [Phibul's effort] was a first step for our leaders to gather [the power and the spirit of the country] together, when so many foreigners were trying to get involved in our business.

The authoritative language of the decrees signified that the nation-building process was not a matter of free individual choice, but everyone's duty. This

mirrored the notion of respect and obedience rooted in kinship-relations and in military political thought. As Nakarin (1986: 74-85) points out, military thought built on the notion of duty, or *Nathi,* as underlying principle. People were expected to surrender their individual interests to the superior interests of the nation in a patriotic manner. Conversely, people's rights, or *Sidthi*, were crudely limited to the right to live (ib.: 75; Vichit 1931: Laksana Khong Khon [On Being Man]). Moreover, Phibul transferred the duty of vigilance to the people in *Ratthaniyom* No. 2 of 3 July 1939, which was titled "Prevention of Dangers to the Nation":

> … the Thai should have the highest esteem for the nation above all else, it is the duty of *each and every citizen* of the nation to uphold and protect the nation by guarding against all forms of danger or deterioration which may occur… (Thak 1978: 245, 246; Ratthaniyom No. 2).

People were thus not only an economic but also a military resource and subordinate to the nation's interests above all else. The relationship of citizens with the state thus was one of subordination, which presupposed the individual's readiness to sacrifice him or herself for the greater cause of the nation, as put in plain words in the Royal Gazette in 1939:

> The love of one's country would urge individual citizens to work diligently for their living and to bring progress to the nation…. If our love for the country is not of the same level as that in other countries, we, the Thai Nation, cannot hope to live long and freely within the [international] community (Kobkua 1995: 108, 109; Royal Gazette: Phibul to the nation: 24 June 1939).

Clearly, the individual's allegiance was newly owed to the nation, not to the king, and it was the new imaginary purpose of the nation that overrode the individual's interests and even his or her right to life. Meanwhile, Phibul's measures were marked by a sense of urgency, by a need to proceed quickly, which Phibul related to the need to keep up with the world, lest Thailand loose her freedom and independence. In 1941 Phibul told the cabinet:

> The world of today is rapidly moving on. It does not crawl along as in the olden days…. we have arrived at a junction; one direction is to plod along according to our own sweet time, this way the people will not be disturbed… However, the country will lose as we cannot keep up with the rate of progress of others. The other direction would surely save our country from all the dangers and bring us progress for now and the time to come (Kobkua 1995: 111; Phibul to cabinet: 16 October 1941).

However, it seems likely that the true motive behind Phibul's urgency was the narrow window of opportunity he perceived for reshaping the nation so as to expand his régime's power base. The crisis of regional hegemony and the weakness of the monarchy were not static circumstances, and he needed to capitalize on their volatility and weakness as long as they persisted. Perhaps he even realized that he would not be able to hold off political participation indefinitely and he certainly sensed that the regional power balance would soon become explosive. Indeed, it seems characteristic of Phibul that he always tried to be a step ahead of the inevitable, trying to capture any turn of events for his and his country's advantage. By doing so he managed to portray himself as a visionary leader and to sustain the proposition that he was leading the nation towards a better future.

But with regard to the role of the people in the state, Phibul never expressly stated that he wanted to turn them into citizens, nor did a word exist that transcribed "citizen" in the modern meaning of the term. Certainly, Phibul attempted to undo the individual's allegiance to the monarchy and to redirect it at the nation-state. However, this switch of rallying points could not produce citizens without a redefinition of the individual's relationship with the state and with society. While he attempted to keep the relationship with the state defined by subordination, he tried to change the relationship with society by introducing the modern notion that everyone should feel part of and contribute to the nation and work for the improvement of everyone's condition, yet this notion was largely devoid of the notion of rights or of the concept of personal choice and freedom. To a degree his vision was evocative of a fascist state.

5.2.2. Fascism

Europe's fascist leaders inspired Phibul. The ideological similarities between Phibul's and the fascist régimes included in particular exalting the nation, the race, the culture and the state or the "good of the people" above the individual, propagating loyalty to a single leader, using intimidation, propaganda and censorship to suppress opposition, promoting stern social regimentation and imposing state control over most aspects of life (Wikipedia Free Encyclopedia Online; Available from:

en.wikipeida.org/wiki/fascism [Accessed 9 July 2005]). Moreover, Phibul's *Phunam* leadership profile was strongly molded on the *Duce* and *Führer* personas of Mussolini and Hitler, respectively.

Phibul admired Mussolini and Hitler and kept a close watch on their campaigns. In 1941 he declared that Thailand and Germany were "intellectual allies" (E. B. Reynolds 2004: 108; FN 41, Bangkok Chronicle: 29 December 1941). Also Vichit was an admirer of Mussolini, while Prayoon spent most of 1938 in Germany studying the militaristic movement of the Nazis (ib.).

On account of these ideological influences and Phibul's mannerisms E. B. Reynolds (ib.: 115) suggests that Phibul could be classified as "Asia's most successful Führer". He further points out that "the Phibul regime … has entirely escaped the notice of the experts on comparative fascism" (ib.: 113). However, while Phibul's racial and territorial policies were influenced by the German model, Germany and Thailand had entirely different social foundations. Germany was an industrialized nation and had a large social segment of workers who had been seriously affected by economic hardship, while Thailand was a near fully agrarian nation where the majority's base of self-sufficiency had not been substantially undermined. Consequently, Phibul could not whip up popular support on the economic facets of Hitler's National Socialism, in particular not through state control of the economy.

Moreover, any comparison of Phibul's régime with fascism must not be taken to imply that Phibul committed crimes against humanity or acts of genocide. Although there were cases of serious bullying of non-Buddhists by state authorities, in particular of Muslims in the south (Ibrahim 2005: 88) and to a lesser degree of Christians, Phibul on the whole backed away from terrorizing the public and rejected Vichit's proposal for public lynching. When raising his salute became too evocative of Hitler's, he took a handkerchief into his hand to deflect from any direct likeness (Stowe 1991: 124, 154). Yet, Phibul went along with fascist theatricals and at the height of his tenure tried to introduce greetings like "Hail Phibulsongkhram" (ib.: 117), while mandatory slogans in the media were highly evocative of the Third Reich. A study of Thai-German relations in the early 20th century and of the influences of

fascism on Thai sociopolitical structures should yet hold more clues and further research is recommended in this direction.

Phibul's idea of state resembled the fascist model in that the people's role was subordinate to the economic, political and social well-being of the nation, and in that their relationship with the nation-state was marked by duty, discipline and obedience. Yet, the position of the individual in Phibul's nation-state also had similarity with the individual's position under the absolute monarchy.

5.2.3. Ideological Tools

Phibul used various approaches and tools to disseminate his ideology, including the mass media, plays, songs, dances and paramilitary organizations.

a) Mass Media

Phibul was the first Thai leader to have access to and use the radio for full-scale and nation-wide ideological indoctrination and propaganda purposes. Apart from its reach, radio offered the possibility of communicating with the illiterate masses (Thitinan 1997: 220). Phibul established radio stations nationwide and installed the latest equipment. To disseminate his ideology, he broadcast political speeches, songs, educational messages and government propaganda. Furthermore, Phibul had sections of the constitution read out over the radio every day and he used a conversational program named *Nai Man Nai Kong,* whose names combine into *Mankong*, or stability, to explain and promote in colloquial terms the government's sociocultural reform policies and measures. The programs were produced by the Department of Public Relations and broadcast almost daily between 1939 and 1944. Phibul got personally involved in directing the programs and in selecting the key topics (Charnvit 1974: 39; FN 30). Phibul said the feedback he got from the programs was his way of listening to the voice of the people (ib.: 39). Evidently, he fully grasped the potential of the media and monitored its use and the impact the broadcasts had on the public at large. To increase the audience Phibul suggested people should listen to the radio to further their education, as decreed in *Ratthaniyom* No. 11. Chai-Anan (2002: 71) sums up the nature and effect of the broadcasts:

> The influence of this new technology of communication became so strong that nationalistic feelings were effectively aroused through the broadcasting of martial and nationalistic songs as well as a program which gave guidance to people on desirable behavior (Chai-Anan: 2002: 71).

During the irredentist campaign Phibul extended the network to reach into Laos and Cambodia where he broadcast the message that Thailand would soon help end French colonial oppression (Stowe 1991: 157). However, the media had its flaws. Phibul used the shortwave band to reach outer areas. The use of shortwave radios therefore remained unrestricted during the war and people could listen to the broadcasts of the Free Thai Movement and of the Allies.

Newspapers were vigorously censured by Phibul and he muzzled the press by closing down newspapers if necessary. From 1942 onwards, Phibul ordered only good news to be printed about the Axis (ib.: 237). To support his *Phunam* leadership profile, newspapers daily had to publish slogans that glorified the leader, typically "Hail Phibulsongkhram", "Believe in and follow The Leader", or the "Nation will survive if we believe in Phibulsongkhram" (Thamsook 1978: 237).

Accordingly, Phibul's used the media for indoctrination purposes, not as a forum for the free exchange of opinions as would be the norm in a modern society.

b) Dramaturgy and Literature

Phibul's nationalism was strongly supported by Vichit's theatrical work who was adamant about manipulating the Thai people's collective psyche. During the Phahon years Vichit had begun writing songs, plays and a new historiography, which eulogized the Thai race's heroic and glorious struggle for unity and independence. While the themes did not differ from royal nationalism, heroism was no longer a royal monopoly but extended to all social classes. For dissemination the scripts were circulated to all schools, the military, the *Yuwachon* and *Yuwanari*, and staged all over the country.

Literature was rectified to more accurately reflect the official propaganda. Phibul became president of the Literature Association of Thailand, which engaged in publicizing works that instilled pride in the new "imagined society" (Manas 1995:

45). The association comprised many prominent scholars, such as Anuman Rajadhon, Norawet Siwasariyanon, No' Saranupraphan, Prince Wan Waithayakon and many others (Manas 1995: 34, 35). Although many of them did not engage in nationalist writing as such, their membership lent credibility to the association and to its journal, *Wannakhadi San* (ib.: 34-43).

Meanwhile, some folk plays were banned. *Lakhon Chatri* and *Likay* were outlawed, as they were thought to bring "disrepute and shame to the nation as well as [undermine] the country's culture, … [or they were thought not to be] truly Thai in origin" (Thamsook 1978: 216; Sri Krung: 15 September 1942). This signified that a fine line was being drawn as to what constituted "Thai" and what not. The school of classical dance and music changed its curriculum to focus on new styles of dances that were endorsed by the government. Emphasis was laid on combining Thai classical dance with western music. The use of some traditional instruments was prohibited as they were considered "un-Thai", either because they did not originate from Thailand or because they could not accommodate the Western tone scale (Thamsook 1978: 216). Classical Indian styles of dance were neglected (Charnvit, 1974: 41) and the *Ramakian* was rebuffed because *Rama* "was a weak, indecisive and ineffectual character" (Manas 1995: 38) that did not match Phibul's preferred national ideal of a resolute, hard working and meticulous character.

The way selected styles of Western culture and art were embraced was evocative of *Siwilai,* however, rather than the hierarchical cultural segmentation that *Siwilai* imposed, Phibul's use of Western cultural standards was intended for equalizing and unifying rather than for segregating purposes. Meanwhile some regional or local ethnic influences were discriminated against, while other localized forms of performing arts or customs were adopted for national use, such as *Ramwong* – an upgraded version of a northeastern folk dance, which was made popular in all parts of the country. Thamsook (1978: 215) says:

> Ramwong received the full support of the government and every Wednesday afternoon all official business was stopped to allow government employees to practice their Ramwong. (…) Over 60 Ramwong songs were composed…

Arts and *Watthanatham* had little to do with free artistic expression. They were ideological tools used to instill "the imaginary concept of *Chat* and Thainess" and to mold the people and society to be more uniform and unified according to the government's vision (Manas 1995: 49). This notion of "Thainess", or *Khwampenthai*, was established as a blend of essential Thai characteristics defined by the régime. It was not a notion built on an organic sense of nationhood, but on imagined and "selected Thai norms [that were] enthusiastically practiced in order to maintain the power position of the self-proclaimed guardians of Thai nationhood in society" (Pavin 2005: 13).

Hence, "Thainess" was "a cultural construct" (Thongchai 1994: 15) that had political motives. However, the construct was modern in that it tended to move people from a local identity to a national one, which was newly defined on the basis of an assumed kinship. While it was driven by economic, social and political motives, it also fostered a new ideological and utilitarian compatibility and identity based on shared imaginary values. This was typical of a society transforming under the influence of modernity. It tended to change the individual's relationship with society and with the nation and establish a new allegiance with the nation. It reflected Phibul's intent of turning the 1932 shift of sovereignty into a broader reality by changing the collective psyche and instilling a new national identity and a new sense of purpose aimed at overcoming discontinuities caused by the breakdown of the old sociocultural framework. In terms of creating a new sense of belonging to a purposeful national community that was self-determined from within, it signified a step on the path of turning people into citizens of a nation.

c) Sociocultural Reform

Sociocultural reform was Phibul's most direct attempt at changing the mind and the behavior of the people through the imposition of socializing decrees. The key instruments for state-enforced changes were state decrees, or *Ratthaniyom*, which Phibul issued without passing through the assembly. The use of *Ratthaniyom* characterized Phibul's idea of constitutionalism, which regarded "the constitution [as] subordinate to the government, not the other way round" (Wyatt 1984: 266). *Ratthaniyom* were molded on the old idea of Royal Decrees on Customs and

Conventions, or *Phra Ratcha Niyom*, which had been used under absolutism. However, while the latter were an expression of the king's opinion, *Ratthaniyom* reflected the "opinion of the state formed in conformity with public opinion (*Maha Chon*)…", indicating that newly the government, not the monarchy, took the lead (Manas 1995: 30) and that the principles were being formulated from within rather than from above society. The use of *Ratthaniyom* also reflected Phibul's sense of urgency, as he held that achieving the desired sociocultural changes by means of conventional education would be too slow. Moreover the decrees represented an inexpensive but effective method for changing society without the need for substantial finances, which were either not available or which were being absorbed by the military. The twelve *Ratthaniyom* that were announced between 1939 and 1942 (Thamsook 1977: 202) were titled as follows:

1   On the names of the country, people and nationality (June 1939);
2   On protecting the country's security (July 1939);
3   On the name of the Thai people (August 1939);
4   On saluting the national flag, the national anthem and the royal anthem (September 1939);
5   On the use of the Thai produce ("Thai buy Thai") (November 1939);
6   On the tune and words of the national anthem (December 1939);
7   On calling the Thais to build their nation (March 1940);
8   On the royal anthem (April 1940);
9   On the Thai language and the duty of good citizens (June 1940);
10 On the dress of the Thais (January 1941);
11 On the daily routine work of the Thais (September 1941);
12 On the treatment of children, the aged and the handicapped (January 1942).

One of Phibul's motives behind these decrees was improving the country's profile in the eyes of foreigners, most notably the Japanese, but not merely in the sense of showcasing a more developed Thailand, but in aiming to fulfill the drive for national self-determination. In an article at the end of the war Phibul claimed the decrees had served to fight and obstruct Japan throughout the war (Thak 1978: 348-370) and he added that he had never believed in a Japanese victory and that he had neither earnestly collaborated nor made any secret treaty with Japan. While Phibul's statements perhaps held up from a patriotic point of view, they belied his ambiguity in accommodating foreign interests and, most importantly, they sidestepped his fundamental and ideological motives for changing society and the position of Thailand in the international order.

To an extent the decrees conveyed the impression that a new era was dawning and that Phibul was leading the nation towards a better future, but at the same time the decrees were regimental. Kukrit (1970: 40) says Phibul promoted "culture by compulsion" and Chai-Anan (2002: 77) says the policies made "citizens sacrifice their freedom and liberty to serve the imaginary identity [of state ideology] … which was separate from the constitutional order". Thus the contention arises that Phibul treated people as if they were a resource of the state rather than citizens of a nation. However, while the decrees were not intended to change the relationship between the individual and authority, they were intended to change the relationship between people and society. While the following sub-section examines Phibul's idea of the state, the thereafter following section on the implementation of Phibul's attempt looks more closely at how he tried to reshape the individual's relationship with society.

5.2.4. Phibul's Idea of the State

Phibul's idea of the state and of the people's role in the state was reflected in the work of No' Saranupraphan, one of the literati who were members of the Literature Association of Thailand. No' was full of praise for Phibul and likened the new Thai state and its institutions and bureaucracy to the root and the trunk of a tree, in an allegory that sought to paint the nation as a "symbol of oneness and unity", and Manas (1995: 37) further suggests:

> [The nation-state] comprised roots, a trunk and many branches, flowers, fruits and leaves. The leader of the nation was like the tap root while other main roots formed the government. The trunk and the branches represented the government officials and leaves, fruits and flowers were the people

This portrait shows the state rather than the people as central to the nation, in an inversion of the first constitution that proclaimed the people as the new sovereign. This view was typical of Phibul's coterie and was clearly reflected in Vichit's thinking. Vichit implied that because the people's interest was subordinate to the nation's, the "good of the people" was subordinate to the "good of the nation"; therefore, while the government was subsidiary to the "good of the people", the government had the mandate to stand guard over the higher "good of the nation"

(Barmé 1993: 88). Barmé (ib.) concludes that this implied that whoever could credibly define the superior good of the nation could also claim a mandate to rule.

In this view the people had the duty to support the state – in a primordial and militaristic sense. The people were a resource that needed to be educated to support the state's economic, political and social policies. The people's role was to perform for the prosperity, harmony and unity of the nation. The individual's socio-political identity thus was subordinate to the state's. The individual's role was cast similar to the individual's role in the fascist state, but also similar to the individual's role in pre-modern and absolutist Thai society, thus as a subject's more than as citizen.

However, different from the absolute monarchy and from the first constitutional government, Phibul attempted to rally support from among the masses, rather than from only among the elite. In a more modern approach, he tried to mobilize the Thai people to join together in the life and in the building of their nation in a manner that as Wyatt (1984: 252) suggests "was more nearly egalitarian in its implications than it could have been earlier under a monarchist psychology". While participation was not a matter of individual choice, it signified a hitherto unknown effort to both mentally and physically engage the individual in building the nation. Political rights remained symbolic and there was no explicit reference to civic rights. The latter at best remained hidden beneath duties and thus were implicit rather than explicit, as exemplified by *Ratthaniyom* No. 12 (Thak 1978: 254), which made it the people's duty to show compassion and awareness for the more marginalized segments of society, although it did not explicitly make it a right for the needier groups to receive compassion or help. Yet, such measures addressed the people's plight and their relationship with society in a different way than had hitherto been the case.

Accordingly, the next section dissects Phibul's measures and asks which of his measures signified a change in the relationship between the people and society.

5.3. Implementation of Phibul's Attempt

This section examines how Phibul attempted to implement his ideology between 1938 and 1944 by mobilizing the nation, creating a national identity and changing the people's ability and attitude, and through economic reform.

5.3.1. Mobilizing the Nation

Phibul's attempt at mobilizing the nation was meant to arouse support for his régime among the entire population and to rally the whole nation behind his effort to unify the nation. In this aim, he used the crisis of regional hegemony to position the nation as a "valuable new prize", holding out Thailand's more equal position in the international order and the vindication of past injustices as incentives. In turn these goals allowed him to justify the military build-up and the regimentation of society. By proposing that the new government could do better than the old one he hoped to build support, legitimacy and rally the people behind his leadership. However, this effort ultimately called for a kind of fulfillment, which inclined Phibul towards authoritarianism, jingoism and the search for an opportunity to confirm the military's worth.

a) Irredentism

Irredentism – the campaign to recover Thailand's lost territories – provided Phibul the opportunity to fulfill the rationale behind the military build-up. It was also the enactment of the doctrines of *Maha Prathet* and "Great Thai Race". Irredentism started as a rhetorical campaign, however, it's attraction proved so popular that Phibul played the matter up, promising to free Thai brethren beyond Thailand's borders from Western colonial domination. Sribhumi remembers how as a schoolboy he was drawn in to by the irredentist campaign:

> [Phibul's irredentism] aroused the attention of all Thai people, including students and schoolboys. I remember that as schoolboys we [went to] a demonstration, calling for the land to be reclaimed…. We had to sing a song: "*Kham Khong Pai Su Khwaen Daen Thai Maa Puak Rao Chao Thai*" [Across the Mekong river we go to the land of the Thai, we are all Thai]...

Yet, when Phibul's opportunity to fulfill the irredentist promises came in 1941, it came almost as a bonus at the end of failed negotiations with Paris and Hanoi over minor border corrections, rather than at the end of a serious military campaign. Following a deadlock in negotiations after the fall of Paris in June 1940, Phibul – ever apprehensive of Japan's advances into Indochina – allowed border skirmishes to ignite into a confrontation with French forces in the area. Within a couple of weeks he gained a fickle upper hand. Japan, eager to present herself as arbiter in the Asian co-prosperity sphere, quickly intervened to mediate a settlement and Phibul came away with less territorial gains than he had hoped for. Nevertheless he got two long desired enclaves on the Mekong west bank – Sayaboury and Champasak – and two provinces in western Cambodia – Siemreap and Battambang. One was duly renamed "Phibulsongkhram" province (Charnvit 1974: 46).

Phibul fully played out his supposed victory for propaganda purposes, putting French prisoners on public display in Bangkok to show that the white men were not the gods the Thais might have thought they were. To commemorate his superficial victory, Phibul dedicated the Victory Monument to this national triumph. He likened Thailand's success to Japan's victory over Russia and he related the triumph to his quest to end the era of Western colonial domination in Asia.

The irredentist success lifted Phibul's popularity and allowed him to sharpen his heroic leadership profile. It also met with widespread excitement among the people. In an unprecedented about turn, the cabinet duly agreed to extend the ten-year interim constitutional provision, precluding popular elections for another ten years. However Stowe (1991: 151) contends that also much money changed hands prior to this decision, a statement that Murashima (1991: 64) corroborates:

> One of Phibul's early acts on becoming prime minister was to acquire funds from the proceeds of the Bureau of Crown Property. He had 500 thousand baht presented to the People's Party for its distinguished service to the country, and part of this royal money was used in the government's maneuvers to get the interim provisions extended.

Nevertheless the irredentist success rallied the nation behind Phibul and satisfied the Thais' deep-felt aggravation over the late 19th century loss of territories. While Sribhumi says "there was full support to claim the land back", there is debate

over the extent to which the campaign was staged. However, as Batson (1980: 292; FN 33) says, while Thai leaders were split over whether to lean towards the West or Japan, all fundamentally agreed on the need to revise the frontier. Indeed after the victory, it was Khuang Aphaiwong, whose father had been the last governor of Battambang, who went to take possession of the western Cambodian provinces. The recovery of the lost territories clearly responded to deep collective feelings. Even Seni in Washington defended Siam's claims in Indochina (Stowe 1991: 258) and later governments tried to hold on to Phibul's territorial gains, while in 1946 Pridi offered $50 million to buy Laos (Pasuk/Baker 1995: 282). However, in 1946/47 the government was forced to retract when France threatened to veto Thailand's request to join the United Nations if Bangkok did not return the lands (Charnvit 1974: 46).

With irredentism Phibul rallied the nation behind a new national cause, justified his militarism, and inspired the people with the idea of Thailand's new role in the region and with her ability to defend her right to self-determination.

b) Regimenting Society

To breed martial discipline among the people in tandem with the military build-up, Phibul in 1939 issued *Ratthaniyom* No. 4 on "Saluting National Flag and Anthem and Royal Anthem", which imposed behavior "prescribed for uniformed personnels [sic]" on the public (Thak 1978: 247, 248; Ratthaniyom No. 4). The royal anthem was included in these rulings signifying that symbolically the monarchy was upheld as a sacred institution (ib.; Ratthaniyom No. 8).

Militarism was promoted nationwide through the broadcast of anthems and military music. Meanwhile, Phibul's dress reform tried to impose a more uniform, orderly and disciplined look on society. However, mandating a dress code was not unique to Phibul's tenure as prime minister. Already in 1937, proper dress was imposed in a Royal Decree Prescribing Customs for the People, which stated:

> The people of Thailand must maintain national prestige. In public places or areas within the municipality people must not dress in improper manners which will damage the prestige of the country, e.g. wearing loose-ended sarong, … only underpants, … sleeping garments, … loincloth, … no blouse or shirt, women wearing only undershirt or wrap-around (Thak 1978: 257).

While above decree carried Phibul's handwriting, the timing indicates that it had nothing to do with obstructing the Japanese, although Phibul later claimed so. From 1942 onwards Phibul increasingly invoked proper dress as a means to achieve national independence (Thamsook 1978: 238), claiming that a "civilized" appearance would keep foreigners from interfering in local affairs under the false "pretext of introducing us to civilization" (Kobkua 1995: 109). Phibul became obsessed with hats. Three days after the declaration of war he said "now more than ever it is essential to go on wearing hats…" (Thamsook 1978: 238) and he proclaimed that hats would lead Thailand to greatness, signifying that he increasingly used the issue of proper attire to deflect from the country's predicament and partial loss of sovereignty.

To the people, the dress code and the hat decree in particular were a nuisance and led to ridiculous situations. Meyer remembers that a pregnant woman was refused admission at Chulalongkorn Hospital for lack of a hat and had to deliver her baby on the stairs. While not all reactions to the dress code were negative, it led to bitterness and mockery. It reinforced the idea that the people's conduct and attire were subordinate to the state's orders and while it projected a new – albeit alien – standard of social interaction, it undermined traditional life-styles and defied people's civil liberties. However, the much ridiculed decrees also overshadowed some of the more progressive changes and perhaps the fact that Phibul attempted to make everyone part of a more modern society, not only the elite, as had been signified by Chulalongkorn's model, when he had worn a hat representative for the kingdom's quest for modernization and to facilitate interaction with the West.

Daily life was regimented in painful detail. *Ratthaniyom* No. 11 on the "Daily Activities of the Thais" issued in 1941 (Thak 1978: 253, 254), reads like an army's order of the day, instructing Thais to:

> …punctually eat their meals not more than four times [a day]… sleep for six to eight hours… have lunch for a period of not over an hour….

However, the decree also instructed the people to be more self-sufficient, which reflected a wartime necessity and was contained in *Ratthaniyom* No. 5 of November 1939, on the "Use of the Thai Produce", which encouraged a higher degree

of self-sufficiency and solidarity (Thak 1978: 248, 249). Similarly, *Ratthaniyom* No. 11 urged people to lead more purposeful lives and said Thais should engage in:

> … growing vegetables, raising animals or plants … converse with … families or friends, educate themselves by listening to the radio, reading, or go for entertainments or art exhibits... spend their holidays in manners useful for their bodies or minds such as religious activities, listen to a sermon, make merit, study, travel, play games or rest.

The decree followed up on *Ratthaniyom* No. 7 on "Calling on Thais to Join Hands and Build Their Nation", which was issued in 1940 and which gave details on how the public should fulfill its duty of promoting and maintaining national culture (ib.). It also called for the public to educate itself, to listen to the radio and visit theaters. While to an extent this was an encouragement to imbibe the government's propaganda, the measures reflected Phibul's desire to build a more modern society and to engage people in this process. In further detail people were urged to show a pleasant personality, to eat with fork and spoon, to stop chewing betel nut and to sit on chairs rather than on the floor. Wudh pointedly comments:

> [Phibul] was trying to change in a way that he thought was an improvement. But it would have happened eventually anyway. He was trying to force it.

Indeed, many of the changes reflected changing times and while Phibul may have been both forceful and advanced, many changes became almost generic to the Thai way of life. Hence, his attempt represented a mix of coerciveness and progress, and it certainly left its mark on modern Thai society.

5.3.2. Forming a New Identity

a) Internalizing the Appellation of the Country

Ratthaniyom No. 1 on the "Appellation of Country, People and Nationality" (Thak 1978: 245), which was issued in June 1939, changed the country's name from Siam to Thailand. It coincided with Phibul's decree to move the official New Year from 13 April to 1 January to align the calendar year with international convention, while in a typical mix of utilitarian and traditional norms he upheld the year-count which was based on the Buddhist era.

Ratthaniyom No. 1 contained a racial reference, but it also was populist and nationalistic in that it purported to be "in accord with the exact name of the race and preference of the Thai people" (ib.). "Thai" in Phibul's context correlated with the assumed kinship theory of Thai-speaking peoples within and beyond the national territory (Wyatt 1984: 253), and Crosby (1945: 112) said it portrayed Thailand as the "mother-country of all peoples of Thai race". Concerns were raised in the cabinet, as the new name was exclusive of certain groups, particularly of people in the south, yet at the same time "Thailand" did reduce the historic focus on central Siam and took a view of the population that was more "undifferentiated" (Nakharin 1986: 79).

Ratthaniyom No. 3 (Thak 1978: 245-247) directed all nationals to identify themselves as "Thai", without division by region, religion or ethnicity, and to abandon the use of regional identities that divided the Thai people into "Northern Thais", "Northeastern Thais", "Southern Thais" and "Islamic Thais". Diversity was to be overcome by national unity, or *Samakkhi Chai*, which was supposed to reflect the identity of the majority, or *Maha Chon* (Manas 1995: 29, 30). While the National Cultural Maintenance Act 1940 allowed "local variations" of customs (Thak 1978: 255, 256), there was no tolerance for fundamental diversity, especially not for religious diversity, as was evident from Phibul's proselytizing of non-Buddhists, in particular of Muslims and Christians. This approach defied the modern notion of citizenship, which acknowledges and defends diversity of culture and freedom of religion as fundamental human rights.

On the other hand, the decree had anti-colonial motives and thus signified Thailand's right to self-determination. That the use of "Siam" was still linked to colonial perspectives was suggested by the irritation and the condescending reaction the name-change triggered in London. Churchill (1950: 642) retorted, "why is Siam buried under the name of Thailand?" and a British Foreign Office note snapped at Thailand's impertinence:

> This is really rather tiresome. Let the Siamese call their country what they will – but surely what the English chose to call it is a matter for the English to decide (Songsiri 1981: 4; FN 4).

To a degree the name-change also broke with royal tradition. While the crown had referred to the state as the Kingdom of Ayutthaya even during the early Bangkok period, it adapted "Siam", which historically denominated the lower Chaophraya basin, in its correspondence with colonial powers and in particular on the *McCarthy* map (published in London in 1885), which was named after Chulalongkorn's British cartographer and which delineated "Greater Siam" as reaching as far east as the Annamese Cordillera, south into Malaya and north into the Shan states.

In contrast, *Muang Thai* was the way the people – at least in the central plains – referred to their country from within, and thus "Thailand" internalized a certain folk identity in the appellation of the country, although like "Siam" and "Kingdom of Ayutthaya" it discriminated against remote areas, in particular the northeast and the former kingdoms of Lanna and Patani. Thus, the change reflected the complexities and confusions typical of a nation at the threshold of modernity seeking to redefine itself on internalized notions, but which at the same time was entangled in an attempt to establish and impress a new imaginary identity and unity on a national population.

b) Linking People and Historiography

While Damrong had carved Thailand's historiography around the monarchy, Phibul adopted Vichit's version, which was similar to the royal historiography in that it upheld the notion of the individual's "absolute sacrifice" (Manas 1995: 31). However, Phibul attempted to introduce a new aspect to the nation's assumed kinship by adding racial and hegemonic motives, and including people of all social classes in acts of heroism in defense of the nation's independence and unity. This historiography was transcribed in form of maps, showing the Thai people's migration from an imaginary homeland, *Nanchao*. It was distributed as part of the national curriculum, while for popular consumption Phibul embraced Vichit's plays and songs.

Two highly popular plays were *Luat Suphan* and *Suk Thalang*, written in 1936 and 1937, respectively. The first eulogized the heroic stance of villagers in an 18th century fight against Burma, while the second praised the defense of Phuket by two heroines, also against the Burmese (Charnvit 1974: 39, 40; FN 31). The sagas struck a chord with the people, probably in part because of the epic format, in part because

of the heroic stance of commoners and in part because of the nationalist feelings the plays evoked in a time of change and insecurity. The proceeds from *Luat Suphan* allowed the Fine Arts Department to finance the construction of a new theatre (ib.). Also other plays praised the people's love and sacrifice for their nation. *Ratmanu* (written in 1936) was about the fight against Cambodia, *Maha Devi* (1938) narrated the fight of a Chiangmai queen against the Burmese, and *Pho Khun Phamunag* (1940) told the story of a Thai prince who defeated a Khmer overlord (ib.). Some plays celebrated the monarchy, but the Chakri kings were conspicuously left out, while *Prachao Krung Thon* (1937) exalted King Taksin (1767-1782) – whose throne was usurped by the first Chakri king – and directly attacked the image of the Chakri dynasty. Other plays expounded on the *Maha Chat* doctrine. *Chaoying Senwi* (1938) bespoke the Thai people's struggle for their land in the Shan states and *Nanchao* (1939) the eviction of Thais from their imaginary homeland. The lyrics of Vichit's patriotic songs became seared into the people's memories. Sribhumi recalls lines as "*Ma duaikan, ma duaikan, Lueat Suphan*" and "*Rak Mueang Thai, Choo Chat Thai ... Pen Mueang Khong Thai*".

The new historiography, while chauvinistic, established a new assumed kinship – a new national, territorial and racial identity – which largely was dissociated from the Chakri dynasty and which was aimed at creating a new bond between the individual and the nation. Phibul used the myth of the Thais' struggle to reflect on his role as heroic leader (Manas 1995: 40), especially in the context of his irredentist campaign. Yet, the imaginary construct also allowed the people to easily identify with it; Vichit's plays were popular and his lyrics became part of the new identity.

c) Anchoring Pride, Identity and Unity in Culture

Watthanatham became a tool to define the nation around a cause that involved everyone. The state's purpose was inculcating a sense of unity, duty, morality and progressiveness, which newly was defined from within society, rather than from above or from outside. While Phibul attempted to stimulate identity by creating a new national purpose, the approach was typified by compulsion and built on primordial notions of duty and subservience. Conflict, difference and diversity were

"taboo"; accordingly, Manas (1995: 49, 50) puts society's low tolerance for conflict into context with Phibul's attempt, saying:

> Thais [were] led to imagine that in such a conflict-free community so long as everyone [did] his duty then there would be harmony in that community.

Watthanatham emerged as the prime focus of national pride, identity and unity, radiating the notion that culture was rooted in the Thai language and even in Thai food. In fact Phibul created a national dish, *Phad Thai* noodles, in an attempt "to transform Chinese noodles into a Thai-style dish in a bid to champion his nationalist policy against the Chinese" (The Nation: 18 December 2001).

Phibul's attempt to change the definition and the rallying point of the nation involved a wide-reaching and profound approach, which addressed questions related to historic, social, life-style, economic and political conditions. It was a holistic attempt at fundamentally reconstructing society and the collective psyche. Its effects reached far beyond Phibul's era and contributed to shaping a modern Thai identity, which comprised a mix of primordial notions – as obedience and discipline – and modern utilitarian notions aimed at overcoming the people's fundamental complacency. The next sub-section looks at some of these measures more closely.

5.3.3. Addressing the People's Ability and Attitude

Some of Phibul's measures had the effect of making society more egalitarian, broadening skills and changing social consciousness. Among them were policies and measures that concerned the Thai language and which addressed gender inequalities and the plight of weaker members of society. Many of these measures have been eclipsed by Phibul's more ridiculed and coercive decrees.

a) Language Reform

Phibul identified language as a core component of culture and as an important utilitarian tool. Issued in June 1940, *Ratthaniyom* No. 9 on the "Thai Language, Alphabet and Civic Duties of Good Citizens" (Thak 1978: 251, 252) proclaims:

> … the continuity and the progress of Thailand depends on the usage of the

national language and alphabet as important elements… Thais must respect, show esteem, and venerate the Thai language, and must feel honored to speak or to use the Thai language… Thais must recognize that one of the civic duties of a good Thai citizen is to study Thai which is the national language, at least until being literate… Thais must not regard the place of birth, domicile, residence or local dialects … as marks of differences. Everyone must consider that being born as a Thai means that he has Thai blood and speaks the same Thai language.

Phibul's language reform was rooted in the underlying idea of making society more uniform. It made it the people's duty to improve their skills, however, it also comprised an effort by the government to promote literacy. To simplify the writing system, five vowels and thirteen consonants were dropped. Phibul's wife, La-iad, later confirmed that this simplification was meant "to aid those who had no formal schooling" (Ray1972: 198; La-iad) and make Thai easier to learn. Wudh says:

[The reform] actually was good. But then they changed it back again. It was easier. You know, I find it's not easy to follow the present way of writing. The way he changed [the writing system] was easier, simpler. He was trying to change [society] in a way that he thought was an improvement. What [his successors] did was back to the original state, after he was gone, the writing reform was cancelled.

To enforce literacy, Phibul ordered that all soldiers had to learn to read and write within six months or stay confined to their barracks until literate. He even prepared a tax for illiteracy, which, however, was never applied (Thamsook 1977: 216). Considering the few years that the masses spent in school, a simpler writing system should have made literacy at least somewhat more accessible.

Phibul saw the Thai language as an important symbol of national identity and independence, especially during the war years. In 1942, the committee on language reform denounced the use of foreign words and linked the language to the country's quest for self-determination:

We Thais must have our own language. A nation which does not have its own language will lose its sovereignty and independence in the end (Thamsook 1978: 240; Sri Krung: 27 May 1942).

Although Phibul later claimed to have introduced language reform to deter the Japanese language from entering the curriculum, *Ratthaniyom* No. 9 predates the war by one and a half years and cannot only be interpreted in the context of Thailand's

wartime situation and the threat of an influx of Japanese culture. Language was clearly both a unifying factor in Phibul's nation-building policy and a utilitarian tool.

Language reform had another dimension aimed at making language more egalitarian. Sribhumi recalls how Phibul invented greetings such as *Sawasdee*, *Aroonsawat* and *Sayansawat*, but most particularly how he introduced the use of more egalitarian pronouns:

> He started new words for 'I' and 'you'. Formerly, Thai people used '*Mung*', '*Kae*', '*Eng*', and so on. Some of these words also signified different levels. But if you use '*Phom*' and '*Khun*' you talk to everybody, say to a taxi driver or to a director general. In the beginning it was difficult, but now we actually use that.

The motives of this change are more difficult to grasp for a non-native Thai speaker, except that they perhaps ironed out some of the language's hierarchical structures and colloquialisms. Yet, despite the changes the Thai language remained hierarchical. As Bechstedt (2002: 240, 247) suggests, it is still "impossible to address a person [in Thai] without referring to social status" and the language continues to contain "esteem, conformity and a sense of obligation towards elders".

Phibul's language reform contained aspects of unity, orderliness, utilitarianism and nationalism. While its more egalitarian components should not be exaggerated, the overall measures nevertheless fit a pattern of modernizing society and showed increasing awareness for language as a cultural asset and focus of identity. The reform tended to benefit a large and marginalized segment of society – the illiterate masses – which, at least in principle, represented an effort to give better abilities and opportunities to everyone.

b) Raising the Status of Women in Society

One of Phibul's first acts as prime minister was to promulgate a new electoral law, which amongst other changes gave women the right to vote, giving women the same political rights as men, although these rights remained largely symbolic for both men and women. But Phibul also tried in other ways to raise the status of women in society to that of men (Thamsook 1977: 219, 220). Although Phibul's underlying motive probably was to create a more uniform and purposeful society and to mobilize

all human resources, in particular also women, his effort qualifies as an attempt to create a more egalitarian society. The policy was inspired by La-iad, but it also reflected Phibul's view that women should be able to do whatever men could do – hence be more equal – and that their proactive role in society and in the economy should be recognized. Phibul also tried to give women more dignity and liberty in the family and in society, and Kobkua (1995: 127, 128) says:

> To Phibul, women played an important role both at home and at the national level. (…) The government also exhibited its confidence in womenfolk when it set up a women's corps in the Army. (…) Generally speaking, in spite of the excessiveness of the efforts designed to raise their status, Thai women owed their social liberation to the Draconian measures launched by Phibul. The campaign made it possible for Thai women to participate in the national and social affairs of the nation.

One of the reasons women were given a special status and a separate cultural department was that Phibul saw women as vital to shaping the nation. He said women were the "mould of the nation… the mould of the character of men… [without women] we can never build the Thai nation" (ib.: 158; FN 79; Phibul: 1 February 1943). But it is likely that Phibul also wanted women to take on some of their traditional responsibilities, not only in the family, but also in the economy, in his attempt to balance the grip foreigners – in particular the Chinese – had on the economy.

The importance of women's economic role in traditional society is described by Reid (1992: 482, 483), who tells of the 16th century role women had in the commercialization of Southeast Asia during the Ayutthaya period:

> Commerce and marketing were considered predominantly the business of women by all Southeast Asian societies. (…) Foreign traders were surprised to find themselves doing business with women, not only in the market-place but also in large-scale transactions. Women frequently traveled on trading ships, to the surprise of Europeans, Chinese and Indians alike. While for males of high status it was considered demeaning to haggle over prices, at least in one's home territory, women had no such inhibitions. The business concerns of powerful men were typically managed by their wives.

Phibul's grandchild and this person's close friend comment on Phibul's improvement of the status of women:

> [Phibul] tried hard to change the position of women in the Thai society… Before

he became prime minister, many women just stayed at home in the traditional way. They could not stand on their own feet, so they tried to marry, when they were very young… After Phibul raised the position of the women, many went to study in foreign countries, like the men, and then they could work in positions that previously were reserved for only men. In a sense, before that, Thai women were just like slaves. They belonged to the husband. Therefore, without a husband they could not succeed. The old saying was "*Saamee Pen Chatkaewkankeet*" [the husband is the protector of the wife, or the wife was under the protection of the husband's umbrella]. (…) [Before Phibul] they were not considered equal, women had to follow the men's ideas; women could not do important things by themselves.

Karnika also confirms some of the changes to the status of women, though for women of her social class the changes were perhaps not that new:

Yes. The women could do more than before. [Phibul's] wife [La-iad] was a very energetic person. She established societies and associations for women, and all those sorts of things. [It was not that] formerly a woman could not work if she wanted to work, but most women stayed in the house. I myself, I worked for the Red Cross during the wartime. I think the women were freer. They could go anywhere they liked, they had clubs of their own, their own parties, their own society and they started to have a lady's society. Formerly, it was not so organized, it used to be just friends that got together. [Under Phibul women were encouraged to do] social work, they could do something good for the country.

Ending women's subordinate role in family and society did little to carry more women to the top ranks of society and Phibul's motives were not primarily aimed at emancipating women. But the policies did balance social inequalities. Phibul's attempt to raise the status of women stands out as the strongest evidence that some of his measures had the effect of creating a more egalitarian society and of establishing new norms for social interaction, which were commensurate with notions of equality among citizens rather than with notions of subordination among subjects.

c) Addressing the Plight of the Needy

Phibul introduced some other decrees that fostered a more modern sense of social consciousness, especially vis-à-vis the underprivileged. A monument in Saraburi province (observed for this thesis on 24 July 2005) pays tribute to Phibul's effort to promote public welfare. It's plaque reads:

50 year Memorial of the Division of Public Welfare, Ministry Interior, 2533 (CE 1990). Field Marshal P. Phibulsongkhram. Prime Minister 2481-2487 (CE 1938-1944) and 2491-2500 (CE 1948-1957). Ex director of the Department of

Public Welfare who first initiated the government's policy of providing public welfare services and who established the Nikhom Sang Tua Eng [Center for Self-Support] of the needy and underprivileged people, the first center being located at Amphoe Phraphutthabat, Saraburi Province. In recognition of his good deeds the Department of Public Welfare and the people have built this monument to mark his accomplishments. Inaugurated by General Chatichai Choonhavan, Prime Minister of Thailand, on 8 September 2533 [CE 1990].

Phibul set up a model of a citizens' self-support center, *Nikhom Sang Tua Eng,* in Saraburi province, while his *Ratthaniyom* No. 12 promoted compassion and awareness for society's needy, infirm, weak and young. The decree on "Aid and Protection given to the Young, Old and Infirm" of 1942 (Thak 1978; 254), proclaims:

The government considers that living together in a community where generosity and ready hands to help those who are young, old or infirm are culturally desirable, … [and that in] public places or on public roads, a person must aid and protect the safety of the young, the old, the infirm in their travels, and help them to avoid danger.

These measures, which like most others were inexpensive, conveyed the impression that something was being done and supported the idea that people should join hands in building a better society. By encouraging self-help organizations and compassion for the weak and needy, Phibul was addressing the lot of the more marginalized groups of society and improving their plight and their opportunities, which was something that had never been done before. It reflected a move toward a society that embraces more modern, social and egalitarian notions.

5.3.4. Economic Reform

Phibul's economic measures were characterized by a number of measures aimed at getting the Thai people to take a more proactive role in the economy and at displacing foreign interests and freeing up supplies for Japan.

a) Promoting a Stronger Work Ethic

Crosby (1945: 24) remarks that the Thais were not particularly industrious:

No one will say of the people of Siam that they are fond of hard work. As manual labourers, no less than as traders, they are markedly inferior to the industrious Chinese, dwelling as they do in a fertile land where most of them can gain a livelihood without too great exertion…

In 1938, Phibul said that foreigners "should not be allowed to take all kinds of jobs from the owners of the country" (Kobkua 1995: 146). In 1939 he publicly revealed his motives by propagating the need for the Thais to work harder and change their economic behavior in order to compete with foreign contenders:

> We must compete with [the Chinese and other foreigners]. We must build up Thai communities such that the Thais become sellers and buyers; and not… merely buyers as at present… Whatever products sold by the Thais should also be produced by them. We are Thai, we must buy Thai first; we must prefer Thai products; we must believe that Thai products are better than foreign-made ones (Kobkua 1995: 161; Phibul to the Nation: 24 June 1939).

Vichit went as far as giving preference to the image of the walking Buddha to encourage stronger work ethics (Batson 1974: 91), indicating the extent to which the government was willing to go to encourage people to work harder. However, Phibul backed up his attempt with little tangible support. While he reserved a number of professions for Thais only (Thamsook 1978: 236) and recommended a range of diverse economic activities to the people (Pasuk 1980: 30) – indeed petty-trade and noodle vending became popular activities – neither did the structure of the economy change, nor did Thailand begin to industrialize. 85 percent of the people remained in agriculture, forestry and fishing and only 2.2 percent in manufacturing, as Thailand's economy continued to trail the region's well into the 1960s (Ingram 1955: 145).

Yet, Phibul's era produced a new breed of commoners, who identified with the country in a new way and who turned the discipline and etiquette the government tried to impress on them into a platform for personal progress. Sribhumi credits Phibul's policies for endowing him with a strong work ethic and fine professional standards, and though Sribhumi is a single case, he characterizes a particular breed of people that came out of the Phibul era. He says:

> I was born during that period. I was trained to love the country, to work hard. That is why I have [advanced], because of my discipline, because of my hard work. I was taught to be like that. I was trained to have that quality. That is why I have climbed up. [Because of] my parents and my school under the policy of the government. And because of the *Ratthaniyom* and everything we were taught. That is my background.

Sribhumi may be the archetype of a modern Thai the way Phibul might have imagined the people should be, resolute, hard working and of fine character, with a new standard of universality and a deep sense of love for the country. However, it is hard to imagine how with rhetoric and decrees primarily, and with few tangible measures to back up the reforms, Phibul might have succeeded in instilling such qualities on the masses.

Nevertheless, another area where Phibul tried to support development was by promoting agricultural education. In 1943 Kasetsart University was founded, signifying Phibul's inclination to improve conditions, skills and techniques for the masses. Though credit cannot be given to Phibul alone, Porntip Jarasviroj (daughter of Kasetsart University's founder Luang Suwan Vajokkasikij, and interviewed for this thesis on 3 January 2006), tells of how Phibul took a personal interest in the development of Kasetsart University. Porntip says Phibul came by to see her father "all the time", encouraging him with rhetoric but with little tangible help.

b) Anti-Chinese, Anti-Colonial and pro-Japanese Measures

One of the rare areas where Phibul tackled the structure of the economy was in freeing up resources for Japan. State enterprises made inroads into rice milling and salt production, in particular to brake up the grip the Chinese had on these sectors of the economy (Charnvit 1974: 45). The aim was to make supplies to Japan less vulnerable to Chinese boycotts. However, the measures against the Chinese were also driven by sociopolitical motives. Phibul set out to undermine the position of the foreign communities by closing down foreign schools and by imposing restrictions on foreigners. The group that suffered most were the Chinese, while vis-à-vis the indigenous population these measures looked rather popular on account of the widespread dislike for Chinese middlemen. However, Wudh says that while the Chinese disliked Phibul because of these measures, the situation for the Chinese was never excessively difficult. Obviously, while the Chinese were an obstacle and a political target, Phibul could not afford to oust them as this would have derailed the economy. While upholding the anti-foreign measures and intimidating foreign communities to keep them at least politically subdued, Phibul turned a blind eye on the new alliances businessmen increasingly formed with members of his cabinet and

with the generals. As Riggs (1966: 255) shows – though in a review of Phibul's entire tenure, not only his first term – many politicians and most generals became involved in lucrative alliances with business, while Phibul seems to have limited his interests to the prosperity of the armed forces, which after all were the top beneficiary of state revenues.

c) Final Break with the British World Economy

Some strategic measures were added to Phibul's pre-war attempt to displace foreign interests and to free up supplies for Japan. Most eminent were his intents to nationalize the oil business and to set up tin smelting facilities in the south. While the former irritated the Americans, the latter irritated the British who controlled the export of tin ore to Malaya for processing. Sales to Japan let Thailand generate direct foreign exchange revenues, rather than having reserves accumulate in Britain, which limited Thailand's control over her reserves. The risk of this monetary dependency on London became evident at the outbreak of war when Britain froze £12,500,000 of Thai reserves in British banks, putting additional pressure on Thailand's depressed economy. The details of Thai foreign reserves in British financial institutions were reported by the British Foreign Office in 1942 through the Swiss Legation in London as follows: £1,000,000 "standing to the credit of His Siamese Majesty's government currency reserve account with the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China" and the grand sums of £6,810,179, £113,127, £2,995,803, £500,000, £750,000 and some smaller amounts in the National Provincial Bank in several Free Currency Reserve Deposit Accounts (SFA/FI 61: T.1.B.60. SLL: 31 August 1942). These funds remained inaccessible to the Bangkok government throughout the war.

After the war began, Phibul revoked all British forestry and mining concession. The extent of these concessions is plain from documents in the Swiss Federal Archives, as the termination notices were forwarded through Switzerland's good offices in 1942. Under several orders the Forestry Department cancelled the concessions of The Borneo Company in Tak and in Chiang Mai, of the Anglo Thai Corporation in Lampang, of the Bombay Burma Trading Corporation in Lamphun, Phayao, Chiang Rai and Tak, and of Louis T. Leonowens in Lampang and Sukhothai (SFA/BKK 2: 24 February 1942). Somewhat later, mining leases granted to British

companies were withdrawn by the Department of Mines, affecting leases in Chumphon, Surat Thani, Nakorn Sridhamaraj, Songkhla, Yala, Pattani, Trang, Phuket, Phanga and Ranong, and companies like Thai Tin Syndicate, Nawng Pet Tin, Chiang Phra Tin, Ban Nasan Tin, Tongkah Harbour Tin Dredging, Ronpibon Tin, Takuapa Valley Tin Dredging, Anglo-Thai Tin Syndicate, Yala Mines, Straits Consolidated Tin Mines, Phuket Tin Dredging, Alexander Campbell Smith MacCloud and many others (ib.: 16 February 1943; Government Gazette: 16 March 1943).

The termination of concessions broke Thailand's final link with the British world economy and was accompanied by the surrender of British consulates in Chiang Mai, Lampang, Songkhla and British consular rest-houses in Chiang Rai and Phrae to the care of the Swiss consulate (SFA/BKK 2: Note 101: 22 July 1941; SFA/BKK 3: Protocol of Transfer: 13 July 1942). The extent of British interests is further supported by Crosby (1945: 40), who says there were 50,000 British Indian subjects in Northern Thailand until 1941, and by the decline after 1937 of the populations in the timber provinces Chiang Mai and Mae Hong Son and in the tin-mining province Ranong, in contrast to the national population which grew by 21 percent from 1937 to 1947 (Statistical Yearbook of Thailand 22, I: BE 2488-2498).

Britain reacted with bitterness against the expulsion of British interests and after the war tried to impose "retribution and controls on Siam that would [have amounted to turning Siam into] a protectorate" (Wyatt 1984: 261), however, the United States of America intervened to prevent Britain from doing so.

The Thai economy suffered as a result of the war. Inflation rose ten-fold on account of the state deficit, which accrued with the military build-up and with Thailand's obligation to support Japanese troops in Thailand. Meanwhile, Phibul's economic reforms entailed little tangible effects. The measures were nationalistic, populist, aimed at self-help, at freeing up supplies for Japan and at displacing foreign interests, but the measures against the Chinese were of limited success and Phibul's vision of a more resolute and hard working Thai workforce that was supposed to displace the Chinese did not materialize, however, in the aftermath of his declaration of war on the Allies, he was able to fulfill his anti-colonial economic objectives by terminating the extensive British concessions in mining and timber extraction.

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter has examined Phibul's attempt and his motives to change the mind and the behavior of the people. It has identified his aim to firmly establish his régime's and his personal legitimacy on the basis of a new set of notions, without, however, fundamentally changing the relationship between the individual and the state. While Phibul undertook to deconstruct the legitimacy of and the feelings of allegiance for the monarchy, he instead erected the military, the *Phunam* persona, the nation and *Watthanatham* as the new edifices for the people to focus their allegiance on. He endeavored to fill the gap left by the breakdown of old structures by making the military the most important institution in the nation. As foundation of political legitimacy he upheld the constitution and democracy in a symbolic and sacred manner, while he attempted to redirect the legitimizing force of the *Sangha* at his régime. Yet, the monarchy retained a symbolic and an increasingly sacral role in society, which opened the path for people to uphold their fundamental sentiments for the monarchy.

Phibul's nationalist ideology partly built on royal nationalism, especially on the idea of the individual's subordination and duty to the state, but his ideology entailed a sense of loyalty detached from the monarchy and newly attached to the nation. Phibul constructed a new assumed kinship on the doctrines of a great Thai nation and race and on the national language, national food, a national culture and shared Buddhist values. *Watthanatham* became the new focal point of national identity, signifying a new shared and progressive purpose defined from within society that was supposed to involve everyone. However, the way *Watthanatham* was promoted was coercive. The people's relationship with the state remained shaped on the primordial notions of duty and subordination to the state and Phibul kept people's political and civic rights quarantined.

Phibul used irredentism to mobilize and rally the nation around a new central cause, to emancipate the nation in the international order and to vindicate old injustices. This gained him wide popular support and the consensus of the assembly.

Phibul's economic measures were not supported in any tangible way, except those aimed at supporting Japan and at reducing the grip the Chinese had on the Thai economy, but the latter rather led to a closer alliance between the Chinese and the bureaucracy. Meanwhile, the wartime termination of concessions fulfilled Phibul's quest to end British economic interests and accordingly, upset London.

In his all-out drive to change the mind and the behavior of the people, Phibul embarked on a program of sociocultural reform. He resorted to *Ratthaniyom* to accelerate change with decrees that were closely interlinked with his military and political objectives and which were aimed at imposing discipline, obedience and uniformity on society. Nevertheless, some of these measures were egalitarian in their implications, in particular his policies which addressed the role and status of women in society. He also addressed the plight of other marginalized but wide segments of society, such as the illiterate, the young, the infirm and the needy, and he encouraged self-help organizations to be set up. These measures entailed improvements in the social status of wide segments of the population that hitherto had been ignored. Along with a more direct engagement of the individual in the progress and prosperity of the nation, these measures signified a change of the individual's relationship with society and a move toward a society that embraces more modern and egalitarian notions. In so far, the people's envisioned role was more commensurate with an active and engaged role of a citizen than with the passive and submissive role of a subject, while on balance the metamorphosis of people – as well as the status of society – remained stuck somewhere between primordial and modern notions of identity, position and belonging.

CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

During his first term as prime minister Phibul undertook to fulfill the fundamental shift of sovereignty of 1932 by changing the mind and the behavior of the people in an attempt to ingrain a new base of political legitimacy in the collective psyche and to establish a new individual sense of allegiance with the nation. Such a change reflected the transformation of society under the influence of modernity, which typically was marked by an ideological shift from primordial to reasoned notions, by a political shift from a monarchy to a nation-state and ultimately by a metamorphosis of people from being subjects of a king to being citizens of a nation.

This thesis first comes to terms with three critical complexities of Phibul's era. The first complexity is that the formal shift of sovereignty of 1932 did not broadly implement the people's sovereignty it promised. Instead it was followed by a struggle for power among the new oligarchy's radical, liberal and conservative factions, which Phibul managed to decide in his radical group's favor. He then took on the challenge of reinforcing the notion of the new political foundation in broader society. Secondly, since the 1850s Thailand was in the process of becoming a nation. The absolute monarchs had fulfilled the change of a pre-modern state into a territorial, centralized and absolutist state, however, in the process they had used nationalism to equate the nation with the monarchy. After 1932, the opportunity arose to dissociate the nation from the monarchy, a challenge Phibul responded to with dedication. Thirdly, the regional crisis of hegemony, which coincided with the end of the age of colonialism, offered both an opportunity and a need to reposition and defend Thailand in a new international order, again a challenge Phibul seized on with particular enthusiasm, as it allowed him to strengthen the military – his personal power base.

Phibul emerged as a leader who understood the implications of these changes and who was able to manage and capitalize on them. While he seized on the crises of the monarchy and of regional hegemony in an opportunistic manner, he embarked on a consistent, coherent, long-term and broad effort to eliminate the royalist opposition,

to marginalize the monarchy and to displace it by establishing the military, the *Phunam* persona and the constitution as new edifices of power, and *Watthanatham* as a new focus of allegiance and identity in the nation. In this context four distinct patterns are discernible in Phibul's attempt:

One, Phibul embarked on a persistent attempt to displace the monarchy from its supreme position as source of political legitimacy, to cancel its functional roles and to marginalize the king's presence and visibility. This signaled his intent to fulfill the 1932 shift of sovereignty. It also reflected his view that the monarchy was not endowed with any superior powers and that the old régime had been an obstacle to progress. To avoid a political comeback of the old régime, Phibul undertook to eliminate the royalist opposition, which posed a prime political threat to his group and – as he claimed – to constitutional rule.

Two, in place of the monarchy, Phibul erected new political edifices and power structures to replace the monarchy's institutional roles and to overcome a crisis of legitimacy and a sense of insecurity that came with the discontinuity of traditional structures and with the gap left by the absence of the king. He elevated the military to supreme guardian of the nation, invented the *Phunam* persona and used the assembly as a new legitimizing political forum. He erected democracy as a new quasi-sacred political symbol of legitimacy and attempted to redirect the *Sangha's* legitimizing force at his régime. He created *Watthanatham* as a construct of purposeful culture and as a new focus of national identity and allegiance.

Three, Phibul embarked on a battle to win over the collective psyche of the Thai people and to overcome indigenous complacency by initiating a nation-building policy and a program of sociocultural reform. Using coercive decrees and measures, he tried to instill the notion of a new assumed kinship and of a national quest for independence, unity and progress. He newly defined culture from within society and gave people of all social classes a prominent role in the nation's historiography. His decrees sought to engage the entire population in reconstructing the nation and in this endeavor he reached out to all segments of society, also to hitherto marginalized groups, such as women, the illiterate, the young, the weak and needy, so as to mobilize support from all levels.

Four, Phibul strived to emancipate Thailand in the international order. He capitalized on the regional crisis of hegemony and bent towards Japan to undo the influence Britain still had over the Thai economy. He magnified the external threat to justify his military build-up, to support his irredentist and jingoistic policies, to show his ability to rectify past injustices and to mobilize the people to join hands and work together to displace foreign influence in the country. The declaration of war on the Allies matched Phibul's quest to fulfill Thailand's self-determination as did his claim to equality with Japan, which on account of Japan's presence in Thailand he had to define on the basis of idealized cultural benchmarks. More realistically, he submitted to the presence of Japanese troops, a move that essentially allowed him to keep his country out of war hostilities and which reflected Phibul's inclination to always try and stay ahead of imperatives and use them to his advantage.

In seeking an answer to whether Phibul's attempt to change the mind and behavior of the people was commensurate with changing people from being subjects of a king to being citizens of a nation, this thesis in Chapter Two has defined citizenship and its implications as transcending the people's *de jure* political sovereignty. The status of citizenship that emerged with modernity comprised a new sense of community, new shared attitudes, abilities and values that allowed the individual to identity with a nation-state – typically a new construct based on reasoned rather than traditional notions. It implied greater individual and national self-consciousness, and the individual's engagement in the prosperity of the national community and contribution towards the well-being of every member in that community – hence a sense of more formal equality, dignity and social participation.

Phibul's efforts focused on three sets of relations: the relation between the state and the individual, between the individual and society and between Thailand and other nations. The relevance of the latter was that more horizontal relationships between nations and greater national self-consciousness were related to a more horizontal relationship between citizens and to greater individual self-consciousness. Phibul's nationalism linked the emancipation of Thailand in the international order to his endeavor to change the people's attitude and behavior and to his effort to rally the masses behind the nation as the "valuable new price".

As to the relation between the state and the individual, Phibul held on to primordial hierarchical notions, which reflected both monarchist and military thought and which regarded the individual as a subordinate of the state. This was evident from his dictatorial inclination and from his use of coercion and propaganda aimed at promoting martial values, discipline, uniformity, obedience and a sense of duty. Phibul's approach was largely devoid of the idea of civic or political freedom and rights. He saw the people as an economic, social and military resource, and his idea of the state had distinct similarities with the fascist model. Nevertheless, he by and large refrained from terrorizing the public and the patterns and mannerisms he adapted were as much reminiscent of absolutism as they were of fascism.

While Phibul tried to rally the people behind his nation-building policy, he never declared that he wanted to turn subjects into citizens. Thus such a change was not part of his agenda, at least not in political terms. However, in a symbolic manner he strengthened the new foundation of political legitimacy, which was based, at least in principle, on universal suffrage. He was adamant about shifting the people's allegiance to the new institutions and edifices of the nation-state, without, however, undoing the submissive nature of the individual's sense of allegiance.

As to the individual's relation with society and with the nation, Phibul set out to create a new construct of national identity, unity and purpose defined from within society, and to engage the individual in identifying with and contributing to the nation-state and its progress. In particular, he tried to involve everyone in working for the betterment of all members of society. He undertook to widely improve the people's basic abilities by facilitating and evening out the Thai language, a measure that entailed the prospect of better opportunities for the large illiterate segment of society. In a similar way he addressed the plight of such marginalized groups as the young, the weak and the needy, which entailed the prospect of these people gaining more dignity, compassion and attention than had hitherto been the case. And Phibul raised the status of women, giving them the same – albeit symbolic – political rights as men, and recognizing their fundamental importance to society. The attempt to end the women's subordinate role in the family and in society was commensurate with creating a more egalitarian society and with balancing fundamental social inequalities.

In elementary divergence from the monarchist psychology, Phibul used internalized notions and norms to make society more uniform and by implication more equal. Although Phibul's military hierarchy reflected primordial hierarchical structures and although his intolerance for religious diversity defied pluralist principles, the way he tried to change the individual's relation with society and his proclivity to define the nation from within were conducive to the development of a new sense of national identity, belonging and participation. The new relationship between the individual and the nation-state, which Phibul envisioned, had deep primordial roots. While Phibul did attempt to undo the people's notion of being subjects of a king, he neither endowed the people with political or civic rights, nor did he attempt to change the people's submissive relationship with authority.

Nevertheless, in terms of the new abilities, behavior, the wider adaptation of modern norms, notions of nationhood and social engagement that Phibul attempted to implement among broader society, his attempt was – to use Wyatt's term – more nearly egalitarian in some of its implications than the attempts of earlier régimes had been. It is on this basis that Phibul contributed to the process of turning people into citizens, yet, like the Thai nation, Phibul stood at the threshold of modernity, torn between traditional perceptions and modern notions, and accordingly his attempt was marked by mixed principles. However, if Phibul did not fulfill the metamorphosis, he did significantly influence the notion of what constituted – during his time and for a considerable period thereafter – the state's idea of modern Thai citizens. This idea encompassed a form of citizenship without full civic or political autonomy: citizens that remained malleable and loyal to primordial notions of discipline, obedience and subservience to authority, in effect citizens that were a state resource. To this end people were newly endowed with modern forms of behavior and thoughts, with better abilities and opportunities, with a wider sense of equality, dignity and national self-confidence, and with a stronger encouragement to lead active and engaged social and economic lives than had hitherto been the case.

This thesis is limited to Phibul's first era, which ended in 1944. It therefore provides only a partial picture of his impact on Thai society. At the end of his first term Phibul's confidence collapsed and he turned to refuting many of his original aspirations, especially during his imprisonment pending trial for his alleged war

crimes. His successor, Khuang Aphaiwong, cancelled most of Phibul's sociocultural measures and immediately addressed the financial plight of the Thai royal family in Switzerland, giving rise to a new relationship with the monarchy. The post-war coalition, however, was short-lived and in 1947 the military retook power and reinstated Phibul for a second term (1947-1957). However, his authority was limited and his relationship with the monarchy remained uptight. When Phibul's power further waned as a result of his generals' rising might, he tried to implement democracy in an ultimate attempt to reach out to the people and bypass the military oligarchy. But within short he was displaced by Sarit Thanarat who declared democracy an unsuitable political system for Thailand, did away with constitutionalism, reinstated the monarchy as symbolic source of authority, redirected the legitimizing force of the *Sangha* at the monarchy and embarked on a reign of despotism of a hitherto unknown degree in modern Thailand.

To a degree it looks as though Phibul was the one who was displaced, both as a politician and as a historic figure. However, understanding the lasting marks Phibul left on Thai society, Thai politics and Thai identity and on at least the formal notion of Thai citizenship is essential to understanding the way Thailand transformed during the 20th century under the influence of modernity.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This thesis covers only Phibul's first term (1938-1944), primarily because his first term gave him a more unrestrained opportunity to turn his visions into reality, while his second term (1947-1957) was marked by a new power structure, which he was far more subordinate to than before. However, in the interest of rounding off a study of Phibul's influence on the development of the Thai state and Thai society in the 20th century, a continuation of an analysis along the lines attempted in this thesis is recommended covering Phibul's second term.

Furthermore, Phibul's fascist inclination needs more comparative study, however, for this purpose a closer examination of German and Italian fascist models is required and a deeper study of the fascist influences on Thai policy and ideology from the turn of the century until the early 1940s. It may also be helpful to compare the profiles of Phibul and his other European idol, Napoléon Bonaparte, more closely.

Phibul's attempt to change the *Sangha* in 1941 has received relatively little attention from scholars. Further research is recommended into the question whether the subordination of the *Sangha* under the ministry of education in 1941 was linked to any doctrinal influence, since the minister of education was also the head of the *Yuwachon Thahan* and strongly involved in the dissemination of state ideology.

Finally, the terminology of "citizenship" used by Phibul seems to have defied its modern implications. As a non-native Thai speaker, the author of this thesis has not been able to explore the semantics attached to the terms *Chow Thai*, *Khon Thai, Prachachon,* or *Maha Chon* and other terms during the Phibul era, but it is well likely that this terminology holds more information on Phibul's view of the people's and the state's role. Dr. Charnwit Kasetsiri has explored some of these issues and further study is recommended to put this terminology into context with the change of the individual's position in the nation-state under Phibul.

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