

The Concept of Political Power in Thailand s' Philosophy "Absolute Power Tends to Absolute Morality": Obstacle of Thailand s' Liberal Democracy

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Abstract

In the late of 20 century Since the fall of The berlin wall and the collapse of soviet union, the end of political ideology era has comes, liberal Democracy the worst form of government except for all those other forms having been tried from time to time became a political Main Idea and regarded as one the great civilizing achievements of our time. However, Kingdom of Thailand is different from that. The Authoritarian-Aristocracy old school regime in the name of moral was adopted and was supported by extreme right Wing. The purpose of this paper is to study the Thailand s' concepts of power, differing from western original Concept, which equates power with moral; and absolute power led to absolute morality and Then Thai s' political philosophy do not share the idea of separated power. This view is concluded that the best way for political society If power Centralized to the good moral ruler such as Plato s' philosopher king. As Montesquier s' famous quote "experience constantly proves that every man who has power is impelled to abuse it." The consequence of this concept is dictatorship

Keywords: Political Power in Thailand, Seperation of power, Absolute Power

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Introduction

Since Thailand changed its rule from absolute monarchy to monarchy under the constitutional which has the government with the king as the head of the state in 1932. The liberal democracy seem was not rooted on Thai society. In the past 86 years, the image of democracy in Thailand has fallen into one of the most widely known as “The sinister political cycle of Thai politics”¹, or the cycle of constitutional drafting (by coup d'etat group and the most of it is to inheritance the power), uses the constitution and tear the constitution (by the coup d'etat group).

Thailand has a total of 20 constitutions and there are attempting of 13 coups. At the present, National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), the current national government which has been in power since the coup on May 22, 2014. It is a government that has gained power by military intervention and has the longest tenure in every government of the modern world.² It has been in power for over 5 years.

In the 21st century, the power of authoritarianism in Thailand can be traced to the value of (almost) all political societies due to many supporting factors. This work will present the factors of political philosophy in Thai civilization that centralized on the morality of the potentate over the structure of the political system.

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Conclusion

Overview of political philosophy in Eastern civilization.

The main religions of the world such as Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism are all originate in Eastern hemisphere. This indicates that Eastern civilization focus on human life in an individualistic way. On the perspective of Buddhism, their common questions are “What should a human life be like?” or “How can men be free from suffering?” Difference from the political content, it is about answering the question like “What should the good politics be like?” On the view of Professor Dr. Amorn Tassanee through the logical reason, he has a comment that originally Eastern civilization especially in Suvarnabhumi, there are no political philosophers at all. It is not because the wisdom of the Eastern civilization people is inferior. But the influence of the belief in Brahman-Buddhist culture of India³ that the king is a divine king, they have the power and the avatar to subdue the suffering of the people. No other concept came to the challenge this idea of Eastern civilization. In the ancient times, the most people in this region do not care about politics or engage in political doctrine.⁴

¹ See Likhith Dhiravegin (2011, p. 157).

² Not included the many countries that are Authoritarianism. But leaders have been transformed into elections, such as North Korea.

³ Even in ancient India in the epoch, It is a democratic process, but it has not been developed.

⁴ See Amorn Ruksasuth (1996, pp. 52-53).

The remarks about the citizen ignore on the political issues in the views of Professor Amon are in the same track with the observations of Monsieur de la Loubère. Monsieur de la Loubère, ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Louis XIV, the king of France, traveling to Thailand for the amity in 1630 during the reign of King Narai the Great. He recorded the overview of the economic, social and cultural history of Thailand at that time in the archives of the name *Du Royaume de Siam*, which was later translated into Thai as “La Loubère archives”. “La Loubère archives” described the characteristics of Siamese people in those days that kindness.⁵ Deeply believe in a profound, intelligent mind, easily and clearly understood, sharp and nimble through dialogue.⁶ But in the view of political issues, La Loubère sees that Siamese people have no interest in political. For example, “Siamese people will not focus on politics, we can hear singing and dancing of all the houses, at the nightfall.”⁷

“In a country where there is hardly for anyone to talk about (Political affairs) The Great servitude of Siam, it is almost impossible to open Siamese’s mouth to tell the story of their country to anyone”⁸ In the concept of freedom which is the root of liberalism, La Loubère notes that “Slavery in Siam is still popular, can say that self-freedom at that time was so harsh?”⁹ In the sense of the fraternal brotherhood as one of the foundations of human rights, La Loubère notes that “Siamese people are well known for their kindness to animal, even it sick in the fields, they will help. But it is hard to give help to fellowmen beings.”¹⁰

A good example is even in the 21st century in a constitutional referendum on August 7, 2016, which is a day of judgment that our life is still ours. How do the basic rules for establishing our political society and for compatriot will be? The future of the next generation will go on which direction. The milestone in the political life of Thai people at that time, King Prajadhipok’s Institute public survey on the referendum in the subject of the reading of the draft of the constitution, the result shown that for the entire country, 3.4 percent read every section, 39.5 percent read some section, 57 percent did not read. The area that read the draft of the constitution before the referendum the least is Bangkok, 0.9 percent read in every section, 29.7 percent read some section, and 69.4 percent did not read.

In the point of view of Eastern political philosophy, Professor Dr. Thanate Apornsuwarn gave the opinion that political philosophers who have influenced to the human mind in Eastern civilization are not without, but very few. There are only five Eastern political philosophers: Confucius, Lao Tzu, Mao Tse-tung, and the most influence of the political ideas of Suvarnabhumi and Thailand are Manu Sarajarn¹¹ and the Buddha. If include the Prophet Muhammad of Islamic civilization, It is only 6 people. The political philosophy of Eastern civilization is the only question “Who should have the power to govern the society?” The answer of Western civilization since the 18th century will become “The People”. But the direction of the answer of Eastern civilization is reversed. The answer is the same for all Eastern political philosophers “The minority that better than the else in society.”¹² The slight difference

⁵ See La Loubère: 224, *as cited in* San T. Komonbut (2009).

⁶ See La Loubère: 187 and 198, *Ibid.*

⁷ See La Loubère: 120, *Ibid.*

⁸ See La Loubère: 249, *Ibid.*

⁹ See La Loubère: 236, *Ibid.*

¹⁰ See La Loubère: 236, *Ibid.*

¹¹ From the influence of the teachings on Mānava-Dharmaśāstra whether Manu Sarajarn the hermit is present in history or not?

¹² Western political philosopher who ever proposed this concept is Plato. He proposed that the person with intelligence and had a vision of true truth over the illusion of the world. The intellectual king whom is filled

in the concept of each political philosopher is that “how goodness of the right person should be?” For example, Mencius explaining that the potentate must have a “Lao Jue” or the righteousness of the hordes of people, together with righteousness from heaven. Mao Teung explains that partisans must be proletarians who understand Marxist materialist philosophy, can bring revolution, can reach and appreciate the teachings of the Communist Party. Buddha has the greatest influence on the political philosophy of Thailand, explain that the qualification of the custodian is: virtuous and high prestige person who has accumulate merit from religious principles. Tripitaka or the Buddhist scriptures teach the governance rule for Buddhism in Jukkawatdhiwat or Akkunyasutha which all about Dharma for the Emperor. They all focus on the qualities of good custodian. This has a great influence on the political concepts of Thailand. These philosophies are clearly explaining that Eastern civilization emphasis on the “person” who has the “Absolute morality”. It does not focus on the “system” or “regime”, which is the opposite of the political philosophy that focuses on good systems in Western civilization.¹³

The concept of power in Thai civilization.

In Western civilization, power is signified in the way of fraud or “Power is Corrupt” but in the Eastern civilization, especially the South-East civilization preferably in Thai civilization, not hold on it but one of the concepts is power and merits comes together and reflect to each other. Prof. Dr. Thongchai Winijakkul gave an sharpen example of the relationship between merit and power that

“These stories are reflection of this concept. All of us know well but never connect them together. One-When the Buddha was born. The astrologer predicts that if he is not a prophet, he will be the king, so two merits close to each other. Depend on Siththudtha the prince choose the way. This story of Buddhist philosophy reflects the merit to each other. Another story is Lord Ashoka. As a king, he spread the glory and kills a lot of people to build a great kingdom. Lord Asoka is the greatest Buddhist. These two things are together. We have this tradition. But now a day we forget that there are. That means the power does not cheat. But the power is morality. The absolute power is absolute morality.”¹⁴

The influence of the concept of power that the power is the merit and the power is the prestige comes from the spiritual beliefs of Suvarnabhumi people. Blended with the Buddhism teachings and emphasized by the rituals of Hinduism. It has become a Theravada Buddhist teaching¹⁵ or “Thai Buddhist religion,” which is based on the

with knowledge, he should be a potentate. However, the theory of Plato, the problem is finding the intellectual king whom his vision over the illusion of the world and how to measure the qualities of a kingship over another?

¹³ See Thanet Arpornsuwan (2016).

¹⁴ See Thongchai Winichakul (2016).

¹⁵ Herein, the author refers to Theravada Buddhism in the current Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, Section 67, which states that

“The state favors and protects Buddhism and other religions. In supporting and protecting Buddhism, which is the religion of the majority of Thai people for a long time, the state should promote and support the education and propagation of the principles of Theravada Buddhism to develop the mind and intelligence. There must be procedures and mechanisms to prevent Buddhism subverting in any form and encourage Buddhists to participate in the implementation of procedures or those mechanisms too”

logical reason that all things come from the source or the “cause” of existence. It is not happening by them-self., (Tipitaka, Abhidhamma Pitaka, Phra Maha Patthaya). Buddhism uses the concept of “Law of Karmic” explains the cause of things that happen from the past actions of each unit of life in transmigration. This principle, although initially reasonable considered but easily come to a halt because cannot explain empirical facts in many cases. Such as why some people are so wealthy, some people are born poor. Some people do bad things all their life but they have a good life. Some people do good things in life but they get bad returns. In order to response this problem, Theravada Buddhism teaches that physical and mental are separate.¹⁶ The body can be extinguished by physical death. The mental will remain eternal by circulating in the transmigration.¹⁷ The following statement was made from the belief in the circular death of this birth.¹⁸ The results in this world, some of them are from the actions of the past worlds. The cause of actions in this world will affect the next world.¹⁹

The belief of “Law of Karmic” becomes the concept in the book of Trai Bhum Pra Ruang or Three Worlds, a Thai Buddhist cosmology composed by PraMahathammaraja Litai. The content is described that the aristocracy is a man who has accumulated a lot of merit, the power that exists is right. The proletariat, the poor is caused by their own actions, not the result of the system.²⁰ Professor Dr. Nitthi Eawsrivong also describes the view of Thai ancient about the power is merit that may be due to Thai people view that the power cannot separated. Power and moral are considered the same power. State potentate holds the power from the power of their own merit. The greatest state potentate power, the highest authority of the merit power automatically. So even the monks will have a much dharma power, it is less than the monarch with the absolute morality in the state.²¹

The concept of power is morality and morality is power, state potentate is the man with high merit in Thai society make the state authority is meritorious. State potentate must try to behave in dharma for example temple building, make the merit. The power does not cheat when state potentate is the man with morality. This results in the

¹⁶ In Comparative Religion, all religions are based on spiritual beliefs. It is from the initial view of human beings, they understand that his world has two parts. The first part is the world of objects around the body. Another part is the world of mind. It appears in the picture that he was thinking “in mind” (in the brain).

¹⁷ In the 21st century, Professor Michio Kaku, a US scientist, explain the most popular research in this century that “To answer the question that how the brain create the mind?” This is a question that man has long been trying to answer in the history. He give many advance results to complementary the book “*VISIONS How Science will Revolutionize the 21th Century and Physic of the future*”. Doctor Chudchapol Kietkajornrada rise this issue “*how the brain create the mind*” to write a book “*500 million years of love*” which is a total of 2 books. His books included the philosophical ideas, history of finding the answer and important result from the researches in many disciplines.

¹⁸ Monsieur de la Loubère, a Westerner whom wonder to this notion, his opinion is “If human beings are in circulating death is real. Why are so many people increasing?”

¹⁹ In view of Prof. Dr. Richard Feymann's Nobel Prize in Physics, he is described in his book *Lecture on Physics*: “Science is the search for natural truth by experiments or observations of natural phenomena. When considering the process of explaining the results of the life of the last world, as well as the consequences that will affect the next world. It is found that no scientific process can explain the phenomenon of “karma” of Buddhism.” Prof. Dr. Somphan Prommata, who was a professor of Buddhism in Chulalongkorn University and Mahachulalongkorn University, explained that “The proof that the Buddha attain complete Nibbana and prove that Steve Jobs died and was born as giant. It is not possible to prove both.”

²⁰ See Likhit Dhiravegin (2011, pp. 52-53).

²¹ See Nithi Eawsrivong (2014, pp. 126-127).

understanding that the king with the highest morality or Thammarajja is never going to do the wrong thing. However, exception is the diminish of the morality or powerless, the power will decline.²² The coup in the Ayutthaya period is always having allegations of moral deterioration.²³

Professor Kukrit Pramoj has noted that. Power in a manner that is the same as morality, the acquisition of power must be in the way that is the omnipotent of the merit. Such as the power of the king, the power comes to the almighty because of king's morality, not the power of the ardent desire to acquire power in any way. Beside the influence of this concept on power in Thai society, at present, those who still have the notion that “morality is the power and power is morality” will look at the politicians who hold positions through elections that low legitimacy. Because of the process enters into power by election. There must be a campaign with the public that is running into power. Even the entry of a coup d'etat, they all have a view on the power is morality, morality is power, often explained to the public in a similar way. He did not come in because he needed power; it is the necessary to come into power. Of course, the reason is due to the moral deterioration of the former governance. The most interesting from the observation of the current author is that when people believe that the morality is the power and power is morality, according to the ancient Thai political motto. If the junta leader is a good person, there is morality in their minds. The idea of the power is a fraud. The authority has sought a mechanism to recover the capital from the cost of entry into power. It is imperative that the power monitored as doing to politicians will disappear. They will see that power is absolute when there is absolute power. Power monitoring system is not necessary.

Political philosophy which including the concept of power, is the blueprint of the constitution.²⁴ The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand is a reflection of the concept of the power of Thai civilization, as in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand (Provisional), BE 2557, Section 44, which is the heart of the constitutional power of this provisional provision, established that

“In the case where the Head of the National Council for Peace and Order deems necessary for the purpose of reforms in various fields, for the enhancement of unity and harmony among people in the country, or for the prevention, restraint, or suppression of any act which undermines public order or national security, the Monarchy, the national economy, or State affairs, irrespective of whether such act occurred inside or outside of the Kingdom, the Head of the National Council for Peace and Order, with the approval of the National Council for Peace and Order, shall have power to order, restrain, or perform any act, whether such act has legislative, executive, or judicial force; the orders and the acts, including the performance in compliance with such orders, shall be deemed lawful and constitutional under this Constitution, and shall be final. When those have been carried out, a report shall be submitted to the President of the National Assembly and the Prime Minister for acknowledgement without delay.”

These provisions are a reflection of the absolute power that has no distinction of Thai civilization. In the present day, there is no law in any country in the world to give full

²² See Thongchai Winichakul (2013, pp. 61-63).

²³ See Chit Phumisak (2008).

²⁴ See Dieter Grim *as cited in* Michale Rosenfield and András Sajó (2012, p. 100).

power to any man to do any like this. At present, even the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand (Temporary) 2014 will be canceled. The promulgation of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, 2560, but the provisions of the Provisional Constitution of the current Section 265 also laid down the principle. The provisions of section 265 of the current Constitution stipulate that the Head of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) shall remain in power until the new Cabinet becomes available after the general elections to be held in the future.

In addition, the current structure of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand also requires that the organization be governed by the election of the people or politicians elected by the House of Representatives and the Cabinet. They have a very small power. The power to determine and decide on the conduct of public policy is in politicians who are not elected. The Constitutional Court has virtually no connection with the sovereign state. This reflects the bizarre view of the people who believe. "Absolute Power is Absolute Morality," which looked at the politicians who tried "Campaign with the people" to enter into power is less legitimate than the kind of politicians who have the power by the designation. This is a major obstacle to the Liberal democracy regime of Thailand.

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