

**THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENTS:
A CASE STUDY OF THAILAND 1973 TO 1997**

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CERTIFICATE

This is certified that the dissertation entitled “**THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENTS: A CASE STUDY OF THAILAND 1973 TO 1997**” submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university and is my own work.

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***Dedicated to my parents
and
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Saowaphak Kronin

Preface

Very often the governing system under the monarchical and military rule do not reflect the aspirations of the larger society. In other words, gender equality; freedom of expression; democratic movement etc. are not easily displayed under such a system. The democratic governing system of the modern days indicates the progress and transformation of the traditional society towards a more advancing one. There are numerous historical forces like social, cultural, political etc. that have contributed to the overall transformation. Society and governing system are interrelated irrespective of different system of government.

Thailand had a long monarchical and military rule in the past. This dissertation is a humble attempt to explore and study the status, role, and challenges of women in the Thai society. In order to have a comprehensive knowledge about the women and gender relation in the Thai society I have delve into the historical stages of various type of governance system. The object is to understand the status and position and the gender relations during all these stages of development. As you will find the role and status of women are worse during the time of monarchical and military rule. The emergence of democratic movement is very significant in terms of the social and political position of the Thai women.

This dissertation also intends to explore and evaluate the contemporary contribution, social movement and challenges of the Thai women under the democratic process. It is true that under democratic system the worth of the individual and the community are respected legally through the written constitution. Over the years there is a growing increase of women's role and status of the Thai women.

This transformation of social and political status of the Thai women were largely due to the emergence of democratic system of governance in Thailand. Democratic and social movement will be discussed in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation and an attempt to provide a suggestive perspective for future research will be highlighted in the conclusion.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BIPGO	Board of Inspection and Follow-up of Government Operation.
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
FOW	Friends of Women
GEM	General Empowerment Measure
GDI	Gender – related Development Index
GDRI	Gender and Development Research Institute
HDI	Human Development Index
NCWA	National Council Women Association
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation
TNCWA	Thailand National Commission on Women's Affairs
TRT	Thai Rak Thai Party
UNIS	United Nations Information Services
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

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CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

Thailand is divided into four natural regions: the North, Northeast, the Central plain, and the Southern Peninsula. The regional variations- geographic, economic, ethnic, and political-act as the centrifugal force that keep the country unified and integrated. These variations, however, are balanced by similarities that transcend the regional differences and make some nationwide generalizations possible.¹

In 2003, the population of Thailand stood at around 64.2 million; about 8 million of live in the capital city of Bangkok. The largest ethnic minority is the Chinese. Other ethnic groups present in Thailand include Malays, Cambodians, Vietnamese, and Indians. The official language, spoken by almost 100 percent of the population, is Thai. Thai is a tonal, uninflected, and predominantly monosyllabic language borrowed from Khmer, Pali, and Sanskrit. Chinese and Malay are also spoken in some areas, while local dialects are common in rural communities. English is widely spoken in Bangkok and other major metropolitan areas of Thailand.²

Buddhism is the faith of approximately 95 percent of the population. Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and other faiths are also openly practiced and protected under the Constitution.³

I. i Thailand's Political History

Prior to 1932, Thailand's political history can be summarized into three chronological kingdoms: Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, and Rattanakosin. The Kingdom of Sukhothai (1257-1378) adopted the paternalistic system of government, where the King had absolute power and reigned over his subjects, paying close attention to their well-

¹Neher, Clark D., *Modern Thai Politics From Village to Nation* (Massachusetts, Schenkman Company, Press, 1979), p.87

² Ibid, p.88, see more details in M.L. Manich Jumsai, *History of Anglo- Thai Relations* (Bangkok: Erawan Arcade Press,1970), pp. 5-6

³ Source: UN, *World Population Prospects: Regional Surveys of the World: The Far East and Australasia*: (London and New York: (The Greshan Press, 2004), p.1075

being.⁴ The succeeding Ayutthaya Kingdom during the 1300-1700's inherited extensive Khmer traditions and customs, including a system of government based on the concept of divine rights. The Ayutthaya period also brought a strong centralized government characterized by a clear division between civil and military administration.⁵

The final Rattanakosin Kingdom was established in 1767 with Bangkok as the capital. The Rattanakosin Kingdom adopted the Ayutthaya system of governance. Three centuries later, King Rama V, who reigned in the late 19th century during the threat of colonialism in Southeast Asia, reorganized the central, regional and local administrations.⁶

The present study basically focus on status and role of women in Thailand, and looks at the milieu in which the gender equation has evolved in terms of society & political space. Irrespective of changes in the social role of Thai women throughout the ages and the countless variations on this issue in diverse cultures, women's status still largely depends on the biological fact that she is potentially, if not in actual fact at any given time- the bearer of children, whose care, at least in infancy, is usually her responsibility.⁷ The purpose of this study is to examine the roles of women in Thai society, and democratic movements.

The latest Thai constitution (1997) stated that, "men and women are equal under the law (section 30) and that "family violence is prohibited by state (section 53)." The government declared its national policy to eliminate violence against women and children in June 1999. Also, section 30 says that all persons are equal before the law and shall enjoy equal protection under the law. Men and women shall enjoy equal rights. Unjust discrimination against a person on the grounds of origin, race, language, sex, age, physical or health condition, personal status, economic or social standing, religious belief, education or constitutionally political view, shall not be permitted.

⁴ Hazra, Kanai Lal. *Thailand Political History and Buddhist Cultural Influences*, (New Delhi, Decent Books Press, 2000), p. 21

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 44

⁶ Wood, W.A.R., *A history of Siam: from the earliest times to the year 1781 A.D. with a supplement dealing with more recent events* (Bangkok: Chalermnit Press, 1994), pp. 52-53

⁷ The New Encyclopedia Britannica Vol, 30: (London, Macropedia Press, 1977), p.906

This chapter will address and examine the roles of women in Thai society especially their political roles before 1973. The study will take into account the various views that are relevant with regard to role played by women before 1973. It will also look at the measure that both supported greater participation and those that hindered it.

Marti King Whyte suggests that it will be more useful to examine the relative share of women in political power and how this varies cross-culturally than simply holding that men tend to monopolize political positions in every society. Instead of simply stating that men everywhere tend to be aggressive and girls to be passive, we should examine how cultures differ in stressing or de-emphasizing such differences.⁸

Whyte further comments that, knowing how much access to political power women have in a given society would indicate the levels of confidence which they possess in terms of having a liberal space and their work potential too can be gauged from this. Since these different indicators vary pretty much, one can come to the conclusion that there was no such thing as the status of women. There now seems to be no grounds for assuming that the relative substantive contribution of women has any general status implications. It appears that in some societies women do most of the productive work, have certain high status, while in other sectors women do similar economically important jobs, but are systematically discriminated against in many ways.⁹

I. ii Sukhothai (1238-1378 AD)

We will discuss a brief history of Sukhothai period from 1238-1378 (140 years). The study would briefly highlight and limit itself to only one important King Sri Inthrathit. It is very difficult discuss to all the kings in detail. We learn that the

⁸ Martin King, Whyte, *The Status of Women in Pre-industrial Societies* (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 168

⁹ Ibid, p.169

Sukhothai kingdom was able to extend its boundary on the coast to the bank of the Mekhong River and also to the south Nakon Sri Dhammarach or Ligor and on the west up to Hongsavati or Pegu. The *location of ancient capitals were shown on the map* King Ram Kamhaeng ascended to the throne at Sukhothai, in 1275-1317 AD. ¹⁰

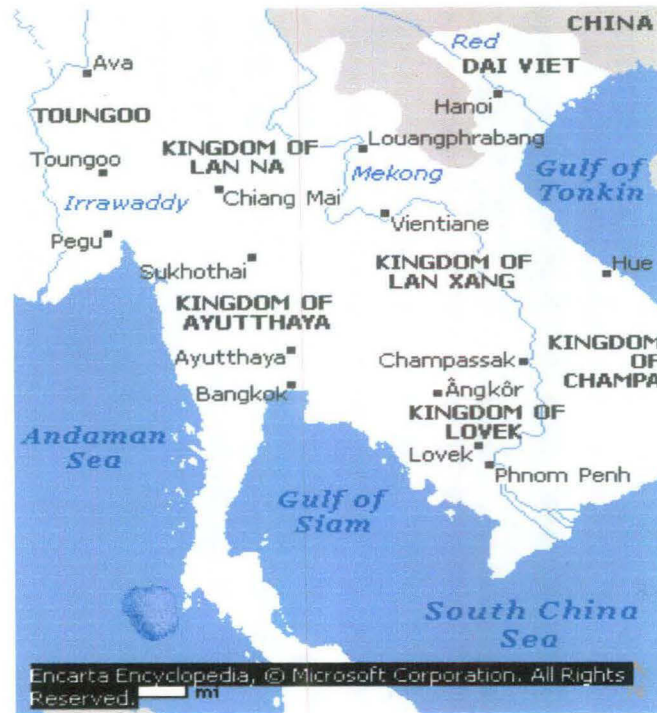


Figure- 1

King Sri Inthrathit was the founder of Sukhothai. There were two local Thai Princes who had taken advantage of the weakened Khmer empire. Two princes namely: Khun Bang Klang and Khun Pan muong, both of them were actually officials of the Khmer occupational government in Siam (Ancient name) started a rebellion against the Khmers Khan Lampong, a Cambodian General, tries to subdue but was defeated.¹¹ Sukhothai thereby became a truly independent state. Khun Bang Klang is crowned king of Sukhothai under the title Sri Inthrarhit.¹²

Justice system was very minimal during the Sukhothai period. The king was able to exercise direct justice system attending to the needs of the people. Whenever,

¹⁰ Wyatt, David K. *Studies in Thai History: Contextual Arguments for the Authenticity of the Ramkhamhaeng Inscription* : (Bangkok: Silkworm Books Press, 1999) p. 48

¹¹ Tate, D.J.M., *The Making of Modern South-East Asia: The European Conquest*: (Vol. One: Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1971), p.486

¹² Sukhothai Period, [http:// www.mahidol.ac.th/ Thailand/glancethai/area.html](http://www.mahidol.ac.th/Thailand/glancethai/area.html)

Justice system was very minimal during the Sukhothai period. The king was able to exercise direct justice system attending to the needs of the people. Whenever, there was a grievance any citizen can come to the palace and ring the big bell. On hearing the bell being rung the king comes out and checks what the grievance would be like and based on that the king would grant relief. In this way there was a direct, simple and immediate justice without much delay. By that time population also would increase making direct approachability to the king almost impossible. Since then, the role of the king has been both political and Buddhist-centric. In some periods the king was so awe-inspiring, that it was forbidden for the commons to look upon his face or touch his royal person.¹³

The king's duties were arduous. Administration centered on him personally. He sat in judgment of civil and criminal cases. He had to appear publicly before his officials and people. King usually appeared in a carefully selected open space. That meeting place still remains in the King's court in Sukhothai capital of the early Sukhothai Kingdom. It has been a monarchical tradition, followed by the rulers of the Ayutthaya and Chakri Dynasties, to construct a porch at the royal palace for people assembly.¹⁴

Adoption of Buddhism by 12th century, provided force and potency to the kingdom and provided useful guide for the conduct of the king. King Ramkhamhaeng, the third king of Sukhothai, had the honour of introducing a script for the Thai language. While spoken Thai has some of the linguistic characteristics as that of Chinese – monosyllabic and tonal Written Thai (script) borrowed from the Mon and Khmer scripts which, in turn, it had the origin from Sanskrit.

Limited evidence on culture of Sukothai period (1238 – 1350) was found and the available inscriptions provide evidence to Buddhism and animism being dominant

¹³ Ray, Jayanta Kumar, *Portraits of Thai Politics*: (New Delhi Orient Longman Press, 1972), p.177

¹⁴ Hazra, Kanai Lal, op, cit., p.21

religious forces. During the reign of King Rama Kamhang the city of Sukhothai prospered. According to Akin "There are fish in its waters and rice in its rice-fields, The Lord of the country does not tax his subjects, who through the roads leading cattle to market and ride horses on their way to sell them."¹⁵

His reign came to an end by 1218 AD and was succeeded by his son Loe Thai, who was considered as weak ruler as he did not take any interest in the political matters of his kingdom. During his reign the power of Sukhothai kingdom began to decline. The rising Ayutthaya kingdom repeatedly challenged the Sukhothai kingdom.¹⁶ Subsequently, a war broke out between the two kingdoms. Wars between the two states ceased after Sukhothai princess joined in marriage to the Ayutthaya monarch.¹⁷

I. iii **Status of Women**

The positions of women in Sukhothai period were largely confined to a predominant role as housewives and in domestic activities. Their roles in politics was very insignificant and to a great extent they were kept away from politics. However, their less significant position in politics does not necessarily mean that they were inferior to men. Recent studies on Thai women indicate that men and women are treated equally in the social sphere. Most studies on Thai women reveal that they were of equal status to their husbands in the Sukhothai time of the ancient period in the history of Thailand.¹⁸

I. iv **Kingdom of Ayutthaya from 1350-1767 (417 years)**

The first ruler of Ayutthaya was King Ramadhipati. Ayutthaya was situated in the fertile land - middle of three fertile rivers namely: Cho Phraya, Pasak and Lopburi.

¹⁵ Rabihadana, Akin, "The Organization of Thai Society in the Early Bangkok Period, 1782-1872" in *Modern Thai Politics: From village to Nation*, Clark D. Neher ed., (Massachusetts: Schenman Press, 1977), p.4

¹⁶ At the present one of the most controversial cases is the preservation of old Sukhothai, which was made into a historical site for tourism.

¹⁷ Ibid, p.7 see also details in Hall, D.G.E., *A History of South-East Asia*: (Malaysia: Macmillan Press, 1981), p. 182

¹⁸ Ibid, p.25

According to O.W. Walter “during Ramadhipati’s rule in 1369 AD, the Thais were able to capture and annex Angkor.”¹⁹ King Ramadhipati also introduced the Thai Law Code.²⁰

Thus the Ayutthaya Kingdom changed during the 15th century from a small to a big state with a centralized kingdom wielding tight control over the states of its territory as well as having loose authority over a string of tributary states. The greater size of Ayutthaya’s territory, as compared with that of Sukhothai, meant that the method of government could not remain the same as during the days of King Ramkhamhaeng. The paternalistic and benevolent Buddhist kingship of Sukhothai would not have worked in Ayutthaya.²¹ Kings of the latter dynasty therefore had to create a complex administrative system allied to a hierarchical social system. This administrative system dating from the reign of King Trailok, or Borommatrailokanat (1448-1488), was evolved into the modern Thai bureaucracy. The Ayutthaya bureaucracy contained a hierarchy of ranked and titled officials, all of whom had varying amounts of “honor marks”(sakdina).²²

Thai society during the Ayutthaya period became strictly hierarchical. There were, broadly three classes of people, with king at the very apex of the structure. At the bottom of the social scale, and the most numerous, were the commoners (freemen or phrai) and the slaves. Above the commoners were the officials or “nobles”(khunnang) while at the top of the scale were the princes (chca). Only classless sector of Thai society was the Buddhist monkhood, or Sangha into which all classes of Thai men could be ordained. The monkhood was the institution. The Buddhist monasteries being

¹⁹ Ancient Ayutthaya kingdom of Thailand: <http://www.mahidol.ac.th/Thailand/history/ayutthaya.html>. See also in Kanai Lal Hazra op. cit., p.25

²⁰ Wyatt, David K. *Studies in Thai History: The Thai “Palatine Law” and Malacca* (Bangkok: Silkworm Books Press, 1999), p.81

²¹ Wyatt, David K. op.cit., p.27

²² Quoted in Tamara Loos, *Sakdina* translated as ‘field power’ or ‘control over the rice field.’ The *sakdina* units, which the king allotted to each of his subjects according to rank and position, may have corresponded to the units of land and number of people to which the subject was entitled. Theoretically, the higher an individual’s *sakdina*, the larger the individual’s retinue of subordinate individuals and the more land possessed by that individual. “The politics of women’s suffrage in Thailand”: in Louise Edwards and Mina Rocas eds., in *Women’s Suffrage in Asia: Gender, nationalism and democracy*: (London: Routled Curzon Press, 2004), p. 187

the center of all Thai communities both urban and agricultural could weld together all the different social classes.²³

I. v Status of Women

Most studies show that, there is no evidence of woman participation in politics in Ayutthaya period. They were a medium of exchange used to foster political alliance or offering them to the male leaders in power. In that sense women's position in the Ayutthaya period was worse as compared to Sukhothai period. During the Ayutthaya period women are merely used for political alliances, which are highly male centric.²⁴

I. vi Thai women in Rattanakosin period (1782-1809)

According to Thai History, King Rama I (1782-1809) moved the capital from Thonburee to Bangkok and fought a war with the Burmese who were again trying to wrest control of Thailand. During this war in 1785 in the 'Battle at Tharang', Burmese invaders had attacked by land and sea and captured several cities on the west coast of Thailand. While King Rama I, was preparing to defend his capital then located in the village of Thalang the governor there died leaving the defending forces and Phuket leaderless. By this time Chan, the Governor's widow and her sister Mook and women where disguising as men, fought with the enemy. In recognition of their honour and bravery, King Rama I conferred royal titles on the two sisters for bravery namely: Tao Thep Satri and Tao Sri Sunthorn (Chan and Mook). Today, the Heroines' Monument is located at the south of the airport in the traffic circle on the main highway that honors their memory.²⁵

²³ Manickavasagam.M.E., *Dravidian Influence in Thai Culture*:(Thanjavur: Tamil University Press, 1986), p.19

²⁴ Tantiwiramanond, Darunee, "Changing Gender Relations in Thailand: A Historical and Cultural Analysis." *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol, 4 No.2, 1997, pp.167-79, see more detail in article by Busakorn Suriyasan "Role and Status of women from past to present" in the web site [http:// www.busakorn.addr.com/women/htm](http://www.busakorn.addr.com/women/htm) (1993)

²⁵ Chakri Dynasty [http:// www.phuket-guide.net.phuket.History/chakri.htm](http://www.phuket-guide.net.phuket.History/chakri.htm)

Another example is of Ya Mo, wife of the governor of Korach. While he and his army were off fighting against the Burmese from other places of the Korach. However, army from Laos came in and tries to take control Korach. Ya Mo has made a secret plan and declared that all Laotians (men and women) were their slaves. Ya Mo took charge of the Laotian troops, bringing them food and drinks. When Laotians were sleeping, Ya Mo got her people to kill them. Thus, Ya Mo and her people protected City of Korach. At present, her statue is located in the city of Korach where she is regarded as a symbol of courage, especially by the Northeastern Thais.²⁶

Above account of two sisters (Chan and Mook after the death of Chan's husband), details as to how they safeguarded the city of Phuket, and Ya Mo protected the city of Korach. Their names were written in Thai history in golden letters. This is a clear picture of how women entered into the political sphere being left with no other alternative defence during the beginning of the Rattanakosin period.²⁷

I. vii Status of Women: In the Current Royal Dynasty

The position of women if the Thai society has gone through several phases—having several ups and downs. They have achieved several victories in terms of legal changes such as stringent laws against rape and prostitution, the impact on the respect for women still remains limited. Those limits need to be understood in terms of history, politics and cultural forces playing up certain issues and have contributed to achieving limited success for women, because women not being allowed their own privileges but they acted according to the laws of the country, which were backward in the ancient time.²⁸

²⁶ Quoted in Phuket History: <http://www.phuket.guide.net/history/chakri.htm>

²⁷ Ibid,

²⁸ Prasith-Rathsint Suchart, "The Status of Women in Thailand : Demographic Profile of Thai Women" in K. Mahadevan ed., *Women and Population Dynamics Perspectives from Asian Countries* (New Delhi: Sage Press,1989), pp.64-65

I. viii Brief Account of Successive Monarchical Rule

Though men and women were considered equal before the law, culturally women are hindered and practically this restrained them from receiving benefits from it. In other words, women are not equally treated in the society viz politically, socially and culturally. Practice of monarchy, which exercised monopoly in decision making to a great extent hampered the rights of the women. King Rama II was not interested in the welfare and upliftment of women. During his period, there was a war with Burma. Apart from the Burmese the Europeans too try to penetrate. So the King had to deal with this complex political situation than attending to social matters.²⁹The death of King Rama II took place in July 1824 at the time when the first Anglo-Burmese war started. Prince Maha Mongkut was the eldest son of Rama II by a royal mother. When his father died, he became a Buddhist monk. So the King's court allowed another son whose mother was a commoner, to sit on the throne of Bangkok who received the title of King Rama III (1824-51)³⁰

Rama III played a great role. Both British and the United States approached King Rama III and gained more reasonable terms for merchants. Though King Rama III wanted to establish good relations with Britain and US, but owing to his illness, he was unable to do so. King Rama III died in 1851. His rule was effective and vigorous because it re-established royal and national prestige and also helped to strengthen vassal control.³¹ With good administrative system, dynamic role and good diplomacy he not only enhanced the power and the fame of his country but his government also became very strong at the time of his death.³²

²⁹ Cited in Haza, KanaiLal, op.cit, p. 50

³⁰ Ibid, p. 51

³¹ Prince Chula Chakrabongse, *The Twain OR Have met: An Eastern Prince Came West*, (London: G.T.Foulis Press, 1946), p.20

³² Haza Kanailal, op.cit p.54

In 1851, Rama IV who became the King of Rattanakosin attempt to uplift Thai women. The study on women for this research will commence at this point of history.

According to Tamara Loos, a political historian of women in Thailand began her treatise with the reign of King Mongkut (Rama IV) in 1851. Women's history prior to King Mongkut's reign, with a few exception, belonged to a kind of historical dark age. This could be substantiated with reference to the Three Seals Laws³³ which served as the legal foundation for polygamy, granting the right to alienate women from their parents or husbands and these are treated as patriarchal laws under the modern perspective. However, change begins during the reign of Rama IV who signed the Bowring Treaty with Britain in 1855.³⁴

What is the Bowring Treaty? Woman historians at both ends of the political spectrum have acknowledged the significance of gender relations of the socio-economic changes catalyzed by the treaty. In other words the treaty, signed with Britain and later with about fourteen other foreign countries, opened Thailand's economy to international trade and granted treaty partners extraterritoriality and residence rights in Siam. It also stimulated rice production for export, which increased the value of land and rearranged the relationship between peasant farmers and their lords. During this period increasing numbers of people became small holders cultivating rice for trade and get away from relationships of indebted servitude of local elite. It is less clear how these changes affected gender relations and women's economic position in rural areas.³⁵

Scholar like Siriphon Skrobanek argues that it lowered the status of rural women because their economic power decreased, and it created new feminine

³³ According to Thai's History Why is called The Three Seals Laws " *The King assembled a team of legal advisors to write a series of new laws and updates to write a series of new law and updates to existing laws, when the works was completed, the King affixed three Royal Seals to the documents, which became knows as 'The Law of the Three Seals' and reflected the king's justice to his subjects. For their part, the Siamese people were to conduct themselves as good citizens and faithful Buddhist.*" See David K.Wyatt.*Studies in Thai History: Collected Article* (Bangkok: Silkworm Books Press,1999), pp., 83-84

³⁴ Tamara Loos, *The politics of women's suffrage in Thailand* (London Routledge Courzon Press, 2004), p.173

³⁵ *Ibid*, p.187

standards for urban women that were nonetheless patriarchal. As she said it was meaningless to criticize the Bowring Treaty and King Mongkut.³⁶

Tamara Loos further suggests two case studies as a methodology for writing women's history in Thailand. First case Amdaeng Muan, who has been eulogized as such in history, literature, and film. As a female first, women's historians have upgraded her as the first link in a chain of events that led to women's suffrage and constitutionally protected gender equality. In the second case (Amdeang Can) a similar kind of class-based bias occurs. She was also a female commoner from the nineteenth century, similarly gained fame as one of Thailand's first women's rights advocates. Her husband without her knowledge or consent sold her into slavery. The King used Amdeang Can's case to preface a law in 1868 prohibiting commoner husbands and parents from selling wives and children without first receiving the permission of them. Some scholars have cited this law as additional proof of King Mongkut's concern for women and individual rights.³⁷ She further explains that, King Mongkut's laws on lakpha were motivated by a concern to maintain a social hierarchy in the face of a changing political and economic environment.³⁸

According to Thailand history, King Mongkut was forced to open Thailand to international trade because of the 1855 Bowring Treaty.³⁹ This treaty had a significant impact on economic sphere.

Pasuk and Baker have criticized the normative version of 1855 in two ways: first, they have exposed as minimal the actual role of King Mongkut as merely one player among royal and aristocratic factions and second, they have flipped our commonplace understandings of the monarch as the victim of Western aggression by

³⁶ Loos, Tamara, op, cit., p.72

³⁷ Ibid, p.173

³⁸ Ibid, p.188

³⁹ Hong, Oey, "Elite and Government in the ASEAN Countries": in Bernhard Daheam and Werner Draguhn., eds., in *Politic, Society and Economy in the ASEAN States:* (Hamburg: Otto Harrassowitz Press, 1975), p.141

revealing that a faction of Thailand's elites to preemptively enacted economic changes that were merely rubber stamped by the treaty.⁴⁰

Tamara Loos argues that, King Mongkut did not promote the welfare of women as a whole. He had passed the laws that produced the woman firsts' were directed against commoner men and favoured elite groups upon whom his power depended.⁴¹

When the King Mongkut passed away, his son (Chulalongkorn) took the throne and became known figure in Thailand's history in 1873 as King Rama V.⁴² He was mentioned as a distinguished understanding person. In 1874, he abolished slavery by a decree. King Rama V declared that, "all children of slave parents at the age of twenty-one would be free. Previously King Mongkut has made the rules to moderate laws concerning the slaves, but Rama V announced very clearly that 'thence forward no one could be born a slaves' and no one was permitted to sell himself against debt. He said that this was against the law."⁴³ King Rama V declared the liberty of the press. An American missionary became editor of several periodicals in English and in Thai under his direction. In terms of democracy according to David A. Wilson, the Rama V was rather suspicious about the idea of a parliament in Thailand in his time.⁴⁴ Wilson points out that Rama V adjusted King's council to bring him nearer to the administration, to inform him of what was going on and seemingly to search for previous agreement among the officials on his proposed policies. Wilson further comments that, during the reign of Rama V, it was clear that he (Rama V) saw the eventuality of constitutional regime, but it was also clear that he did not expect to see it in his lifetime.⁴⁵

Since the reign of King Rama V, up to 1932, a kind of parliament in Thailand was evolved. King Rama VI made no attempt to revive King's council. Wilson argues

⁴⁰ Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, *Thailand: Economy and Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press'1997, p.126

⁴¹ Tamara Loos, op, cit., p. 176 (see also for more details in Hong Lysa, "Palace Women at the Margins of Social Change: An Aspect of the Politics of Social History in the Reign of King Chulalongkorn" *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* Vol, 30.No.2. 1999, pp., 310-324

⁴² Hazra Kanai Lal, op, cit., p. 68

⁴³ Ibid, p.69

⁴⁴ Wilson, David A. *Politics in Thailand: (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1967)*, p. 196

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.197

King Rama VI evidently was not a systemic administrator but he was a man of strong opinions. He stressed the significance of indigenous Thai political principles and the unique character of *Chat Thai* in Thailand's history and culture.⁴⁶ According to Eiji Murashima King Rama VI, all members of the national community should be regarded as relatives and the king is the member who dignifies this national community. But when the people have entrusted with responsibility, they must follow him absolutely. Therefore, he can justify the elimination of his opponents on the grounds that he is the personification of the common interest of the nation.⁴⁷

These political ideas such as 'king, Buddhist nation, and democracy' set down by King Vajiravudh retain traditional characteristics to Thai culture and have become the principles of the modern Thai state.⁴⁸ The 1932 constitutional revolution incorporated the concept of "democracy" in Thailand different from Western ideas of democracy.⁴⁹

King Rama VI died in 1925. His youngest brother succeeded him. He was known as King Rama VII or Prachathipok, who had never expected to become the king of Thailand.⁵⁰ He revived the idea of an advisory council. It was called the Supreme State (in Thai word *aphirahamontri sapha*) and was constituted of high princes who were half brothers or uncles of the king. Some of them also held office concurrently as Minister of State.⁵¹ According to David A Wilson Rama VII, is generally understood that, he himself was in favor of establishing a constitutional monarchy, but was dissuaded by his older counselors.⁵²

During the year before the coup of 1932, the government had been suffering from financial difficulties. Inheriting a chaotic state of affairs from the preceding reign,

⁴⁶ Murashima, Eiji, "The Origin of Modern Official State Ideology in Thailand," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* Vol. XIX, No.1 March 1988, p.89

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 93

⁴⁸ Jory, Patrick, "Books and the Nation: The Making of Thailand's National Library" *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* Vol. 31. No.2 September 2003, pp. 351-73

⁴⁹ Murashima, Eiji, op.cit., p. 96, see also in George McTurnan Kahin, ed., *Governments and Politics of Southeast Asia*: (London: Cornell University Press, 1968), p.39

⁵⁰ Wilson, David. A, Thailand, in George McTurnan Kahin ed., *Governments and Politics of Southeast Asia*: Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1968, p.14

⁵¹ Wilson, David A. op, cit., p.8

⁵² Ibid, p.113

the government of Rama VII found itself short of funds. The King made an effort to save by reducing the salaries and also by cutting expenses from the royal court downward. However, this course of action created some uneasiness and dissatisfaction in the services, particularly, in the army. By this time the coup was expected to start as a consequence of the above-mentioned situation.⁵³

David A. Wilson further comments that so long as the monarchy provided dynamic leadership for the necessary adjustments, its apparent position was strengthened. When the Monarchy faltered in its leadership, the internal dynamics of this great organization began to dilute.⁵⁴

I. ix Emergence of Constitutional Government

At the dawn of June 24, 1932 troops which were under the command of the coup group moved to take hold of certain key positions in the city of Bangkok and various high positions of the government. Finally, the end of the absolute monarchy was proclaimed, and the king was invited to rule under a constitution.⁵⁵ King Rama VII accepted a provisional constitution; of the coup group. Organized under the name People's Party, and they appointed itself as provisional parliament, a government acceptable to both the king and the People's Party was formed.

I. x There were six Leaders

1. *Phraya Phahon Phonphayahasena*
2. *Phibunsongkram*
3. *Dr.Pridi Phanomyong*
4. *Khuang Aphaiwong*
5. *Sarit Thanarat*
6. *Phao Siyanon*⁵⁶

⁵³ George, Mctunan, op, cit., p. 16

⁵⁴ Ibid,

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 17

⁵⁶ Wilson, David A. , "National Leadership" op. cit., p.118

They selected a conservative judge to become the first prime minister of Thailand, whose name was Phraya Monopakon.⁵⁷ He held the post of prime minister from 1932-1933. After one year of administration, he has resigned. Phraya Phahon Phonphayusana was the second prime minister from 1933-1938. Phibun Songkram became prime minister from 1938-1944 he and the army were firmly in control of the country.⁵⁸ They were less concerned with its political implications, such as the problems of liberty and equality, than with the economic consequence which they believed would follow democracy. Thawatt Mokorapong argues that "To them, democracy meant only one thing, modernization and prosperity which have been experienced by many democratic nations and which they professed to give to the nation. With such beliefs and aspirations they solemnly swore to die for 'democracy,' the meaning of which many of them did not understand."⁵⁹ (Democracy in Kurkrit Pramoj points of view (*Thai form of democracy is not like that anywhere in the world. This Thai constitution is not like that of any country in the world. Member of the Thai Upper House are not like those anywhere else in the world. The present Thai Government is not like that of any other country in the world. Thailand is not like any other country in the world. The Thai people are not any other people in the world. And a member of the Upper House like me is not like a senator anywhere in the world*).⁺

Phibun pressed forward a nationalist policy initially against the Chinese minority in the country.⁶⁰ During this period Thailand had a conflict situation with the France on the borders of Indo-China. However, this conflict had brought Thailand into the scope of Japan's developing strength in Southeast Asia. Therefore Phibun's came to

⁵⁷ Phraya Manopakon, who had not participated in the coup but was adequately sympathetic with its more moderate objectives. His cabinet included key figures in the coups. (In Thai Phraya-department chief)

⁵⁸ Brailey, Nigel J., *Thailand and the Fall of Singapore: A Frustrated Asian Revolution*: (London: Westview Press, 1986), p. 97

⁵⁹ Mokorapong, Thawatt, "The Causes of the Revolution" in Clark D. Neher ed., *Modern Thai Politics: From Village to Nation* (Massachusetts: Schenkman Press, 1979), p.72 (Six leaders have taken oath along with the coup members swore: 'We intend to establish democratic rule. We will preserve kingship. We will respect the opinions and ideas of each other. We will give only honest and sincere advice and opinion. We intend to make our nation strong and progressive. We will maintain our good behaviour. We will always be honest and uncorrupted. We will maintain our good behaviour. We will honestly and fearlessly perform our duty).

⁺ David A. Wilson., *Quoted in Siam Rath*, August 1, 1968, in Clark D. Neher ed., *Modern Thai Politics from Village to Nation*: (Massachusetts: Schenkman Press, 1979), p. 271

⁶⁰ David A. Wilson. Op, cit., p.176

power and the warlike situation, has developed in which the country found itself in need for protection. The civilians continued to cooperate although with less and less enthusiasm. Thus, the military establishment played a prominent their political role.⁶¹ The details of this account will be discussed in chapter II with the first period of the Prime Minister Phibunsonkram.

Since, the People's Party was proclaimed on 24 June 1932 that they must provide the people with equal rights so that those of royal blood do not have more rights than the people had at present. Everyone will have equal rights and freedom from being serfs and slaves of royalty. The time has ended when royals did business with the toils and sweat of the people.⁶²

The above statement has been made by Bridi Banomyong after the People's Party that staged the successful coup against Rama VII, King Prajadhipok with the support of over one hundred civilian officials and military and naval officers. Bridi had said this because by that time all royal family had very large paddy fields, and they must have a lot of serfs (phrai) and slaves to work on their land. Bridi further commented that the country has changed from monarchy to democracy (*Prachathitai*) and it was not for one part of the country but for the whole kingdom. All Thais would have the same equal rights.⁶³

According to Pasuk Phongpaichit many people still misunderstood the democratic system in Thailand, which was established by the revolution of 24 June 1932 and maintained until today. The author explains that the word "prachathipatai" means "government by the people" which is the same as the English word *democracy*. President Lincoln analyzed it thoroughly as: "The government of the people, by the

⁶¹ Ibid,

⁶² Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *Pridi Banomyong Pridi by Pridi: Selected Writings on Life, politics and Economy*, (Bangkok, Silkworms Press, 2000), p. 71

⁶³ Phongpaichit, Pasuk and Chris Baker, *Pridi by Pridi: Speech by Luang Pradimanutham (Nai Pridi Banomyong) Broadcast on radio on 27 June 1936, the fourth anniversary of the constitutional system*: Bangkok: Silkworm Books Press, 2000), p.194

people, for the people.” The intentions and actions of the People’s Party followed this ideal, as is shown by the provisional constitution of Siam of 27 June 1932 and the constitution of 10 December 1932. There was initially a need for some temporary provision of semi-democracy.⁶⁴

I. xi Phibunsongkram (Prime Minister in 1938 to 1946) and Women’s Status and Roles

Following are the brief historical overview of Thai women during Phibunsongkram’s first regime. There were two periods of Phibun’s regime, from 1938 to 1946, and from 1948 to 1957. The typical characteristics of the two periods were Thai cultural nationalism. From the beginning of Phibun’s first regime in December 1938, people were requested to cooperate in the “nation building policy” (Nayobai Sang Chart).⁶⁵ Phibun explained the meaning of “nation building” in his essay as, “.... The real meaning (of nation building) is, the nation exists but some status is still far from the need of democratic level. We must help each other to add, improve and adjust until we are all satisfied. At least to the same level with other countries....”⁶⁶

In Phibun’s policy of nation building, women were urged to view themselves as important partners of men in building the nation. It was clearly announced in Phibun’s speech that, “Women are part of the nation; they should set up themselves and meanwhile help the nation. Generally, during a short visit, in order to see how much developed the nation is, it can be judged by looking at the women’s development”⁶⁷

According to Phibun, government was divided into two main categories, first is occupations and education and secondly is family life and social roles. So women always have to take all responsibilities of housekeeping, bear and care children’s

⁶⁴ Ibid, p.145

⁶⁵ Costa, LeeRay, “Exploring the History of Women’s Education and Activism in Thailand” *Explorations Southeast, Asian Studies*, Vol.1, No.2, 1997,p.3
<http://www2.hawaii.edu/~seassa/explorations/v1n2/art4/v1n2-art4.html>

⁶⁶ Niyata Onozawa, Thai women: “Changing Status and Roles during the Course of Thai Modernization:” (2000)
<http://www.kasei.ac.jp/library/kiyou/200/4pdf.p.67>

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 68

education and look after husband's interests, and also to take care of her beauty in keeping with western culture.⁶⁸

I. xii Women's occupations and education

Under Phibun's period, women's occupations and education were undivided words. Considering the socio-political and situations women's were to be accommodated in the government's main policies like Westernization, economic nationalism and the preparation of war.⁶⁹ By the end of 1938 Phibun became the prime minister during, when the First World War also broke out in fact; he wanted well-trained manpower in many parts of his country.⁷⁰ After the World War I, there was a shortage of nurses, when he emphasized women polices under training for medical care, nursing, Red Cross, Girl-guide activities, and woman military training.

During the course of preparation for war, it was realized that the country was very underdeveloped. As intellectuals and professionals in many fields were inadequate in number, the shortage of manpower in higher level had brought opportunities for women. Women graduates from abroad with negligible in number were appointed to significant positions in education, medical science, and public health. Domestic women graduates were also needed in various areas of governmental work.⁷¹ In order to encourage women to work with the government, the Civilian Official Act was amended in 1939 to hire capable persons without consideration of gender. The Day of Women Government Officers was founded on February 1 in 1943.

⁶⁸ Mahajani, Usha, "Woment's Status and Modernization in Southeast Asia: The Philippines Model" in Urmila Phadnis and Indra Malini eds., in *Women of the World Illusion and Reality*: (Vikas House Press, 1978), p. 65

⁶⁹ Kanai Lal Hazra, *Op. cit.*, p.88

⁷⁰ Wilson, David A., "Thailand: The Historical Background": in George McTurman Kahin, in *Governments and Politics of Southeast Asia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1968), p.21

⁷¹ Luke, Carmen, "Women in Higher Education Management in Thailand": *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* Vol. 3, No.3-4, 1997, pp.98-130

However, limitations for female officers were specified. Works of the following nature were not assigned to women officers:

1. *Work outside governmental offices*
2. *Work during night time*
3. *Dangerous and tough work*
4. *Work in foreign countries.*

Above mentioned clearly shows that women were allowed to work only in the office. Therefore, to participate in all four kinds of jobs were limited Thai's government might have thought that it is not suitable for women. In other words, Thailand was still an underdeveloped country at that time. Then another important matter was that in Thai culture, women have to be ladies. That in Thai means "kun la satri" and listened to the most senior order.⁷²

Only after 1974-76 and with the UN Declaration of International Women's Year and the first international conference on women held in Mexico City, (countries and international organizations have also expressed their collective commitments to improve the status of women through a number of declarations and program documents)⁷³ there was a tremendous change in Thailand. The growing changes in the international scenario on women's role in the public domains politics, environmental and socio-economic had certainly influenced the position of the Thai women. In Thailand for instance the law was changed for the enlistment of women as a whole. When the country was set to move forward on the path of development, where the people asked to participate equally, with no bias for men and women.⁷⁴ Women were allowed for public participation officially, as well as public life like entering into the local government bodies. In this context, I would like to say in my opinion about the Thai women, compared to earlier period of 1943 have been totally changed and the Thai women's were enjoying a betterment of life now.

⁷² Cultural Imperialism and Thailand Women's Portrayals on Mass Media
<http://www.commart.chula.ac.th/PDF>.

⁷³ Manila, ADB report, *Socio-legal Status of Women in Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Thailand*, 2002, p. 36

⁷⁴ Mahajani, Usha., op. cit., p. 66



This is an important step in Thai women's career despite limitations that hindered promotion. The term "government officer" in Thai language is kha rajakarn, which means "king's subordinate" (kha-subordinate, raj-king, karn-work), or the person who works for the king. It was a traditional preference that working for the king as an officer was the best. There is an old saying that, "being ten traders do not equal to being a subordinate of a king" (sip po-kha mai-tao paya liang).

However, at that time, being a government officer in Thai society was not only prestigious but also powerful and wealthy. Besides, it was usually limited to male descendants of the nobles of the royal blood. Under the constitutional monarchy of the 1940's, governmental work provided certainly prestige, high salary, security, and many fringe benefits, which were rare among jobs for women. It can be called a women's career revolution. There was no doubt that from the 1930's to the 1950's during Phibun's regime and later on, to be a government officer was one of the superior careers for women. Undoubtedly, the work opportunities stimulated ambitious women to pursue advanced and higher education to the maximum level.⁷⁵

In a study by Niyata Onozawa, it was found that special characteristic of Thai women's position has changed in status and roles during the process of modernization. Women in the upper socioeconomic class were engaged in the job market and were active in economic roles before the starting of the industrialization. When industrialization occurred, women had already been in high positions in various field and occupations. Continually, women in the middle and low levels were aspired to receive education and enter the expanded job market in both traditional and modern sectors. Here we have also seen that, Phibun did not encourage Thai women to involve in political sphere in Thailand. However, his wife was elected in 1957.⁷⁶

According to Chai-Anan Samudavanija after the 1932 overthrow of the absolute monarchy, the military and its civilian allies were primarily concerned with state

⁷⁵ Nigel J. Brailey op. cit., p.147

⁷⁶ Niyata Onozawa "Thai Women: Changing Status and Role During the Course of Thai Modernization" www.kasei.ac.jp/library/kiyou/200/4-pdf

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building rather than with consolidating democracy. Although a constitution was promulgated, this only served to guarantee that the system would not revert to monarchical rule. Throughout the so-called democratic period, from 1932 to the present, there have been no serious or continuing efforts to launch meaningful political reform.⁷⁷ Although Government authorities in Thailand had proclaimed a new phase of equal rights for women, Thai representatives told the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in this meeting that Thai women preferred not to take risks, especially political ones; their traditional role was to look after the family and raise the children and, in that context, the introduction of affirmative action had not been well accepted.⁷⁸

I. xiii Family life and Social Roles under Phibun's regime

Phibun's government had a systematic methodology to bring changes to Thai people in terms of relationships between husbands and wives, men and women, and women's social and economic activities. The organizations in charge of women's issues were established under the responsibility of five ministries: Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Defence, and Office of Prime Minister, and also under the Red Cross Council which was then an independent organization. The two most important organizations were the Cultural Council and Department of Public Relations attached to the Office of the Prime Minister. They were directly under control of Prime Minister Phibun. The work of the Cultural Council is divided into five offices: Office of Spiritual Culture, Office of Order and Traditional Culture, Office of Literature Culture, Office of Artifact Culture, and Office of Women Culture. Thun-Phuying La-iad, wife of Phibun was a Chair of Office of Women

⁷⁷ Chai-Anan Samudavanija, "Old soldiers never die, they are just bypassed: The military, bureaucracy and globalization", in Kevin Hewison, ed. in *Political Change in Thailand: Democracy and Participation* (London: Routledge, 1997), p.42

⁷⁸ Jens Malmstrom, "Men as Partner for Gender Equality Strategies of the Thai Women's Rights Movement" Stockholm University Department of Political Science (2002)

Culture.⁷⁹ Her major responsibility was to increase women's status and promote women's social roles. Administration of this office was independent and attached directly to Prime Minister Phibun.

Apparently, during Phibun's governing period, the wives of the high-ranked officers were very active in volunteer social work under the guidance of Thun-phuying La-iad. In Bangkok, many women's associations were organized. Since then the volunteer social work has become a traditional activity of higher officials' wives, especially of the military officers.

Phibun's regime was ended in September 1957 by a bloodless coup d'etat led by Field Marshall Sarit Thanarat. Phibun was exiled to Japan where he lived until he died in 1964 at the age of seventy-six.⁸⁰ As we have seen from the above statements, Thai's government did not encourage women to participate in the political process in the country.

R.A. Hall points out that as for the National Assembly, though it has been an important legitimizing symbol of constitutional rule since the 1932 'revolution', it has, with partial and occasional exceptions, been dominated by the executive⁸¹ and has rarely provided an effective forum for the airing of local aspirations. Although there are exceptions to this generalization in the shape of Assembly members from the northeast of Thailand who have often given active expression to regional grievances, and in the more energetic role played by Assembly members generally in the more liberal political climate of the years 1968-71 and 1973-76, the Assembly has, for the most part, been the creature of the executive, while political parties have never established mass followings or any real roots outside Bangkok's factional politics.⁸² This is to bring out the clear

⁷⁹ Ray, Jayata Kumar, op. cit., p.12

⁸⁰ History of Southeast Asia: Thailand during 1932-48: Rise of Military Governments
http://www.aseanfocus.com/publications/history_thailand.html

⁸¹ Wilson, David A., *Politics in Thailand* (U.S.A: Cornell University Press, 1962), p. 81

⁸² R.A. Hall, "Middlemen in the Politics of Rural Thailand: A Study of Articulation and Cleavage"
Modern Asian Studies, Vol, 14 No, 3, 1980, pp. 441-64

picture the way in which people in Bangkok are better living while in the northeast have been neglected by the government.

Some scholars argue that Pridi Phanomyong and members of the People's Party granted women suffrage because it would assure their new government diplomatic recognition by the USA and Britain. By granting universal suffrage, Thailand's leaders ensured that Thailand would be compared favorably to countries that were considered more civilized and politically progressive but that had not yet given political rights to the women.⁸³

According to Jean Drage, the status and rights of Thai women was also affected by political and economic instability, which affects the development of a political culture with democratic norms, respect for human rights and the rule of law. Socio-cultural norms and religious interpretations are frequently used for challenging and reinterpreting women's rights and creating insecurity for women. And although women have equal political rights to participate as voters and representatives, in reality they can be actively discouraged to do so. Highly patriarchal societies enforce rules, responsibilities and behavior for women, enforcing these norms in ways that affect their self-confidence, limit their access to information and skills and reinforce their lower status.⁸⁴

I. xiv Thai's Traditional Culture, Laws and Political Representation of Women

As mentioned above Thailand's constitutional monarchy since 1932, Section 30 states: "All persons shall enjoy rights and liberties subject to the provisions of the Constitution. Men and women shall enjoy equal rights." Of Thailand's past 15 constitutions, the 1974 constitution was the first to specify equality between men and

⁸³ Tamala Loos, *op. cit.*, p.181

⁸⁴ Jean Drage, "News Women in Local Government in Asia and the Pacific" School of Political Science and International Relations, Victoria university of Wellington: 2004

women. This provision was deleted in 1976. It was then reinstated in 1994, after a vigorous campaign by the WCWA and non-government organizations (NGOs).⁸⁵

Saranya & Sirikanang Chaiyasuta point out that, there is a view, that it is the culture and tradition that hinder the development of Thai women. This fact is both true and false. The culture of Thai people is very classical. They implanted the belief that women should respect men, and women are secondary to men. From that belief, women leave all the decision-making to men. And it was the men who took the role of deciding everything, not in terms of having power but in shouldering responsibility.

Men are satisfied with the role of supporting and securing women for their living. This culture does not obstruct the way men and women live together, but in some ways, it kept women away from the liberty to live their lives. This may be the ground of why the structure of laws is criticized to be unfair to women. Nevertheless, the rights by laws or Thai culture, which Thai women had in the past cannot be implied that women have no power.⁸⁶

Juree Vichit-Vadakan criticizes Thai traditional and cultural ideas in terms of creating a paradox within the social setting. While men were imbued with formal authority, power, and leadership, women were active in economic exchange and trade. Being in charge of the inner domain also meant being in control of the family purse.

According to Juree, in her view, women's movement in Thai society in general is not a highly organizational.⁸⁷ In other words, social groups and social affiliations, particularly in the formal sense, are not numerous.

Thus, women from different social classes were not denied access, and control of, household spending money. Moreover, petty trade in the form of buying and selling in the market place, were carried out by women. This poses the paradox that male

⁸⁵ Manila, Asian Development Bank, *Socio-legal Status of women in Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Thailand* (2002), p.40

⁸⁶ Saranyan & Sirikanang Chaiyasuta, "Social Empowerment of Women" this article is part of presentation given to the participations in the seminar seeking for appropriate action to make women peaceful and qualitative by means of social empowerment of women. (Bangkok, Chulalongkorn University, 2002)

⁸⁷ Juree Vichit-Vadakar, *Women and Politics in Thailand* (UNESCO, 1993), p. 182

leadership could not have been absolute because women were in-charge of economic resources and activities. However, if we are looking very deeply the issue tells us that the origin of Thai women's role in the local economy was due largely to the social structural requirements of the Sakdi Na system. (*The ruling or sakdina class consisted of royalty, local chieftains, and others who held large grants of land at the pleasure of the king who headed the sakdina society.*)⁸⁸ Buddhist monks and Brahmans appeared in all strata. These people as a whole constituted the ruling class, which headed all krom, and as such administered the allocation of landholdings, controlled irrigation water, and mobilized the corvee labourers needed to construct the irrigation and other public works.⁸⁹

As commoners were required to perform corvee labour for the king and the state, able men were drafted into services, which took them away from their homes for long periods. It was not uncommon for men in corvee service to leave home for a total of six months in a year. The responsibility of tending to household activities was left to the women.⁹⁰ Since they worked in the fields, looked after children and disposed of agricultural and other surplus in exchange for items they needed and which they could not produce, Thai women groomed and toughened themselves for a variety of activities including economic exchanges in the market. Historical conditions have propelled Thai women to assume the double burden of domestic and childcare functions on the one hand and the management of household economy on the other.⁹¹

The author (Juree) further raises the question, if women had a central position in economic production, why were they content to play a subservient role to men? Why did able women allow men to subjugate them and treat them like material items, subject to being brought or sold according to the whims of the owner? Why did they allow men to make the major decisions in the family? Here, if we were to examine

⁸⁸ Elliott, David. *Thailand: Origins of Military Rule*, (London: Zed Press, 1978), p.47

⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 48

⁹⁰ Paranakian, Kanda, "Thailand: continuing hardship"(UNESCO: France,1984), p. 255

⁹¹ Vichit – Vadakarn: op. cit., p. 179

traditional Thai society, we would see clearly that male supremacy, dominance and chauvinism were strongest among the social and political elite. At the apex of the society, corvee labour was not a requirement because anyone with noble ancestors was exempted. Money and wealth were made through political power and status; the nobility and loyalty were allowed to extract labour and resources from their clients. Hence, money and power were vested in men who were ennobled and who made their livelihood through their positions. As the social and political elite strengthened its hold on society, the value and norms that elite society saw as appropriate for it were disseminated to the rest of society.⁹²

According to Malee Pruekpongsalee, discriminatory laws against women did exist and could be found in the following areas:

Laws pertaining to women's rights to education and training;

Laws pertaining to women's economic rights;

Laws pertaining to family and citizenship rights of women;

Laws pertaining to women's rights over their own bodies;

Laws pertaining to women's political and administrative rights.⁹³

However, the student revolution of 1973 and the blossoming of democratic ideals and practice in Thailand made it possible to initiate changes in the laws to grant equal rights in different areas for women.⁹⁴

According to Thai law, women have equal rights to manage the property and the living of the family. Of course, there were times when a woman has inferior rights in the family- the rights to manage the finance, the rights in the decision of family matter even her own self such as the place to live in or move to. The development of the

⁹² Ibid, p.180

⁹³ Ibid, p.181

⁹⁴ Prasith-Rathsint, Suchart, op. cit., p.81

rights of women rapidly rose by access to higher education of women and their ability to finance the family.⁹⁵

Although Article 30 in the Constitution states that women and men shall enjoy equal rights, the realities of politics in Thailand make it far more daunting for women to enter politics.⁹⁶ Recent statistics (as shown in the table nos. 1, 2, 3) indicate that female participation in national politics remains low. Thai Women in Politics: A study of the Gender and Development Research Institute (GDRI) shows that only 15 females have held the office of a minister or a deputy minister.⁹⁷

Thai women were given equal voting rights with men in the first Thai constitution of 1933. Since then, socio cultural attitudes regarding the role of Thai women in public affairs have gradually changed as the society has undergone modernization, with increased educational opportunities for women along with social and other reform measures. The spread of western ideas has led to increasing recognition that women have the capacity to take on duties long held to be the exclusive prerogative of men.⁹⁸

The UNDP's gender empowerment measure (GEM) looks at women's representation in Parliament, women's share of managerial and professional jobs, and women's share of national income. Thailand's GEM ranking is 60. Political representation of Thai women is low compared with other major Asian countries, but on the other hand the Thai women played an important role in business activities.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Zhiqin,Shao, "Women and Social Security: Women's Conspicuous Economic Activities"
<http://www.onu.edu/seminars/securityinasia/>

⁹⁶ Thailand, *Thai's Government Constitution* : Government Press, 1997, p.13

⁹⁷ Women in Thailand's Government Speak Out: <http://www.Genderwatchers.Org/Legend/ThaiActivism.htm>

⁹⁸ Thailand, Country Briefing Paper on Women in Thailand: Women, Politics, and Law (2003)
<http://www.rascott.com/ISSUES%>

⁹⁹ Orapin Sopchokechai. *A Report on the Status of Women in Social and Political Affairs*. Paper presented at the Second Women's Congress, National Commission on Women's Affairs, (Bangkok, 1996)

The following table has shown the detail of Thai women in comparison to the major countries in South Asia and Southeast Asia. Thai women are very low in political participation but they are high in terms of business.¹⁰⁰

Table - 1: Comparison among Major Asian Countries
The UNDP GEM and GDI

	China	Korea	Indonesia	Malaysia	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand
GEM rank	33	83	70	45	46	42	60
GDI rank	93	37	88	45	82	29	40
HDI rank	106	30	96	60	98	28	59
Seats in parliament	21	3	11.4	10.3	11.6	4.8	6.6
Administrators and managers	11.6	44	6.6	18.8	32.8	15.4	21.8
Professional and Technical works	45.1	31.9	40.8	43.6	64.1	36.5	52.4
Earned income Share	38	29	33	30	35	32	37
GEM value	0.483	0.292	0.365	0.458	0.458	0.467	0.421

Source: UNDP Human Development Report, 1998

Thai women are underrepresented in the political arena. In 1995, 300,000 more women than men actually went to the polls, but the proportion of women in Parliament today is less than six percent. Since 1932, there have been only eight women in the Thai cabinet. In 1997, Parliament had 22 female members, or only 5.6 percent – about half the world average.¹⁰¹

Hence, in Thailand, as in most other countries, politics has traditionally been a male territory.¹⁰² The year 1949 marked the first time in Thai political history that women directly participated in politics at the national level. In this year, Mrs. Orapin Chaiyakorn, a wife of a famous member of parliament (MP), ran against her husband

¹⁰⁰ For example Kanokwan Wongwattanasin Thailand Illustrated Magazine
[http://www.prd.go.th/ebook/story.php?idmag=108&idstory=88\(7/1/05\)](http://www.prd.go.th/ebook/story.php?idmag=108&idstory=88(7/1/05))

¹⁰¹ United Nation Information Services Press Release No. F/01/97

¹⁰² Vichit-Vadakan, Juree, "Under-Representation of Women in Thai Politics" Nordic Institute of Asian Studies (No. 1. March 1 2004) http://www.niasline.dk/gateway/woen_politics_Asia

for the same office and won, the first Thai female MP. Also in the same year, two other women were appointed senator. It seems to be improved status and increasing active roles of women in economic and social realms, Thai women have been far behind in politics.¹⁰³

The actual participation of women in politics was begun by Mrs. Orapin, (we have mentioned before), who entered the parliamentary contest as a candidate in the same district that her husband had been serving as a MP. Her victory gave her a place in women's history and there emergence within the political space.¹⁰⁴

In addition, other prominent features in the candidates' background may be important, for instance, one MP is a sister of a former Miss Universe whose fame, popularity and glamour helped to enhance the visibility of the candidate.¹⁰⁵ Her candidacy was greatly strengthened by her famous sister's assistance in the campaign. Since then, there has been a change in the women's role in politics and decision-making.

The following table is cited from Juree Vichit-Vadakarn, which she has taken from a paper written by Amara Pongsapich in "Women Leadership in Rural Thailand" 1989.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Busakorn Suriyasarn "Roles and Status of Thai Women: from past to present"
<http://www.busakorn.addr.com/women/htm> (1993)

¹⁰⁴ Ibid,

¹⁰⁵ Ibid,

¹⁰⁶ Juree, Vichit-Vadakan, op.cit., pp.186-187

Table - 2: Statistics on the number of Women in Members of Parliament and Senators

Members of Parliament (election Date)	Female Number	%	Total
1933	-	-	78
1937	-	-	91
1938	-	-	91
1945	-	-	96
1948	-	-	99
1949(additional 19seats were elected)	1	0.85	19
1952	4	3.36	119
1957 (February)	1	0.63	160
1957(December)	4	2.52	160
1958(26 Senators resigned and replaced by MPs)	-	-	26
1969	6	2.78	219
1975	3	1.12	269
1976	5	1.79	279
1979	7	2.33	301
1983	13	4.01	324
1986	12	3.46	347
1988	10	2.80	359

Table- 3: Statistics on the number of women in Member of Parliament and Senators (cont'd)

1933 Senators (nonation)	-	-	78
1937	-	-	91
1945	-	-	95
1946	-	-	96
1946	-	-	80
1947	2	20.00	100
1951	1	0.81	123
1957	-	-	123

Source: Ministry of Interior; Election Division.

Table- 4: Statistics on the number of women members of parliament and senators (cont'd)

Year	Female Number	%	Total
1959 (Constituent Assembly Members)	-	-	240
1967	-	-	164
1968	-	-	120
1969	-	-	164
1972 (National Legislative Assembly Members I)	-	-	299
1973	18	6.02	299
1975	9	9.00	100
1976 (National Administrative Reform Assembly Members)	18	5.29	340
1977 (National Legislative Assembly Member II)	10	2.78	360
1979	3	1.33	225
1981	3	1.33	225
1983	4	1.46	243
1985	5	2.06	243
1986	5	1.92	260
1987	5	1.92	260

Source: Division of Election, Department of Local Administration. Ministry of Interior (1989)

The above tables shows a broader picture of women's participation at different levels of politics, the following table (No. 5, 6 and 7) indicates the distribution of men and women in national, provincial, and municipal parliaments. Again, the percentages of women elected at all levels were very low, but their percentage was high at the lowest level, low at the national level, and somewhere in between at provincial or middle level.¹⁰⁷

Does it mean then that women are more acceptable to both male and female voters if they engage in local rather than national politics?

¹⁰⁷ Women make slow advance in politics and decision-making: United Nations Information Services, 7 March, 1997 (Press Release No. F/01/97 [http:// www.uniescap. Org/unis/press/f_01_97.htm](http://www.uniescap.Org/unis/press/f_01_97.htm))

Table- 5: Distribution of men and women in national, provincial and municipal parliaments:

Year	MNP	Number ran Number	%	Number elected umber	%	%elected of total in same sex
1979	Female	-	-	6	-	-
	Male	-	-	295	98.00	-
	Total	1,626	100.00	301	100.00	18.51
1983	Female	54	2.87	13	4.01	25.07
	Male	1,826	97.13	311	95.99	17.03
	Total	1,880	100.00	324	100.00	17.23
1986	Female	362	9.40	12	3.22	3.31
	Male	3,451	89.61	355	96.73	10.29
	Total	3,813	100.00	367	100.00	9.62
1988	Female	366	9.20	10	2.80	2.73
	Male	3,612	90.00	347	97.20	9.61

Table- 6: Members of provincial parliament

1985	Female	239	3.68	78	3.95	32.64
	Male	6,260	96.32	1,896	96.05	30.29
	Total	6,499	100.00	1,974	100.00	30.37

Table-7: Member of municipal parliament

1985	Female	258	6.75	110	5.87	38.60
	Male	3,937	93.25	1,781	94.18	45.24
	Total	4,222	100.00	1,891	100.00	44.79

Source: Division of Election, Department of Local Administration, Ministry of Interior.

MNP: Member of National Parliament

Within the municipal council, selected members belong to the municipal cabinet headed by the municipal mayor. Since 1936, when the first women became a member of the municipal cabinet, other women have been either elected or nominated to the position.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in n. 103, p.186-187 (Table taken from Amara Pongapich "Women Leadership in Rural Thailand" paper prepared of Women's Economic and Leadership Development programme, Bangkok, 1989

CHAPTER – II

Democratic Movement During Period from 1973 to 1985

This chapter analyzes and examines the important events and democratic movement during the period 1973 to 1985 and look at both the positive and negative role of women's position. We begin by mentioning the Most Tragic Day (Thai Wan Maha–Wippayok) as the King called it on 14 October 1973. Year 1976 was another turning point in modern Thai history that comes to our mind.¹ This period marked the end of the military regime, which had been in power for more than 25 years by the student activists.

The major event in Thailand during 1957 to 1958 was the toppling of the government of Phibun Songkram, which took place in September 1958 and was replaced by a provisional government headed by Pote Sarasin. The crisis, which led to the displacement of Field Marshal Phibun had built up for over a period of almost a year. According to Thai historical records, the Field Marshal had maintained himself in power by juggling the interests of competing groups of which two were particularly important: the army faction headed by Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat, and the police headed by Gen. Phao Sriyanond.² Phibun apparently leaned too far in the direction of the police and as a result the army unseated him. Friction appeared in the aftermath of the election on Feb. 24 1957 in the Thai parliament. Under the Thai Constitution 123 appointive seats would be added and this makes a total number of 283.³ Although the leader of the chief opposition party (Prachatiptat or Democratic) former Premier Kuang Aphaiwongse, was elected, Premier Phibun's party won 85 seats, Prachatiptat won 28, and the balance distributed among minor parties and independents. The election was

¹ Somporn Sangchai and Lim Joo-Jock, eds., "Thailand: Democracy, Dictatorship or Domino?" *Trends in Thailand II* (Singapore University Press, 1976), p.3 see discussion of this issue in Perter F. Bell, in "Cycles of Class Struggle in Thailand" *Journal of Contemporary Asia Quarterly*, Vol. 8. No. 1-2. 1978, pp. 51-79

² History of South East Asia: http://www.aseanfocus.com/publications/history_thailand.html

³ Mcvey, Ruth, "Military- Bureaucratic Rule, 1932-1944" : *Regional Surveys of The World: The Far East and Australasia*: (London: The Greshion Press, 2004), p.1048

conducted amid various charges of fraud against Phibun government; Sarit Thanarat commented that the election "was corrupt on all sides."⁴

In October 1958, Sarit carried out another bloodless coup and declared himself prime minister, abrogating the constitution, proclaiming martial law, and appointing a committee to draft a new constitution.⁵ Martial law remained in force till 1968 when the new constitution came into operation.⁶

In 1959, Cambodia requested the World Court to rule on the withdrawal of Thai police force from the temple grounds of Khao Praviharn, an ancient temple on the border of Thailand and Cambodia, which was occupied by Thailand since 1954. The case remained unresolved with the World Court for four years until 15 June, 1962, when the court ruled in favor of Cambodia. This decision ignited demonstrations throughout Thailand. University students did not initiate the demonstrations, but after a few days of general public protest in Bangkok and other cities they joined in one of the largest student demonstrations ever to be staged in Thailand at that time. In fact, some of the public demonstrations were not only supported by the government but also promoted by government-backed politicians as well.⁷

II. i Thailand's Government in 1960

Thailand continued to make economic and social progress during 1960 under the firm guidance of the Prime Minister Marshal Sarit Thanarat. The Interim Constitution promulgated by the King in 1958 was expected to remain in force for another two years. In the meantime, laws were to be enacted which would govern the writing of the new constitution. In preparation for this task, a careful survey of democratic constitutions was undertaken with a view to adopting those features of

⁴ Nuechterlein, Donald E. *Thailand and the Struggle for Southeast Asia* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1967), p.132

⁵ Fisher, Charles A., *Southeast Asia: A Social, Economic and Political Geography*: (London: Methuen Press,1971), p. 526

⁶ Somvichian, Kamol, "The Thai Political Culture and Political Development" in Clark D. Neher ed., *Modern Thai Politics from village to nation* (Massachusetts: Schenkman Press, 1979), p.162

⁷ Nuechterlein, op. cit., p.133

democracy, which would fit the requirement of the country. Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Sanya Thammasak pointed out that the Western institutions could not be transplanted in Asia without modification or change. He hinted that Thailand's future form of government would be a monarchy with a strong independent executive. Suffrage was confined to the educated coupled with strict qualifications for the candidates.⁸

II. ii The Democracy in Sarit's points of view

According to the Thai historical records, Sarit carried out a coup in 1957 and installing him in power. David A. Wilson suggests that Sarit coup of 1957 marked the start of 'revolution' in the sense that he tried to re-examine the political concepts that Phibun had borrowed from the West and give them a Thai flavour.⁹ This was not at all surprising because the promoters of the coup were the products of indigenous training. Sarit and his colleagues had started their careers during the Great Depression of the 1930s when there was no funds for studying in abroad. It was only in the 1950s that military officers were sent to the United States for training.¹⁰

Sarit's own view of democracy centered on the need for it to be indigenous. He made a colourful analogy "Let us hope that our democracy is like a plant having deep roots in Thai soil. It should grow amidst the beating sun and whipping rain. It should produce bananas, mangoes, rambutans, mangosteens, and durians: and not apples, grapes, dates, plums, or horse chestnuts".¹¹

In addition to this, the fundamental values he wanted to protect were the three ideals of King, Religion and Nation. It is believe that Sarit had borrowed these ideals from the King Rama VI as mentioned above in the first chapter.

⁸ Nuechterein, Donald E. , op, cit., p. 236

⁹ Wilson, David A., *Politics in Thailand*: Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1962, p.180

¹⁰ Tarling Niclolas, *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia: The nineteenth and twentieth centuries*: Vol.2. Part - 2. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.143

¹¹ Ibid,

Domestically, Sarit tried to identify the monarch with the army. Swearing of allegiance by the troops to the throne and flag became major military occasions under Sarit.¹² The army's 21st Regiment was transferred to do palace duties, and the queen became its honorary colonel. The king also accepted various honorary command positions. Traditional ceremonies associated with the monarch and also with Buddhism, discontinued after the revival of the 1932 revolution. The royal *kathin* procession, a Buddhist monarchist ceremony, was one such example. The tours of the king to foreign countries began in late 1959 and early 1960. He visited three neighbouring countries namely: South Vietnam, Indonesia and Burma. The visits had a major significant public-relation event bringing success for Sarit, who was not considered as 'sophisticated' in the Western sense because of being totally trained and educated in Thailand. He did not have a good command of English and on the other, Rama IX had grown up in many foreign countries and was used to foreign ways. His beautiful consort was another plus point for the king. From 1960 till Sarit died in 1963, the king made many trips, especially to those countries having monarchies.¹³

Another significant point of Sarit and his believed was that religion could be abused and used for political refuge by anyone who merely shaved his head or donned the saffron robe. However, under this scheme, the king appointed a supreme prelate. The former would preside over the Ecclesiastical Assembly, Ecclesiastical cabinet and Ecclesiastical courts, each with separate powers to balance the influence of one another. This worked well, until two sects (In Thailand there are two sects in Buddhism such as Mahanikaya and Dhammayut¹⁴ using the same canon). They

¹² Ibid, p.144

¹³ Cheong, Yong Mun, "The Political Structures of the Independent States" in Nicholas Tarling ed., *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia: The nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, Vol, 2:(UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 440

¹⁴ Dhammayut order was founded by King Mongkut (Rama IV, 1851-68) to reform the sangha by establishing a new order, the Thammayut order, which drew on Mon Buddhist traditions to a purer, more disciplined monastic model. King Mongkut obviously hoped that his new order would act as a corrective, helping to curb the abuses, which were rife in the sangha at large. His aim was to shore up the legitimacy of the absolute monarchy by restoring the credibility of the sangha. The sangha reform of Mongkut set the pattern for subsequent administrative and legislative changes: since secular authorities needed the sangha for their own legitimacy, they were frequently ready to intervene in sangha affairs, chiding the unruly, restoring good order, and imposing regulatory mechanisms which reflected the prevailing mode of civil government. See Richard A. O'connor, "Interpreting Thai Religious Change:

squabbled over the appointment of a successor to the Supreme Prelate who died in 1958.¹⁵

In 1962, he initiated measures to bring the monkhood under the state control. He pushed through the establishment of a centralized system under a Supreme Prelate with strong authority. He abolished the checks and balances within the structure. Since the Supreme Prelate was a royal appointee, control over the Buddhist hierarchy was ensured.¹⁶

In addition to this Sarit also believed that the ideal was a hierarchical political structure of three segments: government, bureaucracy and people. His preference was definitely not for a system of political parties with vertical links to the constituents. The three segments that constituted his political structure were intended to be static, and Sarit's policies and programmes were designed to maintain the boundaries.¹⁷

Sarit's government first order segment, was paternalistic, despotic and benevolent. This was his expressed view at the 1959 conference of Vice-Governors and District Chiefs: As pointed by him "the principle to which I refer is the principle of *pho ban pho moang* (father of the family, father of the nation). The nation is like a large family. Provincial Governors, Vice-Governors, District Chiefs are like the heads of various families. So it should be registered in the minds of all administrative officials that the people under their jurisdiction are not different people but their own relations."¹⁸ Bureaucracy is Sarit's second-order segment, this was the loyal servant of his benevolent paternalism - an oft-quoted statement attributed to him illustrates this view:

Temples, Sangha Reform and Social Change" *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* Vol.24, No.2 September, 1993, pp. 330-339

¹⁵ Schober, Juliane, "The Theravada Buddhist Engagement with Modernity in Southeast Asia: Whither the Social Paradigm of the Galactic Polity?" *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* Vol, 26, No. September 1995, pp. 307-325

¹⁶ Schober, Juliane, *op. cit.*, pp 307-325

¹⁷ Swearer, Donald K. "Centre and Periphery: Buddhism and Politics in Modern Thailand": in Ian Harris ed., *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Asia* : (London and New York: Cromwell Press, 1999), p. 195

¹⁸ Quoted in Tarling Nicholas, ed., *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia: The nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, Vol,2 (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), n. 72, p.440

*“I feel all of you (the bureaucrats) are my eyes and ears and heart bent towards the people. I am deeply concerned for the happiness and well being of my people – the interest I would always like you to represent. I want you to offer the people my love and enthusiasm. I want you to help me hear, see, and above all think you occupy the same position as the old khaluang tangcai (local governors representing the king); in short, I want you always to remember that you are the representatives of my feelings i.e. my love for the people and my devotion to them.”*¹⁹

Finally, if this static political structure could not continue, there was always the army as well as other political structures to be resorted to as secondary and final option.²⁰ Nicholas Tarling argues that, “by Sarit’s time, the Thai army had assumed the character of an internal force to be deployed for internal security. Even in the nineteenth century, there was no need for an army to defend Thailand from external invasions when Sarit became prime minister; the United States had viewed him as the perfect strongman with the power to act decisively, often in their interests. Sarit’s tough no-nonsense approach to government confirmed the American opinion of him.”²¹ Another major problem from the northeast of Thailand was that there was a war in the neighboring country such as Laos.²²

The war in Laos was the most significant event for Thailand during 1961. It caused great uneasiness and nervousness among government circles and the main concern of the Prime Minister Sarit Thanarat was to meet the real or sometimes only suspected dangers along the borders. Much of the nation's foreign and internal policies were a reaction to the fighting in the neighboring country and the determination to protect Thailand from undesirable events.²³

In May 1958, the government announced of a plot being hatched by Chinese and North Vietnamese Communists to seize the Northeastern region of Thailand and

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 441

²⁰ Waddell, J.R.E., *Southeast Asian Politics: The Military in Southeast Asian* (Australia : The Griffin Press, 1972), p.266

²¹ Ibid, p.442

²² Buszynski, Leszek, “Thailand: The erosion of a balanced foreign policy ” *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXII, No.11, November 1982, pp.1037-1055

²³ Nuechterlein, Dodonal E. op.cit., p. 218

attach it to Communist-controlled Laos.²⁴ About 100 Thai leaders were arrested, and in June two politicians, one a former member of the National Assembly were shot dead in their home town in Northeastern Thailand to set an example to other plotters. The government considered the northeast to be a sensitive spot because of the close ethnic and linguistic connections of the population to the Laotians.²⁵

Similar situation found in three Southern provinces also caused concern. There the population is predominantly Muslim who complained frequently about the disadvantages of living in a Buddhist country.²⁶ These grievances led to demonstrations and demands for secession or joining with Malaysia. Although the government claimed that Communist agitators were active in the region, it nevertheless promised to devote special attention to these provinces in future economic development plans.²⁷

Accordingly, the major concern was in the area of the Mekong River, which forms the boundary between Thailand and Laos.²⁸ The Mekong River has a significant role in the economic context both for the Thailand and the neighboring countries. A great international development project was also undertaken in the Mekong River.²⁹ This had generated feared for the Thailand that the Laotian Communists might reach the river and not only ruin the project but find easy routes for infiltration into Thailand. It was also concerned that sympathy for Communism might take root in Cambodia leading to a rupture of diplomatic ties in October in the year (1961-1963).³⁰

Realizing that Sarit's government could not handle the crisis by itself, it looked to allies for help, but was greatly disappointed. American and SEATO policies in regard

²⁴ Dommen, Arthur J. "Laos in 1984 : The Year of Thai Border" *Asian survey* Vol, XXV, No,1 January 1985, pp.114-121

²⁵ Thomas, Ladd M, "The Perceived Impact of Communist Indochina on Thailand's Security" in Clark D. Neher ed., *Modern Thai Politics From Village to Nation* (Massachusetts: Schenkman Press, 1979), p.398

²⁶ Andrew D. W. Forbes, "Thailand's Muslim minorities: Assimilation, Secession, or Coexistence?" *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXII, No. 11, November 1982, pp.1056-1073

²⁷ The situation in four Southern provinces of Thailand where the Muslim populations have been living from early 20th century are still caused problem up to the present.

²⁸ Dommen, Arthur J. op. cit., p.116

²⁹ Thayar, Carlyle A. "Laos in 1999: Economic Woes drive Foreign Policy" *Asian Survey* Vol. XL, No.1, January 2000, pp. 43-47

³⁰ Waddell, J.R.E., op.cit., p.277

to Laos, which was a communist country, were grossly inadequate. Thailand wanted determined action, but discovered only softness, uncertainty, and procrastination. Demands by some government leaders that SEATO intervene in Laos to save the situation went unheeded. The foreign minister called the fourteen-nation conference on Laos in Geneva a farce where everybody talked peace but meant something different. Thailand eventually boycotted the conference because no decision was reached there to seat a Laotian delegation.³¹

The resulting dissatisfaction and frustration contributed to the development of anti-American feeling and a drift toward neutralism. This trend had been foreshadowed in 1960 when the government threatened an "agonizing reappraisal" of its foreign policy and followed up this warning, in November 1960, by an agreement with the Soviet Union to establish commercial, technical, scientific, and cultural relations. Again, in the middle of 1961 the government warned that, in view of the free world's inactivity in the Laotian crisis, it might have to reconsider its international obligations.³² But it seemed that the intent of such statements was more to provoke action from friends than to establish closer ties with the Communists, and there was, indeed, some success.³³

The U.S. Congress developed strong sentiments in favor of increasing military aid to Thailand, and Vice President Johnson, during a visit to Bangkok in May, pledged military assistance and help along the Thai borders with Laos and Vietnam.³⁴ It is important to note that Thailand's agreement in August, to enter into a nonpolitical association for economic and cultural purposes with Malaya and the Philippines was an indication that there was no significant swing of sentiment or policy toward the Communist world. In line with this trend was a deterioration of relations with Cambodia in October over the question of that country's relations with the Communist

³¹ Smith Roger M. "Laos : Negotiations in General and Laos" in George McTurman Kahin ed., *Governments and Politics of Southeast Asia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1968), p. 556

³² Ibid, p. 587

³³ Jha, Ganganath, *Foreign Policy of Thailand* (New Delhi: Radiant Press, 1979), p.47

³⁴ Brailey, Nigel, *Thailand and the Fall of Singapore: A Frustrated Asian Revolution* : (London: Westview Press, 1986), p.227

world. Cambodia broke off diplomatic relations with Thailand, which in turn closed her borders with Cambodia.³⁵

Another long-standing problem was the presence of 48,000 Vietnamese refugees in Thailand. It becomes a political and economic burden to the Thai government. Furthermore, the government's efforts to return them were complicated by the absence of diplomatic relations with Communist North Vietnam. On June 19, representatives of the Red Cross societies of North Vietnam and Thailand began negotiations in Rangoon. With the help of the International Red Cross it was ascertained that about 96% of the refugees desired to return to North Vietnam and about 2% to South Vietnam and the remainder to stay in Thailand.³⁶

Dangerous situation in Laos was of constant concern to Thailand throughout the year. The victorious sweep of the Communist Pathet Lao forces across northern Laos toward the Thai border caused grave fears for Thailand's security. These fears were increased by the U.S. acceptance of the Soviet demand, at the Geneva conference on Laos, that supporters of neutralist Prince Souvanna Phouma be given the key posts of minister of defense and minister of the interior in the proposed coalition government of Laos. The Thai government considered that implementation would be a tacit invitation to the Communists to take over all of Laos and feared that U.S. disengagement in Laos might be followed by a withdrawal from Thailand.³⁷

Prime Minister Sarit Thanarat issued an unusually strong statement (In late September) on the Laos situation, which set the tone for the Thai government's attitude during the crucial developments that followed. He began by asserting that events since August 9 had shown clearly that the new government in Laos was pro-Communist and that the Communists were well on their way to taking over the whole country from within. He said, for finding out the true situation and had reliable

³⁵ Huxley, Tim., *Asian and Indochina : A Study of Political Responses 1975-81: Dangers of instability on the Thai-Cambodian border* (Canberra: The Australian National University Press, 1985), p.76

³⁶ Ganganath, Jha., op. cit., p.48

³⁷ Donald E. Nuechterlein, op. cit., pp.218-219 (see also Sar Desai, D,R, *Southeast Asia Past & Present* : (USA: Westview Press, 1994), PP,230-234

evidence that the Communists had Vientiane in their grip. "If this situation persists in this manner; the Kingdom of Laos would entirely fall into Communist hands."³⁸

He also expressed concern over the sudden increase in anti-government agitation in Thailand and asked, "If the Kingdom of Laos were to fall completely under the control of the Communists, how much danger would befall Thailand?" Sarit declared that if the situation in Laos developed to the point where Thailand was threatened, "I shall have to fight in defense of it." In that case Sarit expected "to receive the assistance and co-operation from friendly nations of the Free World, because fighting against the Communists is a fight for the welfare of the whole free world." Even if such assistance were not forth coming, he asserted, Thailand would fight the Communist menace alone:

*"To regard ourselves as having little power, just because there is no one to help us, and stay folded arms allowing enemy to take us over, is not possible, because if we do not fight against the danger that approaches our motherland, that means, we asking to be killed. Let us die fighting; let us die a hero's death than dying like a coward."*³⁹

Sarit's impassioned plea for action in Laos was a warning to Thailand's allies that his government would not stand idle while Communists and pro-Communists took over control of Laos.⁴⁰ Thailand had refused to grant recognition to the Vientiane government, and it maintained a virtual blockade on Laotian foreign commerce by closing the border at Nongkai, thereby preventing goods transported across Thailand to Laos.

Donald E. Nuechterlein comments that since the outbreak of incidents in Laos nobody knows for certain what action SEATO would take should the Communists be able to seize and rule over the whole of Laos. This has made people who formerly felt full confidence in SEATO, now feel anxiety because it does not seem to be showing

³⁸ Donald E. op., cit., p. 169

³⁹ Ibid,

⁴⁰ Martin Stuart-Fox, "Factors influencing relations between the communist parties of Thailand and Laos", *Asian Survey*, Vol. XIX, No. 4, April 1979, pp.333-352

concern over the situation in Laos, although it is clear that the Communists are intervening in that country in every possible way.⁴¹

As Donald further views that “the failure of the SEATO power, particularly the United States, to take strong action to stop the Communist offensive in Laos during the first half of 1961 resulted in disillusionment and deep anxiety in Thailand.⁴² This led to a reappraisal of Thai foreign policy the effects of which have been felt down to the present day.

The contrast between Sarit and Phibun was the policy concerning family and women. Sarit totally ignored the issue on family planning and the women’s role in Thai society. On the other hand Phibun emphasized monogamy by showing his own happiness along with family members. But Sarit had married twice. In addition he had more than fifty mistresses.

II. iii Thailand’s Domestic Affairs

Thai government made determined efforts throughout 1963 to advance the country’s economy. In late May 1963 a Ministry of Development was created to coordinate and boost the Thai economy.⁴³ Meanwhile, the government commissioned worked on a new constitution for the country with the idea of liberalizing the government administration bringing it gradually under civilian control. However, the process took several years.⁴⁴

Dispute over the estate of the late Prime Minister Sarit Thanarat, who died in December 1963, gave rise to domestic scandal. By the time Sarit’s body had been cremated, in March (according to Buddhist custom, 100 days after death), the newspapers had revealed that he had amassed a vast fortune during his six years in office (1958-1963).

⁴¹ Ibid, p.171

⁴² Ibid, p. 173

⁴³ Darling, Frank., “ America and Thailand” *Asian Survey* Vol, VII. No. 4. April, 1967, pp.213-25

⁴⁴ Viksnins, George J. “United States Military Spending and the Economy of Thailand, 1967-1972” *Asian Survey* Vol, XIII, No, 5. May, 1973

Many claimants sought a share of the estate, but the court ruled that only Sarit's widow and his two eldest sons by his first wife could claim. Public agitation over the affair reached such a peak that the new prime minister, Thanom Kittikachorn set up an investigating committee to inquire into the estate, which was alleged to have been built up mainly with public funds. The amount involved was estimated at around \$150 million.⁴⁵

According to Riggs, Field Marshal, Sarit represented the 'golden age of corruption.' However, in the late 1940's before the Sarit coups displaced them from government positions a group of army and police officers, serving in the Phibun government, had been active in business.⁴⁶ This group are known as the "Soi Rachakru Group," derived from the name of the lane in Bangkok where they lived.⁴⁷

The noted scholar like Ji Ungpakorn commented, "It is amusing to see how coup leaders in Thailand have constantly justified their authoritarian actions on the grounds of "promoting democracy." Sarit group announcement was a clear indicative of this fact where it says "his government would maintain and uphold the principles of democracy and respect for human rights."⁴⁸

But the irony is that for 6 years Sarit had ruled by dictatorship. Some of his opponent had to flee the country due to certain hardship faced under the Sarit dictatorship Strikes were made illegal. This obviously tells us that the real reasons for Sarit coup were nothing to do with restoring order or democracy. It is interesting to note that the foreign policies of the Sarit and Thanom's government were in line with the US policy. These policies were highly conditioned by economic investment.

⁴⁵ Riggs .F, Thailand: *The Modernisation of a Bureaucrat Polity*. (USA. East West Centre Press, 1966), p.9

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 10

⁴⁷ Scott, James C. "Corruption in Thailand," in Clark D. Neher ed., in *Modern Thai Politics from Village to Nation* (Massachusetts: Schenkman Press, 1979), p.296

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 63

II. iv Growth of Capitalism in Thailand (Sarit Era)

According to David Elliott, the military rule of the 1960's and 1970's were faced with two contradictory tasks in their attempt to stimulate capitalist production. On the one hand, the measures taken in the interests of the ruling, national bourgeois class and its financial oligarchy encouraged long-term investment in local industry. On the other hand, their close connection with the United States offered the chance to maximize a short term profits by investing in ventures, which served the immediate needs of the American occupation forces. This situation meant that in the process of capitalist accumulation, the ruling class was confronted with two choices.⁴⁹

Firstly, they could convert their wealth into constant capital which would serve as a sound base for reproduction under their own financial oligarchy or they could convert their wealth into various capitals (in the form of service industries) which would realize an immediate return on investment but which would not allow for the expansion of productive forces. Secondly, the needs for the American occupation forces were met by an expansion of the non- producing middle class, which has grown much more rapidly than the productive working class. The productive working class in the private sector constituted about 5% of the economically active population in 1960 and had increased by about 50% by 1970. The privately employed middle class constituted out 1.6% of the economically active population in 1960, but had nearly doubled by 1970.⁵⁰

During the Vietnam War, due to its strategic location, Thailand received significant military and economic support from the US government. In exchange the Thai government allowed the US to use Thai soil as a military base to fight the war in Vietnam. Thai-US cooperation - military and economic - generated a series of mixed blessings for the Thai economy and Thai women.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Elliott, David, *Thailand: Origins of Military Rule* (London: Zed Press), p.123

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p.124

⁵¹ Tantiwiranond, Darunee, "Changing Gender Relations in Thailand: A Historical and Cultural Analysis" *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol.4. No.2, 1997, p.185

As a result there was an increasing economic growth in Thailand. Bangkok improved upon hotels, infrastructure like better airport, new roads, hospitals, massive banks, more administrative offices, more universities, and department stores. Bangkok developed a huge informal sector of street traders, taxi-drivers, food sellers, construction workers, and service industries of all kinds.⁵²

According to Niyata Onozawa, Sarit holding in absolute power for about five to six was characterized by extreme anti-communism and economic development. After Sarit's death in 1963, Thanom who succeeded him, continued till October 1973 when a student uprising called for constitutional democracy. Thanom and his military colleague General Prapass Charusathien had to temporarily leave the country and never returned to power. Sarit's and Thanom's regimes shared a lot of common characteristics in major political and economic policies.⁵³

Thai's economic development had great impact on women it generated unprecedented opportunities for upward mobility as well as help (mostly urban educated) them enter the modern economic sector. However, because of the severe socio-economic disparities, a segment of disadvantaged rural poor women have gradually drifted into prostitution and low-paid urban jobs in the informal sector. In the 1960s, many girls entered the sexual service industry, which expanded to meet the demand from US troops, and continued after 1975 to supply the local market and a growing tourist trade.⁵⁴

Prostitution has become a lucrative cottage industry in Thailand catering to the United States military and coupled with the backing of the World Bank. It is said that during the Vietnam War the US Department of Defence had a contract with the Thai government to provide "Recreation & Relaxation" for US soldiers.⁵⁵ With huge money coming from the US Government the local Thai prostitution organized and expanded into a major industry. In 1975, the World Bank built an economic plan for Thailand

⁵² Pongpaichit, Pasuk and Chris Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 186

⁵³ Quoted in Niyata Onozawa in n. 76. <http://www.kasei.ac.jp/library/kiyou/200/4-pdf>

⁵⁴ Pongpaichit, Pasuk and Chris Baker *op. cit.*, p. 189

⁵⁵ Rogers, B. (Oct/Nov 1999). "Bitter harvest". *Ms Magazine*, 9. New York: Liberty Media for Women.

around the sex tourism industry, which helped turn sex tourism into the country's number one export trade. The World Bank has a role in addressing prostitution when it is loaning \$1.9 billion US dollars to Thailand for that specific projects.⁵⁶

However, the current World Bank reports on Thailand do not even mention the sex tourism industry or prostitution. The NCWA states that the government projects to improve the lives of women and children in Thailand cannot work if the role of sex tourism is not addressed.

Thus, because of the expansion of capitalism Thai women, including the poor from rural areas have greater roles to play with the tolerance of their trade. At present well-educated women have no moral barriers to face competition with men.⁵⁷ Urban Thai women try to take up all kind of jobs challenging their male counterparts.

Let one looks at the situation in August, 1970 the Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn, who has held office since December 1963, announced that he would retire when his current term expires in 1972 and that he would also step down as supreme commander of the Thai Armed Forces in 1971.⁵⁸

But in July Kittikachorn had announced a full-scale military alert allegedly because of the local climate of political insecurity. The government claimed that a Communist plot had been foiled and that 11 men involved in subversion had been arrested. However, many observers believe that the emergency measures were, in fact, a result of independence demonstrated by the Parliament in opposing substantial tax increases announced earlier in the end of August, the government announced measures to restrict press freedom and impose censorship on media coverage.

⁵⁶ The World Bank Group. (September 1999). *The World Bank and Thailand*.
fro the World Wide Web: <http://wbi0018.worldbank.org/eap/eap.nsf/>

⁵⁷ Luke Carmen. "Women in Higher Education Management in Thailand" *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* Vol, 3 No.3-4. 1997, pp.98-129

⁵⁸ Ross, Prizzia, op, cit., p.50

II. v From 1973 to the early 1980s

This period was a time of major political activity, marked by two major crises, the events of 14 October 1973 and of 6 October 1976. Members of the medical profession were involved in both, as well as the activities by the university students and other pressure groups which preceded and followed them.⁵⁹

In the early 1970s medical students participated in student organizations, involved with print media, and engaged in debates on political themes.⁶⁰ For more than ten years Thailand had faced a deficit in the balance of trade with Japan, which increased at an alarming rate during the fiscal years of 1970, 1971, and 1972.⁶¹ In November 1972 student started a campaign to boycott Japanese goods. Student leaders then proclaimed 20 to 30 November as "Anti-Japanese Goods Week." During this period they requested the cooperation of the public in refraining from buying Japanese products, one reason being the increased Japanese presence in Thailand for the past ten years, putting Thailand gradually into a position of being an economic slave. If you study the situation of Japanese dominance in trade and cultural sphere, this could become clear.⁶²

II. vi Summary of Japan's Policy on Thailand

Statement below shows the Japan's policy for the domination of Thailand. For example, the decisions concerned with guidance and we will take administration of important areas, such as financial and monetary affairs, communications and trade. Furthermore, we will give consideration to the Thai desire for establishing an autonomous domestic Thai economy and we will respect as much as possible the proposal and suggestions of the Thai people. Then, we will set up a joint Thai-Japanese

⁵⁹ Bamber, Scott, "The Thai medical professional political activism": in Hewinson Kevin (ed). *Political Change in Thailand Democracy and Participation* (London and New York: Routledge Press, 1997), p.234

⁶⁰ Ibid, p.235

⁶¹ Quoted in. n.50, p. 124

⁶² Ibid, p

economic committee and devise other methods to facilitate the guidance and control of the Thai economy.⁶³

The above policy clearly shows the Japanese government's intention toward Thailand. This was another reason why students protested to the authorities. Students proposed ten-point plan for economic revival and presented it to the government on 20 November 1972. Among the ten points were:

1. Government enforces laws preventing aliens from taking local jobs.
2. Foreign-owned department stores being not necessary to the country and the National Executive Council (NEC) should prohibit the expansion of existing stores and the establishment of new ones.
3. Government should consider prohibiting the import of unnecessary goods and controlling foreign investments.

Ross Prizzia, comments that, even though martial law was in existence, the prime minister did not attempt to stop this student movement. Thanom warned the students that, "there must be no violence, not even demonstration outside the embassy." King Bhumibol said that the idea of the movement was "excellent" and should receive support because purchases of luxury goods needed to be reduced. However, the king also stated that, "careful considerations must be given to what demands are made otherwise the goals of the movement would be defeated."⁶⁴ Words mentioned above exposes the intention of the Japanese's plans on Thailand.

Student's activities and other forms of protests against the military rule, had gained momentum producing significant political change in Thailand during 1973-76.⁶⁵ There were many reasons for the student's demonstration in 1973 firstly; it did not liberalize the country even though it briefly experimented with democracy 1969-1971. However, Thai people never thought that the military would voluntarily loosen its control over Thai politics. Many has considered that the ascension to power by Colonel

⁶³ Swan, William, "Japan's Intentions for Its Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere as Indicated in Its Policy Plans for Thailand" *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol.27, No.1 March 1996, pp.139-149

⁶⁴ Cited in Ross, Prizzai, op, cit., p.51

⁶⁵ Ibid, p.78

Narong Kittikachon was a clear indication of an attempt to perpetuate the military regime in general, and the Kittikachorn-Charusatien families in particular in the Thai political system. Secondly, rivalry among factions in the ruling military group also contributed to the dissolution of the military regime since each faction jostled and attempted to degrade the others. Thirdly, corruption was widely prevalent since some members of the ruling regime benefited from such practices. Any attempt to combat corruption by BIFGO (Board of Inspection and Follow-up of Government Operations) was stymied by lack of co-operation or was viewed from the angle of factional rivalry.⁶⁶

Injustices in the Thai social, administrative, and economic order remains unattended by various governments. Many incidents indicated that the system favoured the rich and penalized the poor. For example, high-ranking army and police officers could use government helicopters on a private hunting trip at *Tung Yai*, an animal forest reserve in *Karnchanaburi*, and caused damage to a helicopter through a collision were excused and protected by some leaders of the regime. Such glaring examples of inequality and injustice alienated the general public and damaged the credibility of the regime.⁶⁷

The above-mentioned factors contributed to a great extent to the toppling of the Thanom-Prapass regime. The immediate cause was student activism. The National Student Center of Thailand (NSCT), established in 1969 was the driving force behind the events of 14 October 1973.⁶⁸

The unexpected overthrow of the military regime by the students ended a long period of benign military dictatorship in Thailand. The student's activism had emerged as one of the most influential forces in modern Thai political system and society.⁶⁹ By this period so many fluctuations were taking place in Bangkok as well as out side Bangkok.

⁶⁶ Sangchai, Somporn and Lim Joo-jock, eds., *Trends in Thailand II: Proceedings with Background and Commentary Papers* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1976), p.3

⁶⁷ Philip Hirsch and Larry Lohmann, "Contemporary Politics of Environment in Thailand" *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXIX, No. 4, April, 1989, pp.439-51

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 5

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 6

An unexpected calm came over the rioters when it was announced via radio and television that Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn, Field Marshal Prapas Charusathien and Colonel Narong Kittikachorn had left the country.⁷⁰

Finally, Lim Joo-Jock has made a comment on that, "the military regime of the past 25 years now tends to be much maligned. It overlooked the needed social and agrarian reforms. It can be argued that working through the traditional bureaucracy, the military lacked the vision and the determination of purpose to push through the necessarily far-reaching changes which would have been needed to smoothen some of the inequalities existing in Thai society."⁷¹

As Ungpakorn comments "the military by its very authoritarian nature and desire for self- perpetuation failed to bring about a democratic constitution. It was surely too much to expect Thai military commanders to give up what other military rulers of Third World have relinquished by force."⁷² Nevertheless, the inaction by the military as far as democratic reform was concerned had its consequences beginning from October 14 1973.⁷³

II. vii Fall of Government: 1973-1985

In mid-October bloody student demonstrations helped topple the military government of Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn and General Prapas Charusathien. The two leaders, who had held the posts of premier and deputy premier, fled into exile. Thereafter a new government was replaced. Premier Sanya Dharmasakti led the new government.⁷⁴ His government had inducted large civilian cabinet and it pledged to develop the economy and reestablish democratic rule in Thailand.

⁷⁰ Darling, Frank C. "Thailand in 1976: Another defeat for constitutional democracy" *Asian Survey*, Vol, XVII, No.4, April, 1977, pp. 116-32

⁷¹ Joo-Jock, Lim, *Thailand: Democracy Experiment in a Bureaucratized Society* (Singapore University Press), p.153

⁷² Ji. Ungpakorn, op.cit, p. 31

⁷³ Ibid, p.154

⁷⁴ Sanya Thammasakdi was a former the rector of Thammasat University, former Chief Justice, and close advisor to the King as a Privy Coucillor had appointed to ministership by the King. The new government moved to promulgate a constitution and initiate elections for the new government, which came into power in March 1975.

Duncan McCargo points out that, during the 1970s, there were a very large number of political parties where 42 parties have participated in the January 1975 elections of which 21 had won seats.⁷⁵

By this time there were many NGOs started to organize workers, farmers, fishermen, teachers, and numerous other grass-root organizations which began to mobilize and press demands upon the fragile civilian government of Sanya Thammasakdi (1973-1975)⁷⁶, Seni Pramoj⁷⁷ (1975) and Kukrit Pramoj (1975-1976).⁷⁸ In 1976 the student protests had become more radical. Student leader of Thammasat University, Thirayuth Boonmee⁷⁹ who claimed to be the follower of Maoist's doctrines led anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist demonstrations. According to Ross Prizzia this was the cause of a bloody battle between leftist students right-wing youth groups and the police in the 6 October, 1976 when a mass protest demonstration led by students at Thammasat University took place.⁸⁰

It was in 1976 and 1979 that the government restored parliamentary democracy and became the dominating force in the Assembly. Within few years, they had lost their control at each successive election the provincial businessmen⁸¹ took a larger share of the seats. In mid-decade they wrested control of the political parties.⁸²

Students also have played an important part in the overthrow of the military government on the 14th October 1973. In 1976, onward they began to play a larger role

⁷⁵ McCargo, Duncan, "Thailand's political parties: Real, authentic and actual": in Kevin Hewison, ed., *Political Change in Thailand: democracy and Participation* (London: Routledge Press, 1997, p.120

⁷⁶ Mabry, Bevars D, "The Thai Labour Movement: The Structure, Government, and Functions of Labour Unions in Thailand" *Asian Survey*, Vol.XIX. No.4, April 1979, pp.931-51

⁷⁷ Seni Pramoj is the elder brother of Kukrit. They were from the royal family. Seni was the leader of Democrats Party and Kukrit was the leader of Social Action Party.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p.79

⁷⁹ Thirayut had become well versed in Marxism and Maoism, and had translated a book on "The Chinese Path to Socialism" from English to Thai.

⁸⁰ Prizzia, Ross., *Thailand in Transition: The Role of Oppositional Forces* (USA: University of Hawaii Press, 1985, p.64

⁸¹ Cited are Pasuk and Chris, being businessmen plus Boonchu Rojanastien of Bangkok Bank, Pong Sarasin, and Koson Krairiksh. Pong came from one of the country's leading business cum bureaucratic dynasties. Starting out as nineteenth-century Chinese immigrant businessmen, the Sarasin family had made the transition into the bureaucracy and professions. Koson descended from a Chinese family prominent at the Siamese court from the late Ayutthaya period. The family had specialized in managing the Crown Property Office, and had diversified into various financial and other businesses. Pp. 341-342

⁸² Phongpaichit Pasuk and Chris Baker, op, cit., p.340

in high-level politics. Students led protests against US Armies based in Thailand and helped NGO to prevent the destruction of the environment.⁸³

The above analysis was largely concerned with the democracy and the military's government, which have dominated the country for more than twenty years and then begun an open confrontation the people.

II. viii Women's Activism

It is interesting to note that during the period 1970-1976 a dramatic social movement took place. One such is the revival of women's activism along with student movement against the military rule.⁸⁴ While the student movement derived their inspiration from leftist or Maoist ideology the new generations of women activists were influenced by multiple sources including western feminism. This new consciousness and activism was initially confined to university students and middle class intellectuals in Bangkok. It has been growing steadily since then to other women in urban cities and some rural communities.

In the 1980s, along with the proliferation of NGOs, the younger generation of women activists (also the 6, October 1976) began to think along the line made apparent by the UN Decade for Women (1975-85).⁸⁵ By that time, some of the young women leaders had just returned from their advanced studies in Europe and begun to work with different NGOs or in universities. Both UN call and their own personal experience with international woman movements heightened their awareness on woman issues. This gender awareness was ahead of their earlier knowledge on general social justice

⁸³ Ungpakorn, Ji Giles "Cleansing democracy of socialism: Crushing the Thai Left on the 6th Oct 1976 and the consequences for present day politics: Paper presented at the School of Oriental and African Studies," (University of London, September, 2001), p.1

⁸⁴ Race, Jeffrey, Thailand in 1974: "A New Constitution : New Rules for the Game" *Asian Survey* Vol, XV, No.1 January, 1975), p.157-165

⁸⁵ Matsui, Yayori., *Women in the New Asia; From Pain to Power:* (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 1999), p.69

issues during their student movement days. But some of them did not see the need to have a separate struggle for women's liberation.⁸⁶

Reason being that they saw the pressing problems in Thai society as a class issue and partly they reacted to the charity-welfare approach of their predecessors—mostly rich and privileged women insisting on the traditional role of wife and mother or narrowly concerned with property rights while the majority poor did have very little wealth.⁸⁷ As the women being on the look out for the model or place to organize they were drawn in 1980 into a regional protest against sex tourism. The regional protest clearly identified a target—Japanese male sex tourists—as well as others. Joining the protest, the Thai women realized that they were not alone. Before that Thai women activism was just engaged in circulumotive and controversial academic discussion on prostitution. But new collaborative force was powerful enough to transform this small discussion group into a somewhat unified loud and unprecedented protest by women on women's issues.⁸⁸

II. ix Women and Thailand's Constitutional Law

Here, women and the relevant laws and how they affected Thai women for decade will be discussed. Thailand's constitution had been subject to many amendments due to many circumstances in the country in other words Thai government could not speak in one voice the realities faced by Thai women in rural areas. In other words the constitutions are not applied and have no practicality pertaining to woman human rights. Often, the law in practicality discriminates women, which are discussed hereunder:

Virada Somswasdi argues that Thai women movement slowly claims the right to manage marital property and carried out campaign against discriminatory

⁸⁶ Pande S.R. "Roles and Challenges of Civil Society (Pracha Sangkhom) in Thailand: A Case Study of women NGO." (2002)

⁸⁷ Prudhism Jumbala and Maneerat Mitprasat, "Non-government development organization": in Kevin Hewison ed., *Political Change in Thailand Democracy and Participation* (London: Routledge Press, 2001), p.198

⁸⁸ Matsui, op. cit., p.5

application of laws and regulations. For instance, gender equality in education, human rights, the rights to life, liberty, inviolability as well as the right to abortion and divorce were some focuses of the campaign.⁸⁹ However, parts of the family Law were revised; but nonetheless, a lot of provisions still maintain gender inequality and a violation of women's human rights. But the rights of men being fiancés or husbands, over women's sexuality remain the same.⁹⁰

Thailand's labor laws do not specify equal opportunity in employment. However, Thailand acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and withdrew its reservation about Article 11, which specifies that "States' parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights".⁹¹ Thailand has also ratified the 1975 International Labor Organization's Convention on Equality of Opportunity for Women Workers.⁹²

The Labor Protection Law specifies that male and female workers must be paid equal wages, overtime and holiday pay for work of the same nature, quality and quantity. The practice of paying low wages to women in certain industries is difficult to challenge as women exclusively perform many manual tasks in the industries.⁹³ Furthermore, if the law was challenged on these grounds it might have an adverse affect on employment opportunities for women especially in unskilled and semi-skilled categories. Employers justify the lower wage rates for women on the grounds that women's productivity is lower than men's yet many industries express a preference for female labor because women have a greater natural aptitude for work that requires manual dexterity.

⁸⁹ Virada Somswasdi, "The Women's Movement and Legal Reform in Thailand," (Cornell Law School, Press, 2003) ,p.2

⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 4

⁹¹ Siddiqi, Fatima Ehiesham and Sarala Ranganathan.' *Handbook on Women and Human Rights: A Guide for Social activists: Empowerment and Employment: Attaining Integrated Development : Part-1* (New Delhi: Kanishka Press, 2002),p. 6

⁹² Mabry, Bevars D. "The Thai Labor Movement" *Asian Survey*, Vol,XIV, No. 2. February, 1974), p.931-951

⁹³ Thai's Government Constitution Article 11: (Bangkok: Bureau Press), p.46

The Name Act obliges women to take her husband's surname but prevented from reverting back to the original in case she is divorced. Though the Cabinet had approved amendments they had not been passed by parliament.⁹⁴ Thai Penal Code stipulates that sexual violence and rape are serious crimes but there is no legal and police protection for women who are victims of domestic violence and marital rape. While domestic violence is a ground for divorce, majority women are not aware of it and relevant legal knowledge is not imparted to them.⁹⁵

The National Council of Women Association (NCWA) is seeking to redress the present approach of the police and other law enforcement agencies through revisions to the pertinent section of the Penal Code.⁹⁶ As of the date of the related country report the Cabinet had approved this revision but the Legislative Drafting Committee had not yet given its approval. Furthermore, the laws have not changed such as reproductive rights and right to abortion.⁹⁷

Names Act and other laws totally prevents women owning property if they marry foreigners. Even otherwise, after marriage, control of properties goes to the husband and if divorced the property does not naturally returned to her instead a case would be dragged on in courts of law for years on till such time matters are decided upon. Only with the consent of the husband that wife can dispose of her property.⁹⁸

In capitalist social structure property inclusive of money is often more powerful than education. Even if it is not so in Thailand very few can access reasonable education to nullify the power of wealth. Women being practically alienated from handling property which was well documented in the preceding paragraph places the women's standard their well being, upward mobility in life etc. at very low level which calls for maximum international attention and the international community should

⁹⁴ Manila, ADB, *Socio-legal Status of Women in Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Thailand* (2002), op. cit., p.41

⁹⁵ Ibid, p.84

⁹⁶ Thailand, *Government Politics on women and Development* "Provisions in the Eight Plan and the New Constitution" [http:// www.undp.paper.org/publications/gender/](http://www.undp.paper.org/publications/gender/)

⁹⁷ Thailand, *National Commission on Women's Affairs: Women in Development Plan during the period of the Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan* (Bangkok, 1997)

⁹⁸ Virada Somswasdi, "The Women's Movement and Legal Reform in Thailand," Chiangmai University, (2003), p.4

take proper cognizance of it and pressure Thai government to bring in necessary alterations.

Yet, the government has taken few measures to give effect to the constitutional guarantees.⁹⁹ Which means woman groups working on women and law were successful to some extent (in changing the laws to extend maternity leave from thirty to ninety days) then had given nationality for children born of foreign fathers other changes being revision of laws regarding prostitution and traffic imposing harsher punishment for procurers, pimps, brothel owners etc., irrespective of it being done by their parents or not. In addition to this male clients will be punished if they are found with child prostitutes who are under 18 years. At present, there are many woman groups including those of grassroots level campaigning for greater human rights to bring them in par with civilized international community.¹⁰⁰

The 1997 Constitution was termed as people's constitution allowed all public gathering and make progress in all human endeavors according to the laws of the country.¹⁰¹ But some articles which involved discriminations against woman in practicality or which could be misinterpreted against women should be revised. As William J, Klausner suggests that the new legislation may well precede any such misinterpretation of existing laws.¹⁰² He further said that the law in Thailand still lags behind new attitudes, beliefs and values, which are slowly emerging particularly in the urban society. With such changes in values and attitudes in the society, legal reform in conformity with them, should not be left far behind?¹⁰³

Khunying Supatra¹⁰⁴ holds similar opinion that because the numbers of women in politics are so less and if more enter politics their decision-making is likely to

⁹⁹ Ibid,

¹⁰⁰ Ibid,

¹⁰¹ Hewinson, Kevin, "Labor and politics in Thaksin's Thailand" Working paper Series No.62 (Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press, March ,2004)

¹⁰² Klausner William J. *Reflections on Thai culture* (Bangkok: The Siam Society Under Royal Patronage Press, 2000), p.231

¹⁰³ Ibid, p.233

¹⁰⁴ Hkunying (an honorary title) Supatra Masdit, She was the Minister of the Prime Miniter's Office.(1990-1998) who served as president of the Centre for Asia Pacific Women in Politics since its inception. She is a senior female politician who has been elected as Member of Parliament for seven times since 1979 in her home constituency of

contribute more for the betterment of the society. In future some articles of the constitution have to be revised making way for the women human rights. Majority Thai women being backward undergoing hardships, fighting for their rights is still difficult.

CHAPTER – III

Democratic political events from 1986 to 1997

This chapter will discuss and examine the progressive political parties and the controversial role of Chamlong Srimuang in the bloody events of May 1992.¹ Attempt will be made here and look at the progress and the dynamics of the Thai political parties and see how Thai women have gradually entered the political scene. The People's Party was the first political party established in 1932 by the coterie responsible for the end of the absolute monarchy (by a military coup).²

Then Khuang Aphaiwong who was a civilian founded Democrat Party in 1946. Khuang set up elite groups, which had been displaced again by a military coup in other words, there was constant power struggles between the civilian and military at that time in.³ As Duncan Mc Cargo comments that military have generally competed with parties with a mixture of suspicion and contempt seeing them as illegitimate and unrepresentative.⁴ Chai-Anan Samudavanija notes that military have commonly intervened when civilian politicians went beyond their closely prescribed legislative function to engage in mass mobilization or interest combination.⁵ However, Thai political system still remains unpredictable as David A. Wilson suggested that to bring democratic constitution; monarchy and democracy have to come together. Thailand progressed very slowly; nothing cleared whether to move forward or backward. He further says that it is difficult to see a way out of the group and corruption until some

¹ The bloody events of May 1992 incident is the name given to the cycle of democracy protests against General Suchinda Kraprayoon taking over as an unelected prime minister and subsequent military crackdown against protesters that resulted in scores being killed and wounded. The crisis with the intervention of King Bhumipol and resignation of General Suchida. Quoted in Robertson, Jr. Philip S. *The Rise of the Rural Network Politician: Will Thailand's New Elite Endure?* *Asian Survey*, Vol, XXXVI, No. 9, September 1996, pp. 924-41

² Neher, Clark D. "Political Succession in Thailand, 1932-1973" *Asian Survey*, Vol, XXII, No, 11 November, 1992, pp. 585-605

³ Ray, Jayanta Kumar, *op. cit.*, p.16

⁴ McCargo, Duncan, "Thailand's political parties: Real, authentic and actual" in Kevin Hewison ed., *Political Change in Thailand: Democracy and Participation*: (London and New York: Routledge Press, 1997), p. 115

⁵ *Ibid*,

such extra-governmental power appeared to lead the nation.⁶ According to Victor Mallet, politicians are known for drug dealing, bribe taking and vote-buying. Although democracy was introduced after the abolition of the absolute power of the monarchy in 1932, no elected government had continued for its full term without being overthrown by military coup (there have been sixteen coups and coup attempts) or forced to dissolve parliament due to betrayals by renegades within the ruling circles.⁷ More often army generals and air force marshals with scant understanding of finance and political governance have normally been appointed to the post of prime ministership.

In 1985, General Prem Tinsulanonda became the prime minister. He was raised to the post by promotion from the headship of the army. Top soldiers and officials held other three ministries.⁸ The two major political events of the year were engineered by other military figures to unseat General Prem, one being a coup and other conspiracy. Politics was so much intermixed with military and military politics.⁹ According to Sukhumbhand Paribatra, during 1978-1991 the political role of the military factions was the selection of the prime ministers and governments most visibly in 1980 and early in 1988. Attempted for the dismissal of unacceptable leaders by the military was most notable in 1981-1985 in an effort to maintain a strong upper house and the military's right to take up ministerial portfolios particularly during the constitutional amendment crisis of 1983; attempts to reorganize the state apparatus to give the executive more control; and promotion of controlled participation through mass based, security-oriented organizations.¹⁰

⁶ Wilson David A, "Thailand Major Problems": in George McTurnan Kahin, ed., *Governments and Politics of Southeast Asia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1968), p.60

⁷ Mallet, Victor, *The Trouble with Tigers: The Rise fall of South-East Asia* (London: Harper Collins Press, 1999), p.224

⁸ Neher, Clark D, "Semi-Successful Semi-Democracy:" *Asian Survey*, Vol, XXVIII. No.2, January 1988, pp, 192-201

⁹ Phongpaichit Pasuk and Chris Baker, *Thailand's BOOM and BUSH*: (Bangkok: Silkworm books Press, 1998), p.216

¹⁰ Paribatra, Sukhumbhand, "State and Society in Thailand: How Fragile the Democracy" *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXXIII, No.9 September, 1993, PP, 879-93

However, another coup by Thai military to overthrow the government of Prime Minister Prem Tinsulanonda failed. Within hours of its operation on September 9 plotters, who attempted to overthrow the government in 1981 was able to muster only 400 to 500 soldiers. A total of 5 persons, including 2 Western journalists, were killed and 59 were wounded in the attempt.

Army rebels struck while Prime Minister Prem and the armed forces commander, General Arthit Kamlangek, were out of the country. Before dawn, armored and cavalry units entered Bangkok and took over Radio Thailand announcing that they were taking power to solve economic problems. The only serious fighting occurred when rebel tanks and their machine guns began firing at an army building in order to knock out radio transmitter. In mid afternoon, however, the rebels finding themselves outnumbered by the government forces had to flee.¹¹

After absolute monarchy was abolished since 1932 Thailand has had 16 coups some of them were successful. Traditionally, Thai authorities have been lenient in dealing with coup attempts; the leader of this uprising (and the 1981 one) Manoon Rupekachorn was allowed to leave the country.¹²

In October 1981 however, 40 persons were charged with sedition including top military officers as well as the former ones and prominent labor leaders. One of those arrested was Kriangsak Chamanand a former prime minister who was then supreme commander of the military and head of the National Democracy Party. Thereafter, the party, which held 15 of the 324 parliamentary seats, was compelled to leave the four-party governing coalition.¹³ However, Prem government continued to hold a comfortable majority. According to Clark D. Neher, Prem Tinsulanond began his eighth year of rule

¹¹ Surachai, Sirikrai, "General Prem Survives on a Conservative Line" *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXII, No. 11 November, pp. 1093-1103 See for more details in Vichit-Vadakan, Juree, "Thailand in 1984: Year of Administering Rumors: Politics in 1984: Silent Water Runs Deep" *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXV, No. 2, February 1985, pp-232-40

¹² History of Southeast Asia : Between autocracy and democracy, 1973-1992
http://www.aseanfocus.com/publications/history_thailand.html (10/5/03)

¹³ Marks, Thomas A. "October 1976 and the role of the Military in Thai Politics" *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 14, No.4, 1980, pp.603-44

as prime minister carrying on longer term than any previous democratically elected leader in Thailand.¹⁴

There were scholars who questioned the politicians on the Thai political system devoid of democracy but none were able to produce a right answer. In March 1987 as the King Rama IX (Bhumibol Adulyadej) remarked that Thailand's brand of democracy was not working well because it was patterned on foreign models adding that Thailand really need a government that could make a concerted effort to solve the problems of the people.¹⁵

One can argue that Thai military government rejected all the ideals of Western-style of liberal democracy and rather preferred bureaucratically guided liberalization expressed in terms of limited controlled participation that emphasized consensus over competition over decentralization of power. The idea of 'democracy' continued the strength of the state structures, juxtaposed with the political parties, then inability to bring about their own institutional development meant that trends toward liberalization notwithstanding, Thailand's process of democratization was not only limited, but apparently also fragile.¹⁶ In other words, most Thai military officers seemed to reject many fundamental tenets of a Western-style of liberal democratic system although they claimed to be and probably were committed to safeguarding and preserving of the four institutions of Nation, Religion, Monarchy and Democratic system of government with the King as its head.¹⁷ From the military point of view there was no guarantee that free elections would bring competent, honest people to the parliament. Sukhumbhan describes the military involved in business like trading companies being corrupt and bent on pursuit of power and self-interest.¹⁸

¹⁴ Clark D. Neher, op. cit., p. 192

¹⁵ Ibid, p, 193

¹⁶ Paribatra, Sukhumbhan, "State and Society in Thailand: *How Fragile the Democracy?*" *Asian Survey*, Vol, XXXIII, No.9 September 1993, PP.879-891

¹⁷ Murashima, Eiji., "The Origin of Modern Official State Ideology in Thailand" *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, March 1988, pp.80-96

¹⁸ Paribatra, op. cit., p.885

Since then Chamlong discussed the relationship between religion and politics in some detail. He cited Phra¹⁹ Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and Phra Pannanantha in support of the view that politics could not be separated from religious standpoint and argued that Thailand needed to have good people entering politics.²⁰ He clearly recognized that the Thai notion of politics was inherently dirty playing into the hands of politicians who were corrupt or simply incompetent. By this period Chamlong urged people to organize political gatherings at a temple and formed a new party in 1988 (Palang Dharma means power of Dharma in other words power from the doctrine of Buddha) for which he would select upright candidates—a suggestion which remained motto of his own subsequent political career.²¹

General Chavalit Yongchaiyut faced the same question whether the government was to be democratic and whether the government was working for the benefit of the people. He (Chavalit) comments that the politicians are acting in honest or corrupt ways.²² He argues that elections are not democratic when as in Thailand they are rife with vote buying and when the people's basic needs are not met. Chavalit was scathe in his criticism of political parties, which he referred to as business concern. Chai-Anan Samudavanija points out that Thai political parties have not gone even to the extent of performing the minimum functions of mobilizing support from people at the grass roots. He criticized parties as reflecting elite self-interests rather than those of the people whom they supposedly represent.²³

¹⁹ Phra means Buddhist monk

²⁰ Payutto. P. A., *Buddhist Solutions for the twenty-first century: Liberty Based on Wisdom is the Flag of Democracy* (Bangkok: Buddhahamma Press, 1998), p.14

²¹ McCargo, Duncan., *Chamlong Srimuang and the New Thai Politics* (London: Hurst & Company Press, 1997), p.98, see more detail in Swearer, Donald K, "Centre and Periphery: Buddhism and Politics in Modern Thailand" in Ian Harris ed., *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-Century Asia* (London: Cromwell Press, 1999), p. 222

²² Part of the military's resentment was caused by the treatment meted out by the government to Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, who had after his retirement as army commander in March 1990 joined the government as deputy prime minister and defense minister. Out of the government, Chavalit established a new party, the New Aspiration Party (NAP), which openly accused the government of rampant corruption.

²³ Samudavanija, Chai-Anand, "Old soldiers never die, they are just bypassed: the military," bureaucracy and globalization, in Kevin Hewison ed., *Political Change in Thailand: Democracy and Participation*: (London and New York: Routledge Press, 2001), p.43

Despite having political parties in Thailand the western definitions do not accord them as real political party status instead categorize them as political cliques or political factions. Scholars do not find them running parallel with British Labour Party or British Conservative Party or for that matter Democratic or Republican Party in US whose modalities principles and practices are frequently cited and studied upon as models in this regard.

Suthep Attakorn commented that the real party must feature mass membership, sophisticated administrative structure, local branches, representative leadership, ideological cohesion and concrete manifesto. In addition to this Kanok Wongtrangan have given 10 points that finds lacking in Thai political parties. They are: (i) short of principles; (ii) unclear and similar policies; (iii) predominance of personalities; (iv) indiscipline and disunity of party members; (v) lack of stability among parties; (vi) lack of real support from the public; (vii) conflict between parties and state officials who look down on parties; (viii) too many parties, producing unstable coalitions; (ix) need for substantial funding produces over reliance on and excessive influence of party financiers; and (x) misunderstandings by politicians and the public concerning the role of parties.²⁷ What Suthep Attakorn finds lacking in Thai political parties in reality are found so in most of the top democracies in the world and in some Third World democracies inclusive of India. Even in Thailand more ideological parties have begun to receive greater popular support since parties of this kind could only serve to undermine entrenched power and privilege. The author comments on the first four of these minus points actually come within the direct control of parties themselves; the other shortcomings arise primarily from wider problems in the political structure.²⁸

Duncan Mc Cargo argues that the desire of Thai scholars for real parties may sometimes go beyond purely political concerns; in terms of comparative social science

²⁷Duncan cited in Wongtrangan, Kanok, eds., "A Theory of Thai Politics," in *Thai Studies Program : Thai Politics and Government / Minority Groups, Proceedings of the International Conference on Thai Studies*: (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 1984), p. 115

²⁸ Ibid, p.116

the existence of such parties would place the country on a par with the West as a subject worthy of academic study.²⁹ He further suggests that, “one important factor in political parties is that they create pre-conditions for comparability.”³⁰ Therefore, one can work to create proper parties and it gives political scientists a role in advising the government of the day to draft the policies intended to refine the party system.

That is very important thing; it gives them the ideal and license to work as well as become involved with the political parties themselves. According to Duncan the idea of the elite-led mass party one with outward trappings of a real party has a long but largely undistinguished history in Thailand. Actual Thai parties do not conform to the ideal types of the real or authentic party.³¹ Moreover, Thai political parties represent uneasy composites of both the real and the authentic. The interesting parties of recent years were the three, which formed the core of the government coalition from September 1992 to December 1994: the Democrat Palang Dharma and New Aspiration Parties.³²

At this juncture it is imperative to look at the role of the political parties in the political process of the Thailand. One should look at the political parties, which have been taking part in running the country since 1975-1992. The table below shows that there were very large number of political parties participated in the election.

²⁹ McCargo, Duncan, *Thailand's political parties: Real, authentic and actual* London: Routledge Press, 2001), p. 116

³⁰ Ibid,

³¹ Ibid, p.121

³² Nicksch, Larry A. “Thailand in 1988: The Economic Surge”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 2, February 19989, pp. 165-73

Table- 8: Election Results from 1975 to1996

Year	1975	1976	1979	1983	1986	1988	1992a	1992b	95	96
Democrat	72	114	32	56	100	48	44	79	86	123
Chat Thai	28	56	38	73	63	87	74	77	92	39
Social Action	18	45	83	92	51	54	31	22	22	20
Palang Dharma	-	-	-	-	-	14	41	47	23	1
New Aspiration	-	-	-	-	-	-	72	51	57	125
Chat Phatthana	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	60	53	52
Samakkhitham	-	-	-	-	-	-	92	-	-	-
Prachakorn Thai	-	-	32	36	24	31	7	3	18	18
Other	151	64	116	67	109	123	12	21	40	15
Total	269	279	301	324	347	357	360	360	391	393

Source: Election Division, Department of Local Administration. Ministry of Interior

This table shows that after the 1975 election the Democrats were offered the first chance to form a government but Seni failed to assemble a coalition and gave up after eight days. Second was offered to his brother Kukrit Parmoj with his Social Action Party, which had only 18 seats but Kukrit himself commanded immense personal popularity as a result of his journalism and role in the caretaker National Assembly formed by the King after the 1973 revolt.³³ Kukrit cobbled a coalition with Chat Thai party and several small parties and formed government, which survived for a year or so. In 1976 the Social Action Party won 45 seats in 1979, 83 seats and in 1983 they have got 92 seats. After the 1979 election Social Action Party became the most powerful party. Its core stood on the strategic alliance between metropolitan business (Boonchu) and liberal royalists (Kukrit Parmoj). According to Pasuk Boonchu, Parliament had to swing the power of the state behind capital, boosting export-oriented strategy, accelerating economic growth after East Asian model.³⁴ Boonchu launched tambon development fund, which provided cash directly to the tambon

³³ Phongpaichit Pasuk and Chris Baker, *Thailand Economics and Politics* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.342

³⁴ Ibid, p. 345 See further details in Mallet, Marian, "Causes and Consequences of the October '76 Coup: Demise of the Kukrit Government" *Journal of Contemporary Asia Quarterly* Vol, 8. No. 2. 1978, pp. 80-103

councils for development projects. Due to the metropolitan businessmen's pre-eminence in the Assembly, the cabinet could not last long. Social Action Party was the first to undergo transformation. In mid 1981, the party resigned from the government over a corruption scandal.

Democrats have got the same similar transformation as the Social Action. Chat Thai, which had been the first of central parties to welcome the provincial notables, increased its showing at the polls to the point where it became the dominant party at the 1988 elections.³⁵ We discuss this in order to understand on how political parties in Thailand have appeared for a short while and later disappeared from the scene. There are many reasons why Thai political parties cannot survive long and here comes the applicability of Kanok Wongtrangan's 10 points given above.

Duncan comments in his article that strategic alliances carry within them the seeds for power struggle and thus of organizational conflict. Thaksin Chinawatra's personal and financial links to the Chat Thai Party's Third Thai group and Amnuay Virawan close relationship with the NAP are examples of alliances which seek to cross the questionable divide between real and authentic parties. Such alliances perpetuate the elite tradition of parliamentary politics, since electoral outcomes are largely determined by a combination of Bangkok voters and provincial vote-buyers.³⁶ Clark D. Neher called democracy in Thailand as the semi-democratic dominated by the military top-level bureaucrats, members of the parliament, and the monarchy.³⁷ But it is the military that continue to play the major role in determining the direction of Thai politics, which remained intact.³⁸

David Murray has given a summary of the loose nature of Thai political parties in general comprising "Splinter groups and forming new parties; politicians swapping allegiance to different parties; competition between groups based in different regions;

³⁵ For an analysis of this impact, see James Ockey, "Political Parties, Factions, and Corruption in Thailand" *Modern Asian Studies* Vol, 28, No. 2. 1994, PP. 251-77

³⁶ Duncan McCargo, op, cit., p.131

³⁷ Clark D. Neher, op, cit., p.200

³⁸ Ibid, p. 201

intra-party competition for cabinet positions, their spoils, and the influence of personalities and personal animosities.”³⁹

However, in 1980 undoubtedly saw political parties assuming increasing importance in what Murray termed the third prong; extra-bureaucratic forces which challenged the political supremacy of the military and the bureaucracy in Thailand.⁴⁰

As Duncan argues that it was not primarily the political parties that disturbed Thailand’s military and bureaucrats who took exception to influential ministers who used the executive and legislative clout and party connection to build up personal power and wealth namely: Banharn Silpa-Archa and Pramarn Adireksarn and the Social Action Party’s Montri Pongphanit and some ministers of Chart Thai Party. Thai bureaucrats and military men had nothing to gain from the development of more ideological parties which had greater popular support, since parties of this kind could only serve to undermine entrenched power and privilege.⁴¹ Another scholar like Dan King argued that during the period 1978-90 political parties played a significant role in the process of Thai ‘democratization.’⁴²

Chai-Anand Samudavanija remarks that Thai politics have not undergone change much. Authoritarian power bases continue in spite of being somewhat minus formal institutional channels to exert their influence as in the past.⁴³ Cold War being over the Communist Party of Thailand is now reduced to a remnant. Thailand experiences incomplete democracy in spite of old style coups becoming no longer possible but the conservative alliance of the military, technocrats and business may

³⁹ Quoted in Duncan McCargo and David Murray, *The coup d’etat in Thailand, 23 February 1991: Just another coup? Nedlands: Indian Ocean Centre for Peace Studies, University of Western Australia, Occasional Paper no.7, 1991, pp.27-28*

⁴⁰ Suriyamongkol, Pisan, *Institutionalitation of democratic political processes in Thailand: A three-pronged democratic polity*, (Bangkok: The 30th Anniversary School of Public Administration Foundation/ Thammasat University Press, 1988), pp.81-94

⁴¹ McCargo, Duncan, *Chamlong Srimoung and the New Thai Politics* (London: Hurst& company, 1997), p.145

⁴² Cited in McCargo and King, Dan, “ Political parties and democratization in Thailand 1978-1990”, Paper for 1991 Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, April, 18-20, 1991.

⁴³ Chai-Anan, Sumudayaniya op. cit., p.56

utilize General Prem's influence to put pressure on any government which they deem unpopular or unresponsive to their demands.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, military's role in Thai politics become very complex. The military has to seek new links' for itself both as an institution and as individuals through new patron client networks. Institutionally, they must pledge support to democratically elected governments, while personally the military elite has been using General Prem as the link to the new power elites of party leaders.⁴⁵ Since the military and bureaucratic elites remain important and will continue to safeguard their diminishing role in society, they will not be replaced instead bypassed.⁴⁶

Progress of democratization was constrained by two factors in the past first, was for the overthrow of the constitutional system in February 1991. Then the failure of political parties to institutionalize themselves as true representatives of the people.⁴⁷ Second was the continued strength of state structures. The political changes that had begun in the early 1970s, remains largely unaltered namely: the organizational framework of civilian and military bureaucracies buttressed by a vast body of laws, decrees, and legal or administrative precedents, to preserve for themselves extensive areas of rural Thailand. These bureaucracies with their capacity also had a propensity to see politicians and their voluntary political participation as potential threats, not only to their roles and functions but also in ultimate analysis to the nation's so-called true interests.⁴⁸

Juree, Vichit-Vadakarn notes that even the politicians and leaders did not have a clear understanding of democracy as a way of life or as a guiding principle for social action. As a result, both successful and unsuccessful *co ups d'états* occurred many times, with the last one taking place in 1991. Moreover, Thai people in general have not

⁴⁴ Tay, S.C, Simon and Jesue p. Estanislaq. Eds., *Reinventing ASEAN: The Context for Change* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Press, 2001), p.28

⁴⁵ Chai- Anand op. cit, p.57

⁴⁶ Ibid., For more details see, Jeffrey Race "Thailand in 1974: A new Constitution", *Asian Survey* Vol. XV, No.1, January, 1975, p. 157-65

⁴⁷ Paribatra, Sukhumhan, op, cit., p.884

⁴⁸ Quoted in n. 140, p.885

clearly understood, much less embraced the principles of democracy.⁴⁹ Principles like equality, participation, rule of law, freedom of expression and right to assembly or minority rights as well as human rights may be familiar terms in Thailand but are generally not upheld nor observed them.

III. i Thailand 1991

Chatichai Choonhavan became prime minister following the 1988 election and after the surprise retirement of General Prem Tinsulanonda the unelected incumbent from 1980. Prem withdrew after enormous pressure from various groups and political parties demanding that the leader be drawn from the ranks of MPs. According to Kevin Hewison, this event was the first time in Thai political history, as Thai people may have thought this the way to a victory in democracy. In other words, it was a precursor to a major turning point in Thai's political development.⁵⁰ Some scholars analyze that the years 1987-96 saw the rise of new political thinking and motivations in Thailand through the shift of political power to a new class of political maneuver.

Paul Handley says that the military groups are qualitatively different from the political players of earlier period. In contrast to the overwhelming corruption and debasement of the past and voters being left apathetic holding elite politicians in disdain. New generation is allegedly more committed to democracy, to the rule of law and the long-term needs of the country and people.⁵¹ Seen as most representative of this change is the overwhelming public rejection. With heavy middle-class backing non-elected Prime Minister Suchinda Kraprayoon took over the government in May 1992.⁵²

⁴⁹ Vachit-Vadakran, Juree and Kanokkan Anukansai, "Civil society and Governance in Thailand": Center for Philanthropy and Civil society: National Institute of Development Administration: (Bangkok: 2004), p.2

⁵⁰ Hewison, Kevin, "Introduction: Power, oppositions and democratization": *Political Changes in Thailand Democracy and Participation*: (London: Routledge, Press, 1997), p. 1

⁵¹ Haul, Handey, "More of the Same? Politics and Business, 1987-96" (London: Routhge Press, 1997), p.94

⁵² Ibid.,

The Chatichai government was ousted by a military coup on 23 February 1991 and replaced by a military junta who promised the appointment of a civilian prime minister and cabinet and a military-dominated Legislative Assembly. The key men behind the coup were members of Chulachomkhaeo Military Academy of Class Five. The leader of Class Five, Suchinda Kraprayoon called themselves the National Peace-Keeping Council (NPKC).⁵³

Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan was arrested on February 23 by the air force chief, General Kaset Rojananil and a small group of soldiers. Later that day the armed forces supreme commander, General Sunthorn Kongsompong appeared on television, flanked by Army Chief General Suchinda Kraprayoon and the chiefs of the air force, navy, and police, to declare martial law and to announce that they were in charge of the government. The subsequent result was that the constitution was abolished, Parliament dissolved, cabinet dismissed, and press censorship imposed.⁵⁴

The stated purpose of the coup was to end corruption in the Chatichai Choonhavan administration and to defend the constitutional monarchy but observers offered other possible reasons, namely: the appointment of a person to a top post who was considered rival of the said military academy and the military's anger at the erosion of its power. It was a bloodless coup like most previous coups in Thailand. This was the 17th coup after the end of the absolute monarchy in 1932.⁵⁶

Evening before the coup, General Suchinda Kraprayoon and Air Chief Marshal Kaset Rojananil had appeared on television to announce that neither of them would accept the post of prime minister after the general election. But Suchinda had broken that promise not to become prime minister and there was a popular distaste for the arrogance Suchinda had displayed.⁵⁷ Suchinda had held the office of prime minister with a cabinet of forty-eight members inclusive of discredited politicians. The

⁵³ Bamber, Scott, "The Thai medical profession and political activism" in Kevin Hewison ed., *Political Change in Thailand: Democracy and Participation*: (London: Routledge Press, 1997), p. 234

⁵⁴ Neher, Clark D, "Political Succession in Thailand" *Asian Survey* Vol, XXXII, No.11 November, 1992), p. 585-605

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 243

⁵⁷ Duncan, McCargo, op, cit., p. 244

progressive movement had serious concerns about the military man's commitment to civil liberties and freedom of the press. People's doubts and suspicions on the new regime grew during the seven weeks of Suchinda's regime.⁵⁸

Opposition to Suchinda during his forty-eight days in office emerged in a series of phases. First phase of protest was centered on the hunger strike of Captain Chalard Vorachat,⁵⁹ which began early in the morning of 8 April—immediately after Suchinda took office. Chalard insisted that he would starve himself to death unless Suchinda resigned as prime minister. But Suchinda announces that he was willing to sacrifice for the sake of the country instead of becoming untrue to the Thailand and its people. Suchinda further declared that it would be quite wrong for a single individual to force him to resign by threats of suicide.

"I don't think that person loves democracy. If you love democracy, you have to listen to the majority. He is making a big issue of his own ideas, as if they must be right and proper, and it hasn't yet been the case that he has continued a hunger strike to the death. Captain Chalard has supposedly gone on hunger strikes many a times before, and in the end has given them up without winning his demands."⁶⁰

Duncan says Suchinda's assertion was untrue. Chalard's 1983 protest was over the constitutional amendment issue. In fact, Chalard ended his hunger strike after his demands being met.⁶¹ In 8 April 1992 the hunger strike had the effect of crystallizing opposition to the Suchinda government. Representatives of various pro-democracy groups—including the pregnant slum activist Khru Prateep Ungsongtham Hata⁶² stayed one-day hunger strikes alongside Chalad. Chamlong Srimuang also led hundreds of thousands of pro-democracy protestors who were demanding the

⁵⁸ Ibid, p.245

⁵⁹ Duncan cited in Sian Rath Weekly, 19-25 April, 1992, p.245 Chalard was a former Democrat MP for Trat Province who had gone on hunger strike on the occasions, once in protest against increases in the price of oil during the Kriangsak administration, in April 1981, and again in February 1983 at the time of the constitutional amendment crisis in which Chamlong had also played a key role.

⁶⁰ For more details see Siatip Sukatipan, Thailand The Evolution of Legitimacy, in *Political Legitimacy in Southeast Asia: The Quest for Moral Authority*, Muthiah Alagappa ed., (California: Stanford University Press, 1995), p.195

⁶¹ Ibid,

⁶² Khru Prateep means Teacher Prateep. She runs NGO: "slum klong touy" for poor children. Being a powerful energetic personality, she (2005), functions as Member of Parliament.

resignation of Suchinda Kraprayoon. His actions were hailed as symbolizing the emergence of powerful civilian political force in Thailand.⁶³ Chamlong praised the hunger strike of Chalard as legitimate way of struggling against the government. Chamlong announced that he too would go on hunger strike taking no nutrients apart from water. Almost 100,000 people answered his call for them to gather in front of Parliament on 6 May in a show of support for the anti-Suchinda cause. One of the main accusations against Suchinda was that he had broken his word by accepting the premiership.⁶⁴

On 6 May, police chief Sawat Amronwiwat declared that the police had been ordered to protect hunger strikers by not allowing anybody to die.⁶⁵ On the morning of 9 May 1992, Chamlong made a controversial decision to end his hunger strike. On ending his hunger strike Chamlong announced of his resignation from the leadership of the Phalang Tham Party, his point being difficulty of controlling the crowd during the move to Ratchadamnoen Anenue. He says: "I gave up because I couldn't continue as I had been doing. I couldn't sit still or lie still any long, because the government forced us to move. I had to stand on top of the vehicle and explain to the people where we had to move. There is no hunger striker in the world who could continue his fast while being forced to walk, run and climb on top of a van at the same time."⁶⁶

Duncan compares Chamlong to Gandhi's use of fasting as a political weapon. He comments that a central difficulty with such protests is that they adopt the rhetoric of non-violence, yet at the same time are replete with overtones of moral coercion. It is important to recognize the differences between Chamlong and Gandhi. Gandhi went to declare fasts at politically sensitive junctures but invariably the fast took religious overtone. His fasts were not always linked to any particular demand nor did he ever declare an explicit intention to starve himself to death.⁶⁷ Duncan further pointed that

⁶³ Duncan, McCargo, op. cit., p.65

⁶⁴ Cited in Duncan McCargo, *The Nation*, 5 May 1992, p.248

⁶⁵ Ibid, p.249

⁶⁶ Duncan McCargo, quoted in *The Nation*, 12 May 1992, p.252

⁶⁷ Ibid,

Chamlong was staging a strike against Suchinda, which hit home and struck a chord with the Bangkok public. His hunger strike was a missile, which could only be fired once: after striking its target it was abandoned.⁶⁸

In May 1992, political events took a sharp turn and there was a mass demonstration for democracy. The Bloody May event saw people from different walks of life, particularly those from the middle classes gather for several days to demonstrate against the military General-Prime Minister whose legitimacy was overthrown with the King's intervention. During this time, women workers and NGOs agreed questioned.⁶⁹ The event turned violent and the undemocratic leadership was eventually 1976, images of bloodshed on the streets of Bangkok were flashed around the television screens of the world in May 1992. For four days and nights thousands of ordinary Thai people braved automatic gunfire in a struggle to bring down General Suchinda, Thailand's latest military dictator.⁷⁰

The full consequences and implications of the crisis of May 1992 widely labeled in Thailand as "Black May". The political challenge posed by popular demonstrations against General Suchinda Kraprayoon's premiership was met with military force, resulting in the worst case of civil strife in the history of the capital city. The period since those bloody events, however, may be sufficient to permit a more or less sober examination of the crisis in the context of Thailand's past and present democratic experiences, as well as a reasoned of what the future holds for the kingdom's political development.⁷¹

Clark D. Neher comments that Suchinda did not understand that the days were long gone when the military could dominate every aspect of Thai politics without much public support. The 1991 coup did not undo almost two decades of public participation

⁶⁸ Ibid, p.253

⁶⁹ Ungpakorn, Ji Giles, "PU-NOI" the little people: The struggle for democracy and social justice in Thailand (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 1997), p.11

⁷⁰ Ibid,

⁷¹ Paribatra, Sukhumbhand, op, cit., p. 879

by Thai urbanites as well as rural peasants who had learned how to have their interests met through political activities.⁷²

Firm action soon became apparent with soldiers beginning to fire thousands rounds of ammunition some into the air but others into the crowd. Deaths and injuries were reported in the electronic and print media almost immediately around the world. Events were covered by dozens of foreign journalists. A brutal crackdown had begun. More than fifty people were confirmed dead and hundreds injured but the true death toll was more than a thousand.⁷³

On 20 May, an extraordinary scene was broadcast on Thai television where Suchinda and Chamlong being knelt before King Bhumibol who told them that they had brought great trouble upon the country and asked them to find a means of resolving their differences.⁷⁴

As King Bhumibol said, "They were not the only losers and in fact, every one is a loser, each side in the confrontation is lost."⁷⁵ Suchinda resigned. Chamlong's determination and political acumen had been crucial factors in the removal of a military strongman from the office of prime minister.⁷⁶ Peter A. Jackson argues in support of political action for Suchinda Kraprayoon in early 1992 because he sought to save Thai Buddhism, preventing opposition leader Chamlong from setting up a new religion.⁷⁷ The king reinstated Anan Panyarachun as interim prime minister for a four- month term, once again winning praise from most people for his even-handed and efficient administration.⁷⁸

⁷² Clark D. Neher, *The People Speak*, op, cit., p.638

⁷³ LoGerfo, Jim., "Attitudes Toward Democracy Among Bangkok and Rural Northern Thais: *The Great Divide*" *Asian Survey*, Vol, XXXVI, No.9. September 1996), p. 904-923

⁷⁴ Bowornwathan, Bidhya, Thailand in 1999: "A Royal jubilee, Economic Recovery, and Political Reform", *Asian Survey*, Vol, 40, No.1, 1999, pp. 87-97, see more detail in Duncan McCargo, p.263

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 262

⁷⁶ Ibid, p.263

⁷⁷ Jackson, Peter A., "Withering centre, flourishing margins: Buddhism's changing political role": in Kevin Hewison ed., *Political Change in Thailand: Democracy and Participation*: (London: Routledge Press, 1997), p.85

⁷⁸ Phuket History, Art, Temples and Antiques Guide, Thailand
http://www.phuket-guide.net/phuket_history/struggle_democracy.htm(download 11,01,2005)



Figure: 2

Pro-Democracy Rally in Thailand: Massive protests in Bangkok, including this one Ramkhamhaeng University, led to the resignation of the Prime Minister Suchinda Kraprayoon.⁷⁹

III. ii Post massacre political reform (1973 to 1992)

The argument put forward by Ji Ungpakorn is that, “not only did the working class play a significant role in May 1992, but also overthrew of the military, and took part in the October 1973 uprising.”⁸⁰ Upheavals and reforms of the 1990s were events influenced by the tumultuous changes of the 1970s. A military coup against elected government in 1991 and the subsequent popular uprising in May 1992, which overthrew that military regime, convinced many sections of the Thai elite that further political reform was long over-due. Yet calls for reform in this period came from two conflicting class factions.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Encarta Reference Library (New York: 2004), Picture by Liason Agency /paola Bronstion, 1992

⁸⁰ Ungpahorn, Ji Giles, “Cleansing democracy of socialism: Crushing the Thai left on the 6th October, 1976 and the consequences for the present day politics: Paper presented at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, September, 2001, p.1

⁸¹ Ibid, p.5

working class, the peasantry and the poor. Reformation became possible because of the mass popular uprising. The main theoretical guide was no longer the socialism of the 1970s, but to reduce the power of the bureaucrats. They aimed to amend the constitution in order to achieve decentralization of political power to the people and to uphold basic human rights. Another important objective was the setting up of monitoring bodies like Anti-Corruption Commission, Human Rights Commission and Election Commission etc. Although the term “independent” was meant to mean independence from the government and political bias, how practical this would have been, was never clear.⁸²

Secondly, the second faction called for political reform did so after the May 1992 events and it was this faction, which later managed to control the actual drafting of the new constitution by appointing itself to the drafting committee. This class faction was an alliance of modern business leaders, politicians, bureaucrats and intellectuals who hoped that the reformed state power could more effectively fit into the complex legal and social requirements.⁸³

Key points of the 1997 constitution had increased the power of the prime minister and jacked up the stability of the government. This was done by manipulating the electoral system to include MPs who would be elected from party lists on a proportional representation basis, intention being to favour larger parties and reduce the likelihood of unstable coalition governments. Another measure was to force cabinet ministers to resign their seats in parliament before becoming ministers to prevent deserting the government.⁸⁴

The 1997 constitution was passed by parliament in September 1997, overcoming opposition from conservative politicians and government officials. Victory for political reform was achieved, “by packaging political reform to enhance

⁸² Ibid, p.6. See also Clark D.Neher, Political Succession in Thailand, *Asian Survey*, Vol,32, No. 11, 1992, pp.585-605

⁸³ Ungpahorn, Ji Giles, op. cit., p. 4

⁸⁴ Brown, Andrew and Kevin Hewison, op. cit., p.3 for example see from the government website at <http://www.thairov.go.th/general/cabin.thak>

government stability and to expand opportunities for political participation". In drafting the constitution, the ideas proposed by the NGOs and the labour groups were incorporated into the general blueprint as determined by the liberals.⁸⁵

People's faction supported the final form of the constitution after accommodating the views of the liberal business faction this being the legacy of the struggles from the 1970s. Today, the People's faction is no longer seeking a fundamental change in Thai society. They reluctantly accept capitalism and no longer seek to overthrow the existing system. Instead of so-called class analysis of society they have adopted a pluralist view of democratic society.⁸⁶

Student activists who fought side by side with the Communist Party of Thailand in jungles and elsewhere have suffered two occasions.⁸⁷ Firstly, they were brutally attacked by the Thai military government in 1973 and 1976. Then the students became disillusioned by the Chinese politics of the Communist Party who had the backing of the People's Republic of China.⁸⁸ It is this generation of activists who took a leading role in the NGO movements and had shown extreme reluctance to re-establish left political parties but carried on a civil struggle to create a political opportunities for various interest groups. This was the current thinking behind the associations of the poor.⁸⁹

The NGO viewpoint was borrowed in a mechanical manner and pluralist idea of social groups is considered to have been equal representation in a reformed, just, and fair political system. This explains how a united front in favour of the new constitution was built between two different class factions favouring political reform. Yet, without political parties of the peasantry and the working class, little economic or political reform to create a more just society will ever take place.

⁸⁵ Ibid.,

⁸⁶ Race, Jeffrey., Thailand 1973: "We Certainly Have Been Ravaged by Something..." *Asian Survey*, Vol. XIV, No. 1 January, 1974), pp.192-203

⁸⁷ Winichakul, Thoncha, "The Changing Landscape of the Past: New Histories in Thailand Since 1973", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* Vol, 26, No. 1, March 1995, pp.99-120

⁸⁸ Waddell, J.R.E., *Communism and Communist in Southeast Asia* op. cit., p.258

⁸⁹ Jumbala, Prudhisana and Maneerat Mitprasat, "Non-Governmental development organizations: Empowerment and environment, in Kevin Hewison ed., *Political Change in Thailand: Democracy and Participation* (London and New York: Routledge Press, 1997), p. 206

III. iii Civilian Government

September 1992 elections brought genuine civilian government to power under Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai, leader of the Democrat Party. Chuan began drafting a supposedly more democratic constitution for Thailand, which was completed in 1997.⁹⁰ He also presided over a period of economic boom during which Thailand experienced one of the highest economic growth rates in the world.⁹¹

Although the Chuan administration from 1992-95 was regarded as relatively free from scandals the Silpa-Archa government (1995-1996) was perceived as a throwback to the same blatant money politics that marked the Chatichai period. General Chavalit's emergence as prime minister following the November 1996 elections in a six-member coalition that included General Chatichai's Chart Phart Pattana party again raised concerns over money politics and special interests linked to various politicians and businessmen. Without tougher transparency and disclosure laws to find how leading politicians came into their fortunes the financial system of Thailand's was doomed to crash.⁹²In 1997, three-fifths of all MPs described themselves as professional politicians (See Pasuk and Chris).⁹³

In November 1997, Chavalit resigned as prime minister in the face of criticism for his economic policies. Chuan Leekpai was appointed to the post a second time. The January 2001 general elections were the first to be held under the reformist 1997 constitution, which created the Election Commission to monitor elections for vote fraud. The Thai Rak Thai (Thai Love Thai) Party leader a telecommunications tycoon

⁹⁰ Sanitwong, Kusuma, "Thailand in 1993: Politics of Survival", *Asian Survey*, Vol, XXXIV, No.2, February, 1993, pp.147-52

⁹¹ MacDonald, Scott B. "Transparency in Thailand's 1997 Economic Crisis : The Significance of Disclosure: A post-Cruch Reflection- Thailand's Tiger Economy," *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXXVIII, No.7, July 1998, pp.688-702 see also in Victor Mallet., *The Trouble with Tigers: The Rise and Fall of South- East Asia: Thailand Smile that Faded*, p.224

⁹² MacDonald, Scott B. "Transparency in Thailand's 1997: Economic Crisis: The Significance of Disclosure", *Asian survey* Vol. XXXVIII, No. 7. July-December, 1998, pp.688-702

⁹³ Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, op, cit, p.246

Thaksin Shinawatra⁹⁴ won by a landslide on a populist platform, promising economic initiatives to benefit small businesses and farmers.⁹⁵

Thai Rak Thai entered a three-party coalition controlling 325 of 500 seats in the House of Representatives and Thaksin Shinawatra secured a parliamentary mandate to become the prime minister. His party then absorbed the Seritham (Liberal Democratic) Party and gained 14 additional seats making it the first governing party in the country's history to secure a simple majority. The Thai Rak Thai party alone elected 22 women, which puts more women than ever in parliament.⁹⁶

Thaksin Shinawatra was re-elected as the Thai Prime Minister on February 6, 2005. The 'Thaksinisation' of Thailand's politics has received a tremendous boost following the general elections on February 6 2005. The stamp of 'Thaksinisation' a mix of populist policies, a certain willingness to think the unthinkable and a high measure of self-esteem that his critics see as the arrogance of power-will, in the short term be the defining feature of Thailand's new 500-member House of Representatives.⁹⁷ How well Thaksin utilizes his immense new power will determine whether he can indeed become Thailand's man of destiny in the early part of the 21st century. The daunting challenge of harnessing the massive mandate will outweigh the opportunities for governance.⁹⁸

Despite Thaksin's government or his impact likewise proves durable or whether- like Thailand's 1991-1992 return to military rule, they represent a temporary deviation from the clear promising trends of the past three decades will depend on three main factors. According to Michael J.Montesano first is the prime minister's

⁹⁴ Thaksin is one of Thailand's most influential businessmen, a former policeman with law degrees from the US, and a committed globalize whose Shinawatra Computer and Communication company had enjoyed phenomenal success following its foundation in 1983. The company launched Thailand's first ever broadcasting satellite 1993, and had substantial telecommunications interests in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, the Philippines and Indonesia. Although he liked to present himself as a new generation Thai entrepreneur, Thaksin owed much of his success to old-fashioned high-level family contracts in the bureaucracy which enabled him to secure a series of lucrative government contracts. Duncan McCargo, P,293

⁹⁵ Montesano, Michael J. Thailand in 2000: Shifting Politics, Dragging Economy, Troubled Border, *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLI, No. January/ February 2001, pp.171-180

⁹⁶ Montesano, Michael J, "Thailand in 2001: Learning to live with Thaksin": *Asian Survey*, Vol,XLII, No.1,January/February 2002,pp.90-99

⁹⁷ Quoted in Orathai Kokpol: *Election Commission of Thailand: The result of the 2001 election* is available at the website www.ect.go.th (2001)

⁹⁸ Suryanarayana, P.S., Frantline (India's National Magazine): Volume 22-Issue, Feb,26, March, 11, 2005

ability to hold his TRT Party together. Second is the notoriously fickle Thai public's assessment of his capacity to deliver improved economic conditions. Third the lengths to which Thaksin will go to remain in power as modern dictatorship.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Micheal J. Montesano, *op, cit.*, p.99

CHAPTER - IV

Challenges to women's political participation at national and level local

As mentioned in Chapter II, Thai women have altered their mode of living during Phibun regime beginning with education, career prospects and so on. This chapter will discuss the ongoing challenges of women's political participation in Thailand. Women have played a significant role in Thai society. They have enjoyed more active role and better status than women in some developing countries. However, Thai women are still struggling to improve their own status.¹ The submissive role of Thai women in society has been reflected both in beliefs and reality since ancient times. For example, a Thai proverb compares a couple to an elephant, saying that the husband is like the front legs of the elephant and wife to back legs. The male role being breadwinner, head of the family, ruler and the warrior of the country, female roles are to look after the house, the children and manage the family's budget. The socio-economic status clearly indicates that Thai women have remained submissive with regard to education, family status and political power etc. in some ways.² Due to the break through in education and legal reform more women were able to enter traditionally male occupation in law, law enforcement, politics, and medicine, academic and professional fields.³

IV. i Challenges in winning equal rights

What are the challenges that Thai women in politics face? Difference between law and its practice is a significant feature. As all constitutions in the world enshrines necessary rights for women couched in the best possible language, in practicality very

¹ Klausner, William J. *Reflections on Thai Culture: Women's Rights*. op.cit., p.239

² Biggins, Ousa, "Cultural Imperialism and Thai Women's Portrayals on Mass Media" Paper presented in International Conference on Revising Globalization & Communication in 2000s: (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University, August 5-6, 20004)

³ Costa, Lee Ray M., "*Thailand Women Issue: The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Women's Issues Worldwide: Asia and Oceania*" (London: Greenwood Press, 2003), p. 503

few countries can boast of proper implementation of them. Unfortunately, Thailand does not belong to that few.⁴

However, it is important to highlight that this is not just a feature of women's rights, but actually one of human rights issues. Words in constitutions remains elusive but it is nevertheless one of the most important empowering mechanisms for the achievement of rights. Challenges to women's equality both in legal status and in Thai society became apparent. In recent years women have begun to rise up in the social and career ladder. Nevertheless, hindrances are found in accessing technology, being result of growth in scientific knowledge and that of other such fields during the last 20 years.

Challenges differ between countries and regions and even within a country they are not always of the same. Relative silence of certain female politicians in some Southeast Asian countries in the face of political manipulation and intrigue are indicators of constraints. The challenges can be classified into social, cultural, economic, and political spheres.

IV.ii Cultural and socio-economic standard of Thai Women

Thai culture and debates on it, have elicited a discipline within the social sciences but it still remains an elusive concept to define. However, Thai culture is still intact for practical purposes; it can be assumed that culture encompasses particular lifestyles derived from history and traditions as well as products of contemporary social and political dynamics. Thailand is inherited by amalgamations of religious practices, different cultural influences—Buddhism Confucianism, Taoism and Hinduism. Culture is that which surrounds us and plays a certain role in determining the way we behave at any given moment. ⁵

⁴ Geert Ten Dam and Hanneke Farkas Teekens, " The Gender Inclusiveness of a Women's History Curriculum in Secondary Education ": *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol.20, No.1. 1997, pp. 61-75

⁵ Karam, Azza M, "Meeting on Women and Political Participation: 21st Century Challenges United Nations Development Programme"(New Delhi, 24 - 26 March 1999)

By no means a static concept, culture defines and is both defined by events that are taking place both locally as well as regionally and internationally, it is shaped by individual events as well as collective ones and it is a feature of the time or epoch we live in. Culture is also often used as a tool to validate all manners of actions—not, all of which may be acceptable to all concerned. Cultural framework is not always imposed one but is open to manipulation and interpretation from many angles and sources.

Thailand was influenced by Western culture from the early 19th century in terms of dress code and education. Interaction with Western countries during this period also introduced concepts of democracy, equal rights for women and liberty to Thai society.⁶ These new concepts and philosophies served as firm ground upon which notions of women's political participation grew. Society began to perceive the role and status of women differently. According to Orapin Sopchokchai most Thai women started themselves to conceptualize their roles and status with a different mindset.⁷

From the very beginning, woman organizations and movements have not systematically documented. But they gradually become more aware of their rights, especially after 1974 constitution, which first provided for equality between men and women and its successors including the 1997 constitution now in force have helped generate a great deal of awareness about women's rights.⁸

The evidence from my studies shows many incidents whereby woman organizations took active role in pressing for equal right for men and women. Prior to the equal right to vote and to contest as an electoral candidate and when many other countries remained dictatorial and unconcerned in respect of women's political rights Thailand had given this right by the first constitution in 1932. They have gone through many general elections, military dictatorships, civilian administrations and people's

⁶ Sopchokchai, Orapin, Women's Political Participation in Thailand, *Quarterly Review* Vol.13, No.4, December, 1998, pp.11-20

⁷ Ibid,

⁸ Nongyao, Nawarat., "Promotion of Women in Local Government in Thailand" In Anne Seyfferth ed., *Women Claim Their in Local Politics: Strategies to Increase Women's Participation in Local Government and Administrative in South and Southeast Asia*, (Friedrich- Ebert- Stiftung: Bangkok, 1994)

revolutions neither of them nor the 16 Constitutions have revoked those equal political rights.

Respect for Women's equal rights and dignity is well reflected in Thai legislation, policy and practices. The Constitution clearly stipulates that men and Women shall enjoy equal rights. Unjust discrimination and treatments against women are therefore, prohibited. Women's roles and contribution are well recognized in politics, commerce, trade, education, academia and agriculture as well at the home turf. This is to guarantee that in practice women can express their concerns and initiate changes when and where their rights are not fully respected.⁹

IV. iii Women's participation at the local level

Thailand has three levels of government: central, provincial¹ and local. At central level they have the bicameral parliament with an appointed Senators of 200 members and an elected House of Representatives with 500 members. Provincial government is based on 75 provinces that are divided into districts, sub-districts and villages.¹⁰ At local government level there are cities and municipalities that govern urban centres in the provinces.¹¹

In addition, there is the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration administered by an elected governor and divided in 38 districts. Some positions in local government are elected and some appointed but this keeps on changing. The first election held for a mayor resulted in a woman being elected in Prathumthani. Currently there are 8 women mayors (0.53 percent) and women fill approximately 6.79 percent of local government seats in Thailand. 30 percent of city clerks are women with 40 percent of

⁹ Siddiqi, Fatima Ehiesham and Sarala Ranganathan., *Handbook on women and Human Rights: A guide for Social Activists: Part – 2 Crime and Punishment: Search for Justice* (New Delhi: Kanishka Press, 2001), p.664

¹⁰ Quoted in Nongyao, Nawarat., N. 8

¹¹ Thailand Government Report: *Country Women in Development Profile: January 2003*, p.3

executives. There are 44 women in the National Parliament (7.8 percent): 22 women in the Senate (10.9 percent) and 22 in the House of Representatives (6.1percent).¹²

The current Thai constitution clearly specifies new concepts on local decentralization in terms of administration, personnel, finance and political participation (direct election of the municipality mayor). While there are neither regulations that specify more roles of women in governance nor measures to attract women towards elected office at the local level, the increasing number of women mayors points to women making strides towards equality at this level of government. In fact the first Mayor to win the recently introduced direct elections was the Woman Mayor of Prathumthani.¹³

The social transformation of the Thai society is also reflected at the local level with more than 30 percent of city clerks and more than 40 percent of executives being women. The restrictions preventing women from political participation are family and traditions. Women were never recognized as leaders in the past. This attitude still prevails in society and is a reason why only a small number of women contribute in politics. At present many local administration and organizations have started programmes on community strengthening and participation. This provides a chance for a woman to be elected as a community leader. The promotion of supplementary income by setting up women's development groups is used as a mean to strengthen communities and also to increase women's status and role in their communities.¹⁴

The amendment of the law in 1982 to allow female *kamnan* has broadened the scope of women's political participation in the local government in many ways. Women village heads are allowed to run for the *kamnan* position. In 1989, the number of women *kamnan* and female village heads accounted for only 0.49 percent and 0.75 percent respectively. The recorded figures by the government shows that the number of female

¹² Election Division, Department of Local Administration, Ministry of Interior from 1989-1996

¹³ Statistics and Results of Provincial Council Election: Department of Local Administration Minister of Interior: 2003

¹⁴ Women's Rights in New Thai Constitution (1997) <http://oak.cats.ohiou.edu/~bs388085/thaiwomen.htm> (30/12/2004)

women community leaders has increased. The numbers of women *kamnan*¹⁵ are increased from 33 persons or 0.49 percent in 1989 to 110 persons or 1.52 % in 1996. The women village heads rose rapidly from 418 persons or 0.75 % in 1989 to 6,375 persons or 9.68 % in 1996. This not only signifies higher opportunities for women to take part in a local level, but also suggests higher position in a national level of women leaders.¹⁶

Women in Thailand are making their mark with distinct styles of leadership at the local government but have a long way to go to reach the critical mass needed to level a political playing field that still remains decided by male oriented.¹⁷ This was a common theme at the opening on Tuesday of the Asia-Pacific Summit of Women Mayors and Councilors in this northern Thai city where some 120 women local leaders and about 100 activists and experts are discussing on how to make political systems more gender-friendly. As Premrudee Charmpoonod, mayor of Phitsanulok municipality in the province of the same name and one of seven local officials cited for their achievements on Tuesday knows exactly how difficult it was to make her way to that table. "The work I have as mayor is not so difficult—the difficulty came before being elected," she recounted. She cited a belief in many parts of Asia that "we trust in men more than women".¹⁸ Women constitute less than ten percent of decision –making at the local level.

¹⁵ Thailand has some 50,000 villages (muban), each of which elects a village headman (puyaiban). These villages are combined into 4,926 communes (tambon), each with a commune leader (Kamnan) who is chosen by the adult citizens living in the commune. The headman plays a middleman role between his village and the district officials. His position as the representative of the village to the district authorities conflicts with his position as representative of the officials to his village constituency. As a middleman the headman is constantly subjected to conflicting pressures and is therefore in a most unenviable position. Hans-Dieter Evers, "The Formation of a Social Class Structure: Urbanization, Bureaucratization, and Social Mobility in Thailand: Rural Politics Process" in Clark D. Neher ed., *Modern Thai Politics from Village to Nation* (Massachusetts: Schekman Press, 1979), pp.194-95

¹⁶ United Nation Information Services 7 March 1997: Press Release

http://www.unescap.org/unis/press/f_01_97.th (6/12/2004)

¹⁷ New states woman : Politics: still a man's world? <http://www.nestatesman.com> 4 April 2005

¹⁸ Johanna, Son, "Women far from critical mass in Asian politics" Asia Time on line, atimes.com: Southeast Asia, June, 21, 2001

Following table shows the percentage of women participation in the local politics.¹⁹

Table- 9: Politics and Administration at the local level 2002

Position	Total Number	Percentage	
		Female	Male
Provincial Government			
Provincial Governor	75		100.0
Deputy Provincial Governor	167	1.8	98.2
District Officer	795	0.3	99.7
Deputy District Officer	5,658	1.2	88.8
Elected Local Government			
Provincial Council Member	2,230	6.3	93.7
Municipality Council Member	1,896	6.0	94.0
Sub-district Head (1998)	7,245	1.8	98.2
Village Head (1998)	69,127	2.1	97.9
Sub-district Administrative Organization (SAO) Members (In June 2000)	127,464	3.8	91.2

Source: Gender and Development Research Institute derived from Department of local Administration, ministry of Interior, Bangkok. January 1 2002²⁰

IV. iv Women in national politics

Although women have increasingly made presence felt in almost all sectors in Thai society they still find the political arena a tough place, where the major players are predominantly men. The number of successful women as electoral candidates in Thailand still remains low.²¹ In the latest general election held on 6 February 2005, 53 women were elected accounting for 10.4 per cent of the total 500 members of the House of Representative.²²

¹⁹ Premrudee Champoonod: <http://www.twinside.org.sg/title/mass.htm> on 24, 2004

²⁰ Thailand's General Election Outcome- 7 Feb 2005: <http://www.thairov.go.th/general/cabin.thak>

²¹ Thai women participation in Thai politics, <http://www.bgipu.rg/post/Thailand>

²² See, for example in James Ockey, "God Mothers, Good Mothers, Good Lovers, Godmothers: Gender Images in Thailand" *The Journal of Asian Studies* Vol.58 No. 4 November 1999, pp. 1033-1058

Out of 51 women candidates from the Thai Rak Thai Party, 44 won the election. The Democrat Party fielded 52 women candidates, but only six were elected.²³ Out of the 40 women candidates from the Chart Thai Party, only two were elected. A total of 35 women candidates ran in the election under the banner of the Mahachon Party, but only one was elected. Female politicians are regarded as a rare breed as seen from the low percentage of the elected women.²⁴ The number of successful female politicians in the 2005 general election is nearly the same as that in the 2001 general election. According to the Gender and Development Research Institute, the 2001 general election saw the female membership of the House at only 9.5 percent. For the first senatorial election in Thailand in 2000, the greatest number of 20 female senators, accounting for 10 percent, was recorded. In fact, there are a lot of capable women with great potential, but they are not ready to run in elections. Moreover, there exist some obstacles for women entering politics.²⁵

IV. v Thai women in the national level from 1976 to 2005

1976-78: Minister of Communication Leosak Sombatsiri (Lurasak Sampatsiri)

1976-78: Minister of Universities Prof. Wimonialsri Chamnawet (Wimonialsri Jarnarnvej)²⁶

1987-88: Minister in the Office of the Premier Minister Responsible for Public Relations SupatraMasdit²⁷

1988: Minister of National Education 1988-91 Minister in the Office of the Premier Minister

²³ Record 52 female MPs elected Pledge to push Women's issues: *The Nation*: on February 10, 2005

²⁴ Ibid,

²⁵ Prime Minister Thaksin Chinawatra speaks on Thailand's Educational Development, 7, March 2005: Press Released, No, 47/48

²⁶ All the period for government will be shown at the appendix) For example, see Frank C. darling, op. cit. n. 70. in Chapter- II

²⁷ Democratic Party Prime Minister Mr. Chuan Leekpai <http://www.democrat.or.th/>

1997-2001: Minister in the Office of the Premier Minister in charge of National Heritage.

1983-86: Foreign Affairs Spokesperson of the Democratic Party

1986-88: Secretary to Minister in Office of the Premier Minister

1989-92: Minister in the Office of the Premier Minister Dr. Saisuree Chutikul

1992-95: Special Advisor of the Premier on Women and Social Affairs

Former Secretary General in the Office of the Prime Minister

1990-91: State Secretary of the Ministry of Universities Lalita Lerksaunran ²⁸

1991-92: Government Spokesperson Ladawan Wongsriwong

2001-02: Vice-Minister of Labour, She was also Assistant Secretary to the Minister of Industry, MP 1992-96 and 2000-01 Deputy Secretary of Thai Rak Thai Party

1995-96: Vice-Minister of Transport and Communication Sudarat Keyuraphan

1996-97: Vice-Minister of Interior

2001-05: Minister of Public Health

2005-: Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives

MP since 1993, Deputy Government Spokesperson 1993-95, Secretary General of the Palang Dharma Party 1994-97. In 1997 she declined to become leader of the party but instead formed the Palang Thai Group which won a number of seats in the Bangkok City Assembly and the same year she was co-founder of Thai Rak Thai (Thais love Thais) and it's deputy Leader since 2000. In she was 2000 one of 3 female candidates for the post of Governor of Bangkok and finished second in the race.²⁹

²⁸ Committee on Children, Youth, Women and the Aged
<http://www.parliament.go.th/files/about/c17-4htm>

²⁹ Thailand Illustrated Magazine: Through the Glass Ceiling
<http://www.prd.go.th/ebook/story.php?idmag=10&dstory=88>

1997-2001: Minister in the Office of the Premier Minister in charge of Tourism Paveena Honsakul (Hongsakula) (Thai Rak Thai Party)³⁰

In 2000, one of 3 female candidates stood for the post of Governor of Bangkok. In 2004 she ran as a pro-government candidate and came in second among the 20 candidates for Governor. MP until 2005.³¹

1997-2001: Vice-Minister of Education Kanjana Silpa-archa (Chat Thai Party)³²

2002-03: Minister of Culture Uraiwan Thienthong

2003-05: Minister of Labour

2005-: Minister of Culture (Thai Rak Thai Party)

A former civil servant (1942) 2002-04: Vice-Minister of Education Sirikorn Maneerin

2004: Vice-Minister of Health. ³³ (Thai Rak Thai Party)

Political culture is one of the reasons.³⁴ It is not only the men who voice doubts about the abilities of women. Often it is the women themselves who do not cooperate or support one another. Nevertheless, there are some doubts as to whether men can properly or best represent women who constitute half of the entire population. Several women's organizations have encouraged political parties to promote women in decision-making or give them more significant roles in transforming politics.³⁵

The interview with the group of Thailand's National Commission on Women's Affairs was to know how they think about women and politics in Thailand at the present. For example, as one lady said the obstacles of women's political participation,

³⁰ Ibid,

³¹ Ibid,

³² Ibid,

³³ Thailand, *Statistic and Result of Senate Election 2005 Minister of Interior*

³⁴ Namsirichai, Juree and Vicharat Vichit-Vadakan, "American Values and Research on Thailand" in Clark D. Neher ed., in *Modern Thai Politics From Village to Nation: Massachusetts Schekman Press, 1979*), p.421

³⁵ *Bangkok Post, Thai*, [http:// www.bangkok post. Com/](http://www.bangkokpost.com/), 16 March, 2005

I think lies with the traditional attitudes towards women's power.³⁶ Women are considered to be placed in the domestic affair while men are placed in the institutional area it is very hard to change the attitude.³⁷ We are compelled to approach the political parties and initiate women's network; we went to the politics party and just urged the head of the party to acquire more women, women as the candidate for the election.³⁸ They claim that it's not their duty to do so and they say that they cannot find qualified women to apply. I think it's up to the political view they seem not to be sincere in this matter. Since then, women are still responsible for the domestic work; women have no time to play their role outside the house because men are not willing to take the household work.³⁹

One senator Maleerat Kaewka knows this problem all too well. Most men looked upon her as an ordinary housewife when she was elected as a member of the local Tambon Administration Organization (TAO).⁴⁰ Maleerat said that entering politics is not a rosy road for women. We have campaigned for women's participation in the constitutional drafting. At present we are campaigning for more women to enter politics but we are still far from our goals. She points out the reasons that female politicians are urgently needed. Many problems faced by women today need a woman's perspective to create better legislation for the women she further lamented. Women politicians have made for little change in the lives of Thai women, but I have seen that women politicians are more open-minded. They don't close themselves to problems.⁴¹

³⁶ Interview on 23 December 2004

³⁷ Asia Time: "Struggle against biases" <http://www.atimes.com/se-asia/cf19Aeo3.htm>

³⁸ Penchisa Hong-oupathamchai, 36, a successful Thai Rak Thai party candidate from Angthong, told *The Nation* she would strive to make women equal to men in all areas, especially leadership, and co-operate with other female MPs to promote women's rights. *The Nation* February 7, 2005

³⁹ TNCWA, The mission of the TNCWA is to spearhead the programme for the advancement of women in Thailand. This includes action to mobilize collaboration with NGOs and the private sector and effort to generate more cooperation from the women of Thailand in general, so that they participate actively for their own development and for national development. Interview on 6 December, 2004

Office of the permanent Secretary, The Prime Minister's Office, Government House, Bangkok
http://www.thaiwomen.net/tncwa/html/wj_en.htm

⁴⁰ Ibid,

⁴¹ Women in Action, http://www.isiswomen.org/wia/wia_199/po/0001.html

When a matter concerning women arises they are ready to join our bandwagon. Maleerat suggests mechanisms to achieve this. The government should help women particularly, the less educated, to know their civil and political rights and to know the importance and effects of their active participation in political life.⁴²

Pusadee Tamthai suggests that women should establish networks to support female candidates during elections. To improve the political image of women is essential. The public has high expectations of women.⁴³ Most want their women representatives to work harder. Their work must be transparent, they must use their full potential and they must allow others to participate in policy decision-making.⁴⁴ The trend clearly indicates that over the years Thai women have increasingly asserting their rights at all level ranging from socio-economic and political sphere. They have also played a significant role in the political domain.⁴⁵

⁴² Senator Maneerat Kaewka, "Women in Thailand's Government Speak Out"
<http://www.genderwatchers.org/Legend/ThaiActism.htm>

⁴³ Cited in Mavic Cabrera-Balleza interview with Pusadee Tamthai of Thailand's Women in Politics Institute., on Women in Action 1, 1999, <http://www.isiswomen.org/wia/wia199/pol00001.html>

⁴⁴ <http://www.bangkokpost.com/> March 16,2003h

⁴⁵ Sopchokchai,Orapin, "People's Participation in Community Development"
Quarterly Review Vol.11 No.3 September 1996, pp.19-25

CHAPTER- V

CONCLUSION

Thailand, like many other South East Asian countries have undergone dramatic transformation in various aspects ranging from socio-economic and political etc. The above discussion clearly indicates that Thailand's society, economy and politics is not static one but it is in a dynamic process of change. Two very important dominant changes that we see today are one, the political system, which have undergone significant shift from sheer autocratic/monarchical rule to democratic system of governance. Social transformation, especially on the issue of equality between men and women is another significant change that we see today. Today, the concept of equality has incorporated in the present Thai's constitutional documents as a legal right of everyone. This process of democratization both in terms of governance and social aspects have come a long way historically.

As discussed in the above chapter, Thailand have undergone various stages of transformation in two major issues i.e. the governing system and the society with special reference to status of women. As it is clear, in the earlier period Thai people were under the monarchical rule whereby, issue of equality, freedom of expression, individual liberty etc. were not to be discussed openly. It is under this type of regime that Thai women faced real hardship, discrimination and always considered as subordinate to men. Moreover, there was a general believe amongst the Thai people that women are not suppose to participate in the public domain. There was a kind of social taboo that women are supposed to confine within domestic activities. With all these social sanctions and believes system women could hardly claim their rights in the governing system, moreover this system of discrimination in the society was also reflected in the governing system as well.

Another special feature is that Thailand had a political history of military rules for many years. Like any other military rules in any parts of the countries the role of the civil society in Thailand was very insignificant during the military rule. Most

notably the role and positions of women are worse during this period except some few general's wife who sometimes acts as the ex-officio in few military departments. In all this the most sufferers are the commoners and rural women. There is a long history of military coup in Thailand. In many occasions military generals have stage both bloodless and bloody coup in Thailand. In this context one could hardly think of the welfare of the people especially, improving the status of women becomes secondary one. One very important aspect to be noted is that Thai has a patriarchal society hence, it was always a male dominated society. This was clearly reflected in all the successive government.

However, Thailand has undergone a series of transition both in governing system and social believe system. Many factors both internal and external are responsible for this. Society is pound to face many conflict within the society in the process of change. Thailand's long political chaos and conflict is nothing but it only shows that they were looking for better system. Again, there was a strong international influence towards the Thai people. In other words, various social and political developments in the international level have greatly impacted the Thai's governance system and social thinking. With long conflicting history within the Thai people today, we see different system of governance in Thailand. At present, Thailand is having a democratic constitution with democratically elected representatives. Ever since the installation of the democratic constitution the status of women seem to have change in various aspect in a positive direction. Today, we have women representatives in the government and there is also ever-increasing demand and assertion that women should be given adequate role in government and society. It is worth noting that this kind of push also comes from the male folks as well and therefore, not limited to women alone. However, it will be too pre-mature to conclude here that Thailand has given adequate status and position to the women. But just the other way round, that there are a lot more to do for improving the status of women specially women from the rural area.

Some of the recent steps taken by the Thai government and other women and social organization on women issue are worth mentioning here.

The National Women Coordination Board was set up by the government in order to strengthen women's potential and to increase gender sensitization in the government. Unfortunately, its work is still largely limited in scope and conducted only within Bangkok and its vicinities and urban areas of each province. It has yet to penetrate rural areas or at the district or sub district levels. There are various government organizations whose works are specifically concerns on women.

The Community Development Department is an important organization that promotes women's roles and works to set up women's groups in villages. As most vulnerable members of the community are poor women, the Department's extension work focuses on economic aspects rather than politics or local administration. Many women would like first to secure their financial status and later take part in public activities. However, experience has shown that even when they are financially secure very few rural women participate politically. Participation of women in urban areas is greater. The number of young and teenaged women involved in political parties, especially volunteers that assist in election campaigns, has increased considerably. Political parties have noted this fact and are increasing focusing their campaigns to attract young adults, particularly women.

Non-government organizations (NGOs) contribute a lot towards women's development and women in community administration. However, working with poor women in cities is difficult because their living conditions do not allow a lot of time for community activities. Local administration organizations used to emphasize infrastructure development. However, with the changes in Thailand's development policy and its emphasis on Human Development, many urban local governments are attempting to set up community-based organizations to provide women with the opportunity to participate in local administration at least at the grass-roots level.

On the Government side, the Perspective Policies and Planning for the Development of women (1992-2011) was formulated to address constraints and vulnerabilities encountered by women, and also to identify strategies and actions for the full enjoyment of human rights. Among areas of prime concern, the Plan targets the problems of women and poverty, violence against women, women and health, and women and sexual exploitation. The Plan adopts an integrated, holistic and preventive approach. Therefore, the Plan not only addresses the root causes of problems such as inequality of opportunity or the existence of environments unfavorable to women, but also ensures that women are also empowered through programs of education and training, including participation in decision-making.

As a result of the 2002 Bureaucratic Reform, the National Commission on women's Affairs, formerly under the Office of the Prime Minister, was transformed into the Women's Affairs and Family Development Bureau, under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. The Bureau formulates policies and plans for the promotion and protection of women's rights. The Bureau also supports activities carried out by government agencies, state enterprises as well as NGOs in the promotion of women development.

If feminism as an ideology and feminist struggles for women's rights and equitable development are to have a chance as a social movement for transformation, the women's movement needs to seriously develop: (i) a structure; (ii) political will and commitment to collective action; and (iii) measures of providing support and solidarity as a movement to feminist struggles at all levels on diverse issues of importance to women in different social and cultural contexts. The women's movement, if it constitutes itself as such, needs to particularly consider different forms of organizing which have contributed to women's empowerment (e.g. co-operatives, community-based movements) to review its strategies to advance the agenda of social transformation and to acknowledge if necessary the limited political impact of some feminist interventions and strategies and change them. Organizing women's resistance

to patriarchy, globalization and militarization through loose, changing NGO campaigns seems politically nave and inadequate at this time. If the women's movement is to be more proactive, it is essential that it develop the politics, organizing commitment and solidarity of a social movement, which has come a long way, and still has a long way to go.

Many struggles, lessons learnt, issues, and advances at the national and local levels need to be part of the collective force of the women's movement. Many different methods of mobilization, organizing and leadership need to be drawn upon if the women's movement is to reinvent itself as a force to be reckoned with, which is precisely what is needed in facing the globalization agenda, militarization and patriarchy. Will feminists and women's organization leaders commit to acting as a movement in the future? Will they focus on the neglected issues of security and defence, the influence of the global media and new information technology, the politics of gender and pervasive oppressions of patriarchal institutions? Hopefully, as time passes and we all grow older, we will not find as I did when clearing my office shelves, that the headlines remained the same and nothing had changed.

The status and position of Thai women is still lacking behind as compared with other society. Therefore, it requires continuous efforts from various organizations at different levels to improve upon the status and position of women. There is a need for more reservation of seats for women not only in the National Assembly of Thailand but also in the provincial and at the local levels. There is also an imperative need for continuous networking with various civil societies, women organizations both within and outside the countries who are engaged in the field of women. The need for sensitizing and advocating the rights of women should not be confined to Thailand alone but it has become a global necessity. Therefore, it should not be confined as an isolated struggle but it should make as a collective effort in the future. The future research should explore these aspects in a detail manner.

*Appendix- I***The Kings of Thailand: Rattanakosin Period ¹**

PhraPhutthayotfa Chulalok Rama I	1782-1809
PhraPhuttaloetla Naphalai Rama II	1809-1824
PhraNangklao Rama III	1824-1851
PhraChomklao Mongkut Rama IV	1851-1868
PhraChulalongkorn Rama V	1868-1910
PhraMongkutklao Vajiravudh Rama VI	1910-1925
Phrapokklao Phrajadhipok Rama VII	1925-1935
Ananda Mahidol Rama VIII	1935-1946
Bhumibol Adulyadej IX	1946- Present Day

¹ List of Kings the Chakri Dynasty
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chakri_dynasty (9 May 2005)

Appendix-II**Prime minister of Thailand from 1932 to 2005¹**

Name	Period
The 1st - 3rd Government I. Phraya Manopakorn Nititada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28 JUN 1932 – 9 DEC 1932 • 10 DEC 1932 – 1 APR 1933 • 1 APR - 20 JUN 1933
The 4th - 8th Government II. General Phray Phahol Pholphayuhasena	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 JUN 1933 – 16 DEC 1933 • 16 DEC 1933 – 22 SEP 1934 • 22 SEP 1937 – 10 DEC 1937 • 21 DEC 1937 - 11 SEP 1938
The 9th – 10th and 22nd - 27th Government III. Field Marshal P. Phibunsongkram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 DEC 1938 – 6 MAR 1942 • 7 MAR 1942 – AUG 1944 • 8 APR 1948 – 24 JUN 1949 • 25 JUN 1949 – 29 NOV 1951 • 6 DEC 1951 - 8 Mar 1952 • 24 Mar 1952 – 25 FEB 1957 • 21 MAR 1957 – 16 SEP 1957
The 11th-14th-20th - 21st Government IV. Major Khuang Apivongse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 AUG 1944 – 31 AUG 1945 • 31 JAN 1946 – 24 MAR 1946 • 10 NOV 1947 – 21 FEB 1948 • 21 FEB 1948 – 8 APR 1948
The 12th Government V. Mr. Tawee Boonyaket	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 31 AUG 1945 – 17 SEP 1945
The 13th- 39th and 40th Government VI. Mr. Seni Pramoj	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 SEP 1945 – 15 OCT 1945 • 21 FEB 1975 – 6 MAR 1975 • 21 APR 1976 – 23 SEP 1976 • 5 OCT 1976 – 8 OCT 1976
The 15th – 17th Government VII. Dr. Pridi Banomyong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 MAR 1946 – 8 JUN 1946 • 8 JUN 1946 - 9 JUN 1946 • 11 JUN 1946 – AUG 1946
The 18th – 19th Government Rear Admiral VIII. Thavan Thamrongnawasawat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 AUG 1946 – 30 MAY 1947 • 30 MAY 1947 – 8 NOV 1947

¹ Source: Secretariat of the Prime Minister: Government House: Thailand
<http://www.thaiembdc.org/bio/pms/pmlist.htm> (9 May 2005)

Appendix –III

<p style="text-align: center;">The 28th Government IX. Mr.Pote Sarasin</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 SEP 1957 – DEC 1957
<p style="text-align: center;">The 29th- 31st – 3rd Government X. Field Marchal Thanom Kittikachon</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 JAN 1958 – 20 OCT 1958 • 9 DEC 1963 – 7 MAR 1968 • 7 MAR 1969 – 7 NOV 1971 • 18 DEC 1972 – 14 OCT 1973
<p style="text-align: center;">The 38th Government XI. M R. Kukrit Pramoj</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 MAR 1975 – 12 JAN 1976
<p style="text-align: center;">The 41st Government XII. Mr.Tanin Krai vichien</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 MAR 1975 – JAN 1976
<p style="text-align: center;">The 30th Government XIII.Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9FEB 1959 – 8 DEC 1963
<p style="text-align: center;">The 35th Government XIV. Prof: Sanya Dharmasakti</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 OCT 1973 - 21 MAY 1974 • 27 MAY 1974 – 21 JAN 1975
<p style="text-align: center;">The 42nd Government XV.General Kriangsak Chamana</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 NOV 1977 – 29 FEB 1980
<p style="text-align: center;">The 43rd – 45th Government XVI.General Prem Tinasulanonda</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 MAR 1980 – 19 MAR 1983 • 30 APR 1983 – 5 AUG 1986 • 5 AUG 1986 – 29 APR 1988

Appendix-IV

<p>The 4th Government XV. General Chatichai Choonhavan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 AUG 1988 – 23 FEB
<p>The 47th Government XVI. Mr. Anand Panyarachun</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 MR 1991 – 6 APR • 10 JUN 1992 – 22 SEP 1992
<p>The 48th Government XII. General Suchinda Kraprayoon</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 APR 1992 – 24 MAR 1992
<p>The 51st Government XIII. Mr. Banharn Silpa- Archa</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 JUL 1995- 27 SEP 1996
<p>The 52nd Government XIV General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 Nov 1996 – 6 NOV 1997
<p>The 50th – 53rd Government XV. Mr. Chuan Leekpai</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 SEP 1992 – 19 MAY 1995 • 9 SEP 1997 – 9 FEB 2001
<p>The 54th – 55th Government XVI. Mr. Thaksin Shinavatra</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 FEB 2001 – 8 MAR 2004 • 9 MAR 2004 - present

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