

POLITICAL CLIENTELISM IN THAILAND

THE MILITARY REGIME:
A CASE STUDY OF POLITICAL CLIENTELISM
IN THAILAND FROM 1947 TO 1963

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine clientelism in the Thai social, political and economic system during the period from 1947 to 1963. There are two important factors causing the emergence and maintenance of clientelism in Thailand: 1) the confined structure of political competition and economic control; and 2) the absence of formal institutions that can guarantee the individuals' wealth, status and position. Both Thai rulers and Chinese entrepreneurs have used clientelism as their "personal security mechanism."

Clientelism also serves as an instrument of acquiring the high central command positions in the Thai armed forces. Some of the Thai military officers try to affiliate themselves with influential military-politicos. They will offer their political support and personal loyalty in exchange for appointments to the command of strategic army garrisons, and especially to the positions of the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and the Army Commander-in-Chief.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

One of the traditional types of Thai social relationships is the patron-client dyad, which involves an exchange of mutually benefitting obligations between persons of unequal status, power and wealth.¹ The patron-client dyad is inherent in all Thai social and political organizations, including the armed forces which are seen as the highly modernized ones. The patron-client dyad also has a great impact upon the ideas and behavior of the Thai people, and especially of the soldiers. Despite this importance, few political scientists have examined the characteristics of clientelism in the Thai socio-political system and the effects of clientelism on the process of modernization and political development.

The Purpose

This study is designed to explore clientelism

in the contemporary Thai socio-political system. We will attempt to answer the following questions relating to clientelism:

1. What are the characteristics of clientelism in the contemporary Thai socio-political system?
2. Why does clientelism survive in the Thai socio-political system, and especially in the armed forces?
3. What is the effect of clientelism on the process of modernization and political development?

Methodology and Research Design

The method used in this study is analytical, derived from a theoretical framework of patronage studies relying heavily on the works of Scott,² Lande,³ and Rabibhadana.⁴

Data used in the analysis are collected mostly from secondary sources in both Thai and English, such as books, journal articles, research monographs, master's and doctoral dissertations, and biographies.

The study proceeds as follows:

Chapter II begins a review of broad theories and generalizations about the Third World military's involvement in politics, with special respect to their role in the modernizing process. The chapter also elaborates on the clientele approach, which may help

us explain more systematically and comprehensively the role and behavior of Third World soldiers engaged in politics.

Chapter III presents the causes of the emergence and maintenance of clientelism in the contemporary Thai political system. In addition, it describes the features of this clientelism.

Chapter IV deals with a clientelism in the Thai armed forces. It pinpoints the characteristics and functions of clientelism in the military organization.

Chapter V concentrates on clientelism in the Thai economic system. It shows the patterns of bureaucratic-business cooperation between wealthy Chinese and powerful Thai political elites. The chapter also explores the negative effects of clientelism on the process of economic development in Thailand.

Chapter VI presents conclusions and an evaluation of alternative theories in relation to the case study of the Thai military.

Notes

¹Akin Rabibhadana, "Clientship and Class Structure in the Early Bangkok Period," in Change and Persistence in Thai Society, ed. by William Skinner and A. Thomas Kirsch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 114.

²James C. Scott, "Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia," in Friends, Followers and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism, ed. by Steffen W. Schmidt, et al., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 123-146.

³Carl H. Lande, "Introduction: The Dyadic Basis of Clientelism," in Schmidt, op.cit., pp. xii-xxxvi.

⁴Rabibhadana, op.cit., pp. 93-124.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

For more than two decades, political scientists have argued about whether or not soldiers in developing countries promote the process of modernization and political development. Some have proposed that soldiers can play a modernizing role better than their civilian counterparts, and others have opposed this proposition. The works of the scholars in these two schools have, however, paid very little attention to the continuation of traditionalism in the Third World socio-political system, and to the adaptative process of such traditionalism to modernism copied in part from the West.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine critically the theories and generalizations of various contributors to these two schools. The chapter also sets out the clientele approach, which may help us explain much more systematically and comprehensively the causes and consequences of the military involvement in politics and the developmental process in the Third World.

General Characteristics of the Third World Socio-
Political System

Before describing the theories and generalizations about military involvement in politics and the developmental process, we need to explore a common characteristic of the Third World socio-political system. Huntington and Perlmutter characterize it as a praetorian polity,¹ in which politics is formless, lacking autonomy, complexity, coherence and adaptability. Various actors such as students, labourers and clergy or priests have engaged in politics dealing with general political issues--issues which affect not only their particular institutional interests or groups but also the society as a whole. In a praetorian system, the military almost always dominates the political arena, and social classes are fragmented. The middle class, acting historically as the stabilizer of the civilian regime during the modernizing era, is very small, divided and politically impotent.

Unlike the situation in developed countries, the political institutions in a praetorian polity are feeble and unable to mediate, refine and moderate group political actions.² The social forces thus confront each other nakedly: no political institution and no corps of professional political leaders are recognized

or accepted as the legitimate and authoritative method for resolving such conflicts, or for influencing governmental policy-making. The traditional patterns of social relationships and the symbols of political power are broken down as a result of a penetration of Western ideas and an extensive expansion of education and industrialization.

Political participation in a praetorian polity is very turbulent. Each social group uses means reflecting its peculiar nature and capability to further its narrow interests: The wealthy bribe; students riot; workers strike; mobs demonstrate; and the military coup. The political system in a praetorian polity is, therefore, highly unstable, and the social system is segmented both vertically and horizontally. Political offices and authority are easily acquired and easily lost.

The Apologists

With regard to these political turmoils, scholars in the late 1960s suggested that the military is the organization best able to bring about social and political stability in developing countries.³ These scholars also asserted that the military can effectively modernize the socio-political system,⁴ and generate a

high degree of economic growth.⁵

The works of these scholars stress the importance of the following characteristics of the military:

1) the highly bureaucratized and modernized organization; 2) the universal recruitment of the soldiers; 3) the middle class backgrounds of the officers; and 4) the socialization process. These works claim that the above four factors enable the military to act as a powerful agent of modernization and political development.

1) The Military as a Modernized and Bureaucratized Organization

Pye points out in his article, "Armies in the Process of Political Modernization", that the armed forces are most bureaucratized and modernized in the Third World because they have been created by colonial administrations. These modern qualities are obviously evident in their organizations which are characterized by centralization, specialization, discipline, hierarchy, inter-communication and esprit de corps.⁶ The administration of the armed forces is based on the criteria of efficiency and rationality. Levy states that the military officers are recruited from every social and economic stratum, and from every part of the country.

Competence and seniority are the major criteria of military promotions and assignments.⁷ Pye also asserts that the armed forces since the Second World War have required contemporary Western technology and knowledge, which place emphasis on the use of modern weapons, equipment and machinery as well as on the development of the socio-political system.⁸ A great number of the military officers have been assigned to staff functions, which do not directly deal with the command of violence. At the same time, several specialized organizations and departments have been established in the armed forces to take responsibility for the construction of an infrastructure and for the promotion of the national development. In Burma, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Korea, for example, the armed forces have developed special sections concerned with chemical warfare, psychological warfare, engineering, history, architectonics, medicine and even economic activities.⁹

Because of this organizational superiority, the armed forces can generate a remarkable degree of modernization and political development. According to Pye, they can effectively relate means to ends, creating organizations that are capable of coping with the complexity of the social problems.¹⁰ For Levy, the military is a major setting for acquiring bureaucratic

experience. It can combine maximum rates of modernization with maximum levels of stability and control. It also brings about an increase in the use of modern technology and advanced managerial or administrative skills by the indigenous people.¹¹

2) Universal Recruitment

Levy states that the basis of military recruitment in developing countries is universal conscription.¹² The military officers are thus drawn from all parts of the country. They do not identify themselves directly with any particular ethnic groups or social stratas. An acceptance of personnel in the armed forces is, ideally speaking, based on the predominantly universal criteria of physical fitness and mental ability.¹³ Even at the elite level, military recruitment is carried out through examinations to select the most talented and healthiest persons. The armed forces in this sense seem to have membership cutting across ethnicities, localism and social classes. They also possess those who have the greatest ability in the society.

More importantly, the socialization process in the armed forces provides a sense of social cohesion and nationalism.¹⁴ The soldiers learn the importance of the nation-building and national integration. In

effect, they may shift their identities and loyalties from parochialism to the nation as a whole. When soldiers come to power, they will promote nation-building and national integration. Turkey under Mustafa Kemal's rule in the 1920s provides a good example of this phenomenon. Professors Lerner and Robinson state:

...the thousands of young Turkish farm lads who went through the military technical training programs acquired more than a skill in the maintenance and operation of modern machinery. Many also acquired some degree of literacy and, along with it, the widening of outlook that comes with the acquisition of the three Rs...new habits of dress, of cleanliness, of teamwork. In the most profound sense, they acquired a new personality....The military corps became... a major agency of social change precisely because it spread among this key sector of the population a new sense of identity. ...Young Turks from isolated villages now suddenly felt themselves to be part of the large society....They are conscious of their membership in the Turkish nation.¹⁵

3) Middle Class Backgrounds

According to Pye, Shils and Janowitz, most of the military officers in developing countries come from middle class backgrounds.¹⁶ They are drawn from the families of petty traders, small craftsmen and farmers.

Like their fathers, these officers are painfully aware of the distance that separates them from the wealthy and powerful. They are not sympathetic to big businessmen and conservative politicians. Their values are egalitarian and progressive.¹⁷ Referring to the soldiers in the Middle East countries, Halpern points out that they are a part of a new middle class.¹⁸ The defining feature of this new middle class is its salaried position. The new middle class is made up of teachers, administrators, technicians, lawyers, engineers, white-collar workers and military officers. Halpern goes on to say that the new middle class is committed to modernization and social reforms because it is frustrated with the chronic ills of the society, and especially with the corruption, nepotism and inefficiency of the traditional political elites.¹⁹ With their advanced organization and control of modern weapons, the military officers become the principal political actors of the new middle class. They counterbalance the power and authority of the traditional political elites. In some cases, they stage a coup in order to establish a moderate regime.²⁰

Huntington states that as the guardians of the middle class, the soldiers will assume an arbitral or stabilizing role. They will also promote national integration, social and economic modernization, and to some extent, an expansion of political participation.²¹

In Korea, for example,

...most of the officers "come from modest rural or small-town backgrounds." In the early 1960s, the military rulers of Korea were young men between the ages of 35 and 45 who...have known poverty at close range. It is natural for these men to have a rural orientation--to feel an empathy with the farmers. Such men must always regard urbanism with a certain ambivalence....They recognize that economic realities of Korea demand more urbanism, not less. Industrialization is the key to this labor-surplus society.²²

Korean soldiers were well aware of the national backwardness, the official corruption and the ineffective administration of the civilian government. In the 1960s they staged a coup in order to eliminate these abuses. At the same time, they introduced into the society highly middle-class ideas of efficiency, honesty, democracy and national loyalty. They also sponsored land reforms and an expansion of political participation. In particular, Gen. Pak Chung Hee, the President, promulgated a new constitution which not only paved the way for presidential and parliamentary elections but also accorded legal status to political parties in the society.²³

4) The Socialization Process

Many of the generalizations concerning the modernizing role of soldiers in the Third World emphasize the importance of the socialization process. They assert that this process is a significant factor making the soldiers committed to modernization and political development. For example, Pye and Shils state that in the socialization process the soldiers are isolated almost entirely from civilian society.²⁴ They live under the strict laws, regulations, rituals and norms of the armed forces. The socialization process also provides a relatively high degree of psychological security, and modern ideas of nationalism, urbanism, secularization and economic and political development.²⁵

Janowitz explains somewhat more explicitly the consequences of the socialization process. He notes that the military socialization serves as a training ground for technical and administrative skills.²⁶ It gives the military officers a modern outlook which is not often an outstanding characteristic of the civilian elite. Specifically, the military officers learn to operate and maintain modern equipment and machinery, to build infrastructures, and to manage economic enterprises to meet their own requirements or for the needs of the society as a whole. The socialization process thus

provides a pool of trained people whose talents and skills are not only available for public and private organizations but also vital for national development.²⁷

The ability of the military officers to perform a modernizing role is obvious. Janowitz found that the military have made a major contribution to the improvement of public works, roads and engineering projects in Burma and Pakistan.²⁸ They have also helped to develop basic educations in Ethiopia, Korea, Iran and Guatemala.²⁹ The military have also played a significant role in economic activities and development in Indonesia, Israel and Egypt.³⁰

The Critics

Since the late 1970s scholars of politics have become suspicious about the modernizing role of soldiers in the Third World. Therefore, instead of looking superficially at the nature or characteristics of military organization, or at the propagandistic statements and modernizing projects of the military rulers, the scholars have carefully contemplated the actual achievements of the soldiers. As a result, they found that most of the theories and generalizations presented by previous scholars tend to be refuted and need modification. Soldiers in developing countries are not

more capable of modernizing or developing the socio-political system than are their civilian counterparts.³¹

It is difficult to bring together and systematically examine the theories and generalizations of the scholars in this critical school because the terms used in their analyses are diverse. Nonetheless, it is useful to discriminate among the various types of political roles of the soldiers, and see how scholars have opposed the previous theories and generalizations. There are three major political roles considered here: 1) the promotion of national integration; 2) the development of political system; and 3) the support of economic growth and social reforms.

1) The Promotion of National Integration

As presented by the scholars in the apologist school, the capacity of a military regime for the promotion of national unity seems to rest upon the assumptions about the unity of military organization and its socialization process. The scholars assert that the military corps is best able to integrate the nation for the following reasons: 1) they are drawn from every ethnic, communal and social stratum; 2) the socialization process in the armed forces has broken down the communal and ethnic attachments of the soldiers, and

provided them with a national outlook; and 3) the military organization is highly harmonized and disciplined.³² This statement, however, tends to be hazardous. It lacks empirical support and rests upon inadequate data and knowledge of the social stratification and organizational characteristics of the armed forces in the Third World.

First of all, military recruitment in developing countries is not totally based on universal conscription or on the universalistic criteria of physical fitness and mental ability. Some countries do recruit military officers from a variety of ethnic, communal and social strata and others do not. The Republic of Korea is an instance of the former³³ and Pakistan is a case of the latter. Nordlinger states that near 95 percent of the Pakistani soldiers before the secession of East Pakistan in 1976 was drawn from West Pakistan. No East Pakistani officer held a rank beyond that of Colonel.³⁴ Similarly, Gregory points out that most of the Indonesian soldiers have come from the Javanese upper class, known as "priyayi".³⁵ Mazrui emphasizes the importance of ethnic origins in the Ugandan army. He notes that when Milton Obote, a leader of the Acholi tribe, was president, Ugandan soldiers were mostly members of the Acholi and Langi tribes. But after

Field Marshall Idi Amin, a Kakwa, came to power in 1971, the Acholi and Langi tribes were discriminated against, and the soldiers were then recruited largely from the Kakwa and other ethnic groups supporting Field Marshal Idi Amin.³⁶

Secondly, though the socialization process in the armed forces has provided a sense of social cohesion and national outlook, this in fact cannot entirely eradicate the communal and ethnic loyalties of the soldiers. It is doubtful how far soldiers can eliminate their communal and ethnic loyalties when they are not totally isolated from the civilian society.³⁷ If middle class backgrounds have a great impact on the political ideas and behavior of the soldiers, why do the communal experiences and ethnic socialization during childhood and adolescence not have any effect?

Indeed, the two sets of values--secular-nationalism and communal or ethnic loyalty--can coexist comfortably so long as the communal and ethnic divisions do not give rise to intense conflicts. But in the midst of such conflicts, the contradictions between these two sets of values will come to the surface, and the communal and ethnic loyalty will prevail. Soldiers will act on behalf of their communal and ethnic segments. At the same time, they try to undermine the power and

interests of other groups. The Nigerian army provides a glaring example of these communal and ethnic contradictions.³⁸

Thirdly, the officer corps in developing countries are not wholly disciplined nor wholly harmonized. More often than not, they split into several cliques and factions, along the lines of communal and ethnic cleavages in the society. These communal and ethnic divisions are evident in the process of military recruitment. Some communal or ethnic groups may have little or no representation within the armed forces. They may also be discriminated against. Others may be over-represented and hold the topmost military commands. The Pakistani army, as noted above, provides a notable example of these ethnic factors in the process of military recruitment.

Given military recruitment based on the universal conscription and the universalistic criteria of physical fitness and mental ability, communal and ethnic differences will still be present in the armed forces. Nordlinger states that communal resentments, jealousies, suspicions and factionalism can develop due to the criteria for promotion and assignment.³⁹ Specifically, communal groups with a relative abundance of secondary school graduates believe that the merit principle should govern the allocation of military positions.

By contrast, communal groups that are educationally disadvantaged, especially when they are under-represented in the armed forces, maintain that a certain number of positions at each rank should be reserved for them until they have attained a percentage that is equivalent to their relative population size. The employment of one or the other of these two divergent criteria clearly affects the interests of individual officers and their communal groups. It is then no wonder that officers prefer the merit or proportionality principle according to their communal identities. Given existing jealousies, resentment and mistrust, even the promotion of individual officers on the basis of merit criteria may be scrutinized in communal terms. Officers may suspect that they are not promoted because of their communal or ethnic origins. If they are suspicious, the armed forces in effect become split. Each communal group will form its clique or faction in the armed forces. It may try to protect its interests and power, and at the same time, undermine those of others.

The soldiers therefore do not have a great capability to integrate the nation. In some instances, they tend to escalate the communal and ethnic conflicts since they have a misperception of the political, social, economic and cultural patterns. Soldiers in general

believe that governmental decrees have a decided impact upon the population. Major problems can be overcome if dealt with in an undeviating manner. Severe communal conflicts are similar to military and technical ones.⁴⁰ They can be promptly solved if attacked directly, unswervingly, and forcefully. Soldiers also think that conciliatory actions are unnecessary, ineffective and positively harmful. They are sign of weakness, lack of resolve and failure of nerve.⁴¹ The soldiers thus tend to refuse to bargain or compromise with any rival groups. In practice, they will use force to suppress their rivals. By such a tactic, soldiers do not resolve communal and ethnic conflicts. In fact, they tend to exacerbate those conflicts. In the final instance, their actions may foment civil wars, insurgencies and bloody riotings.

Sudan was an outstanding example of military inability to integrate the nation. Once Gen. Abboud assumed power in 1958, the country's overlapping racial-religious-regional divisions gave rise to severe conflicts. A struggle between the light-skinned Muslim northerners and the dark-skinned southerners, composed mostly of the Christians and tradition-directed pagans, spread throughout the country.⁴² A cause of this struggle was that the soldiers, made up almost exclusively of northerners, entirely refused to

accommodate the southern demands. Meanwhile, they tried to promote northern predominance over the political and economic system.⁴³ A large number of northerners were assigned to the south as provincial governors, civil servants and policemen. Developmental and educational investments were confined solely to the north. The south's indigenous culture, derived from African and Christian sources, was eliminated and then displaced by the Arab culture and Islamic religion of the north. In particular, Christian schools and missions in the south were closed and mosques and institutes of Islamic education were built instead. Though the military government propagandistically proclaimed that such performances were aimed at unifying the nation, in reality, however, they produced the southern rebellion against the government, and especially against the northern officers residing in the south. The rebellion became increasingly severe and in the final instance developed into a civil war when the military government decided to use force to suppress them.

2) The Development of the Political System

Many political scientists in the 1960s suggested that the military in developing countries are best able to modernize the socio-political system for the follow-

ing reasons. Firstly, the soldiers are drawn mostly from the middle class. Secondly, they are imbued with secular-nationalist values. Thirdly, the military organization is highly harmonized and bureaucratized.⁴⁴ This generalization, however, tends to be erroneous. It needs an empirical test.

With respect to the middle class backgrounds, Nordlinger states that this claim is exaggerated.⁴⁵ Though the soldiers are drawn from the middle class, they can be either progressive or conservative political forces, according to the social and political circumstances.⁴⁶ In societies where a traditional landowning oligarchy is politically and economically dominant and the miniscule middle class's economic position is not secure, the soldiers are progressive political forces. They will destroy the traditional oligarchy and its supporting power bases. They may also carry out social, economic and political reforms. But in societies featuring a relatively large, politically powerful, and economically established middle class, the military officers become conservative political forces. They will suppress political activities of the workers and peasants. At the same time, the military officers try to preserve the political and economic status quo of the middle class in general, and of the armed forces in particular. The military coups in Latin America are

outstanding examples of this military conservatism.⁴⁷

It is irrational to think that the socialization process can provide the military officers with a totally progressive-modernizing outlook. Even though the officers are imbued with modern knowledge and Western ideas, this in fact cannot eradicate or replace their primordial beliefs. Indeed, these two sets of values can exist together. The soldiers, while operating modern machines and administering their organization, may still maintain their primordial habits. Their attitudes toward the society as a whole may also be deeply conditioned by traditional sympathies. Edward Shils notes:

...Military organization has little to do with the structure of traditional society, from which it is set off by its technology, most of its ethos, its organization, and its training--all of which are either imported or follow foreign models....Yet it probably remains a fact that the military have a feeling of sympathy for tradition, not only for their own military tradition but for the traditional style of the society, as well. Hierarchic dignity, respect for superiors, solicitude for subordinates, solidarity, and conventionality produce in professional soldiers an attachment to the same phenomena in civilian society. Their humble origins and their separation from urbane pleasures and indulgences sustain this sympathy. The result is distrust of those who derogate traditional life and rush to overturn it.⁴⁸

As we have noted previously, the armed forces in developing countries are not highly harmonized. They are often divided into several cliques and factions, along the lines of ethnic and ideological cleavages and the personal interests of the soldiers. The capability of the military to develop the socio-political system, therefore, is not higher than that of civilians.

It is important to look at the characteristics of a military regime and examine the effects of such a regime on the process of political development. Nordlinger states that the structure of a military regime is an authoritarian one.⁴⁹ It lacks both mass support and the competition of political groups outside the armed forces. Most executive and legislative power is concentrated in the hands of military and civilian officers. In a military regime, political parties and other politicized associations are strictly controlled, if not abolished. Political rights and liberties of the people may be suspended. Frequently, the authority of the judiciary is curtailed. Newspapers are closed or bridled. The style of military governing may be described as "decision-making without politics."⁵⁰ It emphasizes an expansion of bureaucracy in number, agencies and activities to control or manipulate the political system.

The military officers opt for a style of an

authoritarian rule because of their anti-political attitudes and managerial-technical assumptions. In general, the military officers perceive that political activity is self-serving and unnecessarily divisive. Politicians are corrupt, seeking wealth, power and privileges for themselves, not for the nation. Political parties are the agents of national disunity, causing differences among the people.⁵¹ The military officers also believe that societies are to be administered rather than governed.⁵² Decision options must be evaluated not by political criteria or by mass demands but primarily by the criteria of rationality, efficiency and sound administration. Decisions taken at the top not only will be implemented at the grass-roots but will have a decided impact upon large swatches of political life. Communication, exhortation, rewards and penetration are unnecessary and mass political parties are thus superfluous. Political and economic transformation as well as governmental administration can be best accomplished if there is no participation of the masses and especially of political parties.

The military regime, therefore, tends to obstruct the process of democratization and political institutionalization. It creates an unfavorable condition for institutionalizing political organizations and procedures. The military regimes neither promote mass political parties nor produce institutional scaffolding.

The political and social stability the military officers achieve extends only over the short period during which they restore law and order in the society. Because there is no legitimate means of transferring political power in a military regime, force becomes important. It functions as the ultimate instrument for wresting power from the ruler. Coups and countercoups are therefore prevalent in a military regime.

3) The Support of Socio-Economic Modernization and Reforms

With respect to the issue of whether or not the soldiers can act as powerful agents of national economic reforms, Nordlinger made an empirical study of the correlation between the political strength of the military and the indicators of economic development in seventy-four non-Western countries from 1950 to 1962.⁵³ He found that in comparison with civilian incumbents, military governments do not generate significant increases in per capita GNP, in agricultural productivity, or in enrollments in high schools, technical institutes and universities. He also concluded that the military governments do not enlarge public investments that would contribute to further economic growth. Remarkably, there is a mild negative correlation

Table 1. Correlation Between the Political
Strength of the Military and
Economic Growth and Modernization

Rate of increase in per capita GNP	.13
Improvement in agricultural productivity	.07
Level of economic development	-.11
Increased enrollments in post-primary school	.08
Governments' commitment to economic develop- ment	-.22
Change in tax level	.04
Rate of change in the levels of industriali- zation	.29

Source: Eric A. Nordlinger, "Soldiers in Mufti: The Impact of Military Rule upon Economic and Social Change in the Non-Western States," The American Political Science Review, LXIV (December, 1970), 1139.

between the levels of military intervention and the governments' commitment to economic development.⁵⁴

Such evidence refutes the view that military rule will contribute substantially to economic growth and modernization. Data is presented in Table 1.

Military hindrance to national socio-economic modernization stems from the corporate interests of the armed forces, the corruption of civilian and military officers, and military values, which place over-emphasis on political stability in a conservative and negative manner.

S.E. Finer states that "the military is jealous of its corporate status and privilege," which, in its

most aggressive form, "can lead to the military demand to be the ultimate judge on all matters affecting the armed forces....This certainly includes...domestic economic policy."⁵⁵ Nordlinger points out that the military is sometimes characterized as "the country's most powerful trade union."⁵⁶ As is true of most trade unions, the military acts to maintain or increase its wealth and prerogatives even when these values conflict with the aspirations and interests of large segments within the society. The military will undertake the socio-economic reforms and modernization only after its corporate interests have been satisfied.⁵⁷

In developing countries suffering from economic scarcity, an increase in military budgets may hinder the rate of economic growth and limit the size of progressive social service, health and welfare programs. Specifically, the government cannot spend most of its expenditures on expanding education, enhancing the standard of living of the people, improving agricultural productivity, building infrastructure, or promoting industries. Instead, these funds are expended on unproductive military matters, such as the purchase of military weapons from abroad, an increase in military salaries and expenditures, the production of military hardware and infrastructure, and the enhancement of the international prestige of the armed forces. None of

these things can contribute to economic growth.⁵⁸

The antipathy between military corporate interests and national economic growth is even greater under a military regime since military budgets are increased tremendously. In Paraguay, for example, the military shared 38 percent of the total government budget in 1953. But after the military came to power in the following year, its expenditures rose to 50 percent of the government budget.⁵⁹ Similarly, the defense budget of Togo's government was increased from 5.4 percent to 13.5 percent after the military coup in 1963.⁶⁰ Kennedy, after studying the budget allocation of Third World countries in 1974, reveals that the defense budgets of countries ruled by the military were higher than those of countries governed by civilian governments: 25.5% against 11.4% in Asia; 11.3% against 6.9% in Africa; and 13.9% against 7.5% in Latin America.⁶¹

The corruption of civilian and military officers is another factor causing military governments to impede economic development. It produces ineffectiveness, wastefulness and irrationality in plan fulfillment. If corruption takes place at the topmost level of the bureaucracy, a policy of economic development may be distorted. Instead of being aimed at the benefit of the public at large, this policy may favor a few

privileged groups which have close relations with the high-ranking civilian and military officers. Furthermore, corruption may cause large governmental deficits and foreign debts for which the government has to be responsible.

Indonesia under Gen. Suharto's rule constitutes an especially telling example of the negative effects of corruption on national economic development. In 1968 the government established a scheme, known as "Bimas Gotong Royong", for introducing the "Green Revolution" in the country.⁶² Under this scheme, foreign companies would provide seeds, fertilizers, and aerial spraying of pesticides, while the government collected payment from the peasants on behalf of the foreign companies. These collections were made through the Bulong, a state-owned enterprise. The foreign companies involved in this program were Ciba, Hoechst and Mitsubishi. Also included in the program was Coopa, a local company privately owned by Surjo, a personal assistant of President Suharto.⁶³

The Bimas Gotong Royong program suffered greatly from the official corruption at both the topmost and lower levels. At the beginning of 1970, newspapers alleged that Coopa had failed to supply 200 tons of fertilizers, ureas and diasion, in spite of the fact

that it had already received payment of US\$ 711,000. The government took no action, claiming that the Coopa's failure was only a technical problem.⁶⁴ Furthermore, most officials of the Bulong in the countryside tried to take advantage of the Bimas Gotong Royong program to enrich themselves and their families. They paid very little attention to carrying out the program. In May, 1970 it thus became clear that the Bimas Gotong Royong program was a failure. The Bulong was unable to enforce repayments by the peasants, leaving the government with debts of US\$ 60 million.⁶⁵ In the meantime, it could not provide the peasants with enough seeds and fertilizers. Faced with the huge debts and the peasants' bitter resentment, the government abandoned the Bimas Gotong Royong Program in 1971.

The last factor in the soldiers' obstruction of economic reforms and modernization stems from their political values, which emphasize stability and order in a negative and conservative fashion. Soldiers generally perceive the politicization of the workers and peasants as a threat to social stability, and especially to their corporate interests. If any social and economic reforms bring about a high degree of lower class participation in politics, officers will oppose them, if necessary, with force. Johnson clearly appreciates this point when he writes that soldiers

"might be willing to sanction land reforms, but only if the cost to them is not too high and so long as it can proceed in an orderly manner."⁶⁶

Criticism of the Theories and Generalizations of the Scholars in the Critical School

While many of the critics of the role of the military focus on important issues, they also tend to overlook some significant matters. First and foremost, these scholars frequently fail to give adequate stress to the importance of traditionalism in developing countries. Most of their works tend to concentrate on the authoritarian structure of military regimes, and the organizational characteristics of the armed forces, which are not highly harmonized or highly bureaucratized. These scholars seldom scrutinize the traditional mode of social relationships and values in the military organization. They overlook the causes of the maintenance of such traditionalism in a contemporary political system.

Secondly, scholars in the critical school always condemn corruption by the military and civilian officers, without thorough regard to its causes and effects. They view corruption superficially and assume that it stems solely from the selfishness and greediness of the

officers. These scholars avoid further examination into another cause of the corruption which may arise from the traditionalism. They also seldom acknowledge some of the functional aspects of corruption.

The Patron-Client Dyad

To resolve these problems, and thus to understand more clearly the process of politics and development in a military regime, we need to consider the impact of traditional values and behavior patterns which persist in spite of the adoption of modern institutions and norms. In Thailand, the basis of traditional values and social relationships, as pointed out previously, is clientelism. Before explaining this particular feature, let us first set out, in broad terms, the concept of the patron-client dyad, the relation between clientelism and political power in a military regime, and the effects of clientelism on the process of political, social and economic development.

The Nature of the Patron-Client Relationship

Scott defines the patron-client relationship as:

...a special case of dyadic (two person) ties involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socio-economic status (patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (client) who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron.⁶⁷

Four basic factors that define the characteristics of a patron-client relationship are: 1) the inequality in the social status and power of the two partners; 2) the reciprocity in beneficial exchanges; 3) the absence of firm, impersonal guarantees of physical security, status and position or wealth; and 4) the face-to-face character, or personal quality of the relationship.⁶⁸ These four factors also distinguish the patron-client dyad from the power relationships and other vertical dyadic ties, with which it is often confused. These are, for example, the links joining the "cacique", the bandit leader or the local boss to his men.

First, patron and client are not equal. The basis of exchange and relationship between them arises from and reflects the disparity in their relative wealth, power and status. By definition, a patron is superior. He is most often in a position to supply unilaterally goods and services which a potential client and his family need for their survival and well-

being. A patron may, for example, be the major source of protection, of security, of employment, of access to arable land or to education, and of food in bad times.⁶⁹

The sources of a patron's superiority, Scott states, rely to some extent on specialized skills and knowledge, direct control of personal real property, or control of indirect, office-based property, i.e., official position and authority.⁷⁰ The sources of specialized skills and knowledge are always recognized in the roles of doctor, lawyer, local military chief and teacher. Equipped with particular skills and knowledge that the general people do not have, these men can use the scarce resources to attract clients and enhance the latter's social status, health, or material well-being. As for personal real property, it often means economic resources. A patron may, for example, act as a landlord controlling scarce land, or as a businessman owning an industrial factory, a rice mill and the like. In this sense, the person with more economic resources can cultivate clients by vesting them with food, land and other basic means of subsistence. One of the most important resources of a patron is an official position in which he can exploit his discretionary power and authority over employment, promotion, welfare, permit and license to nurture and extend his personal following.

Furthermore, a patron may use his official power and authority to punish his clients if they try to break off the relation.⁷¹

Secondly, and most importantly, the formation and maintenance of a patron-client dyad depend heavily on reciprocity in the exchange of benefits between the two partners. These benefits are always different in kind. Each will supply the other with benefits that he can never obtain alone, or can obtain alone with difficulty. This qualitative difference in the beneficial exchanges applies both to the exchange of symbolic and substantive favors and to the mutual assurance of aid in time of need.⁷²

Typically, the favors and benefits a patron offers his client are immediately tangible, while those the client pays back almost always involve intangible assets. A patron may provide foods, jobs, funds and protection against both the legal and illegal exactions of authority. The client, in turn, may reciprocate by demonstrating his compliance and loyalty. He may supply supplementary labour and services, including information on the machinations of the patron's enemies. He may promise his political support and try to promote the patron's political power and reputation.

Unlike pure formal authority whose relations with subordinates is regulated by impersonal control or

explicit contractual ties that specify the kinds of reciprocal services owed, a patron-client exchange is considerably diffuse and flexible.⁷³ It can be described as a whole-personal relation, covering a wide range of potential exchange. The patron may well ask the client's help in preparing a wedding, in winning an election campaign, or in finding out what his local rivals are up to. The client in turn may approach the patron for assistance in paying his son's tuition, in filling out governmental forms, or in getting food or medicine when he falls on bad times. The link between the patron and his client is, therefore, a flexible one, and the nature of exchange varies widely over time.⁷⁴

A patron-client exchange tends to persist so long as the two partners have something to offer one another, and so long as each does not feel that he is being exploited by the other. Scott uses the concept of legitimacy to explain an equivalence in a patron-client exchange. He states that the benefits involved in a patron-client exchange cannot be measured by a qualitative means since they are not alike.⁷⁵ In most cases, they are not equivalent goods and services. They include intangible and indivisible services which have no market price making them commensurable. Furthermore, they usually concern time dimensions and the relative bargaining positions of the two parties. It is thus very

difficult, if not impossible, to measure the equivalence of the exchange by a common standard, i.e., a qualitative means.⁷⁶ The fact is that an equivalence of beneficial exchanges is always dependent on personal feelings and social custom. Both patron and client accept the terms of exchange, though inequitable, for they perceive that they provide things highly rewarding to their partners at low cost to themselves.⁷⁷ The social custom also leads them to see the exchange as legitimate. Especially in the case of an inferior client, the social custom often induces him to think that such exchange is suitable since it can assure his security and basic needs of subsistence. Nonetheless, when the patron requires so many goods and services that the security and basic needs of subsistence of the client are jeopardized, it is common to see the client's withdrawal from such exchange. In some cases, the client may seek a new patron who can offer him more benefits, without the requirement of such great values in return.

The opportunity of a client to transfer his allegiance to another patron is great when there is competition between patrons. A client can play off one against another, giving his support and allegiance to the highest bidder.⁷⁸

The stability of a patron-client dyad is dependent upon the nature of goods exchanged and the coercive power of the patron. If a patron controls or monopolizes vital goods and services, such as protection, land, employment and other basic means of subsistence, he can demand from his clients a high degree of compliance, loyalty and other valuable services. The relationship between these two partners seems stable since the clients have no choice. They have to follow a patron, even though they know that such exchange or relationship is inequitable. The oppression of the clients is even greater when a patron has some coercive power. He may punish the clients who try to break off the relationship. The cost of the maintenance of this relationship is therefore very low. A patron does not provide highly valuable services. Conversely, when a patron does not control the basic means of subsistence, and when he has no coercive power, the clients seem to have a free hand. They can affiliate themselves with any superiors who offer the best benefits. In this case, the patron-client relationship is highly unstable. If the clients provide crucial services, such as political support, they have a great power to bargain with their patron. The cost of the maintenance of the relationship is excessively high. A patron has to provide highly valued material rewards for his clients, so that they will not

turn their allegiance and support to another patron.

The relationship between a patron and his clients may end suddenly when the patron falls from power, or when he cannot offer the goods and services his clients need. Similarly, if the clients do not furnish enough valuable services, the patron may terminate his personal ties with those clients.

Thirdly, the patron-client dyad always arises from an absence of legal institutions capable of enforcing formal contracts and securing the status, position, wealth or life of their members.⁷⁹ Foster states that formal, explicit, institutionalized contracts usually cannot provide for all of the needs and protection of a community, or of the individuals who enter into such contracts.⁸⁰ Some of these must be enlivened by the superimposition of voluntary relationships which are highly selective, flexible, intermittent and emotional. This need is often met by the addition of a patron-client nexus. In particular, when personal security is in jeopardy and when impersonal social controls are unreliable, one must try to seek someone able to provide protection. In practice, he may affiliate himself with a superior and offer the latter personal loyalty and deference in exchange for protection. A patron-client dyad in this sense is likely to be a "personal security mechanism."⁸¹

A patron-client dyad is not able to stand alone. Normally, it inheres in the formal institutions, and functions as an addendum to remedy their deficiencies. For example:

...added to the legally sanctioned subordination of a slave to his master, a patron-client relationship protects a slave against the risks of being sold, killed or beaten, while giving the slave-owner some slaves whom he can trust. Attached to a bureaucracy it gives subordinate officials a better hope of attractive assignments and speedy promotion while giving their superiors groups of loyal subordinates who will support them in their intra-bureaucratic battles. Attached to business employment it gives some employees protection against dismissal while giving the owner some employees who will direct their loyalty to him rather than to a labor union.⁸²

A patron-client dyad may disappear almost entirely when the institutions can protect all of their members and achieve their functions completely and effectively, or when needs that were once met through a patron-client nexus are met through the new non-clientele institutions.⁸³ For example, a personal relation between a landlord and his tenants may end at once when peasant organizations are established to assist peasants in times of emergency. The clientele ties in the bureaucracy may vanish when bureaucratic tenure and promotion are regulated by strictly and

effectively enforced civil service laws.

Fourthly, a patron-client dyad is characterized by the personal quality of the relationship, having a face-to-face character. The dyadic contract between a patron and his clients is private, unwritten and highly personalistic. There is no public scrutiny of the terms of such a contract. There is no public entity which functions as an enforcement authority concerning such contracts. A patron-client dyad is easy to create. Its formation can be proposed by either of its prospective members through the offer or request of a favor with the implied understanding that the favor will be returned in the future. In a patron-client dyad, enforcement, compliance and performance are bound up in and limited to the face-to-face relationship.⁸⁴

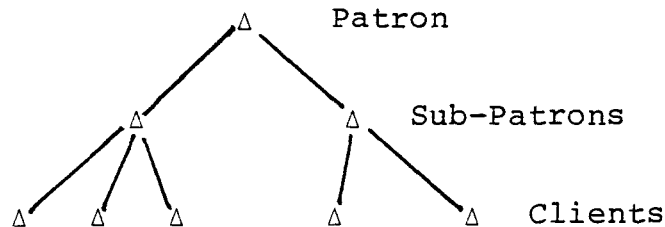
The exchange of mutual benefits in a patron-client dyad is based on the personal trust and affection of the two partners. These ties of personal trust and affection may spring from a variety of sources such as family ties, childhood friendships or school ties, teacher-student ties, ethnic or religious loyalties, and even the long associations and personal links between military or bureaucratic superiors and their subordinates. The trust and affection may also be backed by a social custom. Gouldner describes this custom as the norm of

reciprocity, composed of three important principles:

1) people should help those who help them; 2) if they do not do so, certain penalties will be imposed upon them; and 3) the mutual exchange of goods and services will balance out in the long run.⁸⁵ By these norms, both the patron and client are obligated by their own morality to reimburse the assistance and benefits they have received.

The face-to-face quality of the patron-client dyad limits the size of a potential clientele. Even with vast resources, the patron cannot expand his clientele following further than his capability to meet these men directly or personally. It is, Scott states, unlikely that an active clientele the single patron can have will exceed one hundred persons.⁸⁶ If the patron intends to expand his clientele empire further than this, he has to accept in his entourage the status of sub-patron or broker. It is thus common that a patron-client network under a single patron is characterized by a pyramid in which several patrons, each with his own sets of clients, are the clients of a higher patron, who in turn is the client of a patron even higher than himself.⁸⁷ Figure I illustrates this phenomenon.

Figure I. A Patron-Client Pyramid.



The Relation Between Clientelism and Political Power
in the Military Regime

The political structure of a military regime, as presented previously, is authoritarian, lacking political parties, mass participation and the competition of political groups outside the armed forces. Most, if not all, executive and legislative powers are concentrated in the hands of the soldiers. Politics under these circumstances automatically takes the form of internal struggle within the armed forces, among rival cliques and factions which are formed on the patronage basis. In this struggle, each clique or faction tries to cooperate with one another in order to dominate the political arena and especially to deprive its rivals of political offices. A clique may also try to strengthen its position by enlarging its economic resources for attracting the members of others.

Because of a lack of mass support and mass political parties, the military ruler has to seek the maintenance of his power and status through the mechanism of patron-client relationships and personal alliances. On the one hand, he may appoint his clients to the command of the strategic army garrisons stationed in and around the capital city. He hopes that this will protect his government from being overthrown, and bar other political elites from building up their power bases to counterbalance his rule. On the other hand, the military ruler may make personal alliances with the commanders of those army garrisons or with influential leaders who control the major cliques and factions in the armed forces. To retain the political support and loyalty of these military clients and allies, the ruler supplies them with material benefits and governmental privileges. Politics in a military regime, therefore, almost always involves the distribution of patronage and spoils. Political power is also highly personalistic and patrimonial.⁸⁹

Indonesia under Gen. Suharto's rule provides a good example of this patrimonialism. Professor Crouch states that the key factor enabling Gen. Suharto to win and maintain the support of the armed forces is control over the "machinery of patronage."⁹⁰ Not only have the seventeen regional commands and three intra-regional

commands been assigned to his clients and allies, but to assure the maintenance of his government, Gen. Suharto has sent the high-ranking military officers disagreeing with him to foreign countries as ambassadors. Gen. Suharto has also rewarded those who support him with lucrative positions in public enterprises such as the directorships of Pertamina and the National Logistics Board.⁹¹ So long as Gen. Suharto can keep this clientele system functioning smoothly, his power and position seem secure.

It is very difficult to distinguish the relationships between the ruler and his military followers. These relationships may be patron-client dyads or personal alliances. One way by which we may distinguish the relationships is to look at the access to power. If the military officers gain the topmost command positions by the assistance of the ruler, the relationship will be in the format of the patron-client dyad. One has to keep in mind, however, that these relationships may turn into personal alliances when the military officers already hold the topmost command positions. Frequently, the political status of the military officers and the ruler will then be almost equal.

Clientelism and the Developmental Process

Clientelism tends to have negative effects on the process of social, political and economic development. First of all, it hinders an institutionalization of political authority and the political system, even though it may stabilize the power and status of the ruler in the short run. Characteristically, the institutionalized authority sustaining the political system is highly impersonal, formal and universalistic. Arising from the social structure, it implies a collective legitimation of the power that commands a given group of persons without regard to personal relationship or exchange. Authority in this sense derives from the basic organizational formulas and the social norms and values shared by a large collective of the people.⁹² Clientelism by contrast is highly personalistic. It originates from the direct exchange of favors between the superior and his subordinates and is reinforced by the personal obligations of the two parties. When clientelism prevails in the political system, it is clear that the legitimation of power will be neglected and personal bonds and political exchanges will be intensified. Clientelism also undermines faith in the rules of the game. For example, a deputy may promise favors in exchange for political support. A

public employee may sell his official performance for speedy promotion and attractive assignments. A trade union leader may not engage in collective action for the benefits of all the workers, but may acquire personal benefits or secure benefits which accrue to specific workers only.⁹³

Secondly, clientelism tends to impede economic development. It brings about inefficiency, wastefulness and corruption. These factors are obvious in countries using public enterprises as agents of promoting economic growth. Most boards of directors of these enterprises are appointed on the basis of political patronage. These men are relatively inexperienced and incompetent. They often mismanage public enterprises and bring them to financial collapse, with a vast debt. Public enterprises dominated by clientelism, therefore, tend to obstruct economic growth and modernization.

Notes

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³Guy Pauker, "Southeast Asia as a Problem Area in the Next Decade," World Politics, XI (April, 1959), 325-345.

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⁹Janowitz, op.cit., pp. 76-77; and T.O. Odetola, Military Regimes and Development: A Comparative Analysis of African States (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), p. 58.

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- ¹¹Levy, op.cit., pp. 71-72.
- ¹²Ibid., p. 68.
- ¹³Ibid.
- ¹⁴Pye, op.cit., pp. 82-84; and Janowitz, op.cit., p. 81.
- ¹⁵Daniel Lerner and Richard D. Robinson, "Swords and Ploughshares: The Turkish Army as a Modernizing Force," in Bienen, op.cit., p. 132.
- ¹⁶Janowitz, op.cit., p. 51; Pye, op.cit., p. 80; and Edward Shils, "The Military in the Political Development," in Johnson, op.cit., p. 17.
- ¹⁷Ibid.
- ¹⁸Manfred Halpern, "Middle Eastern Armies and the New Middle Class," in Johnson, op.cit., p. 279.
- ¹⁹Halpern, op.cit., p. 285.
- ²⁰Ibid., pp. 288-289.
- ²¹Huntington, op.cit., p. 222.
- ²²"Which Route for Korea?" Asian Survey, II (September, 1962), 17, quoted in Huntington, op.cit., pp. 175-176.
- ²³Ibid., p. 259.
- ²⁴Pye, op.cit., p. 82; and Shils, op.cit., p. 339.
- ²⁵Pye, op.cit., pp. 82-84.
- ²⁶Janowitz, op.cit., pp. 75-83.

²⁷Ibid., p. 77.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Odetola, op.cit., p. 58.

³⁰Janowitz, op.cit., p. 76.

³¹See Gerald A. Heeger, The Politics of Underdevelopment (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1974), pp. 107-128; Eric A. Nordlinger, Soldiers in Politics: Military Coups and Governments (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1977) pp. 109-201; Robert Price, "Military Officers and Political Leadership: The Ghanaian Case," Comparative Politics, III (April, 1971), 254-263; Ali A. Mazrui, "Soldiers as Traditionalizers," World Politics, XXVIII (January, 1976), 245-273; and Bhabani Sen Gupta, "The Modernizing Soldiers: End of Myth," Bulletin of Peace Proposals, X, No. 3 (1979), 260-264.

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³⁵Ann Gregory, "Factionalism in the Indonesian Army: The New Order," Journal of Comparative Administration, II (November, 1970), 343.

³⁶Mazrui, op.cit., pp. 260-262.

³⁷Nordlinger, op.cit., p. 40.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 160-164.

³⁹Ibid., p. 41.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 152.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 154.

⁴²Ibid., p. 156.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Halpern, op.cit., pp. 278-299; and Janowitz, op.cit., pp. 63-64.

⁴⁵Nordlinger, op.cit., p. 35.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 36.

⁴⁷In his study of military coups in Latin America from 1935 to 1964, Needler classified the types of military coups into reformist and non-reformist. He found that between 1935 and 1945, after the middle class tried to alter the political and economic contours of their society in the face of upper class predominance, 50 percent of the military coups had reformist objectives. But between 1945 and 1954, after the middle class had become established and was now being threatened by powerful lower class, the proportion of reformist coups dropped by half to 23 percent, falling further to 17 percent between 1955 and 1964. See Martin Needler, Political Development in Latin America: Instability, Violence and Evolutionary Change (New York: Random House, 1968) p. 65.

⁴⁸Shils, op.cit., p. 31.

⁴⁹Nordlinger, op.cit., pp. 110-116.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 117-123.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 120.

⁵²Ibid., p. 119.

⁵³Nordlinger classifies seventy-four countries into three categories according to the military's political strength: first, those countries in which the military accepted civilian control; second, those in which the military intervened as a moderator; and

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⁵⁶Nordlinger, "Soldiers in Mufti," p. 167.

⁵⁷Nordlinger, Soldiers in Politics, p. 167.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Edwin Lieuwen, Armies and Politics in Latin America (New York: Praeger, 1961), p. 147.

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⁶⁵Ibid., p. 291.

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⁶⁹Scott, op.cit., p. 125.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 129.

⁷¹Carl H. Lande, "Introduction: The Dyadic Basis of Clientelism," in Schmidt, op.cit., p. xviii.

⁷²Ibid., p. xx.

⁷³Scott, op.cit., p. 126.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Scott and Kerkvliet, op.cit., p. 441.

⁷⁶Lande, op.cit., p. xxv.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. xxviii.

⁷⁹Scott, op.cit., pp. 130-131.

⁸⁰George M. Foster, "The Dyadic Contract: A Model for the Social Structure of a Mexican Peasant Village," American Anthropologist, LXIII (December, 1961), 1175.

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⁸²Lande, op.cit., pp. xxi-xxii.

⁸³Ibid.

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⁸⁵Alvin W. Gouldner, "The Norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement," in Schmidt, op.cit., p. 35.

⁸⁶Scott, op.cit., p. 126.

⁸⁷Lande, op.cit., p. xxi.

⁸⁸See Andrew J. Nathan, "A Factionalism Model for CCP Politics," in Schmidt, op.cit., pp. 386-389; and Heeger, op.cit., pp. 45-57.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 55; and Jean-Francois Medard, "The Underdeveloped State in Tropical Africa: Political Clientelism or Neo-Patrimonialism," in Private, Patronage and Public Power: Political Clientelism in the Modern State, ed. by Christopher Clapham (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982) pp. 168-170. Also, see Harold Crouch, "Patrimonialism and Military Rule in Indonesia," World Politics, XXXI (July, 1979), 557-582.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Crouch, The Army and Politics, pp. 274-307.

⁹²Luigi Grazino, "A Conceptual Framework for the Study of Clientelistic Behavior," European Journal of Political Research, IV (June, 1976), 167.

⁹³Ibid., p. 168.

CHAPTER III

CLIENTELISM IN THE THAI POLITICAL SYSTEM

The purpose of this chapter is to explore clientelism in the Thai political system, with special reference to political events from 1947 to 1963. The chapter contains three parts. We begin with an investigation of the causes and social and political setting of clientelism in Thai politics. Secondly, we will survey the power structure and the type of political elite groups which have emerged in Thailand, giving special emphasis to the role and practices of clientelism. Lastly, we will examine the process of political change in the Thai clientele system.

General Characteristics of the Thai Political System

Following the 1932 revolution, the Thai political system was transformed from an absolute monarchy to what has been termed a "Thai style democracy", characterized by government by the military and bureaucracy, with infrequent experiments with constitutional government and

an elected parliament.¹ In this system, the legislature has been limited to the function of legitimizing the existing elites' claim to rule, with politics being centered around the struggle of small military-bureaucratic cliques for the benefits and privileges of office. The decision-making power has rested in the hands of high-ranking military leaders, who have cooperated with senior civil servants and a few compliant politicians in running state affairs. The fundamental means of transferring power in the Thai political system has been the coup d'etat.²

The domination of the military and civilian officers in the Thai political system is evident in their control over the cabinet. According to Riggs,

...of the 237 men who served in Thai cabinets between 1932 and 1958, a total of 184 may be classified as career officials, compared with 38 who were non-officials. An additional 15 men cannot be classified...in either category because adequate information is not available. Of the career officials, 100 were civil servants, and 84 were military officers.³

The political domination of the Thai military and civilian officers stems largely from an absence of formal political institutions that are capable of countervailing the expanded power of the bureaucracy and armed forces.⁴ Except during the early to mid-1970s, professional associations, student groups, labour unions and peasant

organizations have been strictly controlled, if not proscribed. Groups of businessmen, composed mostly of Chinese, have limited their activities to an attempt to influence politicians and bureaucrats for their narrow special-interest goals, and have contributed to widespread official corruption. These groups have seldom acted as responsible interest groups seeking to influence public policy in favor of national economic development. More significantly, political parties have remained feeble and non-institutionalized, even though they have existed in the Thai political system since the 1932 revolution. The inability of parties to enlist mass support at the grass roots level, and their lack of permanent organizations with effective branches in the rural areas have meant that parties are confined to a subordinate and peripheral role in the political system.⁵

The characteristics of Thai political parties may be described as follows: Thai political parties are not mass parties. Rather, they tend to become "parliamentary clubs" where personal interests and individual ties determine party policies and structure.⁶ Seats are won through local popularity and the prominence of a candidate's name rather than on political platforms. Principles and ideologies are not the underlining foundations of parties. Politicians join parties when motivated by their personal interests, such as their desire for

special favors and material benefits. The boundaries and affiliations of the parties are therefore not rigid and membership is not stable. Individual members may move from one party to another to maximize their advantage in response to competitive political bidding from power holders. Under such circumstances, any military-bureaucratic clique controlling large material resources and governmental patronage can easily dominate and manipulate the party system. It is, thus, not surprising that Thai political parties have never protested military coups nor have they acted as a countervailing force checking the political power of the bureaucracy and armed forces. On the contrary, the parties have rather tried to please military-bureaucratic cliques following the seizure of power by offering their parliamentary support in exchange for jobs and other perquisites.

The Sahaphak or United Parties provide an outstanding example of political parties dominated by a military-bureaucratic clique. After Field Marshall Phibun, the leader of the 1947 military coup group, took control of the government in 1948, he established the United Parties to gather politicians from a number of small parties, such as the Prachachon (Peoples) Party, the Thammathipat Party and the Issara (Independent) Party). The major function of the United Parties was to

back Field Marshal Phibun in parliament. In return for this parliamentary backing, Field Marshal Phibun supplied the members of the United Parties with cabinet posts, governmental privileges and economic benefits.⁷ In 1955, the United Parties were transformed into the Seri Manangkhasila Party, headed by Field Marshal Phibun. This new party, however, did not last long after Phibun's political eclipse. As soon as Field Marshal Sarit gained political prominence in late 1956, the Seri Manangkhasila Party became split. Some of its members went to join the Shaphum Party which backed Field Marshal Sarit. More importantly, after being the recipient of much patronage, former members of the Seri Manangkhasila Party, in association with other politicians, joined the attempt to undermine Phibun's political power and legitimacy. Many former Phibun supporters threw their support behind Field Marshal Sarit.⁸ Thus, by 1958, Field Marshal Sarit easily seized power from Phibun.

Because of the lack of institutionalized political parties and interest groups, political competition in Thailand has been confined to a small group of elites, i.e., high-ranking military officers and senior civil servants who control the executive and administrative power. The units of this competition are personal cliques, formed on the basis of patron-client dyads.⁹ These cliques are not motivated by policy or ideological

difference, but are rather centered around a more or less amoral quest for power and spoils. To strengthen their political positions and to deprive their rivals of power, the cliques make alliances with one another. The leaders of the cliques also provide their allies and clients with high administrative posts, financial opportunities and governmental privileges in exchange for political support and loyalty. The Thai political system is therefore characterized as a system of political clientelism.

The pervasiveness of clientelism in politics is promoted by Thai political culture. Most Thais, at all levels, view social and personal relations in terms of paternalism and reciprocity. In their comprehensive and authoritative analysis of the Thai political culture, Wilson and Phillips state that the Thai people, especially the peasants, look to their government as a source of gentle benevolent concern and as a body possessed, ideally, of the attributes of a strong, wise, but indulgent father.¹⁰ Indeed, the Thai people believe that the government is like a father and they in turn are like its children. Moreover, after examining the Thai political system, Van Roy points out that the Thais perceive the social order and personal relations in terms of hierarchy and reciprocity. He puts it as follows:

...The individual's place in the Thai social order is defined in terms of his relative "rank" (an indissoluble compound of the economic, social and political factors of class, status and power). The individual invariably relates to those with whom he comes into contact as superior or inferior, as determined by relative rank, and his behaviour toward them is set accordingly....

The hierarchical and reciprocative principles are given substance in the "connection." To secure his place and his future and to improve his lot, the individual in the Thai social order seeks to affiliate himself with those...who can most effectively and most faithfully serve his purpose. From among his superiors he seeks out a "patron"; from among inferiors he selects "clients".¹¹

The Power Structure

Military rule in Thailand is somewhat different from that in Latin American countries.¹² The Thai military leaders have never solely dominated the political system nor have they interfered with the civil administration. In fact, they have cooperated with senior civil servants and some politicians in running state affairs. Parliament and elections have been used to legitimize their power. The military have demanded large shares of governmental budgets and the control of important portfolios in the cabinet, such as that of the Prime Minister and those of the ministers of defense and

of the interior. Wilson explains the characteristics of the Thai political system as follows:

...Political instability is in large part a matter of perpetual struggle for political status....Political status is a composite of three elements--power, money and fame--which can be manipulated to maintain a kind of equilibrium. Control of certain key positions in the governmental machinery is a necessary precondition of such stability. The instrument of this control is the personal clique, and loyal followers are appointed to key posts. Among the keys to maintaining power are the Prime Minister's office, the ministerial offices, the positions of director-general of police...and military commands, particularly in Bangkok.

After having taken control of such crucial administrative offices, the [military-bureaucratic] group which has gained power must...control a majority in parliament.... Patronage is one method of keeping parliamentary members in line.¹³

The Thai political system has been composed of two contrasting sets of institutions: 1) the democratic political institutions--parliament and elections--for legitimizing the power and status of the rulers; and 2) the bureaucracy and armed forces as the basis for political power.

Parliament in Thailand has almost always consisted of two bodies.¹⁴ The first is the House of Representatives whose members are elected directly by

the people. The second is the Senate whose members are appointed by the government. The number of MPs in both bodies is roughly equal.

Because the Thai political system lacks mass political parties and interest groups, parliament is very feeble. The military-bureaucratic cliques have dominated and manipulated parliament since the 1932 revolution. Through the use of fear, persuasion, patronage and the power to appoint the Senate's members, the military-bureaucratic cliques have been able to impose an iron discipline on a majority in parliament. The cliques have paid very little attention to mass demands and the views of the opposition parties.

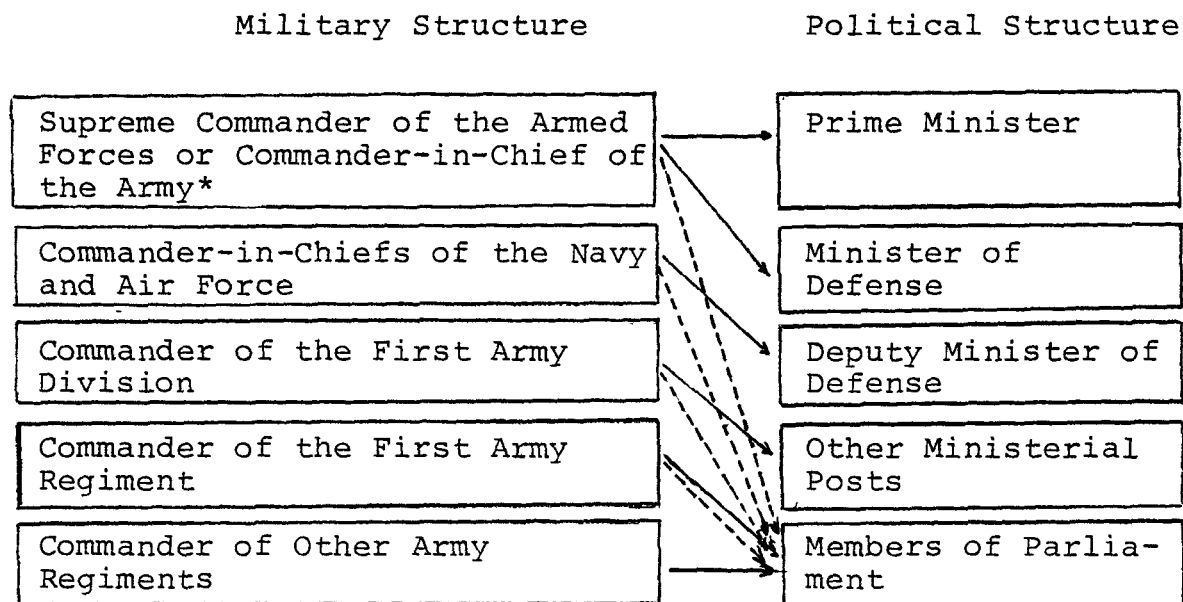
Even though parliament has never played a significant role in recruiting the national political leaders nor in checking the political power of the bureaucracy and armed forces, this institution is, however, very difficult to abolish in the Thai political system. The leaders of military-bureaucratic cliques found that parliament is necessary for the legitimization of their power.¹⁵ The positions in the Senate are indispensable sources of patronage. Yet parliament serves to integrate the nation. In particular, the House of Representatives provides a possible pathway for provincial notables to attain positions of prestige

in the capital, to give vent to their regional grievances and to share in the peripheral benefits of power. Parliament, therefore, links the parts of the country to the center. In a larger measure, it siphons off pressures which might lead to the development of more irascible proponents of localism.¹⁶

The basis of political power in Thailand has been located in the bureaucracy and especially in the armed forces which control coercive resources. While the bureaucracy performs the day-by-day work of governmental administration, the armed forces act to maintain law and order, to recruit the national political leaders and to protect the government from being overthrown. Jin Vibhatakarasa, a Thai political scientist, characterizes the structure of Thai political power as consisting of parallel patterns of military and political hierarchies.¹⁷ Figure II illustrates this feature.

Usually, the Thai military, when taking control of the government, try to hold one or both of the following positions: the supreme commander of the armed forces and the army commander-in-chief. The strategy is obvious: they want to consolidate military power in their hands and protect their government from being overthrown. Field Marshals Phibun and Sarit are the classic examples of this strategy in action. They were the Supreme Commanders of the Armed Forces and the Army

Figure II. The Parallel Structure of the Military and Political Hierarchies



- indicates common pattern of joint office holding
 - - - - -→ indicates collateral positions of joint office holding

Source: Jin Viophatakarasa, The Military in Politics: A Study of Military Leadership in Thailand (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oregon, 1966), p. 189.

*This title has been revised slightly by the author to correspond to the common practice of Thai patronage appointments.

Commanders-in-Chief when they took office as Prime Minister in 1948 and 1960, respectively.¹⁸

When the military rulers retire from the armed forces, in practice they still try to retain direct

influence upon the armed forces by appointing close friends or clients to the positions of Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and Army Commander-in-Chief. These include civilian rulers who by bureaucratic rules and regulations are prohibited from holding both political and military positions. For example, when Pridi, a civilian politician, was Prime Minister in 1945, the positions of the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and the Army Commander-in-Chief were assigned to Luang Aduan, Pridi's supporter in the Free Thai group.¹⁹ Similarly, after Field Marshal Phibun retired from the armed forces in 1948, he nominated his closest client, Field Marshal Phin, to be Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and the Army Commander-in-Chief.²⁰

Though the Thai rulers can control the topmost military commands, this in fact is not enough to manipulate the armed forces nor enough to protect their government. Both the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and the Army Commander-in-Chief do not directly command the army garrisons stationed in and around Bangkok. The Thai rulers, therefore, attempt to appoint close friends and clients to the command of such strategic garrisons. For example, when Field Marshal Phibun was premier, the post of Deputy Director General of Police was assigned to Phao who was later promoted to the Director General in 1954. The command of the First

Army Division was assigned to Field Marshal Sarit (whose rank at that time was Lieutenant General).²¹ These two officers were in fact Phibun's closest clients. They had played a significant role in helping Phibun stage a coup in 1947. After Field Marshal Sarit came to power in 1958, the Director General of Police was replaced by Gen. Prasert Ruchirawong, and the First Army Division, the First Infantry Regiment, the First Cavalry Regiment and the first battalion of the First Infantry Regiment were placed under the command of Sarit's close and trusted clients--Gen. Thanom Kittikachon, Gen. Praphat Charusathain, Gen. Krit Punnakan and Gen. Krit Sivara, respectively.²²

To maintain their political support and loyalty, the Thai ruler needs to furnish his military clients and allies with various prerequisites and prebendary sources. Chai-Anan Samudavanija, a Thai political scientist, suggests that parliamentary positions are utilized for this purpose. In his study of the military involvement in Thai politics, he reveals that since 1932 soldiers have constituted the largest number of appointed members of parliament.²³ In the 1949 parliament, for instance, of 123 appointed members, 91 were military, 21 were civil servants and 11 were police officers. The military contingent was distributed as follows: 62 from the Army; 15 from the Air Force; and 14 from the

Navy.²⁴ More significantly, the number of the military appointed to parliament in 1957 increased from 91 to 103 out of a total parliamentary membership of 121. The military contingent consisted of 74 from the Army and the remainder from the Navy and Air Force.²⁵

Political and bureaucratic power in Thailand is therefore likely to be patrimonial. The operative mechanism of patrimonialism is the patron-client nexus. The central dynamic behind this operation is the distribution of prebends, that is, public and political offices bestowed by the ruler on his clients and allies in return for their loyal support. Political and bureaucratic power in this sense is highly personalistic and precarious. It appears that the maintenance of the ruler's political power is not solely dependent upon his hold of formal positions in the armed forces and government. But to a remarkable degree, this maintenance is contingent on his ability to make alliances with other power-holders and find new sources of patronage for expanding his entourage.

The Type of Political Elite Group

The foundation of Thai politics, as Wilson states, is a clique with a leader as the nucleus.²⁶ A clique is a face-to-face group composed of several

factions. The relationships between a leader and his followers in a clique, or even among the members of its component factions, are personal, unsteady and based on trust and affection. These relationships may spring from a variety of sources such as family ties, personal links between military and bureaucratic superiors and their subordinates, or more utilitarian motives of mutual profits or gains. As for the military-bureaucratic cliques in Thailand, Morell states that the personal attachment is usually a result of graduation from the same school, especially in the same class or generation. "Rundiakan" (belonging to the same generation) creates moral obligation among the members of peer groups as well as the reciprocal exchange of mutual benefits, which may endure for years.²⁷

A clique whose basis of relationship is the patron-client dyad has no formal organization. It is only a web of personal exchange obligations, inhering in the formal institutions. As a rule, a clique is not suitable for taking a specific course of action in a specific circumstance. Rather, the members will work generally to further the leader's cause and will do certain things for him as he suggests. A single clique is very small and has little political power, even though it may comprise several military-bureaucratic factions.

In a bid for greater power, a single clique therefore has to make alliances with others. Wilson uses the Thai term "khana", or semi-formal group, to refer to this coalition. He writes:

Khana are not cliques, properly so called, but rather clusters of cliques. The clique leaders form the leadership of the group. From among themselves, they choose their leader according to a subtle calculus of qualification....Phraya Phahol [for example] was designated leader among the top military officers of the 1932 group because he was senior in age and rank.²⁸

A khana in fact is a ruling group, made up of many military-bureaucratic cliques, with the most privileged and most influential military officer as its leader. By nature, a khana is autocratic²⁹ and its structure is likely to be a patron-client pyramid.³⁰ The relationships in a khana are personal, flowing vertically to the leaders at each level. It is rare, though possible, to discover horizontal cooperation and coordination between cliques in a khana, except when they mingle together in order to stage a coup, or to protect themselves from being overthrown. The cliques in a khana apparently have their autonomy, even though they loosely depend on the leader of a khana. More significantly, these cliques are always in a state of strife with one another, for they try to acquire more benefits

than their rivals. It seems, however, that the leader of a khana prefers to retain the power rivalry of these cliques, rather than resolve such conflicts. The leader perceives that the security and stability of his position are contingent on the power balance between these cliques.

Essentially, the relationships between the leader and his followers in a khana always conform to the patron-client nexus, based on an exchange of goods and services. The leader, for his part, gains support for a seizure of power, for running the state administration and for protecting his government from being overthrown. In return, he gives his followers material benefits, governmental privileges and positions in the cabinet, parliament and state enterprises.³¹ These relationships are, however, not permanent. They rest upon the capability of the leader to provide satisfactory benefits for his followers. If the leader cannot do so, the followers may turn their loyalty and support to other political elites who may offer them more benefits. If the followers do so, it is clear that the power of a ruler is being undermined. In the final instance, he may be ousted from the political scene. In some instances, dissatisfied followers may set up a new khana to oppose the power of a ruler and to wrest power from him if they can.

To protect his own position, a ruler inevitably seeks new resources of patronage for satisfying the aspirations of his followers. Because the main sources of patronage in Thailand, according to Scott, are governmental offices,³² they in effect have been extended enormously. From 1933 to 1979, for instance, the number of ministries increased by six (or 85.7 percent); the number of departments increased by 86 (or 191.9 percent); and the number of divisions increased by 1,121 (or 783.9 percent).³³

To look at this bureaucratic expansion from another angle, one may argue that this expansion arises from the complexity of the society, requiring many organizations for performing specific tasks or services and for developing the country. If this statement is correct, most if not all of the newly created bureaucratic organizations should not perform the same functions and jurisdictions as the old ones. But unfortunately, it appears that most responsibilities of the newly created organizations duplicate the activities of the old ones. Nakata puts it as follows:

Between 1969-79, 32 new departments were established. Of these, 16 were created to perform already existing functions, and 13 to perform new functions--but 7 of these overlapped the jurisdictions of other line agencies, so only 6 departments were performing entirely new functions. It has not

been possible to identify the functional responsibilities of the remaining 3 departments.

The same period saw the creation of 713 new divisions. Of these, 454 were assigned already existing functions, and only 210 were given new functions--but the functional responsibilities of 94 divisions overlapped the jurisdictions of other line agencies. In other words, only 116 divisions (or 16.3 percent) were created to perform entirely new functions. It has not been possible to identify the functions of the remaining 49 divisions.³⁴

It is thus plausible to suggest that the expansion of bureaucratic organizations and agencies in Thailand is not much aimed at the creation of specific organizations for coping with the complex problems of the society. Rather, its aim has been to extend the ruler's sources of patronage for allotment to his allies and clients in exchange for their loyal support.

The Process of Political Change

Professor Fred Riggs studied the process of political change or power shifts in Thailand, utilizing four categories of military-bureaucratic involvement with changes in power: an overthrow of government, realignment, readjustment and consolidation. He emphasizes that this process takes place within the bureaucracy and armed forces because political parties, elections

and parliament do not play a significant role in producing political change and selecting the national political leaders.³⁵ A primary aim of the struggle among military-bureaucratic cliques is to gain positions in the cabinet, which forms the apex of bureaucratic power and authority. Each power shift in the Thai political system is therefore reflected by a cabinet change, and political crisis is marked by a cabinet crisis, which need not involve formal votes of confidence, resignation or action by parliament.

Riggs' generalization on the process of Thai political change seems accurate. But unfortunately, a closer examination of Thai political history reveals that this is so only at the beginning of the process of political upheaval. Riggs appears to ignore the fact that the Thai political system contains more than the bureaucracy and armed forces. In actuality, the Thai political system is made up of two contrasting sets of institutions: 1) the military and bureaucracy as the basis for political power; and 2) the democratic institutions, which can legitimize and sometimes undermine the power and position of the ruler.

In a study of the process of political change in Thailand, therefore, we need to examine the interlinked roles of both sets of political institutions. For purpose of analysis, the process of political power

shifts may be divided into four stages.

1) The Beginning of Political Conflict. Riggs correctly states that the process of political change in Thailand always stems from a cabinet crisis. The attainment of cabinet positions is desired by every military-bureaucratic clique not only because of the governmental authority but because of the public affirmation of higher social status and prestige. In addition, cabinet positions bring about a great number of material rewards.³⁶

Clique politics in Thailand is likely to be a zero-sum game. When one clique gains cabinet posts, it means another's loss of such positions. The limitations of cabinet positions is a result of the following factors. First, the Thai constitutions since 1932 have put limits on the size of the cabinet. For example, the constitution of 1946 specified that the cabinet should be made up of from 10 to 18 members. The 1948 constitution, which was promulgated after the military coup in 1947, limited the number of cabinet ministers to 25 persons.³⁷ Secondly, the Thai ruler may appoint experts to cabinet posts, especially to those requiring the most technological knowledge. He wants to utilize the knowledge, skills and experiences of these experts in the administration of state affairs. Lastly, the Thai

ruler may apportion some of the cabinet positions to civilian politicians in parliament in order to obtain their votes to legitimize his power and status. As a result, he does not have enough cabinet positions to satisfy all the members of military-bureaucratic cliques in his ruling group.

To alleviate the disappointment of clique members, the Thai ruler needs to provide additional material benefits and governmental privileges. He may appoint clique supporters to parliament or appoint them to positions in public enterprises. One has to keep in mind, however, that by so doing, the ruler does not bring the conflicts in his ruling group to an end. In fact, such a tactic only reduces conflicts temporarily, and to such a degree that they will not jeopardize the stability and security of the government.

2) Creation of Political Power and Forces.

Because the basis of political power in Thailand is located in the armed forces, rival cliques must attempt to consolidate as much military power into their hands as they can. The purpose of this attempt is obvious: they want to decrease the power of their opposition and at the same time, to strengthen their political position. In practice, rival cliques will manoeuvre their members into the commands of combat forces garrisoned in and around Bangkok. These include civilian

offices responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the society. The annual reshuffle of the military and police which can cause a political crisis is an example of this phenomenon.

If rival cliques are unable to put their members in the strategic military positions, they will compete with one another in offering perquisites and privileges to influential military commanders. The strategy of these rival cliques is to create personal ties and exchange obligations with the key military commanders and to weaken the political power and positions of their opponents.

3) Elimination of Political Legitimacy. If conflicts among rival cliques in the ruling group become so acute that the ruler cannot contain them, they must spread to parliament and the society at large. Rival cliques will finance student groups, labour unions and other associations to organize campaigns protesting against the government. Rumours, deceptions, demonstrations and even assassinations are common tactics employed.³⁸ Similarly, opposition factions seek the support of politicians in parliament so that they can challenge the legitimacy of their opponents and, especially, of the government. It is thus not surprising that before every military coup in Thailand there are also parliamentary crises. Opposition parties may call

for a general parliamentary debate or a vote of non-confidence in the government.

4) Striking Attack. If rival cliques are successful in gaining wide support from influential military leaders and succeed in eroding the legitimacy of the government, they may seize power. In such an event, the victorious clique at first may not directly assume the reins of government. Instead, it may appoint a highly-respected civilian to head an interim government so as to legitimize its coup and obtain international recognition. In time, however, the victorious clique will need to consolidate its grip on the government by displacing civilian supporters of the previous regime and replacing them with clique loyalists.

If the pattern of clique politics prevails, then power shifts tend to occur in cycles. Once a victorious clique comes to power, its leader must eventually try to legitimize his power by holding general elections and finally installing a new parliament. Subsequently, a struggle among the military-bureaucratic cliques in the new ruling group must take place once more because there will not be enough cabinet posts nor enough ruling positions in the bureaucracy and armed forces to satisfy all the members of the cliques in the ruling group. It seems that the process of power shifts will occur once again. This may be a

reason why Thai politics for over five decades has witnessed a cycle of military coups, general elections, and the reconstruction of parliament.

The above theory or generalization can serve as a useful means of analysis only if linked to the real world. In the following context, we will apply this theory or generalization in an examination of political change from 1948 to 1958, at which time the clique of Field Marshal Sarit replaced that of Field Marshal Phibun.

After the Second World War, the Thai military temporarily removed itself from politics. Field Marshal Phibun was forced to resign from the office of Prime Minister and Army Commander-in-Chief since he had brought the country to be allied with the Axis and had proclaimed war against the Allied Powers.³⁹ From 1945 to 1947, Thailand was under a civilian regime. Pridi, a Regent and the leader of the Free Thai group who had fought against the Japanese during the war, was appointed Prime Minister after the 1946 election.

The period of Pridi's rule was brief. His government faced the serious problems of postwar inflation, rice shortage and widespread official corruption. Above all, Pridi was accused of being involved in the mysterious death of King Rama VIII.⁴⁰ In August 1946, Pridi resigned from the office of Prime Minister

and Luang Thamrong, Pridi's closest friend, was appointed to take his place.

The government of Luang Thamrong did not last long. At the beginning of 1947, the opposition party led by Kuang Apaiwong, a royalist, called for a general parliamentary debate in protest against the government's inability to resolve the problems of economic difficulties and official corruption.⁴¹ Though the government retained its majority support in parliament, its legitimacy was destroyed. On November 8, 1947, a group of military officers, known as Khana Rattaprahan, captured power from Thamrong's government. This group was headed by Field Marshal Phibun.

Fearing difficulty both internally and in diplomatic relations, Khana Rattaprahan did not directly assume the reins of government. It asked Kuang Apaiwong to serve as prime minister. In 1948, Khana Rattaprahan consolidated its grip on the government. It deprived Kuang of his office and then appointed Field Marshal Phibun to the premiership.

Thai politics from 1948 to 1958 was dominated by the power struggle of three military-bureaucratic cliques within Khana Rattaprahan: 1) the police clique led by Pol. Gen. Phao; 2) the military clique headed by Field Marshal Sarit; and 3) Phibun's clique, which was composed mostly of his friends in the People's

Party.⁴²

Pol. Gen. Phao was an ambitious man and loved politics. Promoted to the rank of General in his early forties, he was a good organizer and administrator. But his views on domestic and international politics were unrefined. Everything he deemed communist he detested, and everything he detested was labelled communist.⁴³ Phao was raised and trained by the army but because of political circumstances after the 1947 coup, he was transferred to the police department in order to keep a check on the political activities of Khana Rattaprahan's opponents. Phao's rise to power was easy since he was assisted by his father-in-law, Field Marshal Phin, who had planned the 1947 coup. It was reported that

...by 1953, Phao held the post of Director-General of the Police Department, Deputy Minister of Interior, and Deputy Minister of Finance. He was also appointed to head a special security committee of the cabinet called the Political Affairs Bureau which was given the same status as a ministry.... He headed a Foreign News Collecting and Correcting Committee...and served as the leading spokesman for the government in the Assembly.⁴⁴

Phao's political power base was the police. Thanks to the assistance of the American-owned Sea Supply Corporation, Phao built the police into another powerful

military organization with its own tanks, artillery, armored cars, air force, naval patrol vessels and a training school for paratroopers in the country.⁴⁵ Professor Darling states that Phao "increased the police force to 42,835 men, or one policeman for every 407 people."⁴⁶ Nonetheless, Phao still faced the problem that the discipline and solidarity of police officers were not so high as those in the army. To resolve this problem, Phao tightened the chain of command and strengthened the esprit de corps of the police through his personal influence. He created Asawins or knights in the police force. Asawins in fact were the high-ranking police officers who acted as Phao's clients. The asawins would protect Phao's interests in the opium trade and suppress his political opponents. To reward these asawins and retain their loyalty, Phao gave gold or diamond rings, lavish gifts and undisclosed private income.⁴⁷

Phao also controlled a political machine in parliament. After the 1952 election which was held to legitimize Phibun's government, Phao formed the Sapanittibanyat, or Legislative Study Committee. The Sapanittibanyat comprised the appointed members of parliament and the civilian politicians in the Sahaphak, or government party.⁴⁸ Its functions were to map out plans regarding the passage of bills, to give its votes

in support of the government and to supplement Phao's political power and influence. In return for such things, Phao furnished the members of the Saphanittibanyat with a monthly allowance of 2,000 bahts, travel privileges to Europe, and permission to import cars tax-free.⁴⁹

The financial resources Phao used to finance this political machine came largely from his opium smuggling.⁵⁰ He also had interests in a large number of industrial, financial and commercial enterprises.

Phao's major rival for political ascendancy was Field Marshal Sarit, the Commander of the powerful First Army Region. Like Phao, Sarit had been raised and trained within the army. At the early age of forty-two, he was promoted to the rank of General and five years later to the rank of Field Marshal. In 1952, he attained the rank of Vice Admiral and Air Vice Marshal as rewards for his achievement in suppressing rebellions led by Pridi in 1949 and by naval officers in the following year.⁵¹ By 1955, Sarit was promoted to Admiral and Air Chief Marshal.

At the beginning of Phibun's rule, Sarit was not much involved in politics. Rather, he attempted to be a good professional soldier and was strongly loyal to Phibun. Even the American authorities at that time regarded Sarit as a "rugged and dour army officer to

whom they paid considerable respect."⁵²

Sarit started his political career in 1954 when Phibun appointed him Deputy Minister of Defense in order to counterbalance the ascendant power of Phao. However, Sarit had not yet become deeply involved with politics and parliamentary intrigue. It was apparent that Sarit gave most of his attention to military affairs. In 1954, he paid an official visit to the United States and negotiated a military assistance agreement. Since then, the Thai armed forces have adopted American weapons and patterned their organization and training on an American model.⁵³

Although Field Marshal Phin was the Army Commander-in-Chief until 1954, in practice he did not concern himself too much with the military affairs. Evidently, he and his sons-in-law, Maj. Gen. Praman Adireksan and Maj. Gen. Siri Siriyotin, were more interested in getting rich. These men had cooperated with the Chinese entrepreneurs in running several kinds of businesses.⁵⁴ Under these circumstances, Sarit as Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Army had a free hand to mould the army as he saw appropriate. More importantly, Sarit took advantage of this circumstance to manoeuvre his followers into positions of responsibility, and to consolidate his hold over the army. He appointed Gen. Thanom and Gen. Praphat to head the First Army Division

and the First Infantry Regiment, respectively.⁵⁵ In parliament, Sarit also controlled most of the appointed members coming from the armed forces.⁵⁶

To support these military followers, Sarit in 1952 gained control of the wealthy Lottery Bureau and, in the following year, the Veterans' Organization.

While Phao and Sarit were building their respective political organizations, Phibun tried to maintain his position as a balance of power between these two men. For example, when Phibun appointed Phao Director General of the Police Department, Sarit was likewise promoted to be Army Commander-in-Chief. When Phao became Deputy Minister of the Interior in 1954, Sarit was given the post of Deputy Minister of Defense. As long as Phibun could retain the power balance between these two men, his position seemed secure since neither Phao nor Sarit dared to stage a coup on their own.

To further strengthen his political position, Phibun sought diplomatic support from the United States. After coming to power in 1948, he declared his determination to fight the "international communist conspiracy."⁵⁷ He asserted that Thailand was increasingly the target for communist activities. He proceeded to seek American military and economic assistance. When the Korean war broke out in 1950,

Phibun sent 4,000 ground troops to the beleaguered United Nations forces in South Korea.⁵⁸ The Americans recognized this contribution by increasing their material and moral support to Phibun's government. At the same time, they helped to modernize the Thai armed forces, including the police.⁵⁹

After returning from a world tour in 1955, Phibun announced that general elections in Thailand would be held in February 1957. To implement this plan, Phibun personally convinced parliament to pass a political party bill.⁶⁰ He also set up two institutions of public information. One was the regular press conference of the Prime Minister. The other was the Hyde Park debating center, which provided an opportunity for politicians to criticize the government and discuss politics publicly.⁶¹

The motive behind this democratic reform is difficult to ascertain. During his visit to the United States and other Western countries, Phibun may have been impressed by the democratic institutions and practices. He may have wanted to establish a government based on popular rule.⁶² It is also plausible that Phibun's scheme for democracy was related to his difficulty in balancing off the power between Phao and Sarit. Phibun may have wanted to get popular support so that neither Phao nor Sarit would dare to challenge his

position.⁶³

In any event, the establishment of democracy in 1955 opened the way to one of the most colorful and active periods in Thai politics. More than twenty-five political parties were established. The government set up the Seri Manangkhasila party to gather its parliamentary supporters and other politicians from small political parties. Phibun served as head of the Seri Manangkhasila party, while Sarit was a deputy and Phao was a secretary.⁶⁴ The major competitor of the Seri Manangkhasila party was the Democrat Party headed by Kuang Apaiwong.

Phibun and Phao played a significant role in the 1957 election campaign, while Sarit stayed in the background. Phao poured everything available into the Seri Manangkhasila party. It was reported that at least 20,000,000 bahts were spent in this election campaign.⁶⁵ The government used the civil servants and military officers to support its candidates. While no other party succeeded in putting candidates up for all 160 seats, the Seri Manangkhasila party endorsed no less than 230 candidates.⁶⁶

The result of the 1957 election was as follows:

Party	Elected Seats
Seri Manangkhasila Party	85
Democrat Party	28
Independents	13
Free Democratic Party	11
Thammathipat Party	10
Economist Party	8
National Democratic Party	3
Hyde Park Movement Party	2

Though the Seri Manangkhasila party gained a majority of seats in parliament, it was morally defeated. Phibun and Phao were accused of cheating in the election.⁶⁷ On March 6, 1957, about 2,000 students from the universities in Bangkok rallied against Phibun's government. It was reported that this group of students was financed by Sarit.⁶⁸

On April 1, 1957, Phibun formed a new government, which reflected his attempt to balance off the power between Sarit and Phao. Sarit was appointed Minister of Defense, and his trusted clients, Gen. Thanom (the Commander of the First Army Division), Gen. Praphat (the Commander of the First Infantry Regiment), and Air Vice Marshal Chaloemkiat (the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force) were appointed Deputy Minister of Defense, Deputy Minister of the Interior, and Deputy Minister of Communication, respectively. In counterbalance, Phao was placed in the position of Minister of the Interior,

and his allies, Field Marshal Phin, Maj. Gen. Praman and Maj. Gen. Siri, were assigned to the positions of Minister of Agriculture, Industry and Cooperation, respectively.⁶⁹

After the 1957 election, the conflicts among Phibun, Phao and Sarit became increasingly acute. All three men had their own newspapers running news and articles attacking each other. Sarit owned the Sarnseri (Free Press); Phibun possessed the Sathianraparp (Stability); and Phao had the Songphanharoiraiwan (2500 Daily).⁷⁰

As mentioned earlier, when conflicts among rival cliques in the ruling group become so acute that the ruler is unable to contain them, they may spread into parliament. Rival cliques may then try to eliminate the legitimacy of their opponents and especially of the government. Khana Rattaprahan led by Phibun was no exception to this proposition. In 1957, the Sahaphum (Unionist) party headed by Sarit's half-brother, Sanguan Chantharasakha, called for a general parliamentary debate in protest against Phibun's government. In this debate, Phir Bunnag, a member of the Sahaphum party, accused Phao of contemplating the arrest of the king and of instigating a newspaper to run news items criticizing the king.⁷¹ Even though Phir was later forced to withdraw his accusation, the legitimacy of the

government and especially of Phao, was destroyed almost entirely by this accusation.

On September 17, 1957, Sarit and his army troops captured power from the government. Phibun was forced to flee to Cambodia, while Phao went into exile in Switzerland. Nonetheless, Sarit did not assume the reins of government immediately. He asked Pote Sarasin, a well-known and respected diplomat, to form a new government. In 1960, Sarit moved to consolidate his grip on the government. He staged another coup and then took the premiership.

Notes

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⁴Ibid., p. 211. Also, see David A. Wilson, Politics in Thailand (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962), p. 277; James C. Scott, Comparative Political Corruption (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1972), p. 58; and John L.S. Girling, Thailand: Society and Politics (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), pp. 118-121.

⁵Ibid., p. 166.

⁶Thak Chaloemtiarana, Thailand: The Politics of Despotism (Bangkok: The Social Science Association of Thailand, 1979), p. 62.

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⁸Ibid., p. 165.

⁹Scott, op.cit., p. 59.

¹⁰"Certain Effects of Culture and Social Organization on Internal Security in Thailand" (Santa Monica, California: The Rand Corporation, Memorandum RM-3786-ARPA, 1964), pp. 15-16, cited in Riggs, op.cit., p. 324.

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¹⁴Wilson, Politics in Thailand, pp. 199-211.

¹⁵Wilson, "Thailand", p. 53.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁷Jin Vibhatakarasa, The Military in Politics: A Study of Military Leadership in Thailand (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oregon, 1966), p. 188.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Chaloemtiarana, op.cit., p. 23.

²⁰Ibid., p. 38.

²¹Samudavanija, The Thai Young Turks, p. 14.

²²Chai-Anan Samudavanija, "The Role of the Military in Thai Politics: A Case Study of the Appointed Members in Parliament from 1982 to 1976," (in Thai), in Military and Politics: A Comparative Study, ed. by Kanara Supanit and Vuthichai Mulsin (Bangkok: The Social Science Association of Thailand, 1976), p. 211.

²³Samudavanija, "The Role of the Military in Thai Politics," pp. 196-224.

²⁴Ibid., p. 210.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 211-213.

²⁶Wilson, Politics in Thailand, p. 16.

²⁷David Morell and Chai-Anan Samudavanija, Political Conflict in Thailand: Reform, Reaction, Revolution (Oelgeschlager: Gunn & Hain Publishers Inc., 1981), pp. 31-32.

²⁸Wilson, Politics in Thailand, pp. 248-249.

²⁹Toru Yano, "The Political Elite Cycle in Thailand," The Developing Economies, XII (December, 1974), 311.

³⁰See Chapter II.

³¹Riggs, op.cit., pp. 214-215 and 243-310. Also, see Scott, op.cit., p. 61; and Sangsidh Piriya-rangsan, Thai Bureaucratic Capitalism, 1932-1960 (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Thammasat University, 1980), pp. 103-115.

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³³Nakata, op.cit., p. 67.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Riggs, op.cit., pp. 216-217.

³⁶Wilson, Politics in Thailand, pp. 157-158.

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⁴⁰ Darling, op.cit., p. 54.

⁴¹ Chaloeontiarana, op.cit., p. 56.

⁴² See Riggs, op.cit., pp. 236-238; and Wilson, Politics in Thailand, p. 29.

⁴³ Chaloeontiarana, op.cit., p. 56.

⁴⁴ Darling, op.cit., p. 115.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 114.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 115.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 123.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 124.

⁵⁰ Alfred W. McCoy, The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. 136-145.

⁵¹ Chaloeontiarana, op.cit., p. 91.

⁵² Darling, op.cit., p. 117.

⁵³ Chaloeontiarana, op.cit., p. 92.

⁵⁴ The details of Phin's involvement with the Chinese companies will be discussed in Chapter V.

⁵⁵ Chaloeontiarana, op.cit., p. 94.

⁵⁶ Noranit Setabutr, The Role of the Military in Thailand, 1958-1970 (Bangkok: Praepittaya, 1971), p. 15.

⁵⁷ Chaloeontiarana, op.cit., p. 97.

⁵⁸ Darling, op.cit., p. 78.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 80-81.

⁶⁰ Chaloemtiarana, op.cit., p. 100.

⁶¹ Wilson, Politics in Thailand, p. 29.

⁶² Ibid., p. 30.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Chaloemtiarana, op.cit., p. 112.

⁶⁵ Wilson, Politics in Thailand, p. 31.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Darling, op.cit., p. 157.

⁶⁸ Sayam Rat, September 4, 1957, cited in Chaloemtiarana, op.cit., p. 126.

⁶⁹ Col. Bancha Kalkattong, 36 Governments in the Thai Democracy (in Thai), (Bangkok: Rungruantham, 1973) pp. 223-226.

⁷⁰ Sethabutr, op.cit., pp. 20-21.

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CHAPTER IV

CLIENTELISM IN THE MILITARY ORGANIZATION

This chapter deals with clientelism in the Thai armed forces. It is divided into three parts: 1) The Basis of Clientelism in the Military Organization; 2) The Career Development of the Military Officers; and 3) The Clientelist Patterns in Military Careers.

The Basis of Clientelism in the Thai Armed Forces

The traditional patron-client bond in Thailand is a Phuyai-Phunoi relationship which inheres in every social organization. Even in the armed forces, which are seen as a highly modernized institution, the Phuyai-Phunoi relationship has a dominant impact upon the ideas and behaviour of the soldiers. Akin Rabibhadana, a Thai sociologist, describes a Phuyai-Phunoi nexus as a type of social exchange relationship between persons of unequal power, status and wealth.¹ A Phuyai, or patron, is a person with higher status and power. He may be older, holding senior official

positions. With a good reputation, a Phuyai may be a major source of protection and service which a Phunoi or client needs for his survival and well-being. A Phunoi in turn is an inferior. He may be younger and may occupy a lower position in the state administration. In return for the Phuyai's protection and assistance, a Phunoi offers his deference, support and loyalty. He may give gifts to a Phuyai at the times when he goes to see the latter, or on ceremonial occasions such as the Phuyai's birthday, the new year and so on.²

The basis of a Phuyai-Phunoi relationship is a reciprocity in beneficial exchanges. A Phunoi is expected to be grateful to a Phuyai. By custom, he should reimburse favors and services that he has received from a Phuyai. In Thai terms, these two obligations are called Katanyu-Katawethi.³

The Phuyai-Phunoi relationship also involves patterns of respect. When a Phunoi meets a Phuyai, he is required to show his respect and greeting by putting the palms of his hands together somewhere between his forehead and the chest.⁴ This gesture is called a Wai. A Phunoi should not argue against a Phuyai nor proffer gratuitous advice.⁵ He should exhibit respectful behaviour toward a Phuyai. This respectful behaviour may be summed up in three Thai

terms: Khaorop, Chaefang and Krengchai. In rough translation, Khaorop means respect; Chaefang means obedience; and Krengchai means avoiding any displeasure of a Phuyai.⁶ On the other hand, a Phuyai should behave in such a manner as to obtain respect from a Phunoi. This means that he should be calm, kind, generous and protective toward a Phunoi.⁷

Even though the Phuyai-Phunoi relationship is a traditional patron-client social bond, it is, nonetheless, prevalent in the armed forces, and is quite compatible with the mode of those organizations, which emphasize hierarchical relationships among their members. A Phunoi, more commonly called Thahan-Phunoi in a military context, is a young officer with a lower rank and position. A Phuyai, or Thahan-Phuyai, in turn will be a senior officer with a higher rank and position. A Thahan-Phuyai should have a good reputation, which may arise from the fact that he has fought and won in combat, or from the fact that he has paid much attention to developing the armed forces and working for the welfare of soldiers under his command, as well as their families. Furthermore, an influential Thahan-Phuyai may well hold a political office in the cabinet or parliament. An important office will increase his fame, prestige and baramee, meaning power and influence,⁸ and gain the respect of soldiers under his command as

well as people at large. Field Marshal Phibun provides a notable example. He was admired for his leadership of the Thai armed forces in the fight against the French army in the Indo-China War in 1940, as well as for his role in developing the capability of the Thai armed forces during his first term of office as prime minister from 1938 to 1944.⁹ Writing in 1962, Professor Wilson noted:

Field Marshal P. Phibunsongkhram is a man who loves the nation, the religion, the king and the constitution very firmly. Every soldier knows him, and he is respected by all soldiers. When Field Marshal P. Phibunsongkhram left the positions of Prime Minister and supreme commander, all the soldiers were depressed and sorry. Field Marshal P. Phibunsongkhram has a cool, shrewd and skillful character and is endowed with broad intelligence in politics, having held a high position in government already. He has also conducted coups d'etat successfully several times (sic) without bloodshed.¹⁰

To govern and control the Thahan-Phunois, a Thahan-Phuyai should use both military authority and benevolence. In Thai terms, these authority and benevolence are called Phradej and Phrakun.¹¹ When the Thahan-Phunois do not follow the military regulations and rules, or when they do not obey his command, a Thahan-Phuyai should punish them. But when the

Thahan-Phunois act as good professional soldiers and follow his command, a Thahan-Phuyai should provide rewards for these Thahan-Phunois. These rewards, however, are not confined only to food, clothing, medicine and other services with which a Thahan-Phuyai as a commander is obliged to furnish his Thahan-Phunois in accordance with notions of formal accountability. They also include special favors, extra benefits and privileges. By giving these things, a Thahan-Phuyai will effectively dominate and control the Thahan-Phunois. In some instances, he may be able to create added personal ties and reciprocal obligations with some of the Thahan-Phunois. More significantly, a Thahan-Phuyai can acquire from the Thahan-Phunois special respect or affection, trust, loyalty and political support, all of which are crucial for a Thahan-Phuyai in his struggle for political supremacy.

A Thahan-Phunoi, on the other hand, is expected to respect a senior officer not only because the latter has higher rank than himself but because the senior officer as a Thahan-Phuyai has superiority in social status, moral stature and experience. Practically, a Thahan-Phunoi will seek to associate himself with an influential Thahan-Phuyai in the hope of speedy promotion and attractive assignments. A Thahan-Phunoi may

give gifts to his Thahan-Phuyai on ceremonial occasions. When his Thahan-Phuyai is transferred to another department, a Thahan-Phunoi may move with him. The strategy of a Thahan-Phunoi is to express his personal loyalty and to solidify his personal ties and exchange obligations with his Thahan-Phuyai.

The Phuyai-Phunoi relationship in the armed forces is supported by the army training and socialization process. New soldiers and junior officers who will be Thahan-Phunois learn to submit themselves to military discipline, rituals, regulations and norms, designed to make the junior ranks subservient to the commanders and senior officers.¹² In the socialization process, the Thahan-Phunois are also imbued with the dominant values of Khaorop, Chaefang, Krengchai and Kattanyu-Kattawethi.¹³ The Thahan-Phunois are expected to be grateful to their commanders and senior officers.

It is important to point out that the Phuyai-Phunoi relationship is a principal factor unifying the Thai armed forces and inhibiting internal cleavages. Typically, a military commander who comes to power by a coup tries to build a base of support around his Thahan-Phuyai role. He will capitalize on his fame and baramee to minimize support for rivals who have lost political power and influence. At the same time, he will utilize his reputation and charity in the

acquisition of support from the public and soldiers at the periphery of his support group. For example, the junior army clique in the People's Party nominated Phraya Phahol, an adored Thahan-Phuyai, to the leadership of its faction and utilized his fame and baramee so as to avoid fighting with the senior army clique which lost political power because of the coup in 1933. Even though the members of the senior army clique were resentful, Thai rules of social and political etiquette called for them to respect Phraya Phahol and not protest or challenge his authority. The members of the senior army clique were obligated to show krengchai to Phraya Phahol, who was senior in both age and rank.¹⁴

The Career Development of Soldiers

In his exhaustive study of the career development of the American military elite in the 1940s, Professor Janowitz classifies types of military careers into prescribed and adaptive careers.¹⁵ By the prescribed career, he means that of an officer who has followed the idealized pattern of the military profession, attending higher staff schools, having a proper balance between command and staff assignments and avoiding becoming overspecialized. In short, a

prescribed career is exclusively concerned with military specialization or professionalism. An adaptive career, by contrast, is one involving unusual experiences in both military and non-military activities. These may include special military assignments, experiences with new experimental weapons, unique military-staff experiences, teaching and/or administrative work in military schools, assignments to foreign countries, and especially military-political appointments.¹⁶

In applying these categories to the American military elite of World War II and the post-World War II periods, Janowitz discovered that the soldiers having experiences in an adaptive career, particularly involving military-political assignments, were more successful in entering the elite nucleus of the armed forces than those who had restricted themselves to an exclusively military role.

From a sample of 475 high-ranking American officers of the World War II period, 87 were identified as prime movers by fellow professionals and informed observers. More than half of this elite nucleus had had adaptive careers, demonstrating the widespread extent to which entrance into the top echelons of the U.S. military involved such innovating experiences with strong overtones of political-military matters. These officers were concerned not only with technical management of the military but with relating the military to the broader society.¹⁷

Table 2. Relation of Adaptive Career Experience and Degree of Political Influence Among Different Types of Thai Military Officers (in percentages).

Adaptive Career Experiences	Types of Military Officers		
	Elite Nucleus	Elite Cadre	Professional Officers
High	32	20	-
Medium	46	50	10
Low	22	30	90
Total (N)	(43)	(10)	(20)

Source: Jin Vibhatarasa, The Military in Politics: A Study of Leadership in Thailand (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oregon, 1966), Table 27, p. 180.

Table 3. Relation of the Assumption of Different Levels of Central Command Posts and the Degree of Political Influence Among Different Types of Thai Military Officers (in percentages).

Central Command Positions	Types of Military Officers		
	Elite Nucleus	Elite Cadre	Professional Officers
High	70	-	3
Low	9	70	41
No Positions	21	30	56
Total (N)	(43)	(10)	(32)

Source: Vibhatarasa, The Military in Politics: A Study of Military Leadership in Thailand, Table 28, p. 184.

Following the line of Janowitz's work, Jin Vibhatarasa, a Thai political scientist, made an intensive study of the relation between politics and the career development of Thai soldiers from 1932 to 1965.¹⁸ Vibhatarasa divides the Thai military elite into three categories: 1) military "elite nucleus" comprising those who held high central command posts and cabinet positions; 2) military "elite cadre" comprising those who were appointed to low central command posts and to parliament; and 3) "professional military officers", who never held any political positions and had exclusively military professional careers. Vibhatarasa found that the majority of the Thai military elite from 1932 to 1965 was composed of officers who had highly or moderately medium degree of adaptive careers.¹⁹

The data, as presented in Table 2, reveals that the percentage of higher officers with adaptive careers was higher than that of those in the "elite cadre" category. Significantly, only three percent of the "professional officers" held high central command positions during the period from 1932 to 1965. The data is presented in Table 3.

Vibhatarasa's research reveals the importance of adaptive careers to the Thai military elite. Nonetheless, he does not specify the kinds of adaptive career experiences that are most crucial for the Thai military,

nor does he explain how the soldiers are able to enter the elite nucleus of the armed forces. Because data on this issue is not readily available, we have to study the patterns of military mobility and career development by reference to those of civil servants.

Clientelist Patterns in Military Careers

Likit Dhiravegin studied the mobility and career development of Thai civil servants in the 1970s. He found that patronage, favoritism and the spoils system have been indispensable factors enabling the civil servants to succeed in their careers. Promotions and assignments in the Thai bureaucracy, especially at the topmost levels, have been made on the basis of personal friendship and support rather than on the merit system.²⁰

In practice, a subordinate officer will affiliate himself to a superior. He is expected to make periodic visits to his superior, at which time he will give rare and expensive gifts which symbolize his client status.²¹ By custom, favored gifts include Prabucha, Nampung Duan Ha, Poomaka, Nga-Chang, Hang Nokyoog, and Team Toon Golf. In rough translation, Prabucha means a Buddha statue for worshipping; Nampung Duan Ha means the fifth month honey; Poomaka means rare and expensive wood for furniture-making; Nga-Chang means ivory; Hang

Nokyoog means peacocks' tails; and Team Toon Golf means a golfbag for a souvenir.²² Furthermore, a subordinate officer should provide his superior with services beyond the formal or normal obligations associated with his jobs. In an office setting, a subordinate should be guided by the following norms: when the superior comes to the office, he should hurriedly turn on an electric fan to make his superior feel comfortable. He should also offer a cup of tea or coffee.²³ When the superior pays an official visit to rural areas, a subordinate should supply him with special services, ranging from providing hotel accommodation to finding him a female sleeping-mate and giving gifts as a souvenir.²⁴ Such behaviour is expected by both parties to be a precondition for promotion and attractive assignments.

The above patterns have been characteristic of the bureaucracy, but they have also become prevalent in the Thai armed forces. Clientelism has been a principal factor enabling a soldier to enter the elite nucleus of the army. In practice, an ambitious lower-ranking soldier will associate himself with a leading military-politico or patron. He will move with his patron if the latter is transferred to another department. A lower-ranking soldier will give his patron information on the political activities or machinations of other mili-

tary-politicos. If his patron is a ruler, a lower-ranking soldier will help him suppress rebellions when they break out. Conversely, if his patron is not a ruler, a lower-ranking soldier will support him when he tries to overturn a government. The strategy of a subordinate soldier is to express his personal loyalty and support to his patron. The subordinate hopes that if his patron recognizes him as a close client, he will be appointed to high central command positions, thereby entering the elite nucleus of the army.

A brief review of the career developments of Field Marshals Phin, Thanom and Praphat reveals some features of the clientelist system in operation. All these three officers were the Commanders-in-Chief of the army in 1948, 1963 and 1964, respectively.

Field Marshal Phin graduated from the Army Cadet College in 1915. He was appointed Commanding General of the 2nd battalion of the 4th Infantry Regiment, garrisoned in Rachaburi province.²⁵ His rank at that time was Second Lieutenant. In 1920, Phin was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant and then went to study at the Army Staff College. After finishing these studies he became a staff officer in the 4th Army Division, commanded by Maj. Gen. Phraongchao Tothisiriwong. During this period, Phin was not interested in politics nor did he undertake any

political activities. Accordingly, he spent most of his time in drinking and gambling in the military club of the 4th Army Division.²⁶ Nevertheless, Phin had a good opportunity to meet several Nai Thahan-Phuyais. More importantly, he was able to affiliate himself with Maj. Gen. Phraongchao Tothisiriwong.

When Maj. Gen. Phraongchao Tothisiriwong was appointed Commander of the First Army Region in Bangkok, Phin moved with him. Subsequently, he was promoted to the rank of Captain.²⁷ Phin became a staff officer in the First Army Region, the principal command element in the metropolis which is crucial for those who want to enter the elite nucleus of the army.

When the Boradej rebellion broke out in 1938, Phin was sent to the Special Joint Army Division, headed by Field Marshal Phibun. Phin played a significant role in the suppression of this rebellion. He planned a scheme to attack the rebels. Field Marshal Phibun therefore bestowed upon him a promotion in a huge step from the rank of Captain to Lieutenant Colonel. Field Marshal Phibun also appointed Phin Deputy Commander of the 3rd Army Division.²⁸ In 1939, Phin was promoted to the rank of Colonel, thereby having full power to command the 3rd Army Division.

During the Second World War, Phin led troops to attack and occupy the city of Kengtung in the Shan

States in Burma. Phin was appointed governor of the city of Kengtung and was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General in 1941.²⁹

After the Allies defeated Japan at the end of 1945, they insisted on the withdrawal of Thai troops from the Shan States. Phin was deprived of his position as governor of the city of Kengtung. In 1946, a civilian government led by Pridi cut the military budget. The government also forced several soldiers, including Phin, to resign.³⁰

Phin returned to his military career in 1947. He cooperated with Pol. Gen. Phao, Field Marshals Phibun and Sarit in seizing power from the civilian government. In 1948, Phin was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Deputy Prime Minister.³¹ He was also promoted to the rank of General in 1949, and three years later, to the rank of Field Marshal.

Field Marshal Thanom was the Commander-in-Chief of the Army in 1963. He was regarded as the right hand of Field Marshal Sarit, Prime Minister from 1960 to 1963. Thanom was handsome, possessed of a charming smile and silver-white hair. This appearance earned him the nickname, "Siamese Smile".³² Thanom was greatly admired by the soldiers. He was kind, generous and protective toward lower-ranking military officers, particularly toward those who were under his command.³³

After graduating from the Army Cadet College in 1930, Thanom was sent to the 8th Infantry Regiment, stationed in Chagmai province.³⁴ In 1934, Thanom went to study in the School of Military Maps and became a military teacher in the Army Cadet College from 1935 to 1947. During this period, Thanom never commanded any army garrison nor did he get involved in domestic politics. Apparently, he was concerned exclusively with his military professional specialization, and especially with his duties to teach and govern the army cadets.

Thanom began to enter the arenas of military command and engage in politics when he assisted Field Marshal Sarit to seize power in 1947. He led the army cadets to take the Ministry of Defense while Field Marshal Sarit and his troops went to arrest the prominent political leaders of the previous regime. As a reward, Thanom was appointed Commander of the 21st Infantry Regiment. In the following year, he was transferred to be head of the prestigious 11th Infantry Regiment of the 1st Army Division, commanded by Field Marshal Sarit.³⁵

When Pridi tried to topple Phibun's government on February 26, 1949, Thanom was given the job of suppressing the rebels. He ordered his troops from the 11th Infantry Regiment to attack Thammasat University, which the rebels were using as their headquarters. Bitter fighting between the soldiers of two sides

carried on for three days. In the final instance, Thanom was able to recapture Thammasat University and arrest several rebels. Field Marshal Sarit recognized this performance by assigning Thanom to be Deputy Commander of the 1st Army Division.³⁶

Field Marshal Sarit's trust in Thanom can be surmised from the latter's rapid promotion. For example, when Field Marshal Sarit was appointed Commander of the 1st Army Region, Thanom succeeded him as the Commander of the 1st Army Division. When Field Marshal Sarit became the Army Commander-in-Chief in 1954, and three years later, Minister of Defense, Thanom was promoted to the command of the 1st Army Region. He was also appointed Deputy Minister of Co-operation.³⁷ On August 20, 1957, Field Marshal Sarit resigned from his position as Defense Minister in protest against Phibun's government which was unable to effect reforms he had urged. To express his personal loyalty and support, Thanom resigned from Phibun's government too. After Field Marshal Sarit took over Phibun's government on September 16, 1957, Thanom was rewarded by being appointed Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Army.³⁸

Thanom became the army Commander-in-Chief and Prime Minister after the death of Field Marshal Sarit in 1963. At the end of the same year, he was promoted to Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.³⁹

Field Marshal Praphat was the Army Commander-in-Chief in 1964. He was seen as the left hand of Field Marshal Sarit. Praphat's personality was in sharp contrast to that of Thanom. He was ambitious, physically unattractive and considerably overweight. He wore sunglasses on nearly all occasions, day or night, to conceal weak eyes. It was rumored that Praphat was going blind. Charges of massive corruption were frequently directed against him. "The sunglasses, tiny mustache, and coarse features in a heavy face gave Praphat a sinister appearance, especially next to Thanom."⁴⁰ Whereas Thanom was able to interact easily with visiting foreign leaders, Praphat shied from such contacts. He tried to make up for his disparity with a ready wit and homespun sense of humor. He always maintained a fund of amusing comments for the press.⁴¹ Praphat was a clever speaker and showed a continuing ability to think on his feet while Thanom avoided occasions that demanded such skills. Despite the differences in personality and character, the means that Praphat used for entrance to the top echelons of the army were similar to those of Thanom. These means were political patronage and the assistance of Field Marshal Sarit.

Graduating from the Army Cadet College in 1931, Praphat became the Commander of the 1st battalion of the

1st Infantry Regiment, commanded by Field Marshal Sarit. The relationship between these two officers was very close. In 1947, Praphat cooperated with Field Marshal Sarit in capturing power from the civilian government. He sent army units to arrest the important political leaders supporting the previous government. In return, Praphat was appointed Commander of the 11th Infantry Regiment.⁴² When Field Marshal Sarit was promoted to head the 1st Army Division in 1951, Praphat succeeded him as the Commander of the 1st Infantry Regiment. Three years later, Praphat became Commander of the 1st Army Division when Field Marshal Sarit took over as Army Commander-in-Chief.⁴³

Praphat was a significant backer of Field Marshal Sarit in the armed forces. From 1954 to 1957, Praphat supported Field Marshal Sarit in the struggle with Pol. Gen. Phao for political supremacy. Praphat sent crucial army units to help Field Marshal Sarit take over Phibun's government and oust Pol. Gen. Phao on September 16, 1957. Field Marshal Sarit recognized this contribution by naming Praphat Commander of the 1st Army Region, Minister of the Interior and Secretary-General of the political party set up under Field Marshal Sarit's auspices in late 1957.⁴⁴

Because Praphat had a conflict with Field Marshal Sarit over their competitive business interests,

he was steadily moved away from direct command of troop units. By the time of Field Marshal Sarit's death in 1963, Praphat's only military role was the politically irrelevant position of Assistant Commander-in-Chief of Supreme Command Headquarters.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, after Thanom took office as Prime Minister on December 8, 1963, Praphat as his close friend once again returned to power. He was appointed Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of the Interior, and Army Commander-in-Chief,⁴⁶ the positions he held until he was forced to go into exile in Taiwan in 1973.

Notes

¹Akin Rabibhadana, The Organization of Thai Society in the Early Bangkok Period, 1782-1873 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), pp. 91-96.

²Ibid., p. 94.

³Ibid. Also, see H. William Batt, Obligation and Decision in Thai Administration: From Patrimonial to Rational-Legal Bureaucracy (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The State University of New York, 1974), pp. 90-93.

⁴Rabibhadana, op.cit., p. 93.

⁵Ibid., p. 92.

⁶Akin Rabibhadana, "Clientship and Class Structure in the Early Bangkok Period," in Change and Persistence in Thai Society, ed. by G. William Skinner and A. Thomas Kirsch (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), pp. 108-109. For further discussion about the concept of Krengchai, see David Morell and Chai-Anan Samudavanija, Political Conflict in Thailand: Reform, Reaction, Revolution (Oelgeschlager: Gunn & Hain Publishers, 1981), pp. 27-28.

⁷Rabibhadana, "Clientship and Class Structure...", p. 109.

⁸Morell and Samudavanija, op.cit., pp. 33-34; and Thak Chaloeontiarana, Thailand: The Politics of Despotic Paternalism (Bangkok: The Social Science Association of Thailand, 1979), p. 44.

⁹Suchit Bunbongkan, "Political Power of the Thai Military Elite: A Comparative Study Between Field Marshals P. Phibunsongkram and Sarit," (in Thai), in Love Thailand, ed. by Sombat Chantornwong and Rungsan Thanapornpag (Bangkok: The Social Science Association of Thailand, 1976), p. 96.

¹⁰Revolution, Coup D'Etat, and Rebellion in Thailand During the Democracy Period (Bangkok: nd., 1949), pp. 171-172, cited in David A. Wilson, Politics in Thailand (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962), p. 249.

¹¹First Lieutenant Tassanee Pachusanon, The Political Socialization of Thai Army Cadets (in Thai), (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Chulalongkorn University Press, 1976), p. 172.

¹²Ibid., pp. 70-71 and 152-153.

¹³Ibid., p. 173.

¹⁴Wilson, op.cit., p. 249.

¹⁵Morris Janowitz, The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait (New York: Free Press, 1971), pp. 165-170; and Military Institutions and Coercion in the Developing Nations (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), pp. 121-123.

¹⁶Jin Vibhatarasa, The Military in Politics: A Study of Military Leadership in Thailand (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oregon, 1966), p. 179.

¹⁷Janowitz, Military Institutions and Coercion, p. 122.

¹⁸Vibhatarasa, op.cit., pp. 177-188.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 180.

²⁰Likit Dhiravegin, The Bureaucratic Elite of Thailand: A Study of Their Sociological Attributes, Educational Backgrounds and Career Advancement Patterns (Bangkok: Thai Khadi Research Institute, 1978), p. 135. Also, see Edgar L. Shor, "The Thai Bureaucracy," Administrative Science Quarterly, V (June, 1960), 60-80.

²¹Rabibhadana, op.cit., p. 94.

²²Dhiravegin, op.cit., pp. 137-139.

²³Ibid., p. 143.

²⁴Ibid., p. 140.

²⁵Field Marshal Phin Chunhawan, Life and Events of Field Marshal Phin Chunhawan (in Thai), (Bangkok: Arun Press, 1973), p. 10.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid., p. 13.

²⁸Ibid., p. 26.

²⁹Ibid., p. 37.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid., p. 89.

³²Morell and Samudavanija, op.cit., p. 52.

³³Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn, 60 Years of My Life (in Thai), (Bangkok: The Military Map Press, 1970), pp. 109-121.

³⁴Ibid., p. 110.

³⁵Morell and Samudavanija, op.cit., p. 51.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Sompop Chantaraprapa, Life and Works of Field Marshal Thanom (in Thai), (Bangkok: Progress Press, 1972), p. 151.

³⁸Ibid., p. 153.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Morell and Samudavanija, op.cit., p. 52.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid., p. 53.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

CHAPTER V

CLIENTELISM IN THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM

In Chapter III we characterized the Thai socio-political system as a patrimonial one. The operative mechanism of patrimonialism is the patron-client dyad, and the maintenance of the ruler's political power is dependent upon his ability to provide steady and satisfactory prebendary sources for the military officers, particularly for those who hold high central command posts. Though the ruler may appoint these officers to the cabinet and parliament, apparently these benefits are not enough to retain their loyalty and support. Frequently, several political leaders who may seek to take over the government will attempt to compete with the ruler in offering benefits and privileges to influential military commanders. The issues that arise here are:

- 1) Beyond positions in the cabinet and parliament, what kinds of benefits can the ruler provide for military commanders in exchange for their political support?

- 2) How can the ruler acquire these benefits?
- 3) What is the effect of the patron-client system upon administration and economic development?

We will seek answers for these three questions in the operation of clientelism in public enterprises, in the private enterprises, and in the structure of monopolistic economic control.

Clientelism in Public Enterprises

State enterprises have a long history in Thailand. Starting with textiles, sugar and pepper before the Second World War, the list of government-owned industries and commercial ventures expanded rapidly in the early 1950s when the legislature passed the Government Organizations Incorporation Act.¹ It is reported that the government has since engaged in all public utilities dealing with transportation, irrigation and electric power. The government has also controlled about sixty manufacturing establishments, fifteen of which were distilleries. These include monopolies over tobacco, potable and industrial spirits and playing cards; dominant participation in timber, sugar, pepper, gunny bags and minerals other than tin; and large interests in cement, glass, pharmaceuticals,

batteries, tin, tanneries and ceramics.²

The precise pattern of governmental involvement in commercial enterprises is, however, difficult to gauge because it is not fully disclosed in any public document. As far as we know, some enterprises are wholly owned and operated by the ministry; others are controlled by it but not directly or wholly owned; while still others are only partly financed by the government.³ For example, the Ministry of Industry has operated about twenty-five factories. The Ministries of the Interior, Finance, Agriculture and Defence have also been involved in a large number of public and quasi-public enterprises.⁴

What is the political significance of this huge network of governmental ventures? In a limited way, the proliferation of public enterprises has been associated with the nationalist movement among the political elites since 1932. Because the Thai economy has been dominated and controlled by foreigners, especially the Chinese, Thai political elites have resented this situation and have attempted to bring the control of the economy back into Thai hands. An expansion of the government's role in investment in and management of industrial and commercial ventures is a manifestation of these grievances.⁵ Beyond having this popular appeal,

it is obvious that public enterprises have also served more prosaic ends for the political elites. In fact, public enterprises become a crucial prebendary source second only to positions in the cabinet and parliament. Scott clearly appreciates this point when he states that high positions in public enterprises, which pay comparatively lucrative salaries and bonuses, have often been filled on the basis of clique patronage considerations. The funds of these firms have frequently been manipulated for personal political purposes or to build clique support.⁶

Under the system of public enterprises permeated by clientelism, most key members of a military-bureaucratic clique will be placed in positions where they can raise funds and other benefits on behalf of their own cliques. The key positions are on the boards of directors which set policies and control the administration and finance of the enterprises. In these positions, leaders of military-bureaucratic cliques can extend credits and privileges and provide jobs for their supporters. Because few restrictions govern the regular administration of public enterprises, leaders of military-bureaucratic cliques can also take advantage of their directorships to acquire personal benefits and enrich their own families. These leaders may even illegally place government funds under their control in a private

bank, invest in short-term speculative projects, receive commissions from private entrepreneurs, or establish policies in favor of those businesses in which they and their families personally engage. So long as these performances do not jeopardize the ruler's position, and so long as they do not severely disrupt the economy, political prudence dictates that the ruler ignore such practices. However, when these practices begin to threaten his position, it is common that a leader of a sub-clique will be removed from the boards of directors and thereby lose part of his power base. Nevertheless, it is rare to discover cases where prominent leaders have been punished, since the ruler fears negative effects which may arise and cause military discontent, contributing to a rebellion or a coup d'etat by rival cliques.

On the other hand, a leader of a military-bureaucratic clique may be deprived of his position on the boards of directors when a new ruling group comes to power. The new ruler may want to reward his allies and supporters by appointing them to the boards of directors of public enterprises, and needs to distribute these positions to consolidate his power base.

The practice of using public enterprises as prebends to satisfy the aspirations of military and civilian officers became institutionalized in the Thai

Table 4. List of Companies Controlled by the Members of Sarit's Clique.

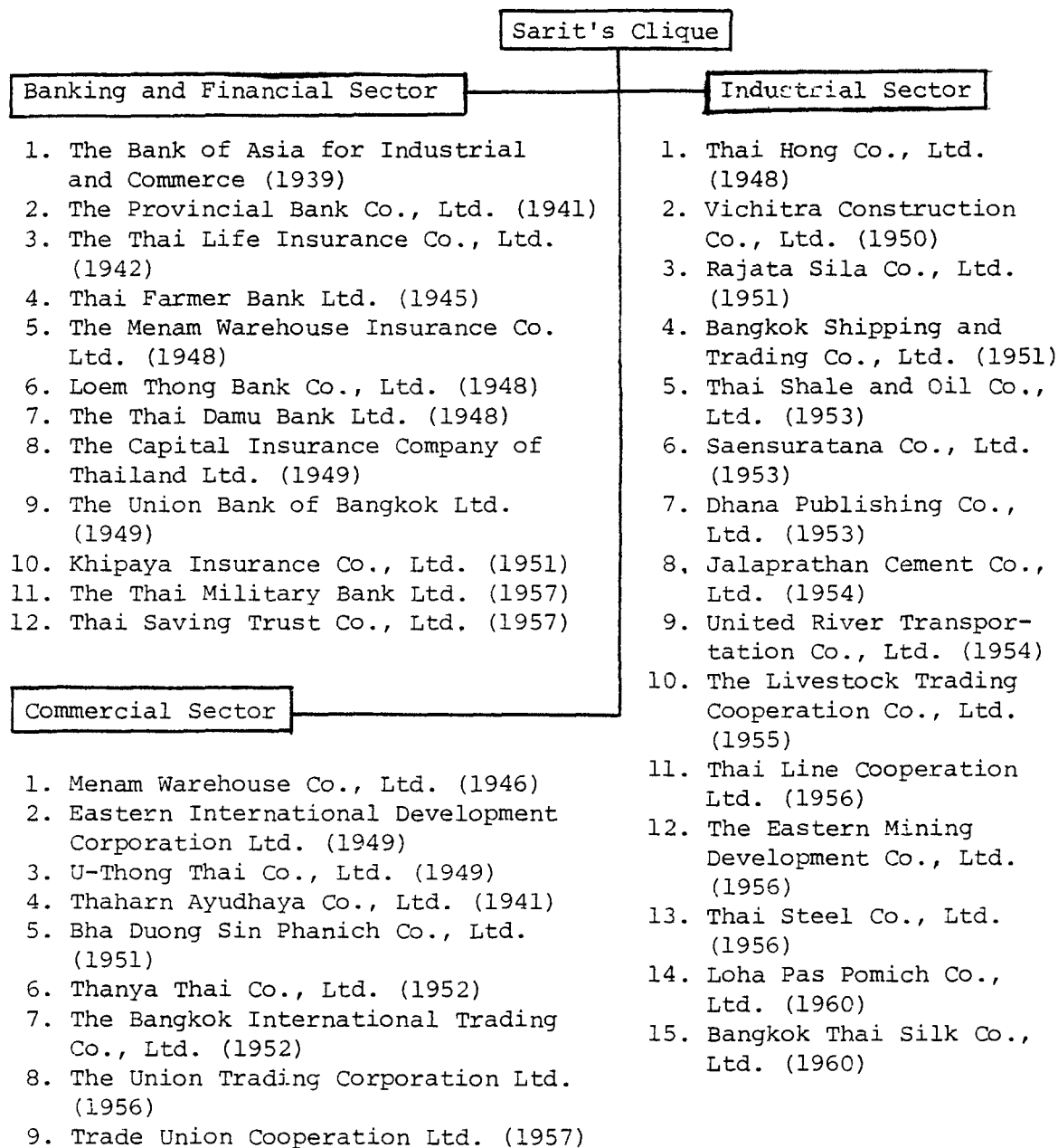
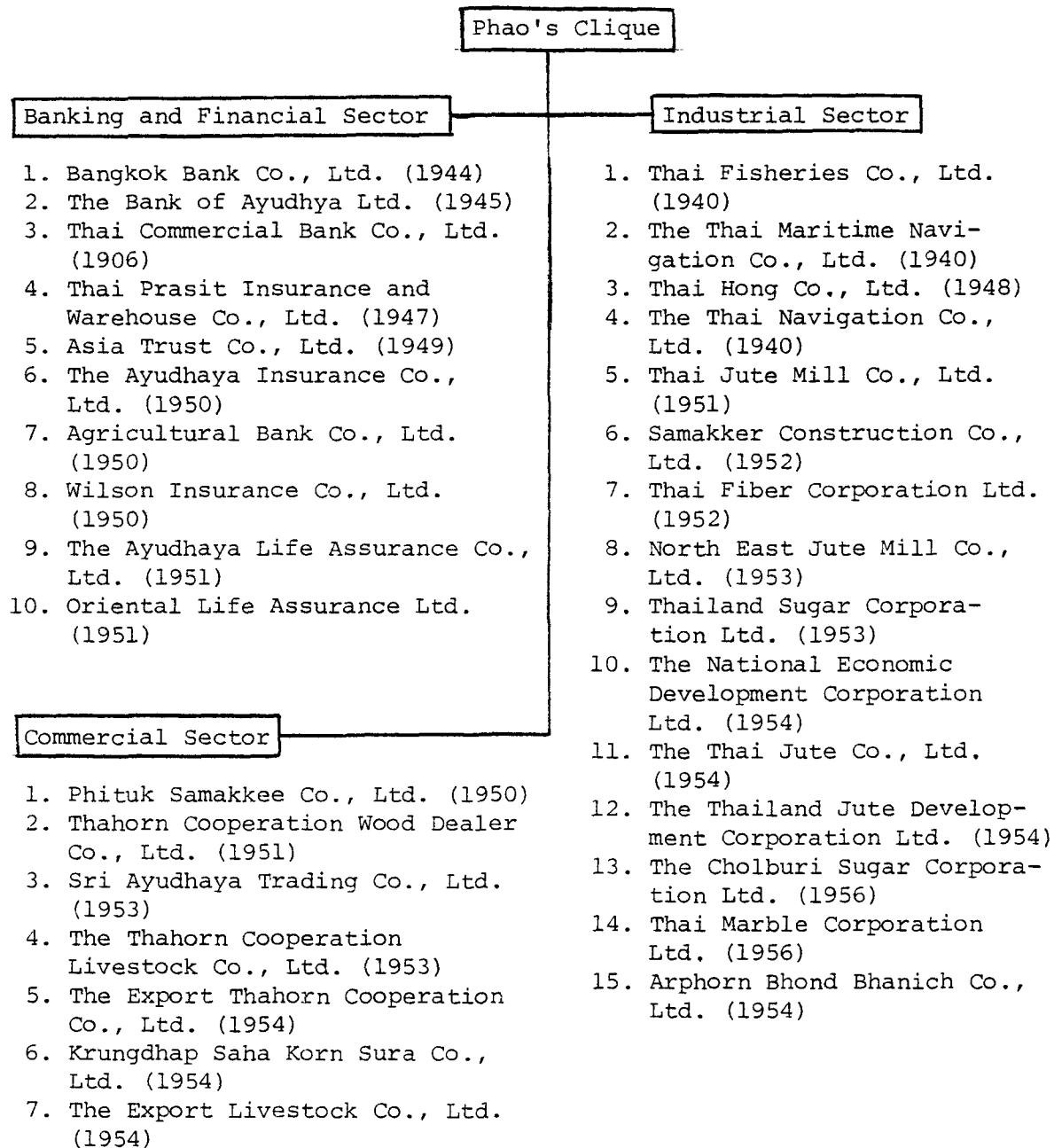


Table 5. List of Companies Controlled by the Members of Phao's Clique.



Note: The year of registration is indented within brackets.

Source: Sungsidh Piriyanangsan, Thai Bureaucratic Capitalism 1932-1960 (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Thammasat University, October, 1980) pp. 226-293.

political system when Field Marshal Phibun took office for the second time as prime minister from 1948 to 1957. In this period, numerous public enterprises were set up, and their boards of directors were filled mostly by the members of Phao's and Sarit's cliques. According to Sungsidh Piriyarangsarn, a Thai economist, the members of Phao's clique were appointed to the boards of directors of thirty-two government and semi-government enterprises while those of Sarit's clique controlled thirty-seven enterprises.⁷ The data is presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Appointments to the boards of directors of public enterprises in Thailand have therefore been made not so much on the merit system as on the basis of political patronage. If the ruler rests his position on certain military-bureaucratic cliques, it is clear that his supporters will receive more positions on boards of directors than members of rival cliques. However, in order to avoid a state of turmoil resulting from competition between the military-bureaucratic cliques, the ruler needs some criteria for the distribution of these positions. Puey Ungphakorn, the Governor of the Bank of Thailand from 1959 to 1971, suggests that this distribution has always been done according to the sections of the armed forces. He ironically states:

...whatever can fly from this world to space has to belong to an air force officer; whatever can float on the water must belong to a naval officer; and all the things which stay on the ground must be owned by army officers.⁸

Because the directors of public enterprises in Thailand are appointed largely on the basis of political patronage, they tend to be highly incompetent. Lacking entrepreneurial skills and experience, these boards of directors tend to mismanage public enterprises. In some instances, they try to exploit their positions to enrich themselves and provide funds and material benefits for their own cliques, without regard to the consequence of such performance on the enterprises and economy as a whole. After a thorough examination of business failures in the Thai public enterprises in 1957, the World Bank Mission came to the following conclusions:

The enterprises were too often initiated by persons with political influence, who had no special knowledge of the industry or particular concern about ultimate success. Consequently, there was little control over expenditures during the course of construction....Because of their political origin, the projects were not properly studied at the beginning....Both assets and liabilities are swollen by loans to and borrowing from other government agencies--a pernicious system which not only makes the balance sheets unintelligible but is obviously open to

abuse....The evidence of poor management is to be seen...in procurement and marketing methods...in idle labour, poor maintenance, inefficient use of plant and bad house-keeping...all establishments in Thailand tend to employ more workers than do their Western equivalents. But the disproportion is even greater in the government plants. Political reasons are said to be responsible.⁹

Because of this failure, public enterprises have almost never been at the forefront of the Thai economy nor generated significant economic growth. On the contrary, they have tended to obstruct economic growth. The government sets aside some of its expenditures to subsidize these enterprises without any return. Instead, it could spent this money to build up the infrastructure for further economic growth or to improve existing economic activities, such as the production of rice, tin, rubber and other primary products. In some extreme cases, the government has also taken responsibility for the debts of these enterprises.

The National Economic Development Corporation Ltd. (NEDCOL) provides a good example of public enterprises that have disrupted the Thai economy. The NEDCOL was established in 1954, with the aim of promoting domestic industries. The NEDCOL claimed that it had an authorized capital of fifty million bahts. Of this capital, only three million bahts were actually subscribed by the shareholders.¹⁰ The majority of the

shares were held, but not paid for, by government entities and prominent members of Phao's clique. For example, Field Marshal Phin possessed 10,715 shares; Pol. Gen. Phao, 10,714 shares; Fleet Adm. Luang Yuthasardkoson, 6,250 shares; Maj. Gen. Siri, 6,250 shares; and Maj. Gen. Praman, 6,250 shares.¹¹

In late 1954, the NEDCOL got a loan of US\$10 million (or 200 million bahts) from the Bank of America, and medium-term credits valued at US\$22 million (or 400 million bahts) from European machinery suppliers. The NEDCOL therefore increased its authorized capital to 200 million bahts and deposited this money in the Bank of Ayudhaya Ltd., a private bank of which Field Marshal Phin was a major shareholder.¹²

Although the NEDCOL was a state-owned corporation, in practice it operated more like a private enterprise of Phao's clique. Field Marshal Phin was the Director General of the enterprise, while other members of Phao's clique, such as Pol. Gen. Phao, Maj. Gen. Siri and Maj. Gen. Praman, served on the board of directors.¹³ More significantly, these men had a free hand to administer the NEDCOL and run its business, partly because the NEDCOL was under the direct control of the Ministry of Industry headed by Maj. Gen. Praman.¹⁴

To launch its business, the NEDCOL acquired a large modern sugar mill from the Thai Sugar Organization

and an old debt-ridden jute factory from the Northeast Jute Mill Company. These two enterprises were state-owned corporations controlled by the Ministry of Industry. In late 1955, the NEDCOL expanded its business, setting up a second sugar mill in Supanburi province, a small marble factory in Saraburi province, and a paper mill in Ayudhaya province. All these five factories, however, never made any profit. The cost of their maintenance and production was excessively high. Some factories operated at a fraction of their capacity. For example, the Sugar Mill in Chonburi province operated only 20 days per year.¹⁵ By the end of 1957 when the first loan repayment was due, it thus became clear that the NEDCOL was bankrupt in spite of the support it had received from the government in loan guarantees, assured markets, high fixed prices, and relief from custom tariffs on imported equipment.

After Field Marshal Sarit came to power in 1957, the affairs of the NEDCOL were investigated. As a result, it was discovered that the major causes of the NEDCOL's bankruptcy were the mismanagement and skullduggery of the board of directors. The new Minister of Economic Affairs, Prince Wan Waithayakorn, put it as follows:

The men who started the NEDCOL were interested in exploiting government resources, not the resources of Thailand....Less than half the credit received by the NEDCOL was actually invested in plant and equipment; the rest disappeared.¹⁶

To avoid defaulting on overseas obligations, the government took over all the NEDCOL's debts, amounting to approximately 700 million bahts. At the same time, the members of Phao's clique resigned from the board of directors of the NEDCOL in order to disclaim their responsibility.¹⁷

Clientelism in Private Enterprise

Clientelism in the private sector of the Thai economy stems from two important factors: 1) the narrow structure of economic control by Chinese entrepreneurs; and 2) the nationalistic economic policy of the government pursued after 1948.

1) The Narrow Structure of Economic Control

The Chinese have dominated the Thai economy for a long time. In the 17th century they cooperated with royal families in monopolizing trade and shipping. Some of the Chinese were also appointed to key positions in the bureaucracy with the duty to collect taxes and take

care of state affairs in rural areas.¹⁸ In the 20th century most of these Chinese elites came to dominate the import-export trade, rice milling, shipping, banking and much of the large scale retail trade.

Skinner states that the control of the business life of the Chinese community in Thailand is concentrated in the hands of a small elite. Business and financial control is exercised largely through business associations and informal groupings of firms in the same line, through combines and syndicates of smaller seemingly independent enterprises by means of an elaborate system of interlocking directorates and through kinship ties and intermarriage.¹⁹

Business associations are the most obvious vehicles of commercial and industrial control in the Chinese community. Usually, the Chinese prefer to form a business association when they trade in the same commodities or perform the same services. The purposes of a business association are to limit the competition among its members, to set price levels and to provide trade information and other valuable services for the members of the association.²⁰ More importantly, the formation of a business association is a tactic that the leading Chinese entrepreneurs use to control other small firms, to monopolize business of one particular kind and to bar other entrepreneurs from launching such a

business. In practice, the leading Chinese entrepreneurs are always elected to the decision-committee of the association. They will set the ground rules and price levels for the business. For example, Leaders Chao, Su and Yao established the Ratchata Corporation in 1948. As the business association of the seven large match factories in Bangkok, the Ratchata Corporation set the daily quotas of match products for each factory. It also required that all the seven factories sell their products only to the Ratchata Corporation, which served as an agent to distribute such match products to the retailers in Bangkok.²¹ By these methods, Leaders Chao, Su and Yao, the directors of the Ratchata Corporation, were able to control and monopolize the match trade in Bangkok.

Relations between business associations are generally made through an elaborate system of interlocking directorates--a system in which leading Chinese entrepreneurs sit on the boards of directors of several business associations. The Chinese entrepreneurs can do so because they and their families control businesses engaged in many different enterprises. Skinner characterizes the type of business corporation of Chinese entrepreneurs as "family empires", comprising a wide range of economic activities.²² For example, Chinese

entrepreneurs and their families may own small retail shops, shipping companies, industrial factories and large financial enterprises. To a very large degree, the business corporations of Chinese entrepreneurs are likely to be "self-sufficient entities."²³

The network of business control in the Chinese community as a whole can therefore be described as consisting of clusters of business cliques or empires. In some cases, these cliques will struggle with one another for economic supremacy or for the monopoly over business of one particular kind.²⁴ But in most cases, they try to make an alliance by means of intermarriage of their members.²⁵ Business power in the Chinese community is consequently concentrated tightly in the hands of a few elites. Under these circumstances, new businessmen, whether Thai or Chinese, find it difficult to set up corporations in competition with the leading Chinese entrepreneurs. Not only are they debarred from the business associations but they are also denied funds and capital for the extension of their businesses. As mentioned earlier, most leading Chinese entrepreneurs have their own financial corporations, such as banks and trust companies. When they cooperate with one another, it is clear that they can control financial institutions. A new businessman, thus, rarely gets loans and credits from banks and trust companies if he

tries to create a new corporation in competition with leading Chinese entrepreneurs.

In theory, there are three possible ways that a new businessman may break through this monopolistic structure of economic control and strive for his own economic prominence. First, a new businessman has to join a business association in order to avoid economic obstacles. Ideally, he should associate himself with leading Chinese entrepreneurs by getting married to a member of a prominent family. In this way, the new businessman will be supported by powerful Chinese entrepreneurs, thereby making it easier to get loans and credits from banks and trust companies and sometimes, to receive special treatment from a business association. One has to keep in mind, however, that if a new businessman does so, it does not mean that he is competing with the leading Chinese entrepreneurs. On the contrary, he helps to expand the economic power and empire of the leading Chinese entrepreneurs. Secondly, a new businessman may form a new business association in order to counterbalance the power of the leading Chinese entrepreneurs and to compete for economic supremacy. This tactic is, however, very difficult for any new businessman since he will lack funds, economic influence and a reputation which would induce other new businessmen to join a new association. Thirdly, a new businessman may

seek political power outside the Chinese community to strengthen his position. He may invite high-ranking military and civilian officers to sit on the boards of directors of his companies. He will thereby expect to capitalize on the power and influence of these officers to protect the new business, to get loans and credit from financial institutions, and to acquire from the government monopolistic concessions, permits, licenses and other special privileges. All of such things are crucial for a new businessman in a competition with the leading Chinese entrepreneurs.

In return for this assistance, a new businessman will be expected to supply the high-ranking military and civilian officers supporting the enterprise with added income, material benefits and perhaps patronage jobs, all of which can be used to bolster the power and positions of the officers.

Business collaboration between Thai political elites and new businessmen will be based on the patron-client relationship. This pattern is revealed in the case of the merger of the Northeast Rice Millers' Association and the Thahan Sammakki, a state-owned enterprise. In 1946, Leader Yang, a small rice miller in Udonthani province, formed the Northeast Rice Millers' Association to incorporate twenty other rice millers in

the northeast into one working group for competition with other firms in the rice trade. Leader Yang and his colleagues in the association found that the transportation of rice to Bangkok was very difficult. They had to bribe railroad officials in order to obtain the use of freight cars. Sometimes the size of bribes skyrocketed because of competition between various rice millers.²⁶

The rice trade of the Northeast Rice Millers' Association in Bangkok was also thwarted by other firms. After a year of the struggle, Leader Yang realized that he needed additional influence behind his organization. Leader Yang approached Field Marshal Phin, the head of Thahan Sammakki, for help. Subsequently, Field Marshal Phin reorganized the Thahan Sammakki to include the Northeast Rice Millers' Association as shareholders. He also changed the business of the Thahan Sammakki from soft drinks to rice exports. Through the political power and influence of Field Marshal Phin, the new corporation grew, with government assistance, with favorable quotas of rice exports and with favored treatment by the Railway Organization in the allocation of freight cars on the Northeast Line.²⁷ In return for this assistance, Field Marshal Phin and his allies were appointed to the board of directors, drawing handsome profits from the proceeds of this successful venture.²⁸

2) The Nationalistic Economic Policy

The nationalistic economic policy of Phibun's government provided additional inducements promoting clientelism in the Thai economy. After Field Marshal Phibun took office as Prime Minister in 1948, he initiated a policy known as "Thailification" to harass the Chinese, especially those who were economically dominant. The alien registration fee increased in a huge step from 4 bahts in 1939 to 400 bahts in 1949. Many of the Occupation Restriction Acts were promulgated to forbid the Chinese to carry on certain kinds of businesses.²⁹ Because of their political weakness, the Chinese suffered greatly from this policy. No one knew when his particular line of business might be reserved exclusively for Thais or subjected to strict government control, when the lease of his shop or the titles of his business property might be challenged, or when his business might be inspected by revenue officials or raided by the police.³⁰ In such a difficult situation, clientelism emerged,³¹ and bribery, squeeze and the payoff became common features of business functioning in Thailand.³² Some Chinese entrepreneurs tried to buy the security of their businesses by giving bribes to officials, while others invited high-ranking military and civilian officers to sit on the boards of directors

of their companies.

Skinner points out that there were three types of Sino-Thai business cooperation in the time of Phibun's second premiership.³³ First, the Chinese merchants reorganized their major corporations to include on the boards of directors top governmental officials and other members of the Thai political elites. Secondly, new corporations were set up on a cooperative pattern, whereby the Chinese supplied the capital and entrepreneurial skills and the Thai political elites offered protection. Lastly, semi-governmental business and financial organizations used the managerial skills and commercial acumen of local-born and naturalized Chinese by bringing them onto their boards and staffs.

Over time, these patterns of business cooperation have become increasingly institutionalized in Thai society, precisely because they are valuable for both the parties. The Chinese on their side gain protection, which not only provides relief from harassment, extortion or arrest, but also assures routine government permits necessary for their business operations. In some extreme cases, the Chinese are also granted governmental privileges and monopolistic concessions that virtually guarantee high profits to their businesses. The Thai political elites in turn receive funds, opportunities for speculation and potential sources of patronage,

all of which will further enhance their power and position.

Interestingly, Sino-Thai business cooperation has often emerged in the context of clique rivalry. One group of Chinese businessmen may come to be associated with a particular military-bureaucratic clique, another with its rival. Banks in the period of Phibun's second premiership provide examples of this phenomenon. According to Silcock, the Bank of Asia and the Union Bank of Bangkok were controlled by Sarit's clique while the Bank of Ayudhaya and the Bangkok Bank were in the hands of Phao's clique.³⁴ There was also a sharp rivalry between the Union Bank and the Bangkok Bank. Both of them were accused of being the sources of financial irregularities that Phao and Sarit used to finance their political machines.³⁵

Although the appointment of Thai political elites to the boards of directors of the Chinese companies has been made on a formalized basis, the relationship between these two parties still remains distinctly personal. This relationship is not permanent but precarious. It is based on the ability of the two parties to provide benefits and services for each other. The Chinese may promptly break off the relation if the political elites fall from power. The Chinese may also seek new patrons who usually come from a successful coup.

For example, after Sarit ousted Phao from power in 1957, the board of directors of the Bangkok Bank was reorganized. Phao and his allies, Maj. Gen. Siri and Maj. Gen. Praman, were removed from the board of directors, while Field Marshal Praphat, an influential member of Sarit's clique, was appointed president of the bank.³⁶ Similarly, Gen. Prasert Ruchirawong, the Director General of the Police Department and Gen. Krit Sivara, the Commander of the First Infantry Regiment, were appointed to the board of directors of the Thai Development Bank in 1958.³⁷

The Monopolistic Structure of Economic Control

The most important consequence of business cooperation between the Chinese entrepreneurs and the Thai political elites is the creation of a very rigid, if not monopolistic, structure of economic control. As we have seen, the Chinese entrepreneurs with their economic empires have controlled other small firms through business associations. When the Chinese receive political backing from Thai elites, it is clear that their economic power will be augmented. In addition, the Chinese will have some political influence which enables their businesses to grow rapidly and extensively. In some instances, the government also grants special

privileges and monopolistic concessions which make the Chinese tightly control the economy and effectively bar other entrepreneurs from launching businesses of a particular kind. The structure of economic control in Thai society as a whole has therefore become similar to that of the Chinese community. It is characterized by clusters of business cliques or "family empires" of the leading Chinese entrepreneurs, who have close relations with the high-ranking military and civilian officers.

Though governments since the 1957 coup have changed their economic policy from "Thailification" to liberalization, which places emphasis on foreign investments and an expansion of the private role in industry, finance and commerce without regard to race, it appears that the structure of monopolistic economic control has not been eliminated. The accumulation of wealth and power still remains in the hands of Chinese entrepreneurs and high-ranking military and civilian officers.

In his exhaustive study of the patterns of big business ownerships in Thailand, Krirkkiat Phipatseritham, a Thai economist, reveals that since the Second World War, about fifty-five families of Chinese entrepreneurs, in addition to the high-ranking military and civilian officers, have controlled the economy.³⁸ These families have had their own business empires, covering a wide

range of economic activities such as banking, construction, agro-industries, import-export trades, services and land. More importantly, these business empires have cooperated with one another in maintaining their grip on business of one particular kind. In finance, for example, the Sophonphanich family has established close relations with those of Ratanarak, Tejaphaibul, and Lumsum. The Sophonphanich owns the Bangkok Bank, the biggest bank in Southeast Asia; the Ratanarak possesses the Bank of Ayudhaya; the Tejaphaibul is the major shareholder of the Bangkok Metropolitan Bank, the First Bangkok City Bank, and the Bank of Asia; and the Lumsum controls the Thai Farmer Bank and the Bangkok Bank of Commerce.³⁹ The relationship among these four families has been maintained through a system of interlocking directorates and ownerships. In particular, Nai Chatri Sophonphanich, Nai Utan Tejaphaibul, Nai Krit Ratanarak and Nai Sombat Lumsum are the members of the board of directors of the Bank Association of Thailand. In addition, the Sophonphanich in association with the Ratanarak and Tejaphaibul families has formed the Thai Financial Syndicates, which control and monopolize the gold and jewelry trade in the country.⁴⁰ The Sophonphanich family has also cooperated with the Lumsum family in running businesses covering every sector of the Thai economy. It is reported that all these four families

have controlled more than 200 companies which have been listed among the largest 1,200 businesses in Thailand.⁴¹

Under a monopolistic structure of economic control, it is clear that ordinary Thai citizens have insurmountable obstacles to achieve success in many kinds of business enterprise. Income distribution is skewed. Social and economic mobility of Thai peasants and labourers is minimal. Above all, the advantages of economic growth rarely filter down to the populace at large.⁴² In fact, these advantages tend to accrue to a few privileged groups, especially Chinese entrepreneurs and the high-ranking military and civilian officers who control economic and political power in the society. The 1978 confidential report of the World Bank on the Thai economy summarized the magnitude of the problem:

The majority of rain-fed subsistence rice farmers in the north and the northeast, and to a lesser extent in the south, have been left out of the economic boom of the 1960s. Their real (inflation-adjusted) income either stagnated or declined in the past 15 years. One-third of households--9 million people--are living in absolute poverty and many million more are barely above that line, while other income groups [such as businessmen and governmental officials] have grown very rich.⁴³

Conclusion

Clientelism in Thailand tends to have negative effects on the process of economic development. In the public sector, clientelism brings about wastefulness, inefficiency and corruption. The Thai ruler appoints his military clients to the boards of directors of public enterprises in order to retain their political support and loyalty. These military clients are, however, very incompetent and lack entrepreneurial skills and knowledge. In practice, they tend to mismanage public enterprises and take advantage of their directorships to enrich themselves and their families. In some instances, the military clients also utilize their positions on the boards of directors of public enterprises to provide funds, material benefits and patronage jobs for their own cliques. In the private sector, clientelism generates a structure of monopolistic economic control. Most Thai political elites have cooperated with leading Chinese entrepreneurs in running businesses and dominating the economy. The Thai political elites supply the Chinese with protection, assistance, governmental privileges and, perhaps, monopolistic concessions, all of which will enable the Chinese to monopolize businesses of a particular kind and tightly control the Thai economy. In return, the

Chinese offer funds, material benefits and other prerequisites which in turn further enhance the power and position of the Thai political elites.

Under this monopolistic structure of economic control, the common people rarely receive the advantages of economic growth and modernization. In fact, these advantages tend to accrue to Chinese entrepreneurs and Thai political elites.

Notes

¹Frank H. Golay, et.al., Underdevelopment and Economic Nationalism in Southeast Asia (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), p. 305.

²See the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, A Public Development Program for Thailand (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1959), pp. 90-91, and Robert J. Muscat, Development Strategy in Thailand (New York: Praeger, 1966), p. 194.

³James C. Scott, Comparative Political Corruption (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1972), p. 69.

⁴See T.H. Silcock, Thailand: Social and Economic Studies in Development (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1967), pp. 308-316, and Fred W. Riggs, Thailand: The Modernization of a Bureaucratic Polity (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1966), pp. 305-308.

⁵Golay, op.cit., p. 299.

⁶Scott, op.cit., p. 70.

⁷Sungsidh Piriya-rangsan, Thai Bureaucratic Capitalism, 1932-1960 (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Thammasat University, 1980), pp. 224-293.

⁸Puey Ungphakorn, "The Role of Politicians in Economic Development" (in Thai), in The Thai Economy: Structure and Change, ed. by Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University (Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 1978), p. 214.

⁹The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, op.cit., pp. 93-94.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 91.

¹¹MOC, DOR, List of the Shareholders of the National Economic Development Corporation Ltd. (November 2, 1954), cited in Piriya-rangsan, op.cit., p. 165. One share is valued at 100 bahts.

¹²Piriyarangsang, op.cit., p. 165.

¹³Ibid., p. 164.

¹⁴See Chapter III.

¹⁵David Elliott, Thailand: Origin of Military Rule (London: Zed Press, 1978), p. 116.

¹⁶Fortune (April, 1958), cited in Golay, op.cit., p. 308.

¹⁷Piriyarangsang, op.cit., p. 166.

¹⁸Elliot, op.cit., p. 66.

¹⁹G. William Skinner, Leadership and Power in the Chinese Community of Thailand (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958), p. 177.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., p. 179.

²²Ibid., p. 183.

²³Ibid., p. 181.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 177-178.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 183-185.

²⁶Ibid., p. 195.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸John L.S. Girling, Thailand: Society and Politics (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 76.

²⁹Skinner, op.cit., pp. 186-192.

³⁰Ibid., p. 191.

³¹Lamarchand and Legg state that a sense of insecurity is an essential condition of the emergence of clientelism. See Rene Lamarchand and Keith Legg, "Political Clientelism and Development: A Preliminary Analysis," Comparative Politics, IV (January, 1972), 158.

³²Skinner, op.cit., p. 190.

³³Ibid., p. 191.

³⁴Silcock, op.cit., p. 184.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., p. 185.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Krikkiat Phipatseritham, An Analysis of the Characteristics of Large Business Corporation Owners in Thailand (in Thai), (Bangkok: The Institute of Thai Study, Thammasat University, 1981), pp. 10-37.

³⁹Kevin J. Hewison, "The Financial Bourgeoisie in Thailand," Journal of Contemporary Asia, XI, No. 4, (1981), 386-409.

⁴⁰Skinner, op.cit., p. 198.

⁴¹Hewison, op.cit., p. 401.

⁴²Mahbub Ul Hag, The Poverty Curtain: Choice for the Third World (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), p. 61.

⁴³Far Eastern Economic Review (December 1, 1978), pp. 40-41.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

For more than five decades, the military officers have dominated the Thai political system. There has been little evidence of significant political development, if we define political development as an institutionalization of political organizations and procedures.¹ The Thai bureaucracy is still ineffective. It cannot cope with the complexity of the contemporary socio-political system. As we have demonstrated, the bureaucracy, including the armed forces, is dominated by favoritism and the spoils system. Furthermore, political parties, interest groups and other politicized associations are very feeble and unable to play a significant role in producing political change, in recruiting national political leaders, and in influencing the government's decision-making. Most importantly, Thai politics is trapped in what Chai-Anan Samudavanija calls the "vicious circle":

Successful military interventions usually resulted in the abrogation of constitutions, abolishment of parliaments, and suspension of participant political activity. Each time, however, the military re-established parliamentary institutions of some kind.... From time to time, they established what they called "Thai-style democracy" with an appointed legislature designed to legitimize their own power. Soon, however, crisis would set in, leading once again to a coup situation.²

Behind the vicious circle is the power struggle of the military-bureaucratic cliques, which are formed on the patron-client basis. In this struggle, the cliques try to strengthen their positions by putting their key members in command of the strategic army garrisons stationed in and around Bangkok. The cliques also try to enlarge their prebendary sources for attracting the members of their rivals. Because the major prebendary sources in Thailand are the bureaucracy and state enterprises, they have been expanded in size, number, agencies and expenditures. It is apparent that the leaders of the military-bureaucratic cliques also try to acquire prerequisites and other sources of patronage from their business cooperation with the Chinese entrepreneurs. The leaders of the military-bureaucratic cliques supply protection, assistance and governmental privileges. The Chinese in return offer funds, material benefits and lucrative positions on the

boards of directors of their companies.

It is very difficult to eliminate clientelism in the Thai political system so long as political competition is confined to a small group of elites, and so long as the armed forces serve as the basis for political power. It seems to me, however, that there are two possible ways for weakening and abolishing this clientelism.

First and foremost, we need the promotion of a parliamentary system with mass political parties. Political participation should be expanded to the populace at large. If parliament and political parties can play a significant role in recruiting national political leaders, in articulating and aggregating the public interests, and in counterbalancing the political power of the bureaucracy and armed forces, clientelism will then become undermined and will decline. The Thai ruler need not appoint his clients and allies to the command of strategic army garrisons. He need not provide prerequisites and prebendary sources for these clients and allies in exchange for their loyal support. Instead, the Thai ruler could rest his power and position on a genuinely popular mandate.

To institutionalize a parliamentary system, political parties need to be developed into mass parties. They should expand their branches into the rural areas.

They should seek support from the people and other interest groups in order to build up their institutional scaffolding. Furthermore, political parties should mobilize the people to participate directly in politics, but in an orderly manner. Success in institutionalizing a parliamentary system is dependent upon the longevity and legitimacy of political parties and parliament. If the people perceive political parties as agents of public aggregation or as their representatives, and if the people believe that elections are a legitimate means of transferring power and of selecting the national political leaders, both political parties and parliament will have great power to counterbalance the bureaucracy and armed forces. They may be capable of opposing the military when some of its members try to seize power from an elected government.

Secondly, the socialization process is a crucial factor in the elimination of clientelism from the Thai bureaucracy and armed forces. If the military and civilian officers were imbued with the dominant values of the merit system, they might oppose clientelist behaviour in their organizations. They might also be concerned exclusively with their professionalism and not want to get involved in politics.

Notes

¹Samuel P. Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 8-38.

²Chai-Anan Samudavanija, The Thai Young Turks (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1981), pp. 1-2.

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