The Binational State The Dilema in Defining Thai Nationalism & the Two National Identities of Siam

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Abstract

Thai History has been examined in numerous ways, by a wide range of scholars, over several decades. This undergraduate history thesis is in no way intended to be a revisionist study of the period in question. What I hope this thesis does make clear, however, is a trend not often considered by historians working on the subject. The idea of two national identities is not uniquely my own. Most research on the origin of Thai nationalism resolves the dilemma of defining the national identity by suggesting the defeat of one of these national models. I would disagree with this simplification, as it gives too much importance to the political parties that introduced these national identities, and not enough to the philosophical and historical background of the identities. In this thesis I do not give names to these two identities, instead referring to the political party or faction that supported them at any given time; most significantly the Monarchist and Revolutionary divide. This was intentional, as the focus of this thesis is on this period, and not the continued evolution of these national models. This thesis was also not intended to criticize the royal family or any monarch of the Chakri dynasty, and has avoided explicitly covering topics that are currently censored by the Thai government. Despite these two limitations, this thesis endeavors to go through the narratives of the two national identities from the start of the reign of King Vajiravudh to the abdication of his successor, King Prajadhipok, and to analyze the points in which these two identities interacted and how they eventually came to conflict

> The County will have complete independence; the people will be safe from danger; everyone will have work and therefore not starve; everyone will have equal rights, and none will be servants or slaves of the royalty
>
> - *Manifesto of the People's Party*

Dedication

To the friends that accept me for who I am, and for all of my teachers and professors that ensured that I kept to this path.

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1. Introduction

As nationalism becomes an increasingly relevant issue in world politics, and as waves of populist demagogues depend on the foundations of nationalist sentiments, it becomes increasingly important for nationalism to be clearly defined. In the case of Thailand, the subject of Nationalism is further complicated by a history of two separate definitions of the Thai Nation, an attribution of the values that define the nation. The first proposed by his Royal Majesty King Vajiravudh, officially Phra Mongkut Klao Chao Yu Hua but also known as Rama VI, has the three values that define the Thai Nation being the Nation (or state itself), the religion (that being Theravada Buddhism, and the King. This three-part model was adopted by the perpetrators of the 1912 Palace coup, but altered so that Nationalism was defined by the Nation, the religion, and the place of birth (the physical land). The Revolutionary definition emerged from the unsuccessful Palace Coup of 1912, a failed rebellion and revolutionary attempt, as a paraphrase of the King's own statement. The mirroring of the King's words, with minor alteration, was also utilized by the would-be revolutionaries in motto of the coup, "Give up life rather than nation" which was formed from the motto of the Wild Tiger Corps, a paramilitary group instituted the year before the Coup was halted, their motto being "Give up life rather than honor".[1] The two sharing a more noticeable similarity in the original Thai, phonetically: 'Sia Chip Ya Sia Chat' for the Wild Tiger Corps and 'Sia Chip Di Kwa Sia Chat' for the coup members. While the Coup was decisively halted prior to any action taken place, the ideas of the group that wished for revolution to spread, culminating in the 1932

[1] Sivaraksa, Sulak. *The Crisis of Siamese Identity*. In Craig J. Reynolds (ed), *National Identity and Its Defenders: Thailand Today*. University of Michigan, 1991.

Siamese Revolution, which reformed the state from an Absolute Monarchy to a Constitutional Monarchy. The role of the Monarch and the Monarchy in both of these events is of insurmountable importance, as the definition of the Nation hinged on the inclusion or exclusion of the Monarchy in these two national models, and it is for this reason, amongst others that will be examined, that the Monarchy continues to hold a very active political role in Thailand.

The object of this thesis is to delineate the two narratives, within Thai history, of the origins of Thai Nationalism, and to examine the initial conflicts between these national identities, when political participation was expanded beyond the institution of the Monarchy, and the traditional ruling elite linked to the crown.

Before introducing the particular narratives on the development of Thai Nationalism, it is necessary to identify the components that make up a nation. What is generally considered the criterion that define a nation state, so often differ when addressing any particular nation, a product of the ambiguity of the terms as they are used by a variety of parties and peoples. The most problematic of a nation's self-defined existence, is on the basis of racial or ethnic features, which though continues to be a problem that defines the world, has been broadly accepted as a failed model. In Ernest Renan's lecture "What is a Nation" he makes an astute observation, "The truth is that there is no pure race and that to make politics depend upon ethnographic analysis is to surrender it to a chimera."[2] Early national identity in Siam, what is now Thailand, provides an intriguing case study, as the defining elements that comprise the nation are so intangible, and most importantly, the perspective on the formation of the nation held by the Thai people does not seem to match the historical record. As is so often the case, the popular memory of the nation state's foundation lies more in story than in history. The self-defined definitive shifts in the history of the

[2] Renan, Ernest. *"What is a Nation?"* Toronto, Ont.: Tapir Press. (1996).

state and people, toward what would be the Thai Nation, have been applied to two particular moments. The first of these is the Siamese Revolution, which took place in 1932 and led to the dissolution of the absolute monarch. Following the absolute monarchy was the formation of the constitutional monarchy, as the monarch gave power to an assembly who spent the remainder of 1932 drafting the Constitution. The second was the quite literal change of the country's name, where in 1939 the Prime Minister, Plaek Phibunsongkhram, declared that the "The Kingdom of Siam" was no more, replaced by the "Nation of Thailand". Although Phibun (Plaek Phibunsongkhram) did this more as an effort to push towards a nationalization that fit within his greater aims to form a Fascist state, which materialized just prior to the Japanese occupation. This simplification was a product of antiquated Great Event histories applied to this case; an analysis of the rise toward Thai Nationalism through contextualizing these two turning points reveals that rather being the agents of a shift toward a Thai state, these events were the products of an intricate narrative, that included the formation of the new Thai government.

The origins of this government are so often simplified in the modern narrative. It is important to consider the position of the King following the dissolution of the absolute monarchy, how his mere presence in the political realm was more than as a symbolic figurehead. An analysis of the Siamese Revolution of 1932 and the Boworadet Rebellion of 1933, could aid in an understanding of the "turning point" events as more than agents of change in the formation of Thai Nationalism, but as products of a larger trend that would form a Thai national identity.

2. Vajiravudh and the Nationalism of the Monarchy

Vajiravudh and Early Challenges to his Legitimacy

There exists a unique word in the Thai language, *sawannokhot*, that translates to "The Death of the King." When the absolute monarch of the Kingdom of Siam, King Chulalongkorn passed, most of his subjects never needed to use the word, a sweeping majority of the Kingdom's population born after his coronation. Never knowing a King but the one who had been titled "Phra Piya Maharat" (The Greatly Beloved King), King Vajiravudh had some rather large shoes to fill. His Majesty King Vajiravudh, Phra Bat Somdet Phra Poramenthra Maha Vajiravudh Phra Mongkut Klao Chao Yu Hua, was crowned the sixth king of the Chakri Dynasty, on the 23rd of October, 1910. Much of his father's legacy is encompassed by the expansion, or rather creation, of the Thai middle class, an achievement Vajiravudh could not replicate and faced the consequences of throughout his reign. Chulalongkorn established a greater administrative body to the government of Siam. As the Royal family was no longer capable of governing the entirety of the state, employing meritocratically appointed officials to serve as the administrative body of the nation, who have been labelled the bureaucrats, a name that in Thailand has come to encompass the social class that emerged after the creation of a modern state bureaucracy (put simply, the Thai term of Bureaucrat has become the term used to describe the Thai equivalent of a middle class). "Bureaucrat" is largely used to distinguish this upper middle class urban elite from the traditional land-owning class, that often is translated to "aristocrats".

When his father was crowned, at an early age, a regent, Sri Suriyawongse, who was the patriarch of one of the most prominent aristocratic families at the time, ran the country until Chulalongkorn came to age, and facilitated his coming of power following his regency. Chulalongkorn's early reign was marked by the threat of a rising aristocratic power, having to consolidate the power of the crown following his coming of age and coronation. Chulalongkorn was able to curtail privileges granted to the aristocracy, and establish firm control over the state, not just because of the support of his regent, but because he had one of the longer reigns of the Chakri Dynasty. When Vajiravudh took the throne, he had to contend with not just the aristocracy, still prominent landowners and public figures, but also with the educated meritocratically appointed bureaucrats, some of whom had studied with Vajiravudh in Europe. In addition to this, the prolific reign of his father had expanded the royal family extensively. While the greater population was appeased by Vajiravudh's early attempts toward greater religious autonomy, and an increase in education in the rural areas in relation to the buddhist groups that populated these regions, both the bureaucrats and aristocrats were not as easy to appease. The civic unrest in his reign was competition from political rivals who threatened the King's sovereignty and minority groups on the outskirts of the Kingdom. While the formation of the Wild Tiger Corps, as will be detailed shortly, appeased a significant number of the bureaucrats who wished for an increase in meritocratic promotions for the military forces (through the instalment of the paramilitary forces), the same policy would upset the aristocrats who had grown accustomed to military promotions based on their noble birth, in addition to alienating the junior officers already involved in the armed forces. It would be these junior officers that would conspire to overthrow the monarchy, in an effort to reorganize the society from a top-down fashion, to better install the meritocratic and democratic systems they desired. These Junior officers ignored that both of these systems were

being pursued by the current monarch, this pursuit, however, was not carried out in Vajiravudh's reign, as he determined that the Thai People were simply not ready for democracy. Part of the King's decision was formed from the preemptive struggle in his reign, in combination with viewing a lack of education in the country, and that the culture still deified the King.

King Vajiravudh, Rama VI, took the throne following the death of his father, on October 23, 1910, and he was crowned on the 11 of November, the first of two ceremonial coronations. Vajiravudh was the first of the Thai monarchs to be educated abroad, having studied at Christ Church, Oxford, but did not receive a degree on account of appendicitis, in 1901. Vajiravudh's reign was steeped in controversy, from his coronation onwards, as he was the first Thai King to have direct opposition from within the military, much of which was from personal grievances of the Prince before his coronation. Prior to his coronation, Vajiravudh created the position of 'general' within the military, promoting his uncle, Prince Savangwongse, as the first field marshal. His first act following the ceremony was to establish a royal pages college, an all boys boarding school. This was built instead of the traditional monastery established as the first act of a new monarch. Vajiravudh wrote that such action was dictated by his wish to establish a place where "young men who will be physically and morally clean, and who will be looking forward keenly to take up whatever burden the future may lay upon them"[3] the first of many decisions by this monarch to focus his attentions on the element of masculinity, above the traditional focuses of the monarchy.

In 1912, a group of young army officers began organizing secret meetings to voice their concerns about the future of their state, and propose a challenge to the monarchy. These would-be revolutionaries did not get very far in their attempt of a coup and revolution, neither

[3] The Royal Bangkok Sports Club Magazine, October 2013.

ideologically nor practically, as the coup would be discovered by the monarchy prior to decision as to any form the government would have after the revolution. The ideological development that informed the actions of these young offices was focused on opposition to the establishment, both in opposition to the monarchy, as an institution, and in opposition to the monarch, as a man.

The "Failed Revolution" that was the Palace Coup, is very much that, a failed revolution. The outcome was not to the benefit of such revolutionary ideas; in fact, to the contrary, as the King's "victory" over would-be-revolutionaries allowed the king enforce the counter-revolutionary aspirations he held, personally. While both the supporters of the monarchy and the revolutionaries wished for a representative state, an introduction of democratic institutions into the Thai Government, the Monarchy itself was hesitant to relinquish its absolute control to a population not able to support such institutions. The argument most used for this defense of absolutism, was the lack of education within the Thai society, with well under half of the greater population not having attended any academic institution at the onset of Vajiravudh's reign. Because of this, Vajiravudh's primary ambition to build and fund education in Siam. In his reign, in addition to creating private colleges for specific functions, such as the Pages college, Vajiravudh would reform the public education system as a part of his religious reformations, and in addition he established the first University of the country, named after his father, Chulalongkorn University.

The Palace Coup was largely defined by the culmination of many minor disagreements with the reigning monarch, with too great of a disparity of opinions and aspirations for any effective system to emerge from this. Some scholars have attributed the majority of the incentive for revolution as petty and personal disagreement with the reigning monarch; a comment that resurfaces in the later 1934 in regards to Pridi in particular; a figure of tremendous importance to the formation of the revolutionary identity, as will be focused on in the following chapter. The

ideology and method of the Palace Coup will be detailed in the following chapter. The introduction of the coup in this chapter will focus more on the unprecedented nature of a challenge to the crown, and on the counter-revolutionary sentiment that King Vajiravudh capitalized on. The focus will not solely be on the failures of a particular monarch, however, as the King was successful in one of his most ambitious ventures, defining the idea of the Thai Nation, and bringing Nationalism into the socio-political system. While his father received great recognition for the Thai Modernization carried out in his reign, the creation of a modern state, his son receives far less renown for the more arduous task he managed to oversee, the creation of a nation state. This national image would invariably contrast the national image presented by the perpetrators of the Palace Coup of 1912; such a conflict would be resurge after the death of Vajiravudh, and contribute to the success of the 1932 Siamese Revolution. The national image presented by Vajiravudh was not entirely clarified by the time of the palace coup, as was the national image of the opposition. Despite this, there is a great degree of already identified contrast between the images these two "parties" presented as definitions of Thai Nationalism.

Coronation

While the explicit practices and rituals of the Coronation are not significant, the deviation from established practice by the part of Vajiravudh is of great relevance, particularly considering the Crown Prince's attendance to the coronations of Alfonso XIII and Edward VII in 1902. The Victorian nature of the king still in question, Vajiravudh made the decision that two coronations would be made, the first in accordance to Brahmanic ritual, with the exception of the following tour of the city. The coronation was essential for the King to claim legitimacy of his position. To act as King of Siam, these rituals were to be observed. The call for a second Coronation, two years

following the first, where a greater ceremony with more time for preparations and invitations, made a number of the members of the court, and a non-insignificant number of the public (particularly Bureaucrats) uneasy, believing that the King would hold a western-style coronation.[4] The King did no such thing, and likely never intended to.

> He argued against those "modernists" who would abandon old rituals in favor of Western models by pointing out that Siam was not a Western country, that modern Western notions should be adopted only when their utility was unmistakable, and that abandonment of Siam's past was to bring Siam back to the jungle, to make the Thai a primitive folk without a history or heritage. Insofar as the Brahmanic rites were concerned, he argued that, although it was true that the Thai were not Hindus but Buddhists, some aspects of life were not the concern of Buddhism. Buddhist monks might chant at coronations, for example, but the heart of the ceremony in Siam had always been not Buddhist but Brahmanic. And so, if for no other reason than to insure legitimacy in the installation of new kings, Brahman priests should be retained and supported.[5]

On the issue of his coronation, which reflects the overall policy he pursued over his reign, Vajiravudh was more conservative. Despite the claims to the opposition, the king actively discouraged deviations from what was customary. Even in conflict to the religious structure and norm, the purpose of Brahman priests was as old as the Thai state itself (from the Sukhothai era), and because of this legitimacy granted by the tradition and the physical legitimacy bestowed to the King from the Brahman priests in the ritual, the King could act as the supreme head of state. The symbolism behind the ritual being the Kings ascent to divinity, where only then was he capable of rulership, when beyond humanity.

> Who came? Although no reigning sovereign did—time and distance in the age before jet, or even prop, travel prevented that—the list of guests was impressive. Altogether there were some twenty-five royal representatives and special representatives (plus their entourages) representing fourteen governments. Ten of the guests were members of royal families. The great powers—England, France, Russia, Germany, the United States, and Japan—were all represented. The editorial writer of a local English-language newspaper reflected the general view: "Siam is feeling very proud and a little anxious. Never before

[4] Bangkok Times, December 9, 1911.
[5] Vella, Walter F. *Chaiyo! King Vajiravudh and the Development of Thai Nationalism*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2018. https://muse.jhu.edu/.

> have there been gathered in this capital so many Princes of foreign Reigning Families. Such a gathering of Royalties, the guests of the Sovereign, is comparatively a rare thing in a European capital, and is without precedent outside Europe." [6]

The coronation serves poetically as a device to tie together two of the concerns for the King; that he had been influenced by the West in his education, and that the West was interested in Thailand. The King, in addition to being called the "playwright prince" or the "King on Stage", had been called a "Victorian Prince" a symbol of his education and relation to the UK.

A Victorian King

The fear of a "Victorian King" was very much that, the fear of a western encroachment on Thai sovereignty. This ties the specific fears of this one monarch with the fears for the state, in the face of colonialist powers encroaching on Thai Sovereignty. While the focus for this chapter will be dedicated on the actions and events that took place during King Vajiravudh's reign, the Gunboat Incident of 1892 defined the politics of the Thai state for the following two decades. The final years of Chulalongkorn's reign were focused on combating what he saw as a resurgence of colonial ambition over Thai territory. Following the death of Chulalongkorn, while the primary focus of Vajiravudh's early reign was establishing his legitimate rule, and quelling the opposition.

> "As for me," he said, "I am a rude man within, and wear a golden exterior…. Although I may use language and diction in the foreign style, when you examine me closely you will surely see that my dip in European educational waters has given me but a European gloss; the flesh inside is still very much Thai."[7]
> The shuttling between East and West —both physically and ideologically— produced tensions and scars in Vajiravudh (and in other princes of his generation). The attempt to create an English club atmosphere at Saranrom Palace by authoritarian means is a typical expression of his dilemma. On the personal level, Vajiravudh's shyness, his reluctance to establish close relationships with members of his own family, his didacticism, his love of children's games, and his sensitivity to criticism all bespeak a complicated man attempting

[6] ibid.
[7] Vella. *Chaiyo!* Chapter 7 quoting "Sapsat" *Samutthasan 9 (September 1915)* 115.

> to resolve his internal confusions on his own, by his own lights. Vajiravudh's reaction to criticism is particularly revealing: instead of modifying his behavior, Vajiravudh almost invariably retaliated with a devastating criticism of the critic.[8]

The 1912 "Revolution"; a Brief History

The historical record of the 1912 Palace Coup is quite naturally one-sided. While only three members of the plot were executed, those that served the full of their prison terms (shortened by the King in 1925) did not publish any memoirs or history of their past actions; a combination of shame for actions of youth, and the nature of censorship laws being particularly stringent in regards to reference of the monarchy. Save for the record of the initiates in the plot, and the written oath made by each initiated, the record of the coup attempt was entirely from the perspective of the administration. There is extensive record from the junior officer that revealed the plot to the administration, Luang Sinad Yotharaksa. The officer originally brought this to the attention to a cadet school instructor, who in turn redirected the officer to Captain Prince Pranthuprawat, who in turn informed his cousin, Prince Chakrabongse, the Army Chief of Staff, and Acting Minister of Defense.

The overwhelming majority of the 1912 Palace Coup plot's membership were junior army officials. The army and the King had an ongoing relationship of a less than desirable nature. About a year prior to his coronation, while Vajiravudh was the crown prince, a number of junior army officials were disciplined for antagonizing some of the Prince's pages. The pages and junior officers got into a quarrel over the favors of some ladies selling betel nuts, and had chased the pages away armed with batons and sticks. The Crown Prince insisted on the now antiquated practice of beating the army officials with a rattan (an often bamboo rod). King Chulalongkorn

[8] Vella. *Chaiyo!* Chapter 1.

was originally opposed to the implementing this particular disciplinary method, heeding the advice of Prince Rabi, then Minister of Justice, who claimed that the method presented an image of Siam of barbarism, that would not present a positive image to the Western Powers; however, Vajiravudh was insistent, and the King yielded.[9] This episode is more emblematic than anything else; however, this concisely presents the personal issues that most military officials had, particularly the junior military officials, who felt they had a vendetta against the king.

Returning to the King & his development of Counter-Revolutionary Nationalism

Returning to focus on Vajiravudh himself, and on the ideological effort to create a Nationalistic image for his benefit. For this nationalism to arrive, the idea of Nationalism itself had to be imported from western Areas, as had been the case under the reign of Chulalongkorn.

> When, then, did the idea of nation become a part of Thai political consciousness? It is difficult to provide a precise answer to this question. However, it can be shown that the idea of nation (chat) had begun to develop within the elite, educated circle of Thais during the reign of King Chulalongkorn.[10]
> As revealed in a number of early Western dictionaries of the Thai language, chat, a term derived from Pali-Sanskrit, had originally carries a number of meanings, such as birth, race, lineage, and origin. A broadening of the word cha to encompass something akin to the western idea of nation appears to have taken place during the nineteenth century when contacts between the Siamese and Europeans increased.[11]

Dusit Thani - Theory and Reality

One of the most recurring criticisms of Vajiravudh during his reign was in relation to his love of theatre and his time spent translating and writing plays. Vajiravudh was called "The

[9] Vella. *Chaiyo!* Chapter 3.
[10] Barmé, Scot. *Luang Wichit Wathakan and the Creation of a Thai Identity*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993. 15.
[11] ibid.

Playwright Prince" or the "Acting King" in mockery, as critics suggested he was only acting as a King, and not being the King. The best expression of this "acting as king" comes into play with Vajiravudh's experimentation with democracy, Dusit Thani. Vajiravudh built a miniature city next to one of his palaces, the Dusit Palace, and attempted to create a democratic city with a township. The King entered this town as an "average citizen" taking up the occupation of an Architect or a Lawyer, sources vary.[12] This lack of clarity on the public role he served in this town only further embeds the problematic nature of this "political show" that was the 'heavenly palace'. The city had two political parties, the 'Blue Bow Party' and the 'Red Bow Party' the former being led by Vajiravudh himself, the latter run by a favoured member of the Tiger Scouts. Most accounts of the debates and campaigns of the political assembly, despite the King's encouragement of opposing views, ended with the Blue Bow Party winning, because the King "always beat the opposition with his superior arguments."[13] The story of Dusit Thani exemplifies the problems the revolutionaries had with the monarch. By all accounts written of and by Vajiravudh, he sincerely wished to install democratic structures in the Thai government, or at least lay the groundwork for a democratic government. To the increasingly resentful opposition, the attempt of democracy in Dusit Thani was more representative of the King's pageantry than of any practical installation of democratic systems.

[12] It seems he very likely played out both roles, at different times over the existence of Dusit Thani.
The Lawyer: Swai Prarmani, "Dusit Thani" in *Ratthasas*, Thammasat University, Bangkok, 1956. 135.
The Architect: S. Watanaset. *The Fame of King Vajiravudh*. Wattana Panich Press, 1957. 220.
[13] S. Watanaset. *The Fame of King Vajiravudh*. 220.

Education and the Faith

The restructuring of the Thai education system came in conjunction with the largest of the modernization efforts undertaken by King Vajiravudh, the restructuring of the Religion of the State. Part of the reason it is so pertinent to focus on the monarchy, as a whole institution, and not just the monarch, is because the religious restructuring was largely directed by another member of the Royal Family, the King's Uncle, Prince Vajiranana. The religious reforms of Vajiravudh centred more on a restructuring of practice than of restructuring the clergy. There was clearly a direction inspired by the monarchy that lead to the four principles of the state religion, each of which were inspired from speeches delivered by Vajiravudh. While the nature of these reforms is not incredibly relevant, this was a far more direct interaction with the faith than of previous monarchs, primarily due to a tradition of holding religion as "above politics".

Vajiravudh would enlist the faith to help strengthen his national image. The King would use his position, in addition to the Prince Patriarch's, to exert influence over the organized faith, to the benefit of promoting his own image and the National image he presented. "One supernatural idea that the King encouraged was belief in a tutelary personal deity of his named Hiranhu or Hiranphanasun. Hiranhu was large and powerful, and his divine function was to keep King Vajiravudh and his retinue free from harm. As long as Hiranhu was propitiated with incense, candles, and food the King would remain safe and well. A portion of the King's food was allotted daily to this royal genie."[14] The faith was co-opted for the benefit of the monarchy in not just the presentation of it beside or as a part the national image, but because the faith provided the majority of the education for rural Thais, the faith was used to disseminate this national model. Female

[14] Vella. *Chaiyo!* Chapter 8.

education would also be implemented in 1921 Vajiravudh's reign, with the Law of Compulsory Education, making it mandatory for all children between seven and fifteen to attend primary education. The Law of Compulsory Education was proposed by King Chulalongkorn, but not passed due to the lack of schools throughout the Kingdom. King Vajiravudh made it one of his primary goals to create the schools required for all to have access, a majority of the public works projects constructed in his reign being educational institutions.

The clergy would at times conflict with the King's aims, namely with the Thai entry to the First World War, of which the monk Phra Deb Mori, in early 1916, delivered sermons condemning the violence and potential military intervention. The sermon was turned into pamphlet that was distributed throughout Bangkok. The pamphlets included phrasing that implied both the manufacturing and usage of violent arms was a sin, and that those who used these violent arms, the military, were guilty of sin. This monk was deprived of his rank, by the King, and moved to a monastery where he was scrutinized. The punishment was for the monk's "misinterpretations of the teachings of the Buddha" who "had never condemned the military life and had never interfered with politics."[15]

World War I & The League of Nations

One of the most influential factors in the decision to ultimately join the war on the side of the entente, was the ability to participate with the colonial powers that would defer expansion into Thai territory, rather than combating the colonial powers at home. Participation in the war would lead to more of an alliance relationship than that of a protectorate relationship. It is pertinent to recall that while the colonial ambitions of Britain and France in the early 20th Century switch to

[15] Vella. *Chaiyo!* Chapter 8.

more consolidatory approaches, particularly as conflict continued to brew between the European powers, and war seemed more and more inevitable. To the eyes of the colonized, and to the states in fear of colonial encroachment, the empires of Great Britain and France seemed ever present to scoop up territory from a state in a period of decline, or perceived decline. The colonizer powers had just recently threatened the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Siam in the Gunboat Incident of 1893 or Paknam Incident. The Gunboat Incident was a brief military skirmish with the French at the Siamese fort Paknam, after the French had demanded that Siam concede its claim and tributary rule within Laos, west of the Mekong. The rejection of these demands was in large part the result of a belief that the British would intervene on Siam's side, which did not occur. The French would successfully break through Siamese defences and blockade Bangkok, upon which Siam would concede. The incident was tremendously important beyond the territorial loss, or the reparations of three million francs, but because it confirmed the technological supremacy of colonial militaries. Colonialism and the threat of would be ever present in the decisions made by Vajiravudh; would particular actions upset colonial powers (among which being his consolidation of administrative power) or taking into consideration how his actions could be perceived by the Western powers, in regards to perceived weaknesses in his reign and opportunities for colonial expansion.

> World War I presented Siam with a whole new range of policy options and propaganda opportunities. And Vajiravudh was determined to make the best use of such options and opportunities. On the policy level he was determined that Siam should follow a course that would yield the greatest advantages in terms of international standing. On the propaganda level he was stimulated to use the war to lead his people further along the path toward the nationalism that he had already charted as his primary goal.[16]

Following the War, the Thai participation in the first multinational multilateral international organization is of importance, particularly in the establishment of a modern state, and

[16] Vella. *Chaiyo!* Chapter 5.

one of the contributions to the modernization effort, done by participation in the war and therefore participation in the peace conferences that followed. While the peace conferences did little "Siam thus proves an excellent case for not reducing the League to its core function of being a collective security instrument – the realm in which the League failed dramatically – but to see the League as an instrument for a much broader range if international political issues."[17] The participation in a multinational organization gave not only international power that bolstered the image of Siam as a modern state, but was influential in creating a modern identity tied to the state. An identity as a citizen to a state increasingly active in the international scene would develop the forming national pride. This image of modernizing statehood, comparable to Japan, was only possible because the League of Nations had need for the small state of Siam:

> For the League, Siam was an important member. Not primarily for its impact on the League's policy – for although it was notable in some areas, it can of course not be compared to that of France or Great Britain, Japan or Germany – but mainly in the sense that it was the only member in the Southeast Asian region and, besides Japan until 1933 and China, the only member state in the whole Far East. Siam thereby provided support to the essentially European League of Nations' claim to global authority.[18]

Vajiravudh's Introduction of Racial Theory in Thai Politics

> The patriotic purpose of dramatizing the Phra Ruang story, which is abundantly clear in the text itself, was made explicit by the royal author. In a preface to the first version Vajiravudh wrote: "I hope it will serve for more than casual reading. I hope it will be a means for our Thai race to reflect on our history and make us feel that our race is not a new race but an old race with an admirable history."[19]

Vajiravudh, in creating a new sense of national identity, felt the need to also create a racial and ethnic component to the identity. Vajiravudh in his academic career wrote *The Jews of the*

[17] Hell, Stefan. *Siam and the League of Nations Modernisation, Sovereignty and Multilateral Diplomacy*, 1920-1940. Bangkok: River Books, 2010. 258.
[18] ibid.
[19] Vella. *Chaiyo!* Chapter 8.

Orient, a book in which he draws parallels between the ethnically Chinese "class" that had developed within the bureaucrats, and with the Jews in Europe. Much of the evidence for his comparison comes from the relationship between the ethnically Chinese and the banking industry. The comparison becomes problematic when Vajiravudh suggests solutions to dealing with this "threat" that bear remarkable similarity to European postwar anti-Semitic rhetoric. His dwelling on this racial and religious divide further complicates the problem. Vajiravudh vocally considers the Buddhism of China to have been bad for China, as the priests of the region had modified the practice. The National model that Vajiravudh wanted to create was one that promoted the traditional view of the monarch, as a living god that protected his subjects, his "children", a duty made difficult by the encroachment of western powers. A comparison with China, in a worse situation being more directly influenced by the Colonial powers, provided the Monarchy a suitable alternative. The Monarchy of Thailand had saved the Thai people from colonialism.

Conclusion

It is important to not assume that the encouragement of efforts to establish the Thai Nation State model, is not the bias of an author in ascribing this as a positive in Vajiravudh's reign, instead acknowledging that this is the positive that is ascribed to his reign, compared to many of his other acts seen as mistakes, such as the formation of the Wild Tiger Corps, or Dusit Thani. There has been some contention on such a view of Vajiravudh's reign, that being because the nationalism formed from his model encouraged the nationalists that participated in the Siamese Revolution of 1932. The Nationalism formed by Vajiravudh would, over the next century, lead to government led cultural genocide efforts, imposing a more standard Thai culture over the extremities of the state, particularly the Northern Thai tribes, including the Lan Na. It's important to note that the

Nationalism created by Vajiravudh that led to pogroms against the Sino-Thai business owners was not only just an expression of the National fervor formed by his majesty, but an encouraged part of the formation of Nationalism, as in his academic writings Vajiravudh calls the Sino-Thai the Jews of Asia, and calls for their expulsion from the state and from political activity. The Nationalism formed by Vajiravudh would lead to the Fascist takeover of the state in 1938/1939, and the entry to the Second World War on the side of the Axis. The delineation of these repercussions of the establishing a Nation-State model is not to ascribe blame for all Nationalist activity, rather to acknowledge that discussion of the Absolute Monarch and the activity of his reign are not to be graded on a moral basis, instead to be analyzed with the least amount of moral focus; focusing on the repercussions of actions without need to define said consequences as benign or otherwise, simply as the legacy of the monarch as a man, and not the Brahman God he had been raised to embody as King over his subjects. Vajiravudh was at the end of the day, human, and the numerous failures and perceived failures of his reign were the result of a monarch disinterested in politics. The institution of the monarchy, after eighty years of direction from one of the most highly regarded monarchs. The main aspiration of Vajiravudh was to continue the modernization initiated by his father. In a letter to a half brother, Vajiravudh wrote "I wish no honor greater than that of being my father's son who, having inherited the throne, walks in his footsteps in order to help to complete the tasks necessary for the progress of the country."[20] Vajiravudh would continue the efforts, most noticeably with his construction of schools throughout the country, the method by which he pursued the modernization his father initiated was characteristic of his reign. Chulalongkorn, humble even in death, described his desire for a more modest cremation and funeral, without the "display of pomp and circumstance" and "waste of labour and expense" that

[20] Stengs, Irene. *A Kingly Cult: Thailand's Guiding Lights in a Dark Era*. Etnofoor 12, no. 2 (1999): 41-75.

conferred "no lasting benefit on the public."[21] A waste of labour and expense would be the revolutionary summary of Vajiravudh's reign, as will be examined in the following chapter.

> Nationalism in Siam under King Vajiravudh was riddled with paradoxes—as it probably has been in all places and in all times, for nationalism is essentially a phenomenon of the emotions rather than of reason. A population stirred to loyalty to the state is the goal, and the ways to that goal are various and often seemingly incompatible. A nationalistic people needs to be proud of its nation. And the elements of that pride must, in large part at least, be universals, that is to say, elements widely agreed upon as desirable throughout the world. A nationalistic people must feel that it excels in significant ways, that what it excels in—an empire on which the sun never sets, an ability to tame and populate a wilderness, a refinement in the arts and culture—elicits the praise and envy of other peoples. In addition to universals, a nationalistic people may focus its pride on qualities that are unique, that no other people considers noteworthy or worthwhile. But an exclusive diet of the special is an austere diet little apt to satisfy nationalistic appetites. Nationalism characteristically has fed on both the universal and the particular.

While Vajiravudh succeeded in his creation of a National identity, or more aptly, a national pride, his insistence on the monarchy's place within this identity fell flat for many, as the monarchy under him was no longer a source of pride.

[21] *Bangkok Times*, December 10, 1910.

3. The Revolution and Nationalism of the People

The efforts of revolutionaries worldwide since the French Revolution have juxtaposed aims. While the novelty of the French Revolution is the aim of most revolutionaries, whether they hold disparate political beliefs, or not, there is a strive toward this topsy-turvy political landscape that will allow for the rebalance of political power, and for the socio-cultural upheaval that reforms a society; this novelty of the French Revolution had become dated by the turn of the 20th century. Whereas the proponents of Revolution envision antagonists yearning for the maintenance of the status quo, or after Revolution keeping to the nostalgia of the Ancién Regime, these would-be revolutionaries begin to grow their own revolutionary reverie. The wave of revolution that swept over the western world over the course of the nineteenth century arrived in Asia over the course of the twentieth century; morphing to the cultures and states it passed, to the people that had revolutionary aspirations, adapting to the rise of communism, integrating the anti-colonial and anti-western sentiment that aligned with the "war for independence" revolutionary mode. Most curiously, the "Revolution" as it passed through Asia encountered the effort of modernization, reacting to modernization with either foresight of perilous need or with a dismayed resentment. Due to the intricacy of relation between modernization, colonialism, ideology, and class struggle, labelling any rebellion or movement a revolution can prove to be a perilous task. Would the first instance of Revolution in China be the Boxer Rebellion or the Xinhai Rebellion? Or would it be more accurate to label earlier revolts, such as the Taiping or Nian rebellions as revolutionary attempts. Would the Meiji Restoration be a revolution, despite revolution taking a top-down model, where authority imposes revolutionary systems; while the

Ancien Regime, subordinate to the Emperor enacting this legislation, takes on the act of rebellion, as the Satsuma rebellion. The violent aggressiveness from "revolutionary" ideas in the government being initiated by the counter-revolutionaries. This counter-revolutionary initiation of violence will also be present in the Thai case, as will be examined in the following chapter.

Proposing a definition of the Revolution that remains applicable in Asia through even just the first half of the twentieth century is an arduous task, destined for disappointment. Instead an examination of a particular state, where these issues seem to converge, might provide more insight into the Asian nature of Revolution, than an examination of this revolutionary wave as a whole. In 1912, a small group of mostly young military officers in Siam were caught in the midst of their planned coup. While unsuccessful in their aspirations of seeing a democratic Thai state, not all of their aims would fail. Below is a passage of the oath members of this coup made:

> Those who have come to swear the oath in this ceremony have known full well that we, the initiators of the revolution, who have studied the consequences of many revolutions, mostly those that occurred in foreign countries, realize that it is quite difficult to be successful. It always appears that the first revolutionary groups are arrested, tortured, or executed before the revolution succeeds. This has mostly been the case. Even though we may fail and receive a severe penalty, there will still be later groups who will continue our work and, having learned the lesson from previous groups, will eventually succeed…[22]

The revolutionaries of 1912 would be caught, with three of their leaders executed, and the rest imprisoned. Their efforts were not in vain, as they are referenced by Revolutionaries that would resume their work in 1932, with what is commonly referred to as the Siamese Revolution. The 1932 Siamese Revolution was the culmination of a growth of this anti-monarchic nationalistic image, that would succeed in supplanting the King in his political power, replacing

[22] Mokarapong, Thawatt. *History of the Thai Revolution : A Study in Political Behaviour*. Bangkok: Distributed by Chalermnit, 1972.
translating: Leng Srichandh and Somchit Tiensiri *Karn Patiwat Ro*. So. 130 (*The Revolution of 1912)*.

his political power with a popular assembly, and replacing his definition of Thai Nationalism with their own alternated definition.

One of the most notable features of the revolutions in Asia, in the 20th century, is the distance from which they were removed from the European revolutionary experience. The time that had passed, and the knowledge of the time that would come with this, meant that both of these groups of revolutionaries had knowledge of what they were attempting, based on the similar attempts of prior revolutionaries (utterly distinct from the French Revolutionaries). Moreover, the antagonists to the Revolutionaries also had such knowledge, arguable more. Particularly in the case of the 1912 failed revolution, the Monarchy had forethought of revolutionary sentiment to follow the Xinhai revolt, and because of this had informers in the bureaucracy and military specifically looking for dissent. In part because of the anti-revolutionary culture that would develop from oppression of would-be revolutionary groups, but also to avoid suspicions while recruiting new members, the later 1932 Revolutionaries would distance themselves from the label "revolution", although they would praise the revolutionary ideas of the 1912 Palace Coup.

Why the 1912 Palace Coup should be considered a Failed Revolution

Up to this point, I have utilized the terms 1912 Revolution, Palace Coup Uprising, 1912 Coup, and the Failed Revolution almost interchangeably; not all would agree with such use, with either the academic or public audiences. Because of this discrepancy, it becomes imperative to argue for why Palace Coup should be considered a Revolution, albeit a failed attempt. The inspirations for the 1912 Palace Coup, the aspirations of those that perpetrated actions against the state, and the self-defined motivations for the actions that they took, are all rooted in the idea of 'Revolution'. The revolutionary vision was self-imposed, as the revolutionaries participating in

what they saw as the beginnings of Revolution did so with their own image in mind, operating based on the image they wished to project; as revolutionaries.

Why the 1917 Coup shouldn't be considered a Failed Revolution

In contrast to 1912 attempted coup, lauded by the revolutionaries of 1932, there is little mention of the other suppressed coup attempt in Vajiravudh's reign, and no record of considering such as a "revolutionary" attempt. The 1917 attempted coup has seemingly been stricken from record, with most accounts of the rebels removed from even state records, or at the very least state records which are open to the public. The 1917 coup seems to have arisen in response to military intervention in foreign policy, that coinciding with the entry of Siam into the first world war. The few sources available consider this coup as only a military coup d'état. The degree of obscurity of the coup, the lack of proclamations or greater support from the population, and the lack of reference to this coup, by those involved in the 1932 coup, show how the 1917 coup was if anything else an attempt to remove a problematic leader, and not an attempt to restructure the Thai state or society.

The Deficit, and resurgence of a separate nationalism

By 1924 the economic situation of the Thai state had degraded to the point the King was considered incapable of rectifying the situation by himself, as was expected of the absolute monarch. To solve this there was a commision of three high princes, appointed to study corrective measures to implement to curb the deficit. These princes would enlist the aid of government staff and foreign economic experts, one of which was Sir Edward Cook, brought into the government as a Financial Adviser. Sir Edward was a distinguished economist, who had worked in public

finance in the British Raj before Siam, and after leaving Siam in 1930 would become the head of the Central Bank of Egypt. The commision came to the conclusion that the most deficit while originating from economic, in the rice shortage that began in 1919 that drastically impacted the Siamese economy, remained a deficit because of government expenditure, most notably the royal expenditure. The King would ignore the commission's reports, prompting the princes to call two cabinet meetings on the financial crisis in May 1925, first on the 8th and then on the 22nd. Prince Prajadhipok would chair both meetings.

In a paper submitted in June, 1925, entitled '*Observations Upon the Present Financial Position of Siam*' to the Minister of Finance Sir Edward[23] detailed the impracticality of expenditure, particularly in comparison to other states. The depletion of royal reserves, of the royal treasury, should have been enough to cause the monarchy to adjust expenditure on courtly proceedings. The pageantry of the Monarch in regards to royal ceremonies had grown too high a burden on the state. Sir Edward compares Siam to China in regards to currency reserves being the last resort of Nations on the verge of bankruptcy, stating that, "Siam is living beyond her means."[24] Japan, Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain, and Norway are listed as as examples by which the similar Thai monarchy might operate, comparing the relationship between monarchy and state. These nations had an expenditure ranging from 8.54% to 20.62% of the national budget, with Siam at 23.3%; more disparagingly, the tables Sir Edward produced show royal expenditure from the above mentioned countries amounting to between 0.13% and 0.33% of the national budget, compared to the 10.7% of the royal expenditure for the Thai state. Thai Royal expenditures amounted to four times the sum spent on Education, even during the educational reform period; and five times that of expenditure on the construction and maintenance of roads. Sir Edward also

[23] National Archives (Bangkok), Papers of Prince Damrong, 37/35.
[24] ibid.

notes that certain items that should have been attributed to Royal expenditure, were instead notoriously "tucked in" with expenses that they did not belong to, the most notable of which was royal disbursement, which had been disguised as either "loans" or as "advances" within the administrative record.[25] Prior to Vajiravudh's death, in a memorandum of which only a copy survives, sent to Prince Damrong, Sir Edward wrote that he had "no doubt that, fortified by His Majesty's instructions and inspired by His personal example" that officials would produce a new budget showing a surplus.[26]

In a cabinet meeting on the fourth of July, 1925, the King delivered a strongly worded statement, in which he declared he would continue to act as "his own prime minister", that the budget commission was merely advisory, and that he would not allow any person or commission push him aside from government policy, "like the Mikado in Japan"[27]

Summing up the state of Vajiravudh's reign in August, 1925, the British Minister sent the following statement: "The King can hardly be more discredited than he is now, but no one seems disposed to take the strong measures necessary to terminate his rule, or rather absence of rule," in addition to "I am more than ever inclined to think that no violent or revolutionary action will be taken and that unless the King were to die a natural death, things will drag on for some time much as the do to-day."[28] Two weeks prior, the same diplomat had sent a dispatch with a more explicit summary, "I feel that death alone will ease the situation and I don't think he will be assassinated."[29]

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[25] ibid.
[26] National Archives (Bangkok), Papers of Prince Damrong, 42/46.
[27] National Archives (Bangkok), Seventh Reign, Ministry of Finance, 15.3/1 (The archive holds two statements of Vajiravudh's Speech, neither identical, but include similar sentiment in regards to comparison to Japan).
[28] Great Britain, Public Record Office; Foreign Office, Despatches from Siam, 6257/183/40, 6 August 1925, Greg to Chamberlain.
[29] Great Britain, Public Record Office; Foreign Office, Despatches from Siam, 4201/183/40, 23 July 1925, Greg to Waterlow.

Four months later, Vajiravudh would pass away by natural means. The assesment of his reign, even early on, was unprecedentedly critical of the Monarchy; as was the case by the conservative paper *Bangkok Times*, who made the comment, " His Majesty was not by any means an ordinary monarch, and his reign will present problems for the country's historians to study and disentangle." [30]

> King Prajadhipok inherited a state in Crisis. King Vajiravudh had utilized the state treasury to maintain the lavish lifestyle he and the other princes had grown accustomed to, which had left the state on the verge of Bankruptcy. [31]

The Press

Both Vajiravudh and his successor, King Prajadhipok, had to contend with an element of modern society that prior Monarchs had no knowledge of, the press. "The one medium that caused Vajiravudh some trouble was the press. The King appreciated the press. He used newspapers often as an outlet for his views. But the press was a problem. It had its own voice. Newspapermen presented their own views. And these views the King often regarded as antithetical to his own and pernicious to the kinds of development he desired for Siam."[32] The King not only struggled with the press over its description of his reign, or antagonism over decisions made in his reign, as was the case of the journalist who wrote under the synonym "Junius" who published articles critical of the Monarchy under the financial crisis that became quite widespread; the King had to contend with nationalist sentiments being spread from the platform. The King himself was inspired by the nationalist sentiment proposed by the literary figures of K.S.R. Kulap and Thianwan. The King would utilize their ideas of a Thai people, but alter components, such as singling out the ethnically

[30] *Bangkok Times*, 25 March 1926.
[31] Stowe, Judith (1991). *Siam Becomes Thailand: A Story of Intrigue*. United Kingdom: C. Hurst & Co. 4.
[32] Vella. *Chaiyo!* Chapter 9.

Chinese Thai, and adopting more racial components to the nationalist theory. The press would come to adopt the position of 'voice of the people' which contradicted the position of the King, traditionally the "father of the nation" who "spoke for his children." The distribution of articles, pamphlets, journals, and newspapers would present more often than not, as counter-narrative to the King's national message, where the people could speak for themselves, and not need the monarch to speak for them.[33] Discussing the rise of a desire to enter politics, King Prajadhipok would write in a memorandum to Dr. Sayre, the grandson of Woodrow Wilson, "The Birth of a FREE PRESS aggravated matters still more… The movements of opinion in this country give a sure sign that the days of the Autocratic Rulership are numbered." [34]

The Rise of Contention in Prajadhipok's Reign

King Prajadhipok, while not being publically known or acknowledged as such, was the prime "salvager" of the history of Thai Monarchs. I use the term 'salvage' because it applies to the two accomplishments of the King's reign, salvaging the state of the economy, which carried into recovery from the Great Depression, and salvaging the prestige of the Monarch, not only from the contentious reign of his predecessor, but following the dissolution of the Absolute Monarchy, Prajadhipok was able to salvage the political standing, societal function, and national image of the Thai Monarch.

> "[His Majesty received a] deplorable inheritance when he ascended the Throne, because the authority of the sovereign had fallen much in respect and confidence, the treasury was

[33] Batson, Benjamin A. *The End of The Absolute Monarchy in Siam*. A publication of the Asian Studies Association of Australia. Oxford University Press, Singapore. 1984.
[34] Batson, Benjamin A. (ed.). *Siam's Political Future: Documents from the End of the Absolute Monarchy*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, Data Paper No. 96, 1974. 13-33.

on the verge of bankruptcy, and the government was corrupted and the services more or less in confusion." -Prince Damrong, 1926

Despite the situation that Prajadhipok was placed in, his observed diligence would lead one to believe that he made the most of it. Prior to his taking the Throne, the Prince suggested that instead of himself, a political "dark horse", that his half brother Prince Boriphat take the throne, being both older and more experienced in government.[35]

The Revolution

On the 24th of June 1932, King Prajadhipok was playing golf, accompanied by his wife and some courtiers, at the Royal Summer Villa, by the town of Hua Hin, when an urgent message arrived via courier. The details of this initial message have not survived, but the King's response was noticeably bleak. The first message can be assumed to have been brief, as later that evening the Prince Purachatra arrived from Bangkok to deliver more specific details of the events of that morning. Bangkok had been taken by rebels. These Rebels had a large majority of the royal family under house arrest, and had staged a military assembly in front of the Throne Hall. Worse even, the people seemed to be in support of these 'revolutionaries'. The King and Princes present would deliberate all night on the course of action for the monarchy moving forward. The rebels had been clear in public with their terms. The King would concede his power to adopt a constitutional monarchy, or he would be replaced by a prince more willing to do so. By the time a telegram with the demands of the revolutionaries reached the King, he had already decided what he would do; he would concede his power without a fight, later writing about his decision, ""I could not sit on a

[35] Čhakkraphong, HRH Čhunla. *Lords of Life: A History of the Kings of Thailand*. Edited by Barend Jan Terwiel. Bangkok: River, 2013. quoting King Prajhadipok

throne besmirched by blood."[36] King Prajadhipok had been open about ambitions of a constitutional monarchy, of introducing democratic reforms into the Thai state, but much like his predecessors, he deemed that the Thai people were not ready for such a system. Many of the new middle class, often called the Bureaucracy, would disagree with this sentiment, as born commoners, they had little possible contribution or control over their state. From this desire for political control and political representation, a group of revolutionaries would begin to plot to overthrow the absolute monarchy.

The origins of these revolutionaries can be placed at the first assembly of the Khana Ratsadon, translated as the People's Party, in France. Ironically, one of the rallying points of revolutionaries was the western influence adopted by the monarchy and aristocracy, but much of the ideological and physical origin of the revolutionary side was in the west. In mid-February 1927, in a boarding-house on Rue du Sommerard in Paris, two young students, a soldier, an artilleryman, and a Law student, assembled to develop a plan on how to change Siam.[37] Sources on the number of people present vary, but many agree there were seven in all.[38] The group were intent on not repeating the events of the 1912 plot, and met to debate the plan several times. This small group decided to call themselves the 'promoters' (ผู้ก่อการ). The promoters realized that they would have difficulty mobilizing a "mass revolution" like that of the French Revolution, as they would have to contend with the monarchy and army opposing their actions before anything came to fruition. In part because of this, many members of the group would avoid labelling themselves as revolutionaries, particularly the latter arrivals to the group. The group also realized that the

[36] Chakrabongse, HRH Chula, Prince of Thailand (1957). *Twain Have Met: An Eastern Prince Came West*. United Kingdom: G.T. Foulis & Co.
[37] Baker, Christopher; Phongpaichit, Pasuk (2005). *A History of Thailand*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
[38] Stowe. *Siam Becomes Thailand* 11-12.

monarch and his advisors were correct in assuming that the Thai people were not prepared for democracy, the majority of the population being illiterate. The plan agreed upon was to return and grow the membership of their "party" as discreetly as possible, with meetings between these promoters never exceeding eight people; largely due to the superstition of colonel Phya Phahol. The group would all have returned to Siam by the turn of the decade, having accumulated about a hundred (103 seems to be the most proposed at this time) members into what they called Khana Ratsadon (คณะราษฎร), The People's Party.[39] Based on record of attendance to organizational meetings at Prayoon's house, the eight members of this inner circle were likely Colonel Phya Pahol, Colonel Phya Song Suradet, Phya Ritthi, Lt. Colonel Phra Phrasas, Pridi Banomyong, Luang Pibul Songgram, Prayoon Pamornmontri, and Luang Sinthu. Earlier members of the inner circle, as some of the key figures mentioned were brought in significantly later, were Luang Tasnai Niyomseuk (Niyomsuk), Tua Laphanukran, Chamuen Surarith Preutthikrai, and Khuang Aphaiwong.

Membership & Growth of the Revolution

One of the first member brought into the promoters circle, not originally present, may have been the most significant addition, Luang Sindhu (Sinthu) Songkramchai. Luang Sinthu came from a well established family, and studied as a Naval Officer in Denmark. Luang Sinthu brought not only legitimacy of a well established family, nor only the naval experience that would position him as the head of the Naval faction, but the correspondence with two elder brothers who served as Admirals. Pridi would be the first to return home to Siam, in late 1927, where he would take a

[39] ibid.

position as an official in the Ministry of Justice that included him teaching at Chulalongkorn University, and slowly accumulate a group of 50 civilians into his Civilian Faction of the revolution. While Pridi has always been known for his shortened name, in this time, as he had socially risen, he adopted a titular name, Luang Pradit Manutharm (which translates literally as "Exercise Humanity").[40] Pibul, who would lead the military faction would return soon after Pridi, where because of his "social polish" he was promoted to be an equerry of one of the Princely members of the Supreme Council. Because Pibul would no longer have direct communication with military officials, despite maintaining himself as head of the military faction, the recruitment of new members fell on the shoulder of Luang Tasnai Niyomsuk; Luang Tasnai Niyomsuk was the 9th most common to attend inner circle meetings. Luang Tasnai differed greatly from Pibul, aligning himself with Pridi's philosophical charge to the revolution. Tasnai was known to be an inspiring speaker, and quite well liked by all military members he communicated with, however, Pibul's "leadership" allowed his crediting of the accomplishments Tasnai made prior to the coup. The first upper-ranking military members brought into the coup, and into the inner circle, were Phya Phahol Pholphayuphasena, who would go on to dominate the People's Party, and the friend he would bring with him, Phya Song Suradet. Phya Phahol and Phya Song had studied in Germany together, and Phya Pahol upon being invited to join by Prayoon would in turn invite Phya Song. Prayoon's Grandmother had taught Phya Phahol German before his studies in Germany, and this personal connection was used to pull in who was at that point the highest ranking military member pulled in. Phya Phahol would effectively take over the People's party upon being invited in, establishing the 8-person inner circle, as he was superstitious and believing eight to be a luck number, limited the number of people to such. Due to this connection between Prayoon and Phya

[40] Stowe. *Siam Becomes Thailand* 13.

Pahol, Prayoon's house was the location for most of these meetings, where a deck of cards would be on the table at reach, as an excuse for their congregation in the case of a police raid. Phya Phahol and Phya Song would reach out to their old classmates, of whom some rejected, for fear of treason, but did not disclose the coup members. Phya Ritthi Akaney, commander of the First Artillery Regiment would join with the revolutionaries, but had a number of conditions to his loose membership, and he had threatened to leave when in disagreement over Phya Song's first suggestion for the coup, that being to take the King hostage. Tension would rise within the government, as some of these revolutionary sentiments would be picked up by high ranking military officials. The government believed action would be taken on April the 6th, 1932, the 150th anniversary of the Chakri Dynasty's reign. The day would come and pass with no attempt, and following the great ceremony and celebrations, the King would take holiday leave at his summer palace by Hua Hin, Klai Kangwol (Literal translation: "Far From Worries").[41]

The Success of the Coup

On the evening of the 23rd of June 1932, the director general of the Bangkok police made a phone call to Prince Paribatra, requesting royal permission to arrest all those found to be colluding to overthrow the king, providing a list of those he wished to arrest at that moment. Prince Paribatra recognizing a significant number of the names mentioned as powerful members of the state, army, and navy; delayed the order for arrest to the next day, requesting the director general to investigate further in the evening, and make the arrests the following morning.[42] The same evening (about an hour after this phone call), Luang Sinthu had one of his supporters commandeer

[41] Stowe. *Siam Becomes Thailand* 15.
[42] Stowe. *Siam Becomes Thailand* 16.

a gunboat, which by the morning was aiming directly at Prince Paribatra's palace. At the same time, Luang Sinthu led about 500 sailors to take Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall, within the Dusit Palace. Amongst these men was Prayoon, who later that night would lead a small group of men to seize the post and telegram offices around the city, which would be used to disable communication between the different princes. After this, both military and civilian men were stationed to guard all of the princes residences, effectively placing the royal family under house-arrest. At about 4:00 am. Phraya Phahol and Songsuradet gathered supporters in front of the Throne Hall captured the night before. Phraya Phahol would maintain control of the hall, and organize the movement of loyal troops (loyal to the revolution). Phraya Songsuradet would enter the Royal Guard barracks, of the First Cavalry Regiment, with some conspirators, reprimanding the officers inside for "sleeping while a Chinese uprising was taking place" as he and his comrades opened the gates and began mobilizing troops with the armored vehicles that were kept in this specific barracks. Phraya Prasan would arrest the commander of the First Cavalry Regiment to ensure that the troops would not be directed elsewhere, and placed him in the custody of Phibul. After having confirmed the success of mobilizing the First Cavalry Regiment, Phraya Ritthi would use the same ruse to mobilize the First Infantry Regiment, and led them from their barracks toward the Throne Hall. Other troops from separate regiments around and in Bangkok who were under the command of Party Members, having been told of a military exercise the month prior, were additionally pulled in unwittingly. As the two main regiments were en route to the Royal Plaza, the plaza in front of the Throne Hall, some civilian members of the coup gathered other civilians to watch the ensuing show, some of whom believed this was indeed a Chinese uprising, others simply thought this was a military exercise. At about 6:00, after the two major regiments had arrived, Phraya Phahol would

deliver a speech written by Pridi from the top of a tank, titled the Khana Ratsadon Manifesto.[43] Phraya Phahol would declare the end of the Absolute Monarchy and the establishment of a new Constitutional State. The promoters and military involved in the coup cheered, and were joined by the crowd in what was described as a "habit of deference rather than comprehension of what was said."[44] The coup had taken place, but the revolutionaries had far from taken power of the state, the monarch himself was in Hua Hin, and many of his supporters not in Bangkok at the time.

Phra Prasat and several other senior officers in the conspiracy would take some of vehicles from the cavalry regiment to arrest leading members of the administration not already in custody, most notably Prince Boripat. With many of these officials commanding personal bodyguards, this was to be the only violent portion of the coup, though there is only record of one injury, to the commander of the First Army Corps, Phya Sena Songkram, who would recover several months later. In this excursion, about forty individuals were captured and brought back to the Throne Hall. That evening, the revolutionaries felt confident enough to call for a meeting of the senior ministerial officials to the Throne Hall, in order to persuade the government to resume functioning. This was amongst the civilian faction's contributions, along with radio broadcasts, and leaflets or pamphlets that contained the Khana Ratsadon Manifesto, being distributed around the city in the wake of the morning's activity. As the ministerial officials attended this Throne Hall meeting, Pridi addressed them, stating the lack of administrative experience of the revolutionaries, and calling for the gathering to be compliant in the transition, as any perceived disarray could invite the attention of neighbouring colonial powers, particularly worry over Britain. Pridi would call for the ministers to reference Phraya Phahol for guidance, which scholars have taken for the first endorsement for Phraya Phahol for the Prime Minister Position, who would not gain a majority

[43] Khana Ratsadon Manifesto.
[44] Stowe. *Siam Becomes Thailand* 17.

support in the first government. The first call of the new administration, prior to having received confirmation from the King, was to send statements to all diplomatic representatives in Bangkok, declaring that the new government would protect foreign lives and property in Siam, and honor any standing treaties.

4. The Conflict of Two National Identities

The modern Thai state is the product of a conscious effort of modernization that was undertaken for over a hundred years, by a 'mostly independent' state, with a history predating these modernization efforts by several more hundred years. Though Thailand was not colonized, retaining its sovereignty, due to the pressures of greater colonial powers resulted in a number of unequal agreements that the Thai state was bound to, such as the Bowring treaty that gave economic concessions to the British, or the peace that came with the Franco-Siamese War, that along with the loss of eastern territories, granted indemnities to the French. Thailand has been considered one of the "New Nations" by historians that worked on the subject of global modernization trends, examining states that emerged from the national unifications in Europe, or from the dissolution of empires after the First and Second War. The fact that Thailand did not earn independence from a colonial power, makes its national history more complicated than the heroic liberation image presented by the regimes that came about in most of Thailand's neighbouring states. The monarch's effort to bring about a modern Thai state is consistently acknowledged, what deviates from this application of the effort of modernization being carried out by the King is the emergence of new actors in the Thai political world. The introduction of democratic political systems allowed for an expression of the national identity of the state, which this thesis attempts to demonstrate was far from a cohesive definition. There are two national identities, opposed to one another, within Thai politics, initially drawn with the pro-revolution and pro-monarchy, but would grow to encompass far more than just these two groups. This paper will focus on the time in which these two groups formed, but it important to state this isn't just political partisanship, but an identity related to the history of the state, in which there are distinctly opposed narratives. The

two will continue to be referred to as pro-monarchy or monarchist, and pro-revolution or revolutionary, although these figures may have objected to such definitions, as the political landscape was more complicated than two factions.

Factions

Before delving explicitly into the cabinet of the first and second prime ministers, or analyzing the unfolding of the Thai political situation between 1932 and 1938, it is important to highlight the four most prominent figures of the time. These four figures were not initially seen as the centres of these factions, but by 1938 could be considered such. The four main political forces were the Monarchists, with Prince Boworadet as the primary figure of; the military conservatives, from which Phibun came from; the intelligentsia, of which Pridi was the heart of; and a conservative civilian faction led by Mano. The centrality of Mano and Phibun's political positions, that their positions lacked the radicalism of the other two, allowed them to survive as the monarchist rebellion was quelled, and as many of the supporters of Pridi were exiled on the grounds of being communist. Pridi himself was included in the red-scare, though as an influential and popular figure, he was brought back to the state and into politics in late 1934, invited to return and appointed as the Minister of the Interior. Pridi's return to Thailand came about after Phraya Phahon Phonphayuhasena staged a coup and took power. Phraya Phahon, a member of the same intelligentsia-faction ousted Mano's government in another bloodless coup, only made possible by having support from figures within the Military and Navy.

King Prajadhipok would speak in detail in his abdication speech on the matter of personal freedom, very much aware that the government in place was providing the groundwork for anti-democratic tendencies to rise in prominence. In 1934, the Press Act was put in place, placing

government regulation over the publication of works thought to be detrimental to greater public order, a law still enforced. The reason given for the king's abdication was that his initial acceptance of a reduction in the king's power was the promise of a democratic state, and this made it difficult for him to accept the transition towards an authoritarian system. "I am willing to surrender the powers I formerly exercised to the people as a whole, but I am not willing to turn them over to any individual or any group to use in an autocratic manner without heeding the voice of the people."[45]

Bowaradet Rebellion: Monarchist Resurgence

Equally a turning point in Thai institutional history as the introduction of the constitutional monarchy was the armed conflict to defend absolutism, the Boworadet Rebellion, also referred to as 'The Thai Civil War'. This conflict is so influential to this history because while the monarch had given up power in favor of a constitutional government, the constitution would not be enacted until the end of that year. In the time from the coup to the adoption of the constitution, the King made a great deal of progress in restoring the power of the monarch, compared to the constitutional charter he was forced to sign in the coup. While the King gave up power for a democratic state, he gave power to groups who were not elected. The first elections were set to take place at the end of 1933.

In October 1933, in the middle of elections, just over a year after the dissolution of the absolute monarchy, Prince Bovoradej (Boworadet) began to mobilize troops in the province of Korat, and almost immediately was offered the support of many neighbouring rural provinces. Prior to this, the prince did not have the best public perception, due to what was seen as his over-

[45] King Prajadhipok's abdication address
Phrabat Somdet Phra Poraminthra Maha Prajadhipok Phra Pokklao Chao, "Abdication Address" 2 March 1935

reactions, when he resigned from political office (as the Minister of the Interior) under the monarchy after having a bout with another Prince on the budget for the upcoming year (1931), a strain on not only his political relations (between the different factions) but also his relations with the greater royal family. With the revolution, Boworadet maintained relations with Phraya Phahon and Phaya Srisith, where Boworadet counseled a lack of physical insurrection and armed takeover of the government; Boworadet reasoned, through personal knowledge of the monarch, that the King would be willing to step down to allow for a democratic state, with a peaceful transition from the monarch to the democratic state bringing a greater legitimacy to the new state than that of an armed rebellion. Boworadet believed he would be called to the capital to serve as the Prime Minister, but instead the cabinet had favoured Mano.

The collapse of the state came into site was in early 1933, when Pridi proposed the Draft National Economic Development Plan, known as the Yellow Cover Dosier. The Yellow Cover Dosier would have led to a general land redistribution, and was considered by other ministers a pseudo-communist, socialist, or full communist policy shift, angling to move the regime toward a communist state; Pridi's rivals in the government did not hold their tongue in regards to this 'red sentiment'. This paper further split the cabinet, on the grounds of both ideological distinctions and the practical and personal interests as the document implied deterioration of the landholding elites' power. The monarch, King Prajadhipok publicly commented on this yellow paper, in effect denouncing it, labelling it as an attempt to shift the Thai state toward communism. This public declaration led Thawan Lithidet, a private citizen, to pursue legal action against the king, in the form of a lawsuit, accusing the king of overstepping his position to the detriment of the Thai people. In April, 1933, with the Kings signature Mano took advantage of the conflict within the assembly to institute a decree that silently dissolved the assembly, granting him the legislative

power to enact similar decrees, such as the Anti-Communist decree. Pridi was exiled in this power struggle, and fled to Paris.

In June, 1933, Phraya Phahon seized power in a coup d'état, naming himself the second Prime Minister, and issuing a retraction of many of the decrees that Mano had enacted, also declaring that Pridi was not guilty of previous charges put against him (treason), but absolved of guilt, and allowed to return. Prince Boworadet already seen as a reactionary political figure, was the first the discontent turned to as an emblematic figure of a rebellion. Due to the prince's previous qualms with the national assembly that now had power, he would take up arms in support of the monarchy and the previous regime. That Prince Boworadet put more emphasis on the restoration of the Monarch's powers, rather than the restoration of the conservative regime that first took power after the revolution, would alienate the conservative military officials he thought he could rely on joining with him. The Thai Royal Navy and by extension the naval faction of politics declared neutrality, moving the entirety of the navy out of reach of the fighting, to naval bases in the south. At the height of the armed conflict, Boworadet took control of Don Meung, the sole international airport of Bangkok, and laid siege upon the city with the assumption that resentment of the regime would yield support from the military, at the very least, within the city. The military did no such thing. The military in agreement with the conservative citizen faction aligned with the current state, and aided in the military conflict in Bangkok. The historical consensus on the rebellion attributes the failure of Boworadet rebellion to the insistence of some return to the absolutism of the monarchy, which the great number of malcontent actors within Bangkok were simple not willing to support; most analyses of these course of events coming to a conclusion that had Prince Boworadet simply wished to take power of the state for himself, dictatorial or

ministerial power, he would have had the support to do so, as opposed to his attempt at undoing the revolution that the urban elite were contented with.

The King's Abdication & Aftermath

Following the end of the conflict, King Prajadhipok would flee the country, fearing persecution from the pro-revolution faction, now firmly in power. The King had attempted to maintain neutrality during the rebellion, but the clear pro-monarch sentiment of the rebels had suggested his support for them; realizing this, Prajadhipok fled what he thought would be retribution. The King would spend the next year travelling around Europe, spending most of his time in London. The King and the government would be in dialogue over the next year, the King issuing a number of ultimatums that the standing government rejected. In 1935, it became clear to the King that if he did wish for the Monarchy and the Dynasty to survive, he would have to abdicate. In a last attempt to restore monarchist sentiment, and as a method to de-legitimize the current regime, Prajadhipok condemned the anti-democratic tendency of the regime. Prajadhipok's word had little initial impact, as the government censored distribution of transcripts of his abdication address; however, the text of his speech remains one of the most important Thai texts of the twentieth century.

The Pro-Revolution government would attempt to consolidate its power after the Boworadet Rebellion. Victory over the rebels was not credited to the revolutionaries, though, but to the military. Over the next five years, the government and the military would grow increasingly at odds. In 1938, Phibun, now firmly in control over the military, ousted the government in another coup, and begin to install a fascist regime. With the support of Japan, Phibun restored absolutism, but in absence of an absolute monarch. Phibun adopted the Nationalist model of the absolute

regime, leaning on the established nationalism of Vajiravudh, with minor alterations. The Sino-Thai and northern tribal people would be persecuted, religion would once again fall within the purview of the state, and through the development of a cult of personality, a fascist inspired policy, Phibun would attempt to deify himself, much the same as the monarchs before him.

Literature Review

Early scholarship on the Siamese Revolution, such as that of David K. Wyatt, Walter F. Vella, and Fred W. Riggs, sees the Revolution as the result of a variety of changes that were introduced in the reigns of King Mongkut and King Chulalongkorn, and resulted in an educated population without representation with aims to have a voice in politics. While the creation of the middle class is pivotal in the resulting Revolution, this understanding of the Revolution is less than adequate. Benjamin Batson in the introduction to *The End of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam* gives a summary of prior scholarship on the Revolution. Batson quotes Wyatt, describing the period of 1910 to 1932 as "Essentially the political working out of the social consequences of the reforms of Chulalongkorn's reign."[46] For Riggs, Batson, provides a quotation from a two page summary of five periods of bureaucratic transformation, with one period ranging from '"approximately 1900 to 1932… a stage of consolidation, readjustment, and expansion"[47] Batson astutely notices the lack of scholarly focus on this period. Most historians that have approached the subject have had their focus lie elsewhere. Judith Stowe, in her work *Siam Becomes Thailand: A Story of Intrigue,* builds upon many of the proposed ideas of Batson, highlighting how court intrigue became politically relevant in the lead-up to revolution. The personal disposition of Vajiravudh, and his relationship

[46] Wyatt, David K. in DJ Steinberg (ed.) *In Search of Southeast Asia* (New York, 1971). 313.
[47] Riggs, F.W. Thailand: T*he Modernization of a Bureaucratic Polity* (Honolulu, 1966) 110-112.

with rising officers in the military was one of the prominent causes of action that resulted in the failed 1912 Palace Coup. King Prajadhipok's personal involvement in the attempts to resolve the financial crisis, showed him how weak the absolute monarchy had become in the reign of his predecessor. Prajadhipok realized that he would have to take specific actions to preserve the monarchy and the dynasty.[48] Clark Neher in *Modern Thai Politics: From Village to Nation* examines the decisions made by Prajadhipok and their relevance to the preservation of the monarchy.[49]

The macro-causes of the revolution, the specifically racial and ethnic components in forming a Thai national identity have been highlighted by Thongchai Winichakul. Thongchai argues that Thai culture was challenged by the West, specifically the Latin Christian model, 'tempered' by Humanism. Thongchai argues that the 'siwilai' mission (a thaified 'civilize') of the Chakri monarchs, mostly Chulalongkorn, had created a westernized core within Thailand. Thongchai quite astutely describes the methods by which the Thai aristocracy dehumanized the northern tribal people, creating their own "barbaric" groups. By creating a new racial and ethnic class system, the aristocrats defended the feudal system that allowed the aristocrats to hold their power.[50]

Walter F. Vella, and his work *Chaiyo!* (the basis for the first chapter of this thesis) was incredibly significant in attracting more attention to the sixth and seventh reigning monarchs. Vella introduces a monarchy-driven national model. Portions of Vella's work are most certainly lacking in content that more recent researchers have shed more light on, Vella has quite an apt defence in

[48] Stowe. *Siam Becomes Thailand* 21.
[49] Neher, Clak D. *Modern Thai Politics: From Village to Nation*. Cambridge University Press.
[50] Thongchai, Winichakul (2000). "The Quest for 'Siwilai': a Geographical Discourse of Civilizational Thinking in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries Siam". The Journal of Asian Studies. 59 (3): 528–549.

his claim that he worked "as thoroughly and completely as talents and the sources… permitted."[51] Vella was incredibly careful making sure that his writing did not upset the reigning Thai monarch, nor the Thai government, so that he could maintain his research. Paul M. Handley, the most recent contributor to this discourse, takes a more critical approach, and his work has been banned from publication in Thailand as a result.

Critique of Vajiravudh's reign is by no means new, as even in life he had a series of critics, however, as writings on Thai history have been strictly controlled by the monarchy, scholarship on the subject that is directly critical of any monarch or of the monarchy, has had less access to the material required to make a proper analysis. Access to government archives has been denied, and some hyper-critical figures have been denied entry to the country. That being said, recent scholarship has been more critical of the failures of Vajiravudh as monarch, and how important his reign was to creating the environment where a revolution could gain support. What has not received enough focus, though, is the success Vajiravudh had in crafting a lasting sense of ThaiNationalism. Vajiravudh was an unsuccessful monarch, whose reign was marked with controversy and crisis, but his legacy was more successful. His work as a writer and a playwright more influential than his work as King, as it built upon his national identity. Vajiravudh managed to direct a good portion of the building nationalist sentiment toward support of the Monarchy. By relying on the history of Siam as a monarchy, the history of his dynasty, and the conservative social structure, he created what Chatthip Nartsupha, Suthy Prasartset, and Montri Chenvidyakarn in *The Political Economy of Siam 1910-1932*, call "Sakdina Nationalism".[52] Sakdina sometimes translated as "dignity marks" was a numerical system that ordered Thai society in a hierarchy. A

[51] Vella. *Chaiyo!* Preface.
[52] Chatthip Nartsupha, Suthy Prasartset, and Montri Chenvidyakarn. *The Political Economy of Siam 1910 - 1932*. Bangkok, 1978.

slave held a sakdina of 5, and the uparaja (often translated as second king, this position is difficult to simplify; the uparaja was the next eldest full brother of the king, who acted as King in the king's absence, and in the absence of a male son to the current king, was the next in line of succession) had a sakdina of 100,000 the highest without considering the King himself, who's sakdina was infinite. The system of sakdina has been compared to European feudalism, and in modern thai is used to mean 'elitist'. Since *The Political Economy of Siam*, "Sakdina Nationalism" has been used to describe the monarch-centric image of nationalism proposed by Vajiravudh. The idea of 'sakdina nationalism' isn't considered to have survived the defeat of Prince Boworadet. Although many of the sentiments and beliefs of the national ideology have been held by members of the more conservative political parties that emerged in the wake of the Second World War, and have been some of the issues that have caused the coups that followed.[53]

Handley, in his book *The King Never Smiles*, takes a critical approach to the institution of the monarchy, and the reigning monarch when he published, Rama IX. Handley adds little to the discourse of the reigning monarchs of the early twentieth century, but the censorship of his book does. The national model proposed by Vajiravudh survived beyond Boworadet. As Benedict Anderson points out in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Spread of Nationalism*, Vajiravudh created a state sanctioned national identity, an "official nationalism" that has survived to date.[54]

[53] Murashima, Eiji. "The Origin of Modern Official State Ideology in Thailand." Journal of Southeast Asian Studies 19, no. 1 (1988): 80-96.
[54] Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso Editions, 1983. 95.

5. Conclusion

Thai society since the 1932 Siamese Revolution has been regarded as a "coup culture" or a political system and society constantly at peril for upheaval, a destabilized regime. What this model fails to take into account is the very different origins of most of the conflicts that arrived to coups or rebellion. As this thesis attempts to propose and demonstrate, there are two very different narratives to Thai Nationalism, and as a result, there are two very distinct nationalism**s**. Most of these struggles for the political control of the nation state can be compared, as the two sides of these struggles can be identified with two distinct national identities. Of course there are peculiarities, differences, and a tremendous amount of grey area between these two identities, and a utter lack of certainty regarding the truly believed national identity of any of the historical figures mentioned, the trend of two conflicting national identities explains more than some of the alternately proposed models.

Early scholarship on the history of Thai Nationalism focused on the modernization efforts of King Mongkut and King Chulalongkorn. David K Wyatt proposed that the political upheaval of the 20th century was simply the continuation of the trends established by the modernization efforts of the earlier kings, which produced the Thai Middle Class, the Bureaucrats, and the politicization of the common Thai, leading to the inclusion of non-royal family members in advisorial positions. This model of a continuation flies in the face of the very active role the two Monarchs following these "Modernizers" as both Vajiravudh and Prajadhipok made distinct attempts at developing democratic institutions either within state structure, or beside it (quite physically in the case of Dusit Thani). Vajiravudh's failure to adapt the structure of the monarchy to the time and society he reigned over, would lead to the establishment of a counter-monarchical

circle. The National model that Vajiravudh developed over his reign would starkly oppose the national model of this group, and the group would develop in opposition to this model. The acts of King Prajadhipok would not only salvage the political and societal standing of the Monarch, but preserve the national model of Vajiravudh. While Prajadhipok's denouncement of the regime that displaced him was justified, on the account of their failure to produce a constitution, and in thus producing a democratic replacement for the absolute monarchy, his condemnation would be over not just the individuals who overthrew the nation, but the national model that took over.

The conflict of two national models, while not explicit, nor as easily divisive as can be seen in the 1932 Revolution, has dominated the various coups that have taken place over the past half century. This thesis was unable to continue the scope of this matter, as the two nationalisms proposed become more apparent with the 1959 Coup, which intended to reverse the revolutionary ideals of the 1932 Coup. This thesis was not a history of the identity of two Thai Nationalisms, as such identities have evolved through the periods following, nor was this a proposal for the origins of current discord in Thai society, as both are far more complex topics that are the result of decades of additional occurrences that have altered the modern Nation-State. What this thesis was intended as, was to trace the origins of these two national identities, and explain the history around them. This thesis was intended to refute older historical thought on the origins of the 1932 coup being in the reigns of prior monarchs, and to assert that the sixth and seventh reigns of the Chakri Monarchy, Vajiravudh and Prajadhipok, were pivotal in the formation of Nationalism in Thailand. Without the errs of the reign of Vajiravudh, most significantly with economic mismanagement but also in attempting to force very specific identities of nationalism and of masculinity, the 1932 Revolutionaries may not have been able to find the support that they had. Without the reign of Prajadhipok, before and after the revolution, the image of the monarchy, and the national identity

established in Vajiravudh's reign, would have had difficulty surviving the administration of the "constitutional" assembly. Prajadhipok's abdication speech was pivotal in the re-establishment of more conservative political agendas in Thailand, and established that the monarchy, while no longer in full control of the government, would have a place within politics. The condemnation of any legislation by the royal family, though not necessarily as strongly worded as condemnation implies, has been shown to drastically affect the legislation of the state, a legacy of Prajadhipok's reign. The latest coup, 2014, has been acknowledged by some as being done explicitly to avoid a coup over the inheritance of the monarchy. The current reigning monarch, in all deference possible, has had his position compared to the reign of the monarch a century past, Vajiravudh, for the same struggle for legitimacy, with many openly mocking his character, and for his seeming fixation on not only the national model, but on the masculine model within Thai society.

On the 14th of April, 2017, it was reported to the police and first reported by local news organizations, that the Revolution Memorial Plaque had gone missing. The 1932 Revolution Memorial Plaque was a brass plaque embedded in the asphalt of the Royal Plaza. The Plaque read "…here in the dawn of 24 June 1932, the Khana Ratsadon has brought forth a constitution for the glory of the nation." Reports have surfaced that ultraroyalist groups had threatened to remove the plaque in the months leading to its theft, and that the theft may have been carried out on the night of the 5th of April, when security cameras of the plaza mysteriously malfunctioned. As of this writing, 2019, no group has taken credit for the theft, and no replacement plaque has been commissioned. The history of the revolution, the memory of the revolution, is significant to the modern definitions of Thai nationalism. It was not within the scope of this thesis to cover the entire development of Thai Nationalism, but through the origins of two distinct traditions of nationalism,

a pattern can be perceived. This thesis has hopefully demonstrated that the political landscape of Thailand may be more accurately represented as two cultures than as a coup culture.

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Appendix 1

Collected from the work of Thawatt Mokarapong and Benjamin Batson, the following lists the people involved in the Siamese Revolution, and the names of figures mentioned in this paper. Alternative transliterations are provided, as throughout the thesis, there may have been inconsistent transliteration.

The Chakri Dynasty

Phrabat Somdet Phra Paramoruracha Maha Chakri Borommanat Phra Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke (Rama I) 1782 – 1809
Phrabat Somdet Phra Boromratchapongchet Mahetsawarasunthon Phra Buddha Loetla Nabhalai (Rama II) 1809 – 1824
Phrabat Somdet Phra Paramathiworaset Maha Jessadabodindra Phra Nangklao Chao Yu Hua (Rama III) 1824 – 1851
Phrabat Somdet Phra Paramenthra Maha Mongkut Phra Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua (Rama IV) (King Mongkut) 1851 – 1868
Phrabat Somdet Phra Paraminthra Maha Chulalongkorn Phra Chulachomklao Chao Yu Hua (Rama V) (King Chulalongkorn) 1868 – 1910
Phrabat Somdet Phra Paramenthra Maha Vajiravudh Phra Mongkut Klao Chao Yu Hua (Rama VI) (King Vajiravudh) 1910 – 1925
Phrabat Somdet Phra Paraminthra Maha Prajadhipok Phra Pok Klao Chao Yu Hua (Rama VII) (King Prajadhipok) 1925 – 1935
Phrabat Somdet Phra Paramenthra Maha Ananda Mahidol (Rama VIII) 1935 – 1946
Phrabat Somdet Phra Paraminthra Maha Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX) 1946 – 2016
Somdet Phra Chao Yu Hua Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradebayavarangkun (Rama X) 2016 – present

Ministers of State & Royal Family

Supreme Council of State

Prince Boriphat
Prince Damrong
Prince Naris
Prince Bhanurangsi
Prince of Chantaburi

Prince of Lopburi
Prince Purachatra
Prince Devawongs Varodya

Other Royal Family Members Mentioned

Prince Savangwongse
Prince Pranthuprawat
Prince Rabi
Prince Vajiranana
Prince Boworadet (Prince Bovoradej)
Prince Subhayoga

Members of the 1932 Revolution

The Promoters

1. Lieutenant Prayoon Pamornmontri, Army officer, formerly of King Vajiravudh's Royal Guards
2. Lieutenant Plaek Khittasangkha, later Luang Phibulsonggram, Army officer, student, School of Applied Artillery, France
3. Lieutenant Thatsanai Mitphakdi, Army officer, student, French Cavalry Academy
4. Tua Lophanukrom, scientist studying in Switzerland
5. Luang Siriratchamaitri, diplomat, officer at the Siamese Embassy in Paris
6. Naep Phahonyothin, law student studying in England
7. Pridi Banomyong, law student studying at the Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris

Army Faction

Colonel Phahon Phonphayuhasena (Phot Phahonyothin), Leader of Khana Ratsadon
Phraya Songsuradet (Deva Bandhumasena)
Phraya Ritthiakhaney (Sala Emasiri)
Phra Phrasasphithayayut (Wan Choothin)
Major Luang Phibulsonggram (Plaek Khittasangkha)
Captain Luang Chamnanyutthasin (Choei Rayanan)
Captain Luang Katsongkhram (Thian Kengradomying)
Captain Luang Kriangsakphichit (Khuan Chittakhun)
Captain Luang Chansongkhram (Phan Chalichan)
Captain Luang Chawengsaksongkhram (Chuang Khwanchoet)
Captain Luang Thatsanainiyomsuek (Thatsanai Mittraphakdi)
Captain Luang Phrommayothi (Mangkon Phonchiwin)

Captain Luang Ronnasitthiphichai (Chuea Kanchanaphinthu)
Captain Luang Sawatronnarong (Sawat Darasawat)
Captain Luang Seriroengrit (Charun Rattanakun)
Captain Luang Aduldejcharat (Bat Phuengphrakhun)
Lieutenant Khun Sucharitronnakan (Phong Nakhanut)
Lieutenant Khun Chamnongphummiwet (Chamnong Siwaphaet)
Lieutenant Khun Nirandonchai (Sawek Nilanchai)
Lieutenant Khun Phiphatsorakan (Theng Phatthanasiri)
Lieutenant Khun Plotporapak (Plot Phanusawa)
Lieutenant Khun Rueangwirayut (Bunrueang Wirahong)
Lieutenant Khun Wimonsorakit (Wimon Kengrian)
Lieutenant Khun Sisarakon (Chalo Sithanakon)
Lieutenant Chai Prathipasen
Lieutenant Thuan Wichaikhatthakha
Lieutenant Nom Ketunuti
Minor Lieutenant Charun Chittralak
Minor Lieutenant Saman Thephatsadin Na Ayutthaya
Minor Lieutenant Udom Phutthikasetarin
Major Luang Wichakkonlayut (Sian Susin)

Navy Faction

Group Commander Luang Sinthusongkhramchai (Sin Kamalanavin)
Lieutenant Commander Luang Supachalasai (Bung Supachalasai)
Senior Lieutenant Luang Thamrongnawasawat (Thawan Tharisawat)
Senior Lieutenant Luang Sangworayutthakit (Sangson Suwannachip)
Senior Lieutenant Luang Nithetkonlakit (Klang Rotchanasena)
Senior Lieutenant Luang Nawawichit (Phan Amphaiwan)
Senior Lieutenant Sa-nguan Ruchirapha
Senior Lieutenant Sa-ngop Charunphon
Senior Lieutenant Chalit Kunkamthon
Junior Lieutenant Thonglo Khamhiran
Junior Lieutenant Chip Siriphaibun
Junior Lieutenant Prasoet Suksamai
Junior Lieutenant Wan Ruyuphon
Ensign Chan Ratsamithat
Ensign Thongdi Ra-ngapphai
Chamrat Suwannachip

Civilian Faction

Luang Praditmanutham (Pridi Phanomyong), the head of the civil faction
Luang Sirirajmaitree (Charun Singhaseni)
Luang Kowit-aphaiwong (Khuang Aphaiwong)

Luang Naruebetmanit (Sa-nguan Chuthatemi)
Luang Chamnanitikaset (Uthai Saengmani)
Luang Atthasanraprasit (Thongyen Lilamia)
Luang Atthakitikamchon (Klueng Phahomyonh)
Luang Sunthonthephatsadin (Saphrang Thephatsadin Na Ayutthaya)
Luang Dechatiwongwarawat (M.L. Kri Dechatiwong)
Tua Laphanukrom
Prachuap Bunnak
M.L. Udom Sanitwong
Naep Phahonlayothin
Tawee Boonyaket
Junior Lieutenant Prayoon Pamornmontri
Wilat Osathanon
Charun Suepsaeng
Leng Sisonwong
Direk Jayanama
Wichian Suwannathat
Chun Pinthanon
Sawat Sotthithat
Chittasen Pancha
Yong Phonlabun
Ek Supphapodok
Surin Chinothai
Siri Chatinan
Chaliao Pathummarot
Banchong Sicharun
Prasoet Sicharun
Chaeng Muttafa
Karim Sicharun
Sa-nguan Tularak
Sim Wirawaithaya
Nguan Thongprasoet
Pramot Phuengsunthon
Charoen Pantharo
Thongpleo Chonlaphum
Phadoem Angsuwat
Chup Salayachiwin
Klin Thephatsadin Na Ayutthaya
Son Bunchung
Yon Samananon
Yin Samananon
Police Lieutenant Choei Kalanchai
Police Lieutenant Thiang Chaloemsak.