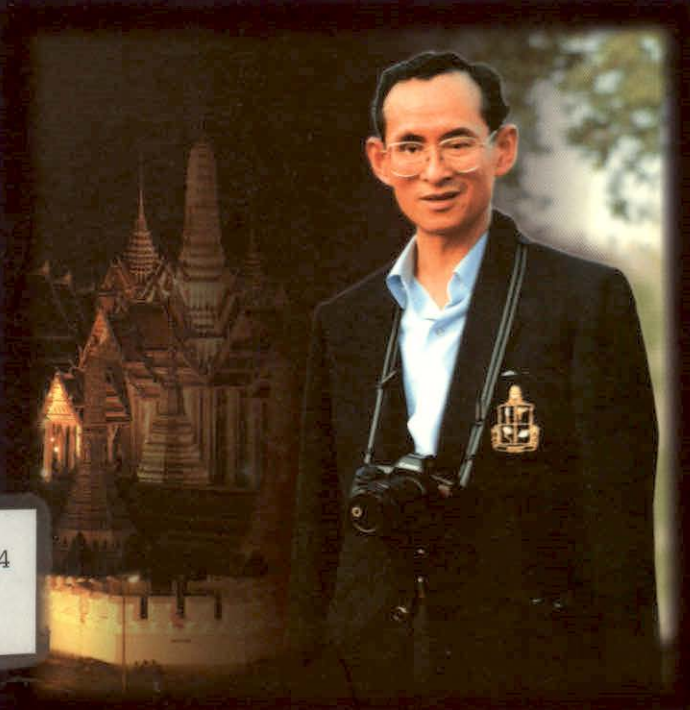
The Thai Monarchy



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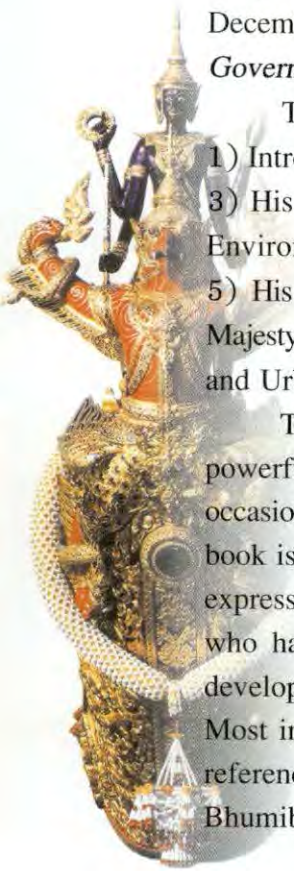
The Thai Monarchy

Preface

The Public Relations Department, Office of the Prime Minister, has published *The Thai Monarchy* as part of a set of three books, in commemoration of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's 72nd Birthday Anniversary on December 5, 1999. The two other books are titled, *The Thai Government and Economy* and *The Thai People and Culture.*



This volume consists of six chapters. They include: 1) Introduction, 2) The Monarchial Institution and the People, 3) His Majesty the King and the Development of a Productive Environment, 4) His Majesty the King and Thai Politics, 5) His Majesty the King and the Thai Economy, and, 6) His Majesty the King and Solutions to Problems of the Environment and Urban Society.

The book profiles King Bhumibol's benevolence and his powerful role in Thai society and politics. On the auspicious occasion of His Majesty's Sixth Cycle Birthday Anniversary, this book is another contribution in the nation's collective effort in expressing respect, gratitude and loyalty to its beloved king who has, for more than 50 years, dedicated himself to the development of Thailand and the well-being of all Thai people. Most importantly, this volume is also intended to be a handy reference that will help explain to foreign readers why King Bhumibol is the "soul of the nation" for the Thai people.

March 2000

Contents

The Thai Monarchy

Introduction 19

The Monarchial Institution and the People 44

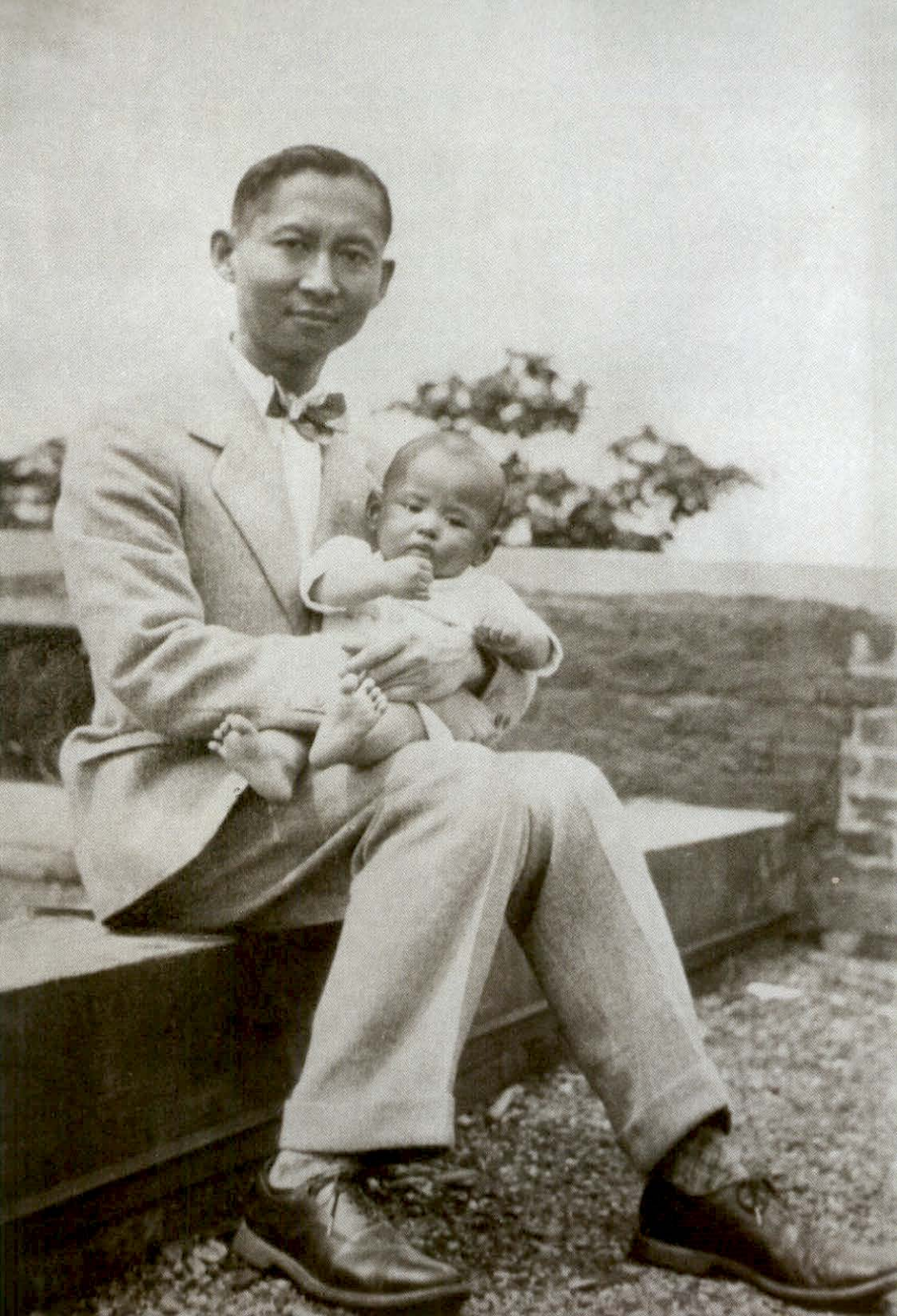
His Majesty the King and the Development of a Productive Environment 67

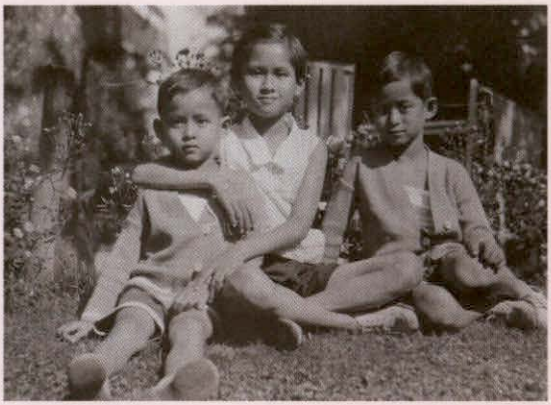
His Majesty the King and Thai Politics 90

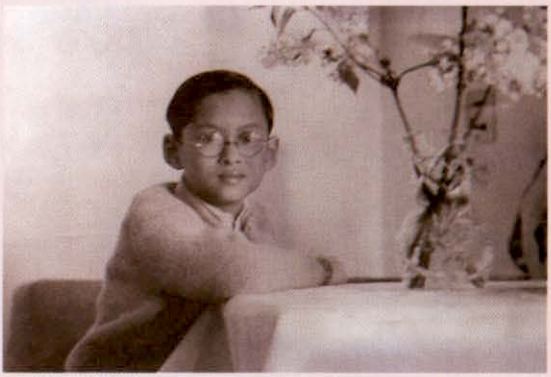
His Majesty the King and the Thai Economy 106

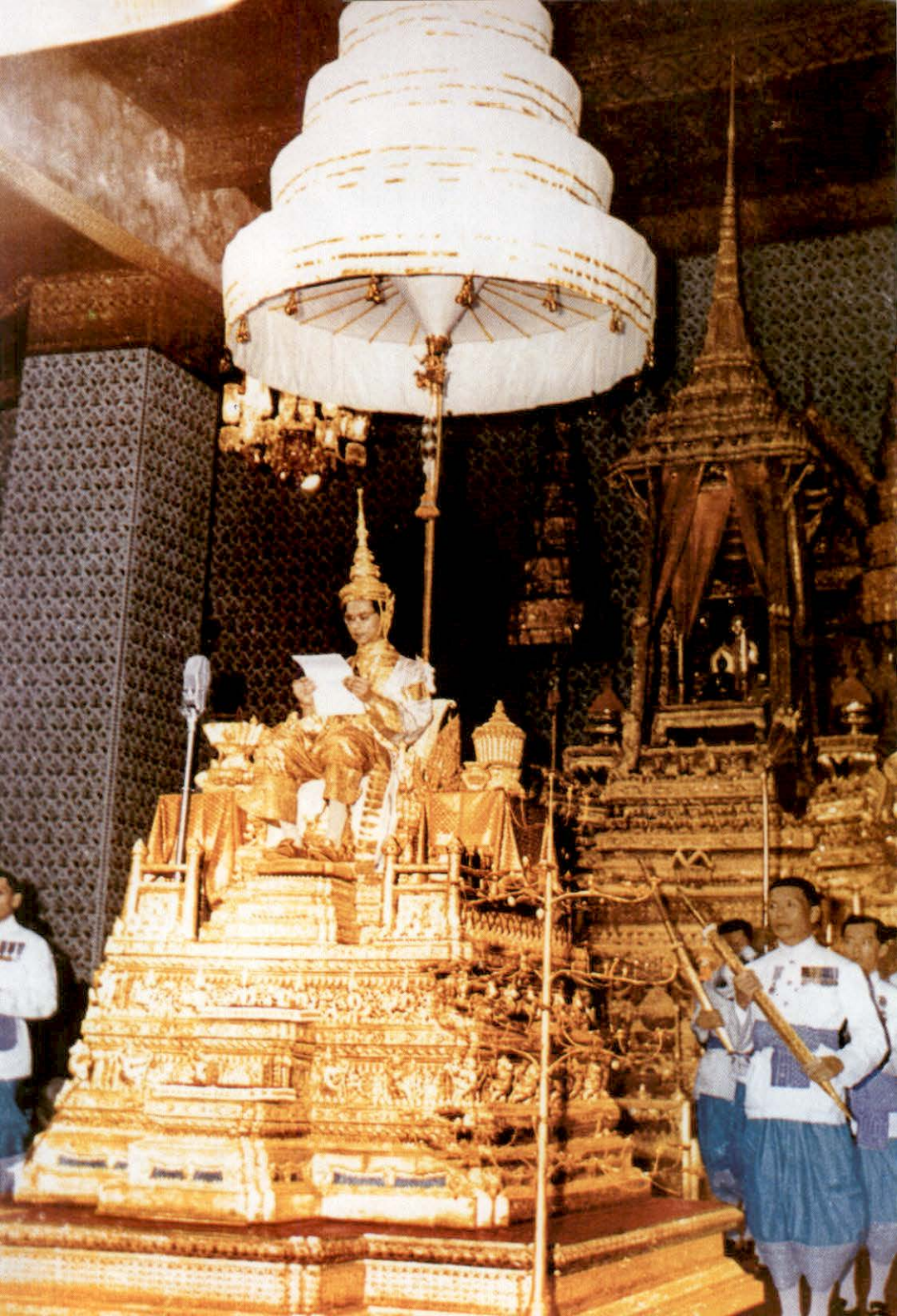
His Majesty the King and Solutions to Problems of the Environment and Urban Society 128

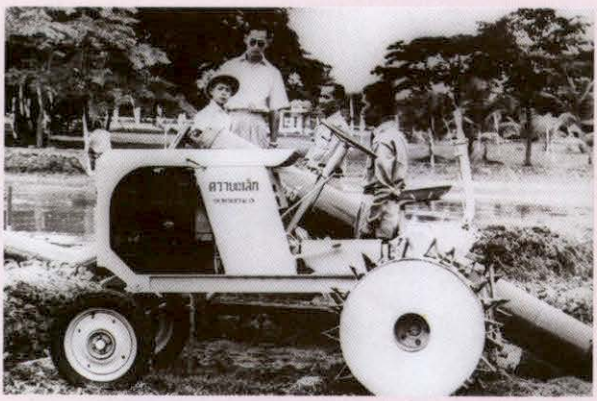
Bibliography 152







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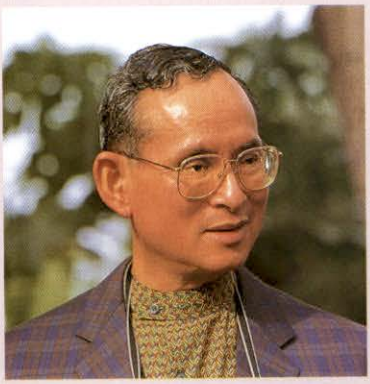
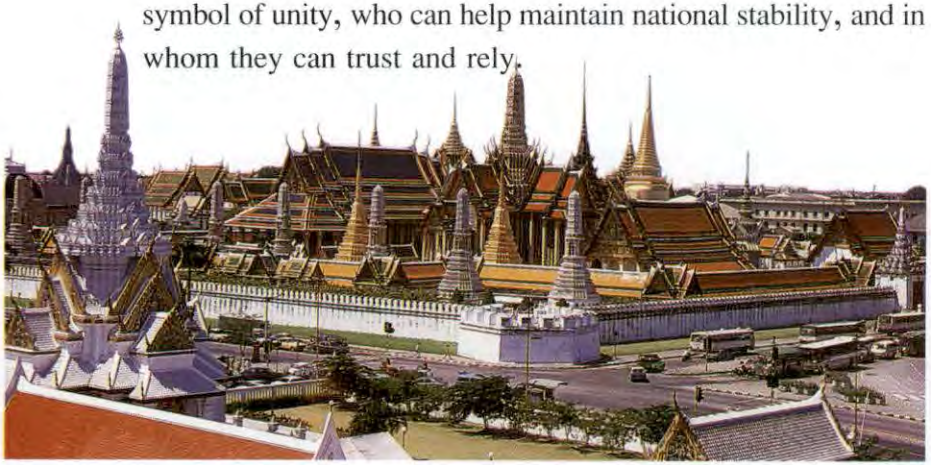


Introduction

By Suwimol Puengprasert

King Bhumibol Adulyadej's Popularity

The fifth of December 1999, 26 days before the year 2000 ushered in the new millenium, was a very special day for 60 million Thai people to rejoice. It gave them an opportunity to celebrate and pay tribute to their beloved and highly revered King Bhumibol Adulyadej on the occasion of his 72nd birthday. This auspicious event was so exceptional that it could hardly be expressed in words. It was a time of great happiness, warmth, and stability, for the Thai people know that the Kingdom is very fortunate to have a king who is the symbol of unity, who can help maintain national stability, and in whom they can trust and rely.



Ascending the throne in 1946, King Bhumibol Adulyadej has reigned the country for 54 years. His reign is the longest in Thai history, 11 years longer than the reign of his grandfather, King Chulalongkorn, who reigned the country for 42 years. Moreover, among the 29 current monarchs throughout the world, he is the longest reigning monarch.

Although only 29 countries in the world have retained the institution of the monarchy, the Thai monarchy and the roles of the Thai monarch are known and admired throughout the world.

In his speech delivered on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of King Bhumibol's ascension to the throne, United States' President Bill Clinton said:

"Your Majesty, Thailand's growing role on the global stage is a fairing tribute to your leadership. You have guarded Thailand through political crisis; you have helped secure a climate in which democracy can flourish. Your tireless efforts, as well as Her Majesty's, to advance rural development have been a model for all the world...."[1]

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On the same occasion, Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain also congratulated the King on the 50th anniversary of his ascension to the throne. The Queen expressed her pleasure in visiting Thailand that year, and said she was fully aware of the respect, reverence and loyalty the King received from his subjects.[2]

The King's story has at times been covered in foreign magazines. For example, both *Time* and *Asiaweek* magazines had his picture on their covers and had cover articles about the celebration of the King's sixth cycle birthday anniversary.

"It is probably safe to say that no monarch in the world is as popular as King Bhumibol. Or so revered. Or so present... His portrait hangs in virtually every home and office in the land, a kind of benevolent father watching over his children. Every night all TV channels run footage of royal family members attending official functions. Some, such as visits by foreign heads of state, are clearly significant; others would make little television sense anywhere else. But, as former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun says, over the years the King has earned the admiration of his people in a manner that cannot be fully comprehended by foreigners.[3]

An article in the *Los Angeles Times* of 28 December 1997 referring to the domestic situation of Thailand in November 1997

highlighted the sharp contrast in the priorities of the Thai people. Despite the fact that the country was undergoing political and economic crises, people were more concerned and worried about the King's health as he underwent a physical checkup at a Bangkok hospital. When it become known that the only remedy to cure his illness was the stability in the country, the politicians resorted to compromise to promptly end all conflicts.

"It would be difficult to imagine such an antidote working in Britain or other countries where monarchies are under siege. Nevertheless, for more than five decades, whenever national nerves are jangled, the Thais have turned for comfort and reassurance to their beloved, American-born King.

"Though little celebrated outside Thailand, Bhumibol, trim and youthful-looking for his age, has been elevated to near-deity status by both rich and poor Thais."[4]

It has been wondered why the constitutional King Bhumibol holds such a significant role since the legitimate ruling power of the king was given over to the elected officials when the absolute monarchy was overthrown in 1932.

All of the above leads us to the question of whether and how the institution of the Thai Monarchy is indispensable to the existence of the country, a small nation that has somehow remained independent for more than 700 years.

The Evolution of the Monarchial Institution

The monarchial institution is the only institution that had continuously molded the Thai identity prior to the era of the constitutional monarchy in 1932. Thus, in order to comprehend the roles of the present monarchy in its two dimensions, that is, as a person and as an institution, they have to be carefully and thoroughly investigated. It is necessary to study the role of the monarch as an institutional framework by reviewing the duties of the monarchs from Sukhothai, Ayutthaya and Rattanakosin periods. In this investigation, we can see that the expectations of the monarch's duties and character have differed from period to period. The other dimension of the monarchy that must be studied is the humanity of the monarch. It is the analysis of his character, activities, and way of life, and their impact on the institutional framework of the monarchy.

In reality, these two dimensions of the institution are inseparable. That is, in order for the monarch to survive his reign, he has to individually be virtuous and capable, while at the same time being empowered by virtue of the tradition of the institutional framework of the monarchy.

However, when the country is in a state of political or economic turmoil or during wartime, the monarch's duties and activities supersede the power described in the code of the institution of the monarchy. In these instances, the monarch's individual capability has played an important role in solving the country's crises, determining the well-being of the country, and at the same time maintaining the stability of the institution itself.

Thus, throughout Thai history, the King has played a pivotal role in the country's political and social development. Although there is limited information available on the early Thai monarchs, we have learned from an inscription stone of Sukhothai Period (1238-1438) that King Ramkamhaeng (1279-1298) invented the Thai alphabet. History also tells us it was one of the great warrior-kings, King Naresuan (1590-1605), who led the country to lasting independence. More recently, history has provided ample evidence on the capability and wisdom of the kings of the Chakri Dynasty (1782- present).

The Changing Monarch-Subject Relationship

There has been a close relationship between the King and the people since the founding of the country. For more than 700 years, throughout the Sukhothai, Ayutthaya and Rattanakosin eras, each kingdom established the qualifications and duties of kingship. Over

the generations, there have been remarkable similarities as well as marked differences in the relationships between the King and his subjects.

We learn from the Sukhothai inscription stone that the king was like the head of a big family. He was either a paternalistic or a fraternal ruler, and was referred to as *Phor Khun* (father). As His Highness Prince Thaniniwat wrote:

"According to the ancient Thais' concept of kingship, the king was the army commander during wartime, (while in) peacetime he was a patriarchal and accessible monarch, whom people revered and to whom they were obedient. This was reflected in the famous Sukhothai inscription that if any person wanted to make his grievance known to the king and wanted justice, he rang the bell which was hung at the gate of the palace and the king would investigate the case."[5]

Another concept of kingship during the Sukhothai Period was that the king was a *Dhamma Raja*, a righteous king. According to the Buddhist's *Dhammasastra* Scripture, the Sukhothai kings had to observe the royal code of conduct "Tenfold Practice" * in order to rule the country peacefully and have the reign flourish.

All evidence suggests that the Sukhothai (1238-1438) monarchial institution was founded on a paternal relationship and the Buddhist doctrines. The Sukhothai kings were like fathers who followed the teaching of the Lord Buddha. This righteous rule brought about the unity, peace and progress of the country.[6]

During the Ayutthaya Period (1350-1767), the Khmer concept of divine kingship replaced the paternalistic ruling style of the Sukhothai. The Ayutthaya kings became divine kings whom the subjects had to worship. The kings instituted many royal rituals, ceremonies and codes to enhance their status as divine monarchs.

Thus, the main difference between the Sukhothai and Ayutthaya kings was the status of divine kingship. The duties over the subjects remained much the same. From the studies of the Indian concept of roles, duties and significance of kingship that influenced the concept of Ayutthayan kingship, the essence of kingship became one of protecting the subjects and facilitating their happy livelihood.[7] Consequently, the divinity of the Ayutthaya kings was ostensibly not to strengthen their divine power, but to enhance their royal obligations to the subjects.[8]

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* The Tenfold Practice or Ten Duties of Kingship as described in the *Sutantapidaka* Scripture comprises alms-giving, morality, generosity, honesty, gentleness, self-restriction, non-anger, non-violence, forbearance and non-obstruction.

The concept of divine kingship inspired royal ceremonies, such as the coronation ceremony, the royal barge procession and the royal land procession. In addition, it brought about the use of a royal codified language.* The terms used to refer to the king also originated during the Ayutthaya Period. They signify the different duties of the king. Mom Rajawong Kukrit Pramoj, a well-known Thai scholar, divided them into five types:[9]

1. "*Phra Chao Yoo Hua*" derives from the words *Phra Chao*, meaning Supreme Being and *Yoo Hua*, meaning Leader. Thus *Phra Chao Yoo Hua* signifies that the king is the leader and the head of state and the subjects.

2. "*Phra Chao Phaen Din*" means that the king possesses the whole land of the country. It is a duty of the king to maintain the prosperity and fertility of the land.

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* In general, royal codified language is used to address the king and members of the royal family. The written royal language was first used during the Ayutthaya Period. General Mom Thaviwong Thawalsakdi once said, "The first written royal codified language was found in the Royal Household Code of King Baromtrailoknard of Ayutthaya. This Code instituted the language to be used when conversing with the king, and to be used to refer to things. This Royal Code is probably the first publication of the royal condified language.

3. "*Chao Cheewit*" means that the lives of the subjects belong to the king. The king is empowered to execute or grant full pardons. This signifies that the king is obliged to protect the lives of his subjects while maintaining the stability of the country.

4. "*Dhamma Raja*" means that the king upholds the rule of Buddhist righteousness and follows the teaching of the Lord Buddha. This signifies that the king exercises everything in accordance with Buddhist righteousness.

5. "*Phra Maha Kasat,*" means Great Warrior. During wartime, the king is the supreme commander of the armed forces. This signifies that the king is responsible for the protection of the country and people.

These five terms have been clearly integrated into the Thai concept that defines the monarchial institution. They remain in use today, signifying that the ideals of Ayutthaya kingship have been sustained into the Rattanakosin Period. However, the 218 years of the Rattanakosin Period have seen many changes, including the establishment of a New Kingdom, the confrontation with the western world, and the conversion to a constitutional monarchy. As a result, the Rattanakosin concept of kingship has been adapted to emphasize the identity of the king's role as an individual.

From his comparative studies on the monarchs of the Chakri, Sukhothai (*Dhamma Raja*) and Ayutthaya (Divine King) periods, Mom Rajawong Kukrit Promoj concluded that they shared certain characteristics which made them revered, but not remote from the people.

"(The present Thai monarch)... is neither a divine king like the Khmer's, nor a common person like the Sukhothai's; but he shares both characters because:

1. Family is very important to Thai people's way of life. Although the king is revered as a super-natural being, Thai people still think that he is the leader of the family. If a chance is provided, they can go to him and tell about their grievance. This is why the king is not totally divine.

2. Buddhism is another factor that helps promote the relationship between the monarchial institution and the people. To the Thai people, the king is not out of reach. Buddhism believes in divine beings, but they are not as significant and benevolent as the Three Gems of Buddhism (the Lord Buddha, his teaching and his disciples). ...Although Thai people have accepted the Khmer concept of divine kingship, their king is a Buddhist like they themselves. This has brought about unity of the nation."[10]

Anand Panyarachun, a former Prime Minister, has expressed his personal perception in the following manner:

"The Sukhothai style of kingship, nonetheless, has never entirely disappeared from the national consciousness, and it was resurrected when the rulers of the Chakri Dynasty ushered in a new era in 1782."[11]

Moreover, former Prime Minister Anand expressed his viewpoint concerning the Rattanakosin approach to maintaining the balance of tradition and the modern ideas, within the monarchial institution. He stated,

"Our kings, and especially the present King, have been able to move with the times, to blend tradition with modern ideas. King Bhumibol stands in the middle. There are some monarchies in Europe that go to one extreme--they become commoners, they ride bicycles on the streets, they shop in the supermarket. And there are other monarchies that still retain the traditional pomp and circumstance. But the institution of the monarchy, has to retain a certain degree of mystique, because the moment you subject the monarchy to daily public scrutiny, it could become counter productive."[12]

However, in order to maintain the stability of the country and to integrate tradition with modern ideas, it is necessary to rely on another factor--that is, the individual capabilities of the nine kings of the Chakri Dynasty.

The Early Rattanakosin Period

There have been four major changes during the Rattanakosin Period. The first occurred during the reigns of the first three Chakri monarchs (Kings Rama I to Rama III). The second major change developed in the reign of King Rama IV at the time when Thailand was being modernized. The country continued developing in all aspects during the reigns of King Rama V and King Rama VI. The third significant change took place during the reign of King Rama VII as the country transitioned from an absolute monarchy through the period of the first constitutional king, King Rama VIII who reigned for only nine years. The fourth change occurred in the present reign of King Bhumibol, King Rama IX. King Bhumibol is the king who best defines the new Thai monarchial institution because he is the only Thai king who was crowned in the coronation ceremony but enthroned as constitutional monarch.

During the early Rattanakosin Period, there were three primary royal duties shared by the first three kings of the Chakri Dynasty. The first duty was to protect the country from war, a responsibility that had been sustained since the Ayutthaya Period. The second duty was to enhance the people's morale and to reform the country structurally and morally, while the third duty was to strengthen, develop and bring the country to prosperity.

A study of the performance of the three kings in fulfilling these duties reflects their wisdom in administrative psychology. King Rama I, the founder of the Chakri Dynasty, built the new capital with beautiful and majestic palaces and temples after the fashion of the Ayutthaya Period[13] to enhance the spirit of the people who had lost their houses during the war with Burma. The King emphasized the construction in all details. He ordered the construction of Amarintharaphisek Throne Hall* in wood, copying the design of Ayutthaya's Sanphet Prashat Throne Hall.[14]

Dusit Maha Prasat Throne Hall

The great heritage passed on by King Rama II to the Thai people was work in handicrafts, literature, dancing and music. The King himself was a great artist who loved all kinds of artwork as well as the arts. However, his reasons for reviving the art and culture of the country were stated thusly:

* In 1789, a thunderbolt struck at the second small front portico of the Amarintharaphisek Throne Hall and it was almost completely destroyed in a fire. It was demolished and replaced by the construction of Dusit Maha Prasat Throne Hall.

"... It is necessary to bring back to normal the spirit of people who have suffered through the war because the work of art can ease the feeling of the people. Another reason is to psychologically show that the country is now as flourishing as it used to be during the Ayutthaya Period."[15]

King Rama III encouraged trading with different countries, especially with China. As a consequence, during his reign, the country's income increased enormously and its economy was more stable than that of the former reigns. This economic development reaped benefits later as, "...the amount that was saved during his time was spent to barter for the independence of the country when there was a territorial conflict between Thailand and France in 1893...."[16]

King Rama III was also a great patron of Buddhism. He gave a commission to build and renovate many temples and the statues of the Lord Buddha. These kings' efforts to sustain culture, art and religion can be interpreted that the early Chakri kings wanted to retrieve Ayutthaya's tradition. Although Ayutthaya had fallen, the early kings of the Chakri Dynasty were able to rule the country in the same way as their ancestors had during the Ayutthaya Period.

Modernization of the Country

One of the most important achievements continually carried out by King Rama IV, King Rama V and King Rama VI was the developing of the country and the laying of the foundations for modern democracy. As strange as it may seem, these absolute kings were willing to lessen their power, in order to modernize their country and preserve Siam's independence.

The reign of King Rama IV was the transitional period from old Siam to modern Thailand. King Rama IV (King Mongkut) was recognized as a democratic monarch. He extended freedom of religion to the people and he initiated the election of jury and the court's prophets.[17] The changes to the country and in the royal tradition began in 1851 when he ascended the throne. At that time the European powers had already begun to colonize the countries in Asia. The book entitled *King Mongkut*, written by A. B. Griswold and translated into Thai by M.C. Subhadradis Diskul, contains information derived from a critical analysis on the King's wisdom or vision as seen through his foreign policies.

"King Mongkut realized that the only way a country in Asia could survive was to make use of the European influence to modernize itself. Japan also did the same thing later. The King had observed what had happened to China when it tried to drive the westerners out of the country. He was probably the only person in Thailand who knew that China was truly defeated in the Opium War and did not

believe the propaganda that China had to surrender certain rights to England only as a compromise. Under Rama V's leadership, Thailand escaped China's fate. It accomplished this by trading with westerners and adopting to new ideas."[18]

King Rama V, a son of King Mongkut, who succeeded to the throne, continued with the policies initiated by his father and successfully led the country in a direction that sustained its independence.

There were many things that King Rama V did to lay the foundations of democracy. His abolition of slavery implied that he valued human rights. He also appointed national and Privy Counselors, and he established the foundations of local administration. Local people were given the right to elect their village headmen.[19]

King Rama VI was educated in England, a model country for the system of constitutional monarchy. As he fully absorbed the constitutional monarchy system, he established the model city *"Dusit Thani"* * to experiment with the new system of administration. The King also wrote a book called *Daily Record of Events*, giving his opinions on democracy, and expressing his thoughts about the duties of kingship.

"... It is no doubt that Thailand will have a constitution, although it is harmful in a certain way. However, the absolute monarchy is also harmful. (Many people of that time felt that way

* Dusit Thani, a model democratic city, is founded and located at the Phayathai Palace, covering the area of 2 1/2 rais. The city planning was very systematic. There were public utilities, such as electricity and water supply, government offices, houses and temples. Court personnel and government officials were allowed to build their houses in the compound in accordance with the city plan, as they were inhabitants of the city.

too!) There is a problem of what to choose. We'd better to leave it to the people to choose. I myself have realized how difficult it is to be king, but I have been trying my best and hope that it will be beneficial to the nation...."[20]

The Move Toward a Constitutional Monarchy

On the 24th of June 1932, the absolute monarchy in Thailand was toppled and the king became a constitutional monarch.

King Rama VII himself was an advocate of democracy, even before the 1932 coup. He was in favor of the system of constitutional monarchy. "As Siam has progressed, (some) people (have wanted) to change the system of government to constitutional monarchy. Ever since my succession to the throne, I have wished to have the change go as smoothly as possible. This is the reason why, when the promoters of June 1932 coup wanted me to become a constitutional monarch, I was willing to accept (their recommendation)."[21]

Subsequently, King Rama VII granted the first Constitution of Siam on the 10th of December 1932. This constitution had the effect of limiting the power of the later two kings, King Ananda Mahidol and King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

King Bhumibol Adulyadej, in an interview with the *National Geographic* of October 1982 reviewed the major accomplishments of the Chakri Dynasty with the following analysis:

"Of the nine kings, I am the ninth. Each has had a special characteristic. Rama I built the system of governing, of military security, of culture et cetera. ... Rama II followed through, and, as he got older, he emphasized literature and art. He was himself an artist. Rama III set up the administration of the country.

"Rama IV was a philosopher and scientist and brought in modern technology. He blended modern science with a traditional religious outlook. Rama IV--King Mongkut, of The King and I fame, taught himself English and Latin. He calculated everything and predicted an eclipse that he went to see. He initiated the modernization of Thailand, but it was during the reign of his son Rama V, King Chulalongkorn, that it blossomed.

"King Chulalongkorn set up all the ministries and railroads and systems of education.

"King Rama VI continued with more emphasis on foreign relations. He, too, was an artist. The seventh reign was unfortunate, because there was an international depression. King Rama VII was in a difficult position, the treasury was nearly drained. He set up democracy, but the ones who wanted the democracy cut him short. He would have set up a real democracy in a few years instead of the government that was not well devised, not well studied. We still have the effect of it.

"The eighth reign, my brother, had no time to do so many things - during and after World War II, (it was) a difficult time. But he set up, perhaps without knowing, the new kingship. The people had somebody to look upon as a symbol. When he died he was 20, a young man with good future. A new thing, because in the past kings were perhaps more sheltered. He was like raising a flag. But he also was cut short.

"So I came, when I was 18. Now (that was) 36 years ago, quite a long time. ... The palace was crumbling down. It was just after the war, and nobody had taken care of things. I had to reconstruct. I don't demolish. I put things together piece by piece. Slowly, (I did so) - for 36 years. So this reign is perhaps characterized (by

steady, incremental progress) going step by step. Evolution (is the keynote). Looking at the good things of the past. Traditions (are) perpetuated and transformed. That is the lesson. We take old traditions and reconstruct them to be used in the present time and in the future."[22]

Also in 1982, the King gave his opinion on the roles of the Thai monarchial institution to a group of foreign correspondents.

"It is very difficult to describe the role of the king, because each situation is different. But the basic role of our constitutional monarch is to be the head of state. In fact, it is like a figurehead. But we must have a figurehead like we have a country. We must have a name of the country. Even the communist countries have names for their countries, and they also have their leaders. A leader is a symbol, whether he happens to have power or not. So a constitutional monarch is first of all a symbol of the country. He must change with the country but, at the same time, he must keep alive the spirit of the

country. It's like being a representative of our embodiment, or the soul of the country. That means that while all the people who compose a country have different characters, the common character of a people must be embodied by the king...."[23]

The Role of Today's Monarch

Throughout 700 years, the Thai monarchial institution has been the pillar of the country's stability, although the pillar of each period has varied from age to age. The Sukhothai's monarch was a paternalistic kingship while the Ayutthaya's was a divine kingship. It has been a combination of these two types that has made up the special character of the Rattanakosin's monarchs. That is to say, the personal character of the monarch is today more prevalent than the institution.

It is self-evident that the most significant change incurred, to date, by the monarchial institution is the change from the absolute monarchy to the constitutional monarchy. Yet, perhaps, the change with the most long-term effect is that the Chakri monarchs have been willing to bestow the ruling power to their people.

Referring to the terms "reign" and "rule", we can see that before the overthrow of the absolute monarchy in 1932, the kings of every period held the right to rule and to reign at the same time. But if King Bhumibol is not entitled to rule, where then is his true power?

Although he has not ruled, the King has reigned the kingdom for more than 53 years. If we consider the five traditional duties and roles of kingship we are led to ask, "has King Bhumibol completed all of the duties and roles of the monarch?" Has His Majesty's performance

as the leader of the nation, the owner of the land of the whole kingdom, the lord of life, the righteous king, and the commander of the armed forces justified the supreme reverence of his people and his extreme de facto power so unusual in a constitutional monarch?

The following chapters will provide non-Thai readers with some insight as to the source of King Bhumibol's true power, and the reasons he is so revered by his countrymen. For the Thai people, we already have the answer in our mind. We understand why His Majesty has been able to bring back the monarchial institution as the symbol of the country, and enable the institution to hold the hearts of the people, ensure the stability of the country, and bring prosperity to the nation as a whole.

Footnotes

[1] สุนทรพจน์ของประธานาธิบดีบิล คลินตัน จากเทปข่าว พ.ศ. 2539.

[2] พระราชดำรัสอำนวยพรในสมเด็จพระราชินีนาถอลิซาเบธที่ 2 จากเทปข่าว พ.ศ. 2539.

[3] Julian Gearing, "A Very Special Monarch", **Asiaweek**, (December 3, 1999), Page 44, 46.

[4] David Lamb, "A Figurehead With Absolute Power", **Los Angeles Times**, (December 28, 1997), Page A6.

[5] กนก วงษ์ตระหง่าน, "พระมหากษัตริย์กับประชาชน", **แนวพระราชดำริด้านการเมืองการปกครองของพระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัว**, สถาบันไทยศึกษา และฝ่ายวิจัย จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย, หน้า 17.

[6] อ้างแล้ว, หน้า 19.

[7] อ้างแล้ว, หน้า 22.

[8] อ้างแล้ว.

[9] อ้างแล้ว, หน้า 22 - 23.

[10] อ้างแล้ว, หน้า 26.

[11] อานันท์ ปันยารชุน, "A Personal Reflection", **King Bhumibol Adulyadej : Thailand's Guiding Light**, The Post Publishing Pcl., (1996), หน้า 170.

[12] Julian Gearing, "King of Hearts", **Asiaweek**, (December 3, 1999), Page 52.

[13] ข้อความบรรยายประกอบภาพที่ 11 หน้า 8, **สมุดภาพเหตุการณ์สำคัญของกรุงรัตนโกสินทร์**, คณะกรรมการจัดงานสมโภชกรุงรัตนโกสินทร์ 200 ปี, สำนักราชเลขาธิการ, (2525).

[14] อ้างแล้ว, หน้า 9.

[15] ทองต่อ กล้วยไม้ ณ อยุธยา, "การทำนุบำรุงศิลปะ นาฏศิลป์ ดุริยางคศิลป์ และวรรณกรรม", **ทศพิธราชธรรม**, บริษัท ต้นอ้อ จำกัด, (กรุงเทพฯ, 2535), หน้า 32.

[16] คำปรารภของ ฯพณฯ นายกรัฐมนตรี พลเอกเปรม ติณสูลานนท์, "รัฐบาลในพระบาทสมเด็จพระปรมินทรมหาภูมิพลอดุลยเดช", **แผ่นดินพระนั่งเกล้าฯ**, กองวรรณคดี และประวัติศาสตร์ กรมศิลปากร, พิมพ์ครั้งที่ 2,(กรุงเทพฯ, 2530).

[17] แนวพระราชดำริเกี่ยวกับการปกครองระบอบประชาธิปไตย, **พระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัวกับรัฐสภา**, วุฒิสภา (พ.ศ. 2535-2539), (2539), หน้า 42.

[18] นายเอ. บี กริสโวลด์ เรียบเรียง หม่อมเจ้าสุภัทรดิศ ดิศกุล ทรงแปล, "พระบาทสมเด็จพระจอมเกล้าเจ้ากรุงสยาม บทที่ 1", **ทำเนียบราชตระกูลในกรุงสยาม และพระบาทสมเด็จพระจอมเกล้าเจ้ากรุงสยาม**, พระบาทสมเด็จพระปรมินทรมหาภูมิพลอดุลยเดชฯ ทรงพระกรุณาโปรดเกล้าฯ ให้จัดพิมพ์, (2537).

[19] "แนวพระราชดำริเกี่ยวกับการปกครองระบอบประชาธิปไตย", **พระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัวกับรัฐสภา**, หน้า 44.

[20] อ้างแล้ว, หน้า 51.

[21] อ้างแล้ว, หน้า 58 - 60.

[22] Denis D. Gray and Bart Mcdowell, "Thailand's Working Royalty", **National Geographic**, October, 1982, in **The King of Thailand in World Focus**, The Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand, (Bangkok, 1988), Page 131.

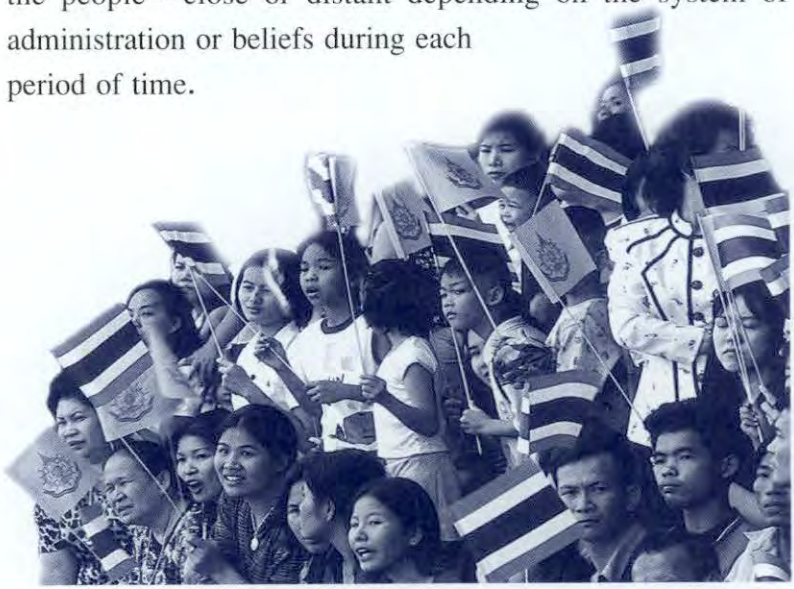
[23] "Give More, Take less", **Leaders Magazine**, April-June, 1982, in **The King of Thailand in World Focus**, The Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand, (Bangkok, 1988), Page 135.

The Monarchial Institution and the People

By Dusdi Naiwattanakul

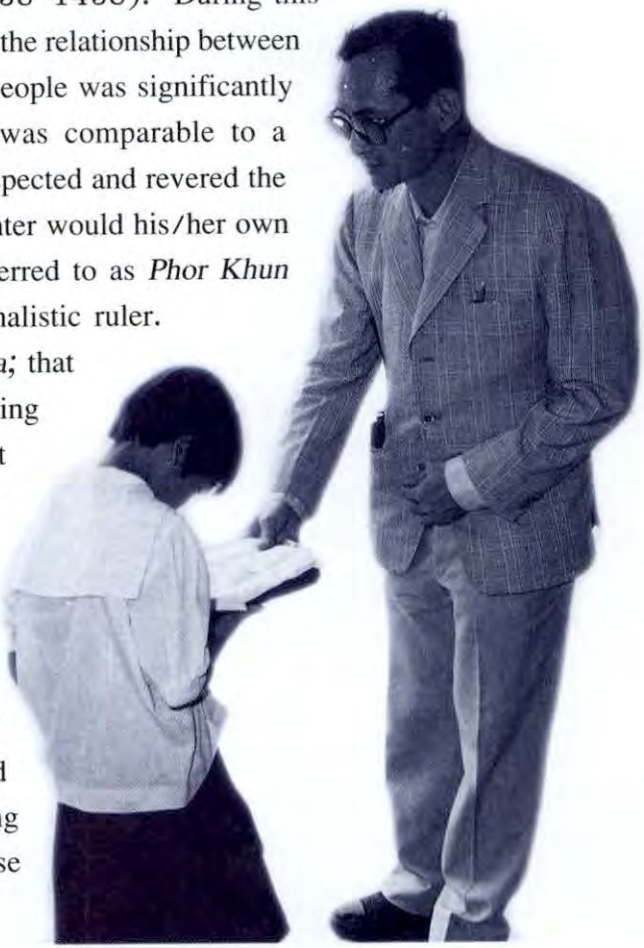
It is an accepted fact that the monarch has been the pillar of stability of Thailand since ancient times. The integrity, independence and development of the country, and the livelihood, well-being and serenity of the people are related to, and assured by, the institution of the monarchy.

Throughout the country's long history, there has been a connection in one way or another between the monarch and the people--close or distant depending on the system of administration or beliefs during each period of time.



Sometimes it was a paternal relationship; at other times it was a divine king-subject relationship. However, the spiritual tie between the supreme ruler and the people has never been broken. It has survived internal and external pressures of many kinds, and the monarch has remained the pillar of the nation and the symbol of the country's sovereignty.

The first integrated Thai nation dates to the Sukhothai Period (1238-1438). During this period of Thai history, the relationship between the monarch and his people was significantly close, and the king was comparable to a father. The people respected and revered the king as a son or daughter would his/her own father. The king, referred to as *Phor Khun* (father), was a paternalistic ruler. He was *Dhamma Raja;* that is, a monarch upholding the rule of Buddhist righteousness. People could go directly to the king whenever they had a grievance. They rang the bell that was hung in front of the king's palace, and the king upon hearing the bell took the case under consideration.



During the Ayutthaya Period (1350-1767), Hinduism was introduced to the country and was blended with Buddhism, the national religion. Under the influence of Hinduism, in which the king was a reincarnation of a deity, the Ayutthaya kings were revered as gods. Thus the relationship between the king and the people changed; it became distant. It was like a relationship between the top and the bottom of a pyramid. The king was placed at the top because he was the supreme ruler while the people were at the bottom, resulting in an immense gap between them. Royal rituals and ceremonies were incorporated into the functions of the throne to enhance the state of divine kingship. At that time, the country's growth was centralized in the capital city where the king lived.

During the Thonburi (1767-1782) and early Rattanakosin (1782-present) Periods, Thailand went through political changes and hardships in founding the new kingdoms. The king played a very important role as the single figure capable of stabilizing and uniting the country. However, the relationship between the king and the people was still in pyramid form. The people were the subordinates revering the king as god. The gap between them was still very great. Unlike the Sukhothai Period, there was a lack of communication and understanding between the king and his subjects, although the king was a good monarch to whom the people were loyal.

The relationship became closer during the reign of King Rama IV (King Mongkut, 1851-1868). This corresponded with the development of the country and the introduction of, and intermingling with, western civilization. King Mongkut abolished an ancient order that had required that people close their doors and windows when the king passed. He also introduced scheduled times when people could take their complaints to the king. King Rama V continued this close relationship with ordinary people. This was the beginning of a more personal relationship between the king and the people. During his reign, as it became more practical, King Rama V traveled to the country-side, meeting with people and gathering information about their problems, their needs and their well-being. This paved the way for the initiation of large-scale administrative reforms to develop remote areas.

Their wisdom and their vision strengthened the security and stability of the succeeding sovereigns. Although political changes took place in the kingdom, especially when the country was transformed into a constitutional monarchy in 1932, the monarch has remained the symbol of unity. Since the inception of the

constitutional monarchy, close contact between the monarch and his subjects has been noticeable. King Rama VIII, although he was born, grew up and was educated in a foreign country, strove to cultivate personal contacts with people when he returned to Thailand twice (in 1938 and 1945-1946). He listened to the grievances of the people, and the people revered and loved him. This close contact has continued through the reign of the present King. His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej has dedicated his time and energy to uplifting the poor and underprivileged people, to strengthening the well-being of the society, to developing the country, and to strengthening national cohesion and stability. This has resulted in an almost personal relationship between the monarch and his people to a degree never before experienced.

His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's Ascension to the Throne: Obstacles and Innovation

Although King Bhumibol Adulyadej became King unexpectedly, more than fifty years under his reign have proved his abilities as a righteous and benevolent ruler. He ascended to the throne when he was very young and had not been fully prepared for assumption of such an august responsibility. To complicate matters, the political situation at that time was turbulent. The absolute monarchy had been abruptly brought to an end in 1932 and was followed by the abdication of King Rama VII on 2 March 1934.[1] Prince Ananda Mahidol was chosen to ascend the throne and became King Rama VIII in the same year. With the sudden death of King Rama VIII on 9 June 1946, which brought great sorrow to the people, Prince Bhumibol Adulyadej succeeded to the throne as King Rama IX.

As King Bhumibol Adulyadej was not born to be King[2], he had to prepare himself and, therefore, changed his studies to the field of public administration, including political science, social science and law. He was only 18, not of legal age, when he became King and, thus, he had to have a regent council to act on his behalf. When he acceded to the throne he did not know very well the Thai ways of life because his background was remote from Thailand. With the political changes of 1932 and because of the health of his elder brother, King Rama VIII, King Bhumibol and his family had lived in Switzerland when he was young.

At first it was difficult for him to uphold his conviction to help promote the well-being of the people and to develop the country. Because of the political context of that time, the King's life was not harmonious. The constitutional monarchy was still young, and this new concept of government administration antagonized and alienated the monarch.[3] Also, in the early days, there were many

changes in government by coup d'etat, and the aftermath of World War II meant difficult times for the country.[4] Moreover, as the center and the unifying force of the nation, the King had to work very hard to bring cohesion to the country during the Cold War when it was confronted with a communist insurgency.

Although there have been limitations and obstacles since the beginning of his reign, His Majesty the King has successfully implemented many development projects and won the hearts of the people. All development projects initiated by the King have originated from his constant wish to improve the well-being of the people. This reflects his thoughts and concerns for the people. In a letter to a former classmate, he wrote,

"I learn to love my people only when I have contact with them. In this connection I learn the value of Love. I am not seriously homesick. I have learnt from my work here that my place is where my people are."[5]

His intention to help the poor countrymen and to make the country flourish stems from his conviction that the grievance of the poor is tantamount to the grievance of the country, and the grievance of the country is the grievance of the sovereign. This genuine concern for his subjects makes the King most revered and adored by the people. His esteem is not limited to the Thai people, though.

He has historically earned worldwide acclaim as one of the hardest working monarchs in the world. In part, this is because at crucial times in his reign he has spent up to eight months a year in the most remote and sometimes insurgent-filled areas of Thailand, traveling as much as of 30,000 miles a year.[6] This strength of character derives from the fact that he was brought up and taught properly by the late Princess Mother. While living abroad, the Princess raised him to live like a commoner and emphasized discipline. She regularly reminded him of his duties and responsibilities to Thailand. Her Royal Highness Princess Galyani Vadhana, Kromluang Naradhi-wasrajanagarindra, the King's elder sister, in an interview, said,

"For our family, we do not have to think what our responsibilities are. Responsibilities are something natural. The first thing we were taught is to ask ourselves, 'What can we do for our country?' "[7]

His care and dedication for the well-being of the people probably originated from the time when he was the Prince Brother. He was with King Rama VIII on his second return to Thailand in 1945 and accompanied King Rama VIII on his visits to country people in such places as Samut Prakan, Pathum Thani, Nonthaburi, Chachoengsao, Samut Sakhon and Nakhon Pathom. With these opportunities to have personal contact with the people, he was able to sense their happiness and their suffering. These visits inspired him to work for all people of the country.[8] Some of these works are still in progress and some have been successfully completed. Yet he has not deviated from his oath upon his ascension to the throne that:

"We shall reign with righteousness for the benefit and happiness of the Siamese people."

Because of his love and concern for his people, the King can bear all kinds of hardship for their happiness and well-being. He is happiest when he works for them. In an interview in the book, *"Our Beloved King,"* published on the occasion of the King's birthday on 5 December 1976, Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, the King's daughter, said,

"The time when the King is happy is when he is planning development projects that he thinks will bring to the people prosperity and benefits, and when people are concerned about him and their fellow citizens."[9]

The capabilities and wisdom which have made him accepted and respected by many foreign leaders since his state visits between 1960-1967 are due to his life and upbringing, and his educational experience in a foreign country when he was young. The King studied at Lausanne University, Switzerland. He returned to Switzerland, after he was crowned King, to continue his studies until his graduation in the field of public administration.

His studies and experience as a commoner abroad, not only molded him into a versatile and intellectual person, accepted by many powerful national leaders, but also into a compassionate and

friendly person. The King is far-sighted and intelligent. He keeps up with current events and he can speak four languages, namely English, French, German and Latin.[10] He is gentle, kind, understanding and friendly. This makes his character unique and he appeals to the people and has their love and respect. As is seen on his many visits, people love to be close to him. He is an innovative King and he understands local problems and supports efforts to help the people and solve the problems.

His Majesty King Bhumibol is a *Dhamma Raja* (righteous King) who attentively and continuously performs royal activities for the benefit of the people. He has dedicated his time and energy to their well-being. He works very hard to reach people, and is not afraid of any difficulties he must overcome to do so. His role as a constitutional King differs from the role of the kings of most other countries. In the hearts and minds of Thai people, the King holds two positions. He is revered as a divine King, and he is the Father of the Nation. He deeply cares for the people. This can be seen by his sacrificing his own happiness for their benefit and happiness. People love and adore him, and exhibit an uncommon degree of loyalty to him.

This strong and manifest relationship between the King and the people signals that there is no longer a gap between the King and the people. They are no longer the top and the base of the pyramid as in the ancient days.

The King's Wisdom to Build a Strong Relationship with the People

During the reign of King Rama IX, the strong ties between the monarch and the people have brought a cooperative "force" to the nation because the monarch is where the people's hearts and souls

are unified. This strong bond and unity has enabled the country to overcome political obstacles and to flourish.

Because he is concerned about the people, the King has used his abilities and has sponsored royal activities to help solve their problems, and thereby to become closer to them. With his vast knowledge of the arts and sciences he tries to solve the problems by initiating development projects that will uplift the well-being of the people. He also gives moral support to the people in times of crisis, which strengthens national stability. This has been seen since the very beginning of his reign when King Rama VIII passed away unexpectedly, and Prince Bhumibol became King Rama IX on 9 June 1946. People were in a state of shock and very disheartened, but the King had to go back to Switzerland to continue his education. Although he was only 18, with his understanding and knowledge of the use of mass media, he was able to encourage his

people, to strengthen their morale and to communicate his spiritualities with the Thai people, thus making them feel close to him while he was abroad. The King sent a memoir he wrote to be published in *Literary Circle* which read:

"August 19, 1946: Today I had to depart... There was a big crowd on Rajadamnern Klang Road. People came very close to the car I rode in. I was afraid that the car would run over them. The car drove through the crowd very slowly. When it arrived at Wat Benjamaborpit, it sped up. Then I heard someone crying out, 'Please don't leave the people.' I wanted to cry back that if the people did not leave me, how could I leave them...."[11]

Early in his reign, in an effort to build a stronger relationship with the people, His Majesty produced movies about his own life. The proceeds from the production and distribution of these movies funded public welfare and social development projects. Besides contributing to the country's development, this project also allowed the populace to know their monarch better, and thereby feel closer to him. The King also founded in 1951 a short wave station broadcasting at 46.8 meters, and a private A.M. radio station, *"Or Sor,"* broadcasting from the Dusit Palace at the frequency of 225 meters, 1332 Kilohertz. At first, the King himself was a disc jockey. He also recorded music programs and arranged music performances in the afternoon for students and the general public. Since founding the Or Sor radio station, the King has used his talent as a media person, and has made wise use of this method of communication to penetrate into the hearts and souls of the people, thus allowing them to understand him and his concerns for their well-being. Over the years, the Or Sor radio station has continued to serve as an informal

channel of contact between the King and the people, and as a means of disseminating the news to the general public.[12] Also, it has served a charitable purpose, inviting the people to join the King in giving donations to those who suffer from specific disasters. People are very delighted to have this opportunity to make merit with the King.

Between 1953-1959, the King traveled to every province of the country, meeting the people. These royal visits yielded significant consequences. The King had an opportunity to contact his people closely and royal development projects were initiated at his behest to improve the livelihood of poor people living in remote parts of the country. On his trips made to the Central part of the country in 1953-1954, to the Northeast in 1955, to the North in 1956, and to the South in 1958, the King listened and learned, first-hand, the problems affecting the people's livelihood, and he suggested practical solutions.[13] Through these visits with his subjects, the King's activities became mainly concerned with social development, such as public welfare and fund raising campaigns for building hospitals.[14]

During his vacation at Klai Kang Won Palace in 1954, he visited the residents of nearby villages. He learned about the people's problems and hardship. It was here, in this area, that he initiated his first development project--the construction of a road to Huay Kod village (later called Huay Mongkol), Prachaub Khiri Khan Province.[15] Although there were many other projects, this undertaking was initially quite restricted because the King had to allocate his time to other monarchical functions. Furthermore, external and internal political conditions at this time were not stable enough to allow him to continue seriously with this task. It was not

until 1959 when Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat staged a coup and became the Prime Minister, that the King was fully supported and recognized by the government.[16] Subsequently, "The monarchical institution and the government became closely related and supported each other. State visits to foreign countries were arranged for the King and the Queen."[17]

His good relationship with the government permitted His Majesty to conduct more frequent trips to visit the people, often after the completion of palace construction in various regions of the country. These trips, in turn, paved the way for the King to have closer contacts with his people. The King encouraged the initiation of development projects to prevent and solve problems related to the use of the land, on which the people's livelihood depends. Since that first project in the 1950's, there have been more than 3,000 projects begun at the King's direction. The royal development projects are classified into four groups: the projects founded in accordance with His Majesty's wishes; the royal projects; the projects founded in accordance with His Majesty's initiatives; and, the projects under His Majesty's patronage.

These visits provided an opportunity for the King to gain first-hand knowledge about the problems encountered by the people and to help solve those problems. During these times, Thailand encountered severe political ideology conflicts, and communist insurgents were active in many areas of Thailand, especially the more remote parts of the country. To counter the alienation that some of the population felt, His Majesty decided to have royal palaces constructed in every region of the country, including the Phu Phing Palace in 1961, the Thaksin Palace in 1973 and the Phu

Phan in 1976.[18] The King wanted palaces built in such areas so that the local people would realize his concern for them and thus establish a sense of patriotism and a sense of national cohesion under the democratic government, of which the King is the titular head. There is little doubt today that this course of action did, indeed, contribute to the independence, security and of the sovereignty of the nation.

Such subtle, but effective, actions point to the wisdom and ingenuity of His Majesty King Bhumibol. He is a King who really knows the core problems of the country. Once, while he was visiting people in the Northeast, a reporter asked His Majesty if the reason why he visited the people and initiated so many projects was to fight against communist insurgents. The King said that he was not concerned whether or not the number of insurgents decreased. He only hoped for a decrease in number of people who were hungry.[19]

His ability to appeal to people stems from his in-depth understanding of the culture and the livelihood of the Thai people. As the majority of the Thai people are farmers, the King resumed the Royal Plowing Ceremony in 1959 (previously abolished in 1936) to bless vegetation, predict the rain and to boost people's morale. The day the ceremony is held has been established as Farmers' Day. General agricultural activities are exhibited, and the representatives of farmers from all regions whose rice species win a competition are granted an audience to receive their prizes.[20] The King also gives rice seeds, derived from the rice grown at Chitralada Palace, to the people as an auspicious gift.

The King also revived the Royal Barge Ceremony in 1959 and, on the occasion of his 36th birthday in 1963, he revived the Royal Land Procession. These exquisite ceremonies mark the civilization of the Thai forefathers, of which today's descendants are proud. It is clearly seen that the King's potential for properly solving problems at exactly the right time facilitates the upholding of those traditions that encourage the livelihood of the people. By promoting the Thai identity, His Majesty builds up the people's morale and their pride in the nation.

It is commonly accepted that the farmers' poverty stems from agricultural problems. Thus, His Majesty the King decided to transform his palace into the headquarters for a royal project operation where he could create project models designed to improve the country's agricultural productivity. He has allocated a part of the Chitralada Palace compound for various experiments.[21] Examples include the Forest Demonstration Project, the Rice Field

Experimental Project, the Chitralada Cattle Farm, the Chitralada Powdered Milk Factory, a Fish Raising for Reproduction Project, and an Experimental Rice Mill. The picture of the palace has been transformed from the center of a governing body into "a study center for agricultural improvements that can help eradicate the suffering of the people." The results of the experiments conducted in the palace compound can be disseminated nationwide to farmers and concerned government agencies as models to be adopted.

The King has emphasized the need for careful correction of the agricultural problems, especially those concerning soil and water. Technological means must be applied to correct the problems. He has set up development centers to study proper technological methods.[22] They are places where different government agencies and centers jointly study, do research and experiments, and seek to find ways to help the people improve their land.[23] The villagers are given opportunities to learn and to put this learning to good use. The development study centers initiated by the King are the Huay Hong Krai Center in Chiang Mai, the Phu Phan Center in Sakhon Nakhon, the Khao Hin Son Center in Chachoengsao, the Kung Kraben Bay Center in Chanthaburi, the Huay Sai Center in Phetchaburi and the Phikun Thong Center in Narathiwat. That the role of these centers is for the benefit of farmers was revealed in a report on a study tour of reporters to the Khao Hin Son Center. It reads, in part,

"The farmers accept and follow the models because they knew from their training in the demonstration plot, that planting peanuts of the same, when followed the center's suggestions, yielded a bigger peanut crop, about 300 kilos per rai as compared to 100 kilos per rai."[24]

The King founded six development centers in different regions because he wanted to be close to the people and to cope with their problems. His residence in each region will represent him, ensuring that the people are not distant from him. The development centers in the different regions are supporting instruments built by the King to cope with the diverse problems of each region. They are also the King's representatives, denoting the King's way of thought.

The Love of the People Enhances the Sovereign's Power

Throughout the 54 years of his reign, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej has righteously ruled the country under the Ten Duties of Kingship for the benefit of the people and for the good of the country. The King, excluding the time when he presided over the opening ceremony of the Thai-Laos Friendship Bridge in 1990, has not been out of the country since 1967. Instead, he has wholeheartedly devoted his time to finding ways to end the suffering of his people. He is the first King in Thai history that has been capable of bridging the gap between the monarch and the people, which had existed since the days of King Rama V.

As his years on the throne have gone by, the gap between the institution of the monarchy and the people has become narrower and narrower. The love the people have for their King is reflected in the power that they confer upon him. It seems that His Majesty the King possesses a new kind of monarchical power that is inexplicable.

"Because of the way you have been King, you have so much of the respect of the people that you are more than a constitutional monarch. You really have power, probably the power of love. Is that correct?"[25]

(Taken from interview with His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej in *Leaders.*)

Another perspective would be that the King has been able to miraculously merge his two roles together. That is, he is a king, who is revered as divine by the people, while at the same time he is adored as a benevolent and paternal monarch. It would not be an exaggeration to say that His Majesty the King's capability to blend these two roles together enables him to serve as the keystone of Thailand, one of a few countries ruled by a monarch.

Footnotes

[1] สรุปความจาก คณิตา เลขะกุล, "ในหลวงของเรา", **อนุสาร อสท.** ปีที่ 28, (5 ธันวาคม 2530), หน้า 464.

[2] ดร.อนุมงคล ศิริเวทิน และ รศ.ดร.ปฐม มณีโรจน์, "การพัฒนาอันเนื่องมาจากพระราชดำริ : บทบาท ภารกิจ และระบบบริหารการพัฒนาโดยพระมหากษัตริย์ไทย", **เอกกษัตริย์อัจฉริยะ**, ทบวงมหาวิทยาลัย, (2540), หน้า 10.

[3] ประมวลจาก ชาญวิทย์ เกษตรศิริ, **ประวัติการเมืองไทย**, (กรุงเทพมหานคร, 2535), หน้า 144-145.

[4] ประมวลจาก **พระเจ้าอยู่หัว**, กรมวิชาการ กระทรวงศึกษาธิการ, (กรุงเทพมหานคร, 2530), หน้า 535.

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[8] ดร.อนุมงคล ศิริเวทิน และรศ.ดร.ปฐม มณีโรจน์, **เอกกษัตริย์อัจฉริยะ**, อ้างในเชิงอรรถที่ 27, หน้า 12.

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[14] อ้างแล้ว, หน้า 21.

[15] อ้างแล้ว.

[16] อ้างแล้ว, หน้า 26.

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[20] อ้างแล้ว, หน้า 164-165.

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[22] คณิตา เลขะกุล, **"มูลนิธิชัยพัฒนา"**, **อนุสาร อสท**., (5 ธันวาคม 2535), หน้า 587.

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[24] รำไพพรรณ แก้วสุริยะ, **"แนวทางใหม่ตามไหล่เขาหินซ้อน"**, **อนุสาร อสท**., (1 สิงหาคม 2526), หน้า 398.

[25] **"Give More, Take Less"**, **Leaders Magazine**, (April - June 1982) in **The King of Thailand in World Focus**, The Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand, (Bangkok, 1988).

His Majesty the King
and the Development of a Productive Environment

By Prinya Chatnukrob

About 65-70 million years ago during the transitional period between the Mesozoic and Cenozoic Ages, the crust of the earth moved and thus formed the land into the shape of an elephant's head. The North and the West of the land are high mountain ranges which look like the top of the elephant's head, while the Northeast is a plateau which resembles the cheeks of the elephant. To the East of the land is a peninsula that looks like the elephant's mouth, while the South has a shape like the elephant's trunk. This land is Thailand.[1]

It is an amazing coincidence that the country of Thailand is shaped like an elephant and the symbol of the country is also an elephant. In the past, the elephant was the animal of nobility. It was the monarch's vehicle and the only animal that could be in the monarch's official service and attain a noble rank, similar to persons who were in monarchial service. But the people have also always been very close to the elephant because it is an animal capable of helping them by doing hard and heavy work, especially logging.

At present elephant labor, in the Thai way of life, is almost obsolete. Nowadays, the elephants' livelihood, like the livelihood of people, are threatened by the decline of natural resources, soil, water and forests. Many elephants are brought to the capital city by mahouts to become beggars, while wild elephants trespass onto farmlands and plantations searching for food and causing destruction to the countryside.

This problem of elephants wandering and grazing on farmlands and thus destroying crops has been happening for more than 400 years.[2] However, in the past, because farmers were able to drive them away, the problem was not critical. In recent times, the severe destruction of the forests, both legally and

illegally, has caused a serious ecological imbalance. The remaining forests are mostly in the mountain ranges and are not suitable as living environments for either humans or elephants. Because the elephants can no longer find food and live in the forests, they invade farmlands searching for food, thus destroying the farmers' property. The conflict between man and elephant has become very serious. In May 1997, three elephants were killed after wandering onto a pineapple plantation in Kuiburi, Prachuab Khiri Khan Province looking for food.

In early 1999, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the monarch of the country whose national flag used to have an elephant in the middle, sought to find a solution to the problem of elephants' trespassing farmlands and cultivated areas. The King advised Lieutenant General Taweep Suwansing, Commander of the 1st Regional Army, and Mr. Choochart Poonsiri, the Prachuab Khiri Khan Governor that:

"Reforestation can be accomplished by allowing the forests to regenerate themselves and this can save the national budget. It is not necessary to plant good species of pineapples for elephants. Pay farmers to care for their crops and suggest that they also make vegetable gardens. Their customers will be the elephants, providing them with more water sources and food."[3]

In accordance with the King's suggestion, conservation efforts were begun to restore the Kuiburi National Forest Reserve. Governmental and private sectors began cooperating to grow food crops for wild elephants. When food and water are abundant, the elephants will not venture out of the forest seeking food and create troubles for the farmers.

The case of wild elephants at Kuiburi is an example of the King's thought and concern about the "suffering of the country" which is caused by the degradation of the natural resources, soil, water and forest, and is a significant problem for the country.

The Environment Impacts on Development

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Thailand is an important food producer for the world. Rice and various other crops, like sugarcane and tapioca as well as fruits and seafood products, have generated enormous income for the country. It is very fortunate that nature has provided Thailand with invaluable resources, especially an abundance of good soil and water, the main requirements for supporting and maintaining a living.

During the last fifty years of the 20th century, in an effort to develop and westernize the country, natural resources, especially soil and water, have been exploited for commercial purposes. Moreover, the rapid decrease of forest areas because of human

encroachment has caused an imbalance of the ecological system. This has had a great impact on and contributes to current farming problems. The declining water resources and soil deterioration cause the soil to become unsuitable for cultivation, forcing the villagers to leave their villages to become industrial laborers in the cities, which in turn causes social and environmental problems in the country's large cities, especially Bangkok.

The King Promotes Systematic Development

In retrospect, it would be correct to say that the King has been concerned and interested in the problems of the country's water and soil since the beginning of his reign. He first had the idea to construct the Khao Tao Reservoir at Hua Hin in Prachuab Khiri Khan Province. He sees water, soil and the preservation of nature as essential for realizing the full development of cultivation potential, thus promoting a lasting livelihood for mankind. More than 3,000 of his projects are concerned with soil, water and forests. As His Majesty has previously stated,

"I have always firmly believed that agriculture is a basic of life, because it is the source of food production and of raw materials needed for various industries. It is important to note that the main factor in the process of agricultural production is nature. Thus, it is essential for us to develop and preserve the bountifulness of nature, as a means to increase productivity, in order to promote the well-being of the world population."[4]

Thus it is clearly understood why the King's thoughts and concerns are focused mainly on rural development through resolution of soil, water and local agricultural problems.

If the royal activities are analyzed further, the relationship between the steps of his developmental projects will become obvious.

First, he puts the emphasis on productivity factors of the soil, water and forests, so farmers, who constitute the majority of the population, have enough to eat and are self-sufficient. When their lives are stable, further development is possible. The King has called this, "the explosion from within." He has explained that,

"The development of a country has to be carried out step by step. It has to be based on a reasonable state of well-being for the people, including sufficient food and other basic needs. It has to be done at low cost, using effective technology and simple methods. When the foundation is strong, the next step of development can be carried out...."[5]

Water Is the Essential Resource

Developing water resources, a basic element, is the King's aim. For the past 40-50 years, water shortages have been caused by the destruction of the forests, which are a source of water. Rivers are also valuable sources of water. However, if there is no efficient and proper water management these plentiful waters are likewise lost in the natural cycle as the rivers flow into the sea. With the rapid growth of population and the development of economic domains such as agriculture, industry, commercial businesses and services, the demand for water and water consumption has increased drastically.

After the first reservoir for irrigation purposes at Khao Tao of Hua Hin District, Prachuab Khiri Khan Province had been scheduled for construction in 1962,various other development projects for water resources were extended throughout the country.

In planning the development of water resources, the King made careful studies in all aspects of this field. He also considered whether an investment in the construction of dams or reservoirs would be

economically and socially viable for villagers. He came to the conclusion that there was no single formula for water resources development because the vast diversity of geographical features of the regions had different impacts on the land conditions, water supply and the people's way of life.

The initiatives for water resource development the King presented to various government agencies for consideration were classified as follows:

1. Water resources projects for agricultural and household uses, such as a project on the construction of reservoirs and irrigation dikes
2. Water resources projects for watershed conservation
3. Water resources projects for the generation of hydro-electric power
4. Projects designed to drain water from the low land areas, and
5. Flood alleviation projects.[6]

In the North of Thailand, most agricultural lands are on the plains at the feet of the mountains. Farmers rely on rain as the main source of water supply for both cultivation and household consumption. If there is a lack of rain for a long time, the land becomes arid and infertile. The Water Resources Development Project in the North is involved in the construction of reservoirs and dikes. At present, many dams and dikes are the permanent water sources for the cultivation of vegetables, winter flowers and fruits, which earn high incomes for the hill tribes people. As a result of this ability to earn a good income from these products, the hill tribes people have stopped growing opium.

The Northeast of Thailand is a drought-ridden land. It is a plateau with only a few rivers, and sandy soil is prevalent throughout the region. Because sandy soil can hold water for only one or two days after a rainfall, the cultivation yield is very low and the land easily becomes barren. Most people in this part of the country are very poor, and often do not have enough food. Without long-term solutions to their problems, their only alternative is to leave their hometowns and seek jobs in the cities. Because of this underlying factor, most of the King's projects on water source development in this region are irrigation projects that emphasize construction of reservoirs of varying sizes.[7]

For the humid regions, like the South, where rain falls throughout the year, there is another kind of problem. In many coastal areas, salt water merges into the rivers, ruining the water for both household consumption and agricultural uses. The case of the Bang Nara River in Narathiwat Province is an excellent example. This River is 60 kilometers long and touches the sea in both Muang and Tak Bai Districts. Since high and low tides affect the saline content of the River, the water is salty and brackish. After studying the problem, the King suggested that the Royal Irrigation Department build water

gates at the estuaries of the upper and lower parts of the River to prevent the salt water from flowing into the rivers, thus permitting fresh water to be retained for use year round. He also suggested methods for correcting the problem of stagnant water in the swampy and acidic lands of the Bang Nara River and Pak Panang River basins. Systems were created to separate water into three types; the system to reduce the acid levels in the swamp water and the acidic lands, the system to prevent the intrusion of salt water, and the system to divert fresh water into designated lands for cultivation and household consumption. His clever thoughts and methods for separating waters with different characteristics shows how truly ingenious His Majesty is in the science of water resources development.[8]

The conservation of the watersheds is ecologically significant as part of water resources development. The deterioration of the watersheds will impose a serious effect on the water resources in the low land areas. The method recommended by the King is to slow down the speed of the current by intermittently constructing dams to trap water flow and to hold water in the ground as long as possible, so that area can remain moist. One type of dam the King has recommended is the "Check Dam" or detainment dam, which is a very efficient method to hold water on the ground. The King applied the villagers' and his own wisdom to the initiation of check dams.

An example of a check dam's operation system can be found at Huay Hong Krai Development Study Center in Chiang Mai Province.

The King's water resources projects, which are designed to simultaneously develop water, soil and forest conservation have shown careful thought in solving the problems at the place of origin. One of the most important of these projects is the Royal Hill Tribe Development Project, founded in 1969. It was later renamed simply, the Royal Project.* This project was established to provide the hill tribe villagers with alternative crops as a substitute for opium growing, which had relied heavily on slash and burn cultivation thus creating severe environmental and economic problems.

The Royal Project continues in operation today. The products derived from the Project are known as *Doi Kam*'s. The success of the Royal Project has led not only to the discontinuation of opium growing, but also to the conservation of forests and watersheds. The King once said,

"One of the objectives of the Project is for humanity. I wish that those disadvantaged living in the remote areas be able to have knowledge and to stand on their own feet. Another objective is to help them in a way they should be helped--that's to help solve the problems of narcotics. If we can help the hill tribesmen grow useful crops; they will stop growing opium. This will serve the opium suppression policy. We know well that the hill tribes are people who earn their living by improper cultivation. They slash and burn forests to pave ways for their cultivation. If we can assist them, it means that we assist our country to have a good life. Thus, helping

* The Royal Project is world famous and is adorned that it is creative and promote mutual understanding among countries. As a result, the Magsaysay Foundation proudly presented the Magsaysay Award to His Majesty the King on 31 August 1988.

the hill tribes is another important thing that can serve the upkeep of forests and soil, which will be of sustainable benefit."[9]

The King's Water Resources Development Project can efficiently alleviate the water shortage problems in different regions. However, it cannot entirely solve the water shortage problems because demand for water is increasing continually, while the supply is not. Up to 82.6% of Thai agricultural land relies almost entirely on water from rainfalls.[10] There are times, however, because of the ecological imbalance, when rainfalls are not as frequent or predictable, and this causes a very critical situation for the farmers. While the King has often visited people in remote and barren areas to listen to their grievances, he is also a scientific person that pays attention to research data and analysis. He concluded that, given Thailand's weather and topography, some kind of artificially created rain could be produced by applying technology from foreign countries to existing resources. Since he originally came up with this idea in 1955, [11] numerous experiments have been conducted in an effort to develop atmospheric-based water resources.

The early experiments faced quite a number of constraints because the science of artificial rainmaking was new. It was a big task and there were neither experts nor scientists in the field of atmospheric modification. The King made the experiments by himself, and he also gave his personal funds to support the project. During the early experiments, the King himself planned, supervised, monitored and followed up on most of them.

The experiments were eventually successful. By 1969, the King had discovered how to make rain, using non-toxic chemicals. As important, he discovered how to divert the rain to the required directions and bodies of water, such as reservoirs, lagoons, lakes and canals.

This success has become the hope and the security of the farmers during times of drought. Farmers all over Thailand refer to this artificial rain as "the Royal Rain," meaning the rain graciously granted by the King out of concern for his people.

Although rainmaking has been developed to a satisfactory level, the King continues to make even further experiments. He has worked with research institutes and Armed Forces missile experts to experimentally build artificial rain rockets. The first prototype was successful built in 1987, and now research is being conducted to produce the rockets for commercial use by industry. It is anticipated that "the Royal Rain" can efficiently solve the drought problems.

The King's concern and involvement in the development of water resources is not restricted to artificial rainmaking. He has studied how to make use of fog in the atmosphere. He found that fog condenses into drops of water that can be used to nourish plants. High up on mountains, at least 500 meters high, thick fogs are very common. If vapor in the fogs can be harvested, it will be a water resource that can greatly benefit cultivation. This natural process has been utilized in some countries and has potential for use in Thailand.

In an effort to develop this potential the King created fog traps and experimented with them at the Phu Phing Palace in Chiang Mai Province in March 1993. They were made of inexpensive local materials like nylon nets and mats. When in use, the fog traps are stretched near the trees against the wind direction. When the wind blows, the vapor in the air will condense and distill into water drops on the traps and drop to the ground.

The use of fog traps for irrigation is an innovation that demonstrates the King's extensive efforts in seeking water resources to benefit his people. However, there is another factor that is necessary

to support the establishment of a strong agricultural society. That factor is the quality of soil.

Fertile Soil Is an Agricultural Imperative

Poor soil quality is another problem that hinders agricultural development in parts of Thailand. Farmlands can suffer from natural soil deficiencies. Soils that are sandy, thin-topped, organic, acidic and saline cover 16% of all Thailand, and are not suitable for farming.[12]

The principle underlying the King's soil development and conservation programs is to solve problems by adhering to nature's guidelines for improving soil productivity. Soils are divided into different types according to their region of origin. The King gathered knowledge about the regions concerned and, after intense study, developed theoretical and practical guidelines for further research and study at six royal-initiative development study centers.*

The Royal-Initiative Development Center at Khao Hin Son in Chachoengsao Province and the Royal-Initiative Development Center at Huay Sai in Phetchaburi Province are studying ways to counter soil erosion and restore productivity to infertile land. High on their list of corrective measures are the growing of vetiver grass, and the use of check dams to keep soil damp and to increase the quantity and quality of topsoil.

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* There are presently six royal-initiative development study centers, namely the Royal-Initiative Development Study Center at Huay Hong Krai in Chiang Mai Province, the Royal-Initiative Development Study Center at Huay Sai in Phetchaburi Province, the Royal-Initiative Development Study Center at Khao Hin Son in Chacherngsao Province, the Royal-Initiative Development Study Center at Kung Kraben Bay in Chanthaburi Province, the Royal-Initiative Development Study Center at Phu Phan in Sakon Nakhon Province, and the Royal-Initiative Development Study Center at Phikun Thong in Narathiwat Province.

The Royal-Initiative Development Center at Kung Kraben Bay in Chanthaburi Province studies the rehabilitation of mangrove forests and coastal waters.

Another activity reflecting the King's ingenuity in the science of soil and water is his efforts to find a solution to the problems of acidic soil and swampy land. The Royal-Initiative Development Center at Phikun Thong in Narathiwat Province has conducted a study under the King's guidance to find a solution to these problems.

Acidic soil covers at least 8 million rais of the Thai countryside. It is mostly found in acidic swamps along the coasts and in the central plain of the country. Farming in these areas produces a very low yield. The largest acidic swamp is found in Narathiwat Province. Once the King had decided to make this useless swamp suitable for agricultural use, he provided advice to all of the agencies concerned on how to overcome the problem of the acidic soil. He finally came up with an idea which he called *"Klaeng Din,"* which literally means "playing a trick on soil." In the process of *"Klaeng Din,"* the swamp was alternately drained and flooded to activate a chemical reaction in the soil. This first step was carried out in order to study the nature of the acidification process of the soil.

The next step was to solve the strongly acidic soil problem by using water and lime. With the King's scientific knowledge and dedication, the soil was successfully de-acidified and an assortment of crops, such as local rice and coconuts, could be grown productively. The result of this research by the King and his co-researchers is considered effective and complete, and it can be applied to correct the problems of acidic soils in other regions as well.

Besides soil quality, other productivity factors related to the soil include the availability of land for cultivation and erosion of existing lands. In the past twenty years, the increase in agricultural production and the income of farm people has resulted from the expansion of agricultural land rather than from increased productivity on the existing land size. An assessment of the quality of agricultural land made by the Land Development Department indicates that 52% of the 321 million rais of land in Thailand is suitable for agriculture. Of the remaining land, 16% is of low agricultural quality, 29% is highland not suitable for agriculture, and the remaining 3% is mangrove forests which must be preserved as natural forests.[13] These data indicate that there is limited suitable land for agriculture.

The expansion of cultivation land by encroachment onto lands previously covered by forests has caused excessive deforestation, leading to soil erosion. When it rains, the rainwater washes away nutrients in the topsoil because there are no plants covering the ground that could block the erosion. Thus the land becomes infertile, resulting in the decrease of agricultural productivity even though there is sufficient rainfall.

Realizing the "cause and effect" relationship between soil erosion and agricultural productivity, the King studied the potential of using vetiver grass, an indigenous plant of Thailand, as a natural fence against soil erosion and excessive water run-off. This grass also

helps to store water and conserve moisture in the soil. With its deep roots extending into the soil in a form similar to a wall, the vetiver grass can trap sediment and prevent soil erosion. The grass is easily planted, using simple technology, and it does not need much tending after it is sown.

Experiments on the cultivation of vetiver grass were performed at the Royal Development Study Center and other suitable places. At present, farmers are being encouraged to grow it. The King's introduction of vetiver grass was publicized in 1994 when it was published by the World Bank in *Vetiver Newsletter No. 11*. In addition, because of his research in this field, the Soil and Water Conservation Association named His Majesty "the World Distinguished Soil and Water Conservationist" in the same year. Today, Thailand is the center of vetiver grass technology, thanks to the emphasis placed on the development of this technology by His Majesty.

His Majesty's work on countering the problems of acidic soil and soil erosion are typical of his soil development projects. Through his guidance, conservation and use restrictions have benefited man and have helped maintain the balance of the ecological system. The King's initiatives emphasize the balance of nature while making use of it in the process of sustainable development. The application of this theory is also reflected in the King's thoughts on forest rehabilitation, which have guided him in the solution to other ecological problems of the country.

Preservation of the Forests Is Critical

One of the King's theories on forest development and conservation is a natural reforestation theory. That is, there is "no planting in the process of reforestation." This theory stems from his profound

understanding of the ecological cycle of the forest. "Leave the degraded forests alone. Don't disturb them and they will regenerate on their own."

Another way to conserve the forests is to encourage the inter-dependency between forests and people in a traditional way. He emphasizes various reforestation processes complete a lifecycle for the forests in order to serve four functions benefiting people.[14] Adequate forests provide the necessary resources for household uses, for food supply, for economic purposes and for soil and water conservation. "Forestation is realized in compliance with irrigation principles - to hold water and to seal the soft banks of the streams."

His Majesty's "New Theory" Improves Land Management

As earlier stated, His Majesty the King has meant to solve the soil and water problems to ensure that the poor have enough to eat, and are able to stand on their own feet and form strong communities. This desire to help the less fortunate of the nation has led him to formulate what he calls "the new theory."

The new theory is a system of land and water management for farmers who possess an average of 10-15 rais of land (this is the average land possession per Thai farmer). Bearing in mind the importance of water resources, the King suggests that each plot of land be divided into different portions. The first 30% would be a pond to store seasonal rain water. The second 30% would be for rice growing to meet the family's consumption needs. The third 30% would be to grow other crops for consumption and as a source of income. The last 10% would be for home building. With this kind of land management, the farmers would be totally self-sufficient. The strength of agricultural communities has long been the main emphasis of the King's development plans.

His new theory has contributed to a great change in farming methods. It takes into account all aspects of the local environment. The management of soil and water systems, which never existed in the past, has become prevalent. Land-use zoning projects have been initiated and reservoirs are being built to reserve water for household and agricultural uses. The main objective of local production is to achieve a sustainable production - that is, to produce enough for one's own uses, not for commercialized purposes only. The new theory is truly His Majesty's original vision of agricultural planning for tackling the future shortages of land and water.

His Majesty Has Been the Guiding Light of Development

Throughout the long period of economic and environmental development, the King has emphasized natural production factors: water, soil and forests. His work not only alleviates the suffering of the poor and the underprivileged, but people of the world also recognize it. In 1995, the Food and Agriculture Organization presented him with an AGRICOLA Medal in recognition of his

dedication and devotion to the progress of the agricultural development of Thailand, which is also beneficial to the world, given the country's large quantities of agricultural exports. He is the first monarch to be given the medal. In awarding the medal, the representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization commented that the award was being presented,

"For Your Majesty's noble devotion to the well-being and happiness of all people in Thailand, particularly those who till the soil, tend the waters and nurture the forests; ... (and) For Your Majesty's noble vision of a world without hunger and for ensuring food and nutrition for all people in Thailand."[15]

The King's vision in promoting the country's development could also be seen during the 1997-1998 economic recession. The King's new theory, which was intended to enhance the stability of the communities prior to their leap into advanced economic and industrial societies, came to the attention of the government. The Ministry of Interior encouraged people to develop their own communities following the economic self-reliance theory, the strategic components of which are based on the King's new theory.

Throughout 54 years, the number of royal-initiative development projects, which are comparable to umbrellas that afford protection and benefit to the people, have been increased gradually all over the kingdom. Presently, there are more than 3,000 projects, and it may be asked why the King's projects are more noticeable than the government's policy platform.[16] Those who have no background knowledge of Thailand may be amazed as to why the King, who is the supreme sovereign, is involved in these kinds of activities, which do not formally fall within the domain of a constitutional monarch.

By way of explanation of His Majesty's interest in such projects, Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn once said,

"In a modern society, no matter whether that person is a king, an engineer or a farmer, he, as a Thai person, has to abide and do his duty as a good citizen. He has to put all of his effort into helping his fellow citizens lead more constructive lives and making the country progress and develop. It does not matter to what extent. It depends on each individual's capability. The King himself is interested in various disciplinary fields such as engineering and agriculture. Whenever he sees the poor and the underprivileged, he wants to help. And of course, he himself cannot help much if there is no support from the agencies concerned. Normally, these governmental agencies are so bound by certain rules and regulations that they become inflexible. Although they have ideas about developing certain things for the better, they are reluctant to pursue these ideas if they think that what they are developing overlaps others' work. The King is able to promote compromise and to achieve cooperation among these different agencies.... (Thus,) We can say that the King is a part of the governmental organization who can help and coordinate to attain the ultimate goal of the country - that is to make people happy and have a sustainable living."[17]

Footnotes

[1] "ประเทศไทยในคาบสมุทรอินโดจีน" ใน **ภูมิลักษณ์ประเทศไทย**, (จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย 2534), หน้า 5.

[2] กฤษฎา ลังกา, **ช้างป่ากับปัญหาการทำลายพืชไร่**, เอกสารเผยแพร่ของกองทุนสัตว์ป่าโลก สำนักงานประเทศไทย, (2542).

[3] "พระราชดำริคืนผืนป่าให้ช้าง", **หนังสือพิมพ์บ้านเมือง**, (9 กรกฎาคม 2542), หน้า 13 - 14.

[4] พระราชดำรัสตอบในโอกาสที่องค์การอาหารและเกษตรแห่งสหประชาชาติ (FAO) ทูลเกล้าถวายเหรียญ AGRICOLA ณ พระที่นั่งจักรีมหาปราสาท, วันพุธที่ 6 ธันวาคม 2538, เอกสารถ่ายสำเนา.

[5] "ทฤษฎีการปลูกป่าโดยไม่ต้องปลูก ตามหลักการฟื้นฟูสภาพป่าด้วยวัฏธรรมชาติ", **แนวคิดและทฤษฎีการพัฒนาอันเนื่องมาจากพระราชดำริในพระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัว**, สำนักงานคณะกรรมการพิเศษเพื่อประสานงานโครงการอันเนื่องมาจากพระราชดำริ, (2540), หน้า 182.

[6] **พระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัวกับงานพัฒนาแหล่งน้ำ**, กรมชลประทาน, (2530), หน้า 79.

[7] **แนวคิดของทฤษฎีการพัฒนาอันเนื่องมาจากพระราชดำริในพระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัว**, หน้า 23.

[8] **พระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัวภูมิพลอดุลยเดชกับงานพัฒนา**, สำนักงานคณะกรรมการพิเศษเพื่อประสานงานโครงการอันเนื่องมาจากพระราชดำริ, (2530), หน้า 80.

[9] อ้างแล้ว, หน้า 121.

[10] "ทฤษฎีว่าด้วยการพัฒนาทรัพยากรแหล่งน้ำในบรรยากาศ", **แนวคิดและทฤษฎีการพัฒนาอันเนื่องมาจากพระราชดำริในพระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัว**, สำนักงานคณะกรรมการพิเศษเพื่อประสานงานโครงการอันเนื่องมาจากพระราชดำริ, (2540), หน้า 79.

[11] อ้างแล้ว, หน้า 10.

[12] **พระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัวกับการพัฒนาการเกษตรไทย**, กระทรวงเกษตรและสหกรณ์ ,(2539), หน้า 137.

[13] อ้างแล้ว, หน้า 139.

[14] "ทฤษฎีการปลูกป่าโดยไม่ต้องปลูก ตามหลักการฟื้นฟูสภาพป่าด้วยวัฏธรรมชาติ", **แนวคิดและทฤษฎีการพัฒนาอันเนื่องมาจากพระราชดำริในพระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัว**, หน้า 188.

[15] คำกราบบังคมทูลพระกรุณาสดุดี พระเกียรติคุณของ Mr. Jacque Diouf ผู้อำนวยการองค์การอาหารและเกษตรแห่งสหประชาชาติ ในโอกาสเข้าเฝ้าฯ ทูลเกล้าฯ ถวายเหรียญ AGRICOLA ณ พระที่นั่งจักรีมหาปราสาท, วันพุธที่ 6 ธันวาคม 2538.

[16] ดร.อนุมงคล ศิริเวทิน และ รศ. ดร.ปฐม มณีโรจน์, "การพัฒนาอันเนื่องมาจากพระราชดำริ : บทบาท ภารกิจ และระบบบริหารการพัฒนาโดยพระมหากษัตริย์ไทย", **เอกกษัตริย์อัจฉริยะ**, ทบวงมหาวิทยาลัย, (2540), หน้า 31.

[17] บทพระราชทานสัมภาษณ์ ของสมเด็จพระเทพรัตนราชสุดา สยามบรมราชกุมารี ใน **ในหลวงกับงานช่าง**, คณะวิศวกรรมศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย, (2530), หน้า 13 - 14.

His Majesty the King and Thai Politics

By Niti Vatiwutipong

King Bhumibol Adulyadej is believed to be the first monarch in a democratic system enthroned and crowned in accordance with the royal ancient Thai tradition. King Rama VII was crowned during a period of absolute monarchy and King Rama VIII, who was chosen by the Parliament to ascend the throne in 1934, passed away before the coronation.[1] King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the first constitutional monarch, has reigned the country with righteousness and virtue for more than fifty years. He is unquestionably very respected and revered by the Thai people. He has remained free from all political biases in the

midst of evolving political changes. People and politicians alike have conceded that His Majesty King Bhumibol, whose actual power exceeds what is prescribed in the Constitution, is the pillar of political and governmental stability. Whenever there has been political turmoil that apparently could not be resolved, the King, using his extra-constitutional power, has intervened and effectively and successfully defused the crisis.

Foreign observers agree. *Asiaweek* magazine once described His Majesty's role in politics in the following way:

"He still does not take part in the day-to-day administration of the country. He is entirely above politics, but he is privy to all decisions made by his cabinet. He no longer needs a guiding hand. He has far more knowledge of the working of the statesmanship than any political or military leaders. His subjects trust him as well as love him. They trust no one he cannot place his faith in. Since 1973, he has several times demonstrated that he is head of state in fact as well as in name. His own is the one that guides the country through each constitutional crisis."[2]

There are only a few countries where the monarchy is as stable as it is in Thailand. Most monarchs are titular heads of state. It is generally said that the administration system in Thailand follows the British system. However, the reality of the genuine power and influence of the Thai monarch are typically Thai, and differ remarkably from that of the British monarchy.[3] There can be no misunderstanding that King Bhumibol paints an overall picture of sovereign power and retains a special role as King of Thailand.

At the beginning of his reign, at the age of 18, His Majesty King Bhumibol studied at Lausanne University, Switzerland to prepare himself for his future obligations as monarch. He spent most of his time overseas, only occasionally visiting Thailand. During that time, the Regent Council acted on His Majesty's behalf in accordance with the Constitution. It was after World War II; the country was unstable, and the pro-Liberal and pro-Military factions who had jointly overthrown the absolute monarchy were in the midst of a power play. From 1946, the year when His Majesty was enthroned, to 1951, the year when His Majesty returned to Thailand permanently, there were eleven governments, three constitutions and four elections. In addition, this period of political turmoil saw five coups and coup attempts.[4]

His Majesty King Bhumibol did not at first perform any significant roles, except those conforming to traditional practices and provisions stipulated in the Constitution. Nevertheless, as he was traditionally revered, he was a morale booster for the people. At the time he ascended the throne the country was in the midst of a social and economic crisis. People suffered from the political instability and changes. They were also saddened by the loss of the soul of the nation--their young king, King Rama VIII, who had just reached his maturity and recently returned to Thailand. They were desperate and spiritually distraught. King Bhumibol realized that he, as the new center of people's hearts and souls, would have to work hard to bring back the people's hopes and maintain national stability. He once said to the people, "Here is the King. There is no longer the younger brother of the king."[5]

To evidence how His Majesty and his people felt about each other, a part of His Majesty's book entitled *When I left Siam for Switzerland* has often been quoted. It refers to the day, a little more than two months after his ascension to the throne, when he left Thailand for Switzerland to complete his studies. When he rode past the crowd that came to see him off, he heard someone crying out, "Please do not leave your people." This made him want to cry back, "If my people do not leave me, how can I leave them."

Since his ascension to the throne, people have wanted to be kept informed of his life and activities. Events such as his engagement to Mom Rajawong Sirikit Kitiyakara in 1949, his return to Bangkok, the royal wedding ceremony, the coronation in 1950, the birth of his first child in 1951, his return to Bangkok permanently in the same year, and his visits to every region of the country have always captured the people's imagination. In addition, they want to know

about His Majesty's various social and economic development projects, which have been initiated and sustained since 1952. Former kings of Thailand had never undertaken these kinds of royal activities so they have been of particular interest to the people for whom they were created.

In addition to traveling to all areas and meeting people throughout the country, he has participated in other activities that have helped form a binding relationship between the monarch and people from all walks of life. These include taking complaints from people, conferring university degrees, composing songs to be sung on various occasions, founding a radio station (even occasionally acting as a disc jockey playing music and taking song requests), playing music at universities and arranging group marriages. It is well said that he is a King who wants, and has, a close relationship with the people. The loyalty extended to him by the people does not follow only from the traditional belief that the king is the reincarnation of god, but also from their reverence and strong spiritual ties that bind them to him. They are deeply grateful for his kindness, his attention and ingenuity, and his intellectual leadership.

Political changes relative to the King have been concrete since 1957. During the beginning of the reign, there were conflicts between the pro-Liberal and the pro-Military leaders, ending with a pro-Military party's victory. At the end of 1947, the military, which had been in power before World War II, overthrew the Liberal government. This coup brought the military to power for ten years. During this time the leaders of the various military governments went to some extent to suppress the roles of the monarch, and at the same time tried to make themselves the symbol of democracy and the center of the nation.[6] However the military leadership experienced

internal conflicts as well, and this led to a coup led by Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat on 16 September 1957 to overthrow Field Marshal Pibulsongkram's government. A provisional prime minister was selected for only one purpose to form an election. Field Marshal Sarit endeavored to build up the King's position. In doing so, he made the main criteria for the selection of the prime minister to be that the chosen individual had to be approved by the military, accepted by the people and foreign governments, and he had to be trusted by the monarch.[7]

One year later on 20 October 1958, Field Marshal Sarit staged another coup to seize power from the elected government. The leader of the coup stated in the Coup Proclamation that,

"... The coup party holds that the King and the Thai nation are inseparable. Throughout Thai history the King has been the symbol of the country and the soul of the nation. The coup party shall strive to maintain the monarchy to full capacity and to treat him with great respect. No one can offend the sovereign, the members of the royal family or the royal tradition which has been observed since ancient times...."

Because the governing coup under the leadership of Field Marshal Sarit vigorously observed the above proclamation, many royal activities could be undertaken by His Majesty the King and the members of the royal family for the benefit of the people. The monarchy was increasingly adored and revered. However, whether the King played any part in politics and administration during this time, no one knew.

The political influence of the King was first revealed in October 1973. At that time students mobilized, demanding a constitution from the military government led by Field Marshal Thanom

Kittikachorn who, after succeeding Field Marshal Sarit, had held power for ten years. This was the greatest demonstration ever held in Thailand and it led to a state of civil unrest on 14 October 1973. Armed soldiers were ordered by Field Marshal Thanom to suppress the uprising. This order led to many of the demonstrators being killed and many more injured when they attempted to burn down a police station and some government offices. It was obvious that the people no longer trusted nor had faith in the government. Moreover, even within the government, some administration leaders themselves did not agree with the order to use the Armed Forces in a police role.[8]

During the crisis, the King was the only person in whom all the concerned parties had faith and accepted as an impartial arbitrator. Subsequent to the shooting of the demonstrators, the commanders of the three military forces refused to obey the Prime Minister's (Field Marshal Thanom's) order to drastically suppress the demonstrators with further military force. They pledged that the three military services would follow the royal command only.[9]

The crisis came to an end in one day. Field Marshal Thanom, the Prime Minister and Field Marshal Prapas Jarusathien, the Deputy Prime Minister, resigned to comply with the King's wish. (Two days later, they resigned from the positions of the Armed Forces

Supreme Commander and the Armed Forces Deputy Supreme Commander, and departed the country according to the King's wish.)[10] The King later gave a speech on television and radio to calm down everyone concerned, and to urge cooperation to solve the problems. He also appointed Mr. Sanya Dharmasakti Prime Minister. Sanya recorded details of the events of that night in the following way:

"... I was immediately granted an audience with His Majesty in the Glass Room at Chitralada Palace. I rushed to be there. His Majesty told me to make a live television broadcast to inform the people that they were promised that the new constitution would be proclaimed in six months' time, counting from that day, and that general election would be held soon. It was requested that all parties be calm now...."[11]

To enable the new government, the so-called Royally Bestowed Government, to successfully appoint the Cabinet, the King played a crucial but discreet role in advising the government on Cabinet member selection, providing the venue and clerical assistants for the process. After the members of the Cabinet were all appointed, the office of the Cabinet moved to Government House.

To ensure the Constitution would be completely drafted by 10 December 1973, the King appointed 2,347 people from different walks of life as members of the National Assembly. These members in turn selected from among themselves members of the National Legislative Assembly. The King, eight days later, presided over the opening ceremony of the National Legislative Assembly. The Constitution was finally drafted and was proclaimed as planned.

As the King is revered and trusted to be free from any political biases, his uses of power are aimed toward providing benefits and happiness for the people. This is why he could use his power to end the unrest very quickly. He could both stop the immediate violence

and could assist in all matters to fulfill the needs of the people. When the country returned to normal, the King showed no intention of playing any political role. Mom Rajawong Thongnoi Thongyai, a royal advisor, who previously worked closely to the King, once quoted His Majesty as saying,

"Be it observed that the monarch will take part in politics only when there is a political vacuum, like the 14 October Event. When the vacuum is filled, the monarch has to resume his status above politics."[12]

Another event showing that the King has desired to limit his political roles in order to strictly hold the position as constitutional King is shown in his writing that he did not approve of the part of the Constitution of Thailand, Draft of 1974. Included in that document was the provision that prescribed the President of the Privy Council as the person who countersigned royal commands. The King's objection to this provision stemmed from the fact that the President of the Privy Council was chosen by the King. Thus, this requirement did not comply with the principle that the King remain above politics.[13]

In addition to the faith the people have in the King's neutral role in politics, another factor that makes him highly accepted is that the King is the only person who possesses continuous political experience. While politicians or military leaders may be in power for short periods of time, the King is the only person who has had the opportunity to watch the administration of the country continuously over a long time. Thus, his governing knowledge is incomparable. He often grants political leaders an audience to report, seek advice, and to discuss various matters both officially and unofficially. He implements his power in accordance with the three traditional conventions (the right to be consulted, the right to encourage and the right to warn) at the proper time.

Under normal circumstances, the King exercises his power through confidential private audiences, which he grants to the government ministers or other high-ranking officers. However, during times of crisis the King's role becomes more obvious. His influence can be illustrated through several examples.

In 1975-1976, Thailand was in a state of disorder and confusion. People had many divergent political ideas. The country succumbed to frequent political unrest in both the city and the country, and there was an active communist insurgency. The military leadership at that time was very concerned about the state of affairs and had been trying to defuse the situation. In an account of his conversation with Admiral Sa-ngad Chaloryoo, Professor Boonchana Athakorn wrote,

"Admiral Sa-ngad, in February 1976, told me that the leftists were challenging and inciting public disturbances. I humbly requested His Majesty the King to graciously grant an audience to Admiral Sa-ngad, Armed Forces Supreme Commander, General Kriangsak Chomanan, Armed Forces Assistant Supreme Commander, General Boonchai Bamroongpong, Army Commander-in-Chief, and General Kamon Techatoongka, Air Force Command-in-Chief. However, only Admiral Sa-ngad was allowed. The Admiral informed the King of the critical situation, and said that Thailand would be like Laos and Cambodia if nothing was done, and the Admiral proposed that a coup be staged.

"Admiral Sa-ngad told me further that he asked for the King's blessing so that the armed forces could move as planned. But the King did not give a direct reply; he simply told him to think carefully of what should be done. Admiral Sa-ngad thought that the coup should not be staged if the King did not give a direct reply. So he said further that the military did not want to govern the country after

the coup. They wanted a civilian government. The Admiral presented names of 15 eligible persons to be selected Prime Minister. The King endorsed no one."

"As no one was approved after some time had passed, the Admiral asked for permission to leave. Before he left, the King said that before doing anything, it would be wise to seek advice from a legal advisor, the Supreme Court Judge Tanin Kraivixien..."[14]

In 1991 the leaders of the Armed forces who called themselves "The National Peacekeeping Council" overthrew General Chatichai Choonhavan's government. General Suchinda Kraprayoon, one of the coup leaders wrote,

"As a person who took part in the coup, I had an opportunity to be close to the King during the time of disorder. After the coup d'etat, our first priority was to request an audience with the King to explain the reasons why it was necessary to stage a coup and to ask for a royal pardon. A special audience was granted and the King gave advice on various matters.

"While the National Peacekeeping Council governed the country, the King gave advice that was extremely beneficial to the people and to the stability of the country. The King was very experienced in administrative, legislative and judicial problem solving.

"I think, in Thailand, no one knows better than the King does about constitutional laws. He gave the Council advice on the drafting of the constitution. He can remember every constitution ever-drafted in Thailand...."[15]

In May 1992, groups of people who disapproved of General Suchinda as Prime Minister made an attempt to overturn the government. This incident culminated in a riot. Many parts of Bangkok were damaged and the people were dead and injured. The King summoned the two opposing leaders, General Suchinda and Major-General Chamlong Srimuang, the leader of the demonstrators, to the Palace. The King quietly and sternly reminded them of the importance of the safety and morale of the people. He asked them, " ... not to confront each other. This country is our country, not the country of you two...." The King explained that between the two, both of whom intended to win, there could be no winner. It was the country that would suffer. "How could you be proud of yourself as a winner on the debris?", the King added.

The whole kingdom witnessed on its TV screens and radios how the crisis had been solved. Both antagonists appeared on elevision to make a plea that the people heed the royal call for unity. Thus the crisis, which had persisted for many days, was immediately defused.

After the event, Anand Panyarachun, someone considered highly trustworthy, was appointed Prime Minister. Mr. Anand later wrote about the event:

"... It was necessary to pacify the anger and end the divisive thinking deriving from the May 1992 event. I had to find ways to relieve the tension. I had to transfer the officers-in-charge during the crisis to inactive posts, and, at the same time, ensure that their new positions should be parallel to the former ones. On Saturday afternoon of the first of August, when I submitted the transfer orders

to the King for his approval, the King attentively asked about the situation. I informed him of detailed procedures, reasons and methods of the transfer. The King acknowledged the instances and asked again if the crisis would definitely end under such management. I said, "I am certain that the situation will return to normal after the transfer." The King, thus, signed the transfer order and suggested the Prime Minister inform the officers concerned before an official announcement on television and radio that night. In fact I had been concerned about this. I did it as soon as I got back to the Government House.

"The officers who were affected by the transfer order did not react against it. They were still loyal to the King and the monarchy."[16]

It is true to say that the King's roles and power in politics and administration are not limited to those prescribed in the Constitution. They are personal to this King and he makes use of them for the benefit of the country and the people at the right time. This is a vital factor that helps maintain the stability of the country under democracy. It is the root supporting the development of the country. It would not be too much to say that the King's political charisma has been a major factor in overcoming all crises, and has led Thailand towards a stronger, more secure and prosperous destiny.

Footnotes

[1] **พระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัวกับรัฐสภา**, สำนักงานเลขาธิการวุฒิสภา, (2539), หน้า 314 - 316.

[2] "Pomp and Majesty: A Dynasty Celebrates 200 Years of Rule", **Asiaweek**, (April 23, 1982).

[3] รศ.ธงทอง จันทรางศุ, "พระราชอำนาจที่จะได้รับการกราบบังคมทูลและการปรึกษา", **เอกกษัตริย์อัจฉริยะ**, ทบวงมหาวิทยาลัย, (2540), หน้า 625.

[4] ชัยอนันต์ สมุทวณิช และคณะ, **ข้อมูลพื้นฐานกึ่งศตวรรษแห่งการเปลี่ยนแปลงการปกครองไทย**, (พิมพ์ครั้งที่ 3), สมาคมสังคมศาสตร์แห่งประเทศไทย, (2535), หน้า 16, 20.

[5] อรสม สุทธิสาคร, "อาทิตย์เบิกฟ้า", **นิตยสารสารคดี**, ฉบับที่ 142, ปีที่ 12 (ธันวาคม 2539), หน้า 104.

[6] ชาญวิทย์ เกษตรศิริ, **ประวัติการเมืองไทย**, (สำนักพิมพ์ดอกหญ้า, 2538), บทที่ 8 และ ดร.อนุมงคล ศิริเวทิน และ รศ.ดร.ปฐม มณีโรจน์, "การพัฒนาอันเนื่องมาจากพระราชดำริ : บทบาท ภารกิจ และระบบบริหารการพัฒนาโดยพระมหากษัตริย์ไทย", **เอกกษัตริย์อัจฉริยะ**, ทบวงมหาวิทยาลัย, (2540), หน้า 27.

[7] เฉลิมเกียรติ ผิวนวล, **ความคิดทางการเมืองของทหารไทย 2519-2535**, (สำนักพิมพ์ผู้จัดการ, 2535), หน้า 43.

[8] ผาสุก พงษ์ไพจิตร และคริส เบเคอร์, **เศรษฐกิจการเมืองไทยสมัยกรุงเทพฯ**, (สำนักพิมพ์ตรัสวิน, 2539), หน้า 513.

[9] "Violence Sweeps Bangkok", **Associated Press**, (October 14,1973), and Peter O'Loughlin "The Student's Revolt", **Associated Press**, (October 17,1973).

[10] ยศ สันติสมบัติ, **อำนาจ บุคลิกภาพ และผู้นำการเมืองไทย**, (พิมพ์ครั้งที่ 2, สำนักพิมพ์น้ำไท, 2535), หน้า 89 - 91.

[11] รศ.ธงทอง จันทรางศุ, "พระราชอำนาจที่จะได้รับการกราบบังคมทูลและการปรึกษา", **เอกกษัตริย์อัจฉริยะ**, ทบวงมหาวิทยาลัย, (2540), หน้า 634.

[12] จากการอภิปรายเรื่อง "จากจิตรลดา...สู่ประชาไทย" จัดโดยสมาคมสันติสุข, (3 พฤศจิกายน 2526).

[13] ชาญวิทย์ เกษตรศิริ และ ธำรงศักดิ์ เพชรเลิศอนันต์, **จาก 14 ถึง 6 ตุลา**, มูลนิธิโครงการตำราสังคมศาสตร์และมนุษยศาสตร์, (2541), หน้า 224 - 225.

[14] ยศ สันติสมบัติ, **อำนาจ บุคลิกภาพ และผู้นำการเมืองไทย**, หน้า 120 - 121.

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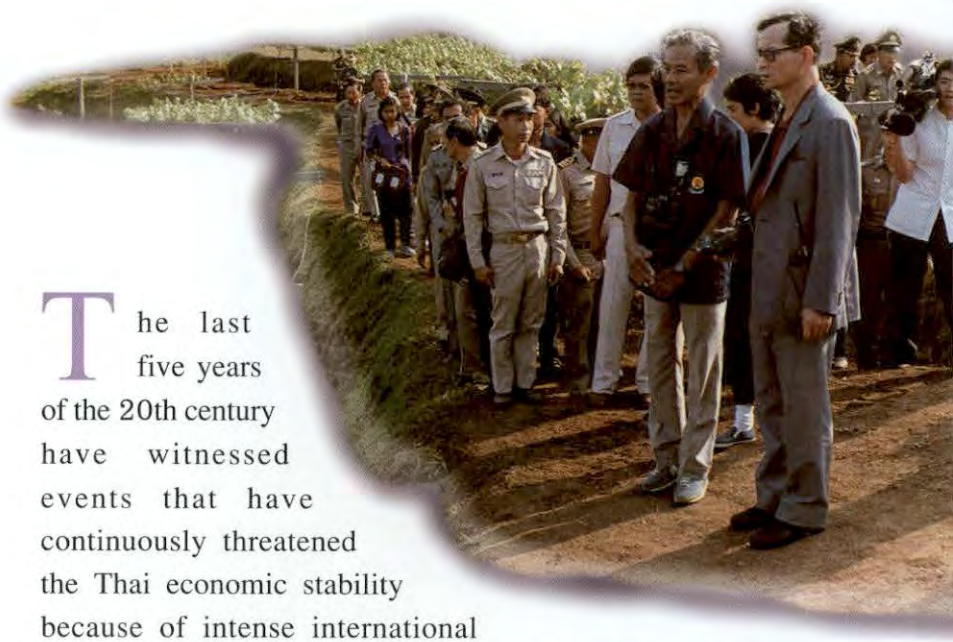
His Majesty the King and the Thai Economy

By Niti Vatiwutipong*



The last five years of the 20th century have witnessed events that have continuously threatened the Thai economic stability because of intense international trade competition. Thai exports, the country's main source of revenue, have lagged while imports have remained large. The country has increasingly faced financial deficits. Banks, as well as other financial institutions, have suffered liquidity and non-performing loan problems and loss of credibility. As a result, the government closed 56 financial institutions, whose combined operating assets totaled at least 800 billion baht.

Since 1997, foreign creditors have not trusted the Thai business sector's capability to repay its loans and are thus hesitant to extend the loan agreements, most of which are for short-term loans. To compound the difficulties, as the financial downturn progressed, there was profit speculation and an attack on the value of the baht currency, which was attached to the US dollar. The Bank of Thailand had to allocate 2.3 million US dollars of national reserve funds in order to protect the value of the baht. This reduction of funds in the national reserve exacerbated the weakness of the national currency situation. On 2 July 1997, when the government floated the baht, the value depreciated 30-40%. In August, to solve the increasing economic problems, the government had to request emergency loans from the International Monetary Fund. The funds were made available, but with attendant drastic conditions and supervision.[1]

Under these circumstances, the economy started to show signs of acute deceleration. The consumer price index and the service rate rose, investment stopped, and many business sectors were forced to liquidity because their capital investment was high, but their revenue had decreased. Businesses had to close, cut down on employee salaries and benefits, or reduce employee numbers. By March 1999, more than 2 million people were laid off.[2]

Looking back a decade prior to the crisis, Thailand'economy had a promising future. Thailand was one of the Asian "economic tigers," the economy was steadily growing at a rapid rate, and it was believed that Thailand would be a significant industrialized country in the region. With the abrupt change in the country's economic condition, and because of the immediate impact the downturn had on their livelihoods, the Thai people were very confused and desperate. They felt cornered and uncertain about what would happen to them in the future.

In the midst of this rapidly spreading panic of desperation and uncertainty, the Thai people were given reasons and explanations as to the causes of, and potential solutions to, the problem. This information provided hope and practical guidelines to help the people cope with the crisis.

In his speech on the economy, addressed to well-wishers in an audience on the 4th of December 1997, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej advised that the production and exporting of goods produced with local raw materials and labors must be emphasized. Investment and technology must be properly implemented, and, through research, production quality improved. In addition, the farmers and general populace must be given support. The King insisted that the approach to people's livelihoods, trade and consumption must be changed into a sustainable type--that is, "enough to keep people alive and to be self-supporting."[3]

The King, the People, and the Economy

Foreigners, especially those who have only a little background knowledge of Thai society, may think that Thai people widely submitted to His Majesty the King's idea of self-sufficiency because

he is held in such high esteem and is so beloved that his recommendations are unquestioningly adopted. This is partially true. But it is also true that the Thai people have for more than 50 years listened and adhered to what the King says because they know that his ideas and guidelines are formed through careful study and analysis of the situations and issues.

To thoroughly understand this, it is necessary to consider the social and economic situations of Thailand, including the role of royal advice and activities since the beginning of the King's reign in 1946.

When His Majesty the King ascended the throne, World War II had just come to an end. Population statistics of 1942, showed that one out of eight infants would die before reaching the age of one year (the 1999 ratio is one to thirty), and those that did survive were likely to be afflicted with one of many diseases, malaria in particular. Also, the rural areas, where 80% of the population lived, were increasingly ravaged by bands of thieves. The people were farmers, and rice was the main crop. There was only one planting a year, with a growing period of six months. Thus, for the rest of the year, the farmers had to find non-agricultural jobs. This was difficult because of poor access to other

villages and towns, and a lack of income limited mobility and employment flexibility. Indeed, in many remote areas, people bartered their goods directly.

During that time the economy of the country depended on the export of agricultural products and mining (the main exports included rice, teak, tin and rubber). World War II had also had a serious impact on the Thai monetary and fiscal system. After the War, the Thai baht depreciated to one-seventh of what it had been worth before the War, and two years later it had devalued by another 20%, causing the worst inflation in Thai history. The income of government officials was reduced to three percent of the income they had received before the War.

The overall picture of the Thai economy in the year the King ascended the throne can be seen by this note of a Thai government financial consultant:

"... in May 1946, Siam started from nothing. There was no money in the government's purse. The only asset left was its potentiality to bring foreign currency into the country...."[4]

Against this backdrop of economic despair, King Bhumibol Adulyadej was thrust into the full responsibility of being the monarch of a small kingdom, greatly removed from the world's power centers. Faced with rebuilding the economy while also establishing a relationship with his subjects was a daunting task. It was made even more challenging because of the fact that His Majesty the King's background before his ascension to the throne was only meagerly related to Thailand and its people. He is of the royal family that was distant from the people, and he was born and brought up in foreign countries.[5] However, the King spent his early life simply and economically like a commoner, and his experience with different social environments probably influenced his thoughts, vision, course of action, and his concern about the economy and society. This is especially true after 1933 when he lived in Switzerland, a country whose economic stability stemmed from agriculture and whose agricultural sector is still of economic importance to day.

Since his return to Thailand at the end of the year 1951, His Majesty the

King has had many opportunities to have close contact with the country and the people. In 1952, he spent his summer vacation at Klai Kang Won Palace in Hua Hin, Prachuab Khiri Khan Province. When he visited people in the villages nearby, he began to learn first-hand about the hardships of the villagers, and to understand their problems. It was in this province that the first royal development activities were initiated.

The King's visits to his people were extended to include different provinces in the central part of the country and later to different regions throughout the country. He visited the Northeast in 1955, the North in 1956 and the South in 1959. These visits became a routine occurrence in his reign. Royal palaces were constructed in every region so that he could spend time with the people. Early in his reign, he made it a rule to spend 7-8 months a year in the country's outlying regions. Through this personal attention, the King came to understand the people and identify weak points in the country's infrastructure. Consequently, he was able to institute royal projects to solve some of the problems and to improve the quality of life for the nation's poor.

The King's Promotion of the Thai Economy

Some have defined economics as, "the effective planning and administration of production activity and the distribution of goods and services to consumers in order to serve the needs of the members of a society as best as possible." If this is the criterion used to assess His Majesty's research projects and development projects, then it can be seen that these royal activities and guidelines form the keystone for building a strong foundation for the Thai economy.

His Majesty the King realizes that the Thai economy is based on agriculture,[6] and this is where he concentrates his interest, by initiating research and development projects in every region. These projects involve the improvement of five production factors, namely water resources, farmland, capital, agricultural technology and marketing.[7]

Among these factors, the King is fully aware that the development of water resources and irrigation systems is very significant, and is of vital and basic importance for the livelihood of the people. Since the beginning of his reign he has given advice and has motivated the government agencies concerned to proceed with water related development projects. In an interview with a foreign

correspondent, the King said, "... At the minimum one must have water to drink and water to irrigate the fields. These basics are lacked by the villagers, and that is why we must give them...."[8]

In addition to providing advice to concerned government agencies about capital, farmland and marketing, the King has personally donated both money and farmland to farmers. These measures are designed to encourage unity and the formation of cooperatives as a means to increasing production capability. In many communities these cooperatives have become very successful. He has also helped promote innovative ideas for marketing the farmers' products. As a result of His Majesty's endeavors, the products produced by the farmers are now of an improved quality, and are sold throughout the country.[9]

If the royal activities are not carefully studied, it may be misunderstood that what His Majesty the King has been trying to do by giving donations to the poor and initiating development projects are just the actions of a rich and powerful person imposing his will

on the underprivileged poor. Instead, they are calculated measures designed to improve the basic economy of the country's agricultural sector. However, the impact of such benevolent gestures raises a legitimate question. And as a result of his intervention, do the farmers become so accustomed to receiving help that it becomes an expectation rather than an act of support? A foreign correspondent of the *Far Eastern Economic Review* posed that question during an interview with His Majesty. The King responded that, "...a recurrent trouble with all aid programs is the danger that they will create an attitude of dependency. Do not give people fish, as the saying goes: better to give them a rod and line, and teach them how to fish." Were his efforts appreciated? Were the villagers grateful? "No one really appreciates (such aid)," he (the King) said. "They always want more. That is why they must be encouraged to be self-supporting and stand on their own feet. That is why it is important not to give too much and even more important not to promise too much...."[10]

His Majesty the King's attitude is that agricultural development provides the firm foundation for a stable economy in Thailand, and thus he endeavors, through his interest in agricultural technology and innovation, to help the people build upon this foundation.

The King as an Agricultural Role Model

Whoever has a chance to see the King's palace will find that it differs from other royal palaces in the world. In this monarch's compound, the visitor will see a rice-mill,

cattle, barns, a windmill, and small factories. Whoever goes inside the compound will find experimental farm plots, nurseries, a mushroom house, a fishpond, an agricultural laboratory and a factory for processing agricultural products. All of these have been experimental projects of the King since 1961. The royal projects in the palace's compound remain laboratories for agriculture and agricultural industries. They are models to be studied and passed on to farmers in different regions.[11]

Although the King's personal projects at Chitralada Palace range from the development of vegetables and animal breeding, cultivation and cattle raising, to the innovative development of machinery and agricultural processing product technology, they all share some of the same characteristics. They use advanced technological knowledge in conjunction with simple techniques and simple machinery that are inexpensive and can be found in the countryside.

Therefore, the knowledge and information developed within the palace compound is suitable for all Thai farmers to adapt for their own needs and uses.

In addition to his personal projects at Chitralada Palace, His Majesty gives advice to various government agencies at study centers in the different regions of Thailand. These centers study ways to improve the standard of living and the livelihood of the farmers through cooperative development. He repeatedly talks to agricultural experts and government agencies concerned about the necessity of seeking simple but efficient methodology and technology to assist farmers.[12]

The King as an Economist

While it is obvious that the King emphasizes agriculture as the economic backbone of the country, he also has definite ideas on productivity and economic theory. He has repeatedly stated that he believes people are most productive when they are free from economic dependency. Therefore, he encourages the people to stand on their own feet and to set up cooperatives to help one another. The government will assist in providing materials for production, in supplying capital, and in marketing. It will also offer help for research and development to increase production capability

with appropriate technology. But, in the end, it is the people themselves that ultimately must be the source of the country's productive capacity. It is the people that must, through their own soil, reach the objective of, "...(having) enough to eat, being able to be self-supporting and be self-sufficient, and producing goods." These guidelines were made public for the first time in 1974, some 23 years prior to Thailand's great economic crisis.[13]

No one knows the extent to which His Majesty the King's economic ideas have been influenced by any specific economic school of thought. He once mentioned that his ideas were not very much bound by textbooks.[14] Nevertheless, in the history of economics, there have been many thinkers who have launched their own theories on economics, and may have influenced His Majesty's own economic theories. Friedrich List (1789-1846), a German economist,

proposed his theory called "national economics," which influenced the development of the economies of Germany, the United States and Japan. The essence of this system was to increase the national production and to develop local industry and technology. People should be self-reliant. Production must serve local markets first. Foreign trade was of secondary importance.[15]

Another thinker who proposed an economic theory based on the empowerment of people in a community was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948). He pointed out that every unit of the local economy, from the family, community, village, and sub-district to higher up in the hierarchy must rely on itself, and that external trading should be done for greater sufficiency, not because of dependency. Gandhi believed that the development of the economy must come from within, strengthening every individual unit, starting from the one that is the closest to the people and expanding to national and international levels.

Gandhi's economic theory is not as popular as his political theory, which defined his role in fighting for the independence of India. Some experts found his economic theory too idealistic and not achievable. However, others like E.F. Schumacher(1911-1977), who launched the theory "Small is Beautiful," thought Gandhi had great economic insight. Schumacher is quoted as describing Gandhi in the following fashion, "...When we seriously consider what is actually happening in our world, Gandhi is one of the greatest development economists in the world...."[16]

His Majesty the King used to say that his own ideas (which are in harmony with the theory "Small is Beautiful") originated from Buddhist philosophy, the essence of which is to promote a reasonable state of well-being, allowing for logical consumption while using the minimal resources. The King has said, "...I had been

thinking of doing something small which would not be of great difficulty. And later I came across Schumacher's theory "Small is Beautiful." In his book, Schumacher also referred to the Buddhist's way of thinking. I was glad that he shared the same idea...."[17]

Some people may argue that the economic theories of those mentioned above and of His Majesty the King are not compatible with the world's main economic theories, which are so often influenced by multinational capitalism. In fact, the King is fully conscious of this. He has explained many times that the methodology he has advocated could not be applied to all ways of living, but only to perhaps one-fourth of them.[18]

His Majesty's Economic Views Lead the Way out of the Morass

Even before the economic crash of 1997, the Thai economy had been a liberal economic system, highly dependent on international trade. This was in large part because of the influence of western economists and an attempt to apply western-style economic theories to the Thai circumstance. A sustainable economy was seriously and systematically studied and introduced in Thailand fifteen years ago[19] by academics, thinkers and rural developers. The study was based on foreign ideas, theories and case studies, and thus there were certain constraints.

Despite the failure to account for Thailand's heavy agricultural base, the economy grew rapidly. However, when regional and world economic conditions began to change in the late 1990's, Thailand's economy suffered from the same over extension of credit and excess construction that entrapped the other "Economic Tigers of Asia." With the collapse of the façade created by too rapid growth, there was an immediate re-evaluation of the proper economic course that the country should adopt.

Some economic academics criticized the previous economic policy. Many hold the view that "there is a lack of study of the actual facts in Thailand, such as studies to understand the livelihood of farmers, the development directions of the farmers' families and community, and the relationship between the economy of the farmers and the nation." These experts demanded the application of foreign theories, based on foreign ideas, to actual facts in Thailand.[20] To a certain extent, their perspective has been influential in making adjustments to national economic policy. An economic system that puts a greater emphasis on rural agriculture (sometimes referred to as a "community economy" or "farmers' economy") was launched as an alternative, and has now become widely accepted. As a consequence, the eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan of 1997-2001 now states that, "The future development will stress the strengthening of the community in regional and rural areas so that people can stand on their own feet. This community economy will play an important role in fostering a good quality of life for the Thai people in the future."

Much of the change in economic philosophy can be attributed to statements made by the King on the proper economic strategy that should be adopted by the government. His views on self-sufficiency have been widely accepted and incorporated into future economic planning. On the issue of establishing a sustainable economy, His Majesty the King has publicized his views, which he has referred to as the "New Theory."

This concept offers his advice on how to conduct and structure one's life in accordance with the economic system. Derived from studies and experiments he has initiated, it presents practical steps to enhance the livelihood of the farmers. As an economic theory, it emphasizes self-sufficiency at the family level first, then later the introduction of cooperatives in order to strengthen production capabilities and marketing. Production must also be related to larger business systems. In his writings on the subject, the King has outlined in detail the different administrative aspects of production, and has illustrated how farmers can implement guidelines that will help them increase productivity by adapting and applying sound techniques to their own use.

Throughout half a century, while the Thai economy has been developing in response to globalization of the world economy, it has simultaneously incorporated the King's initiatives and activities in economics. In the midst of the recent economic crisis in the country, His Majesty's economic theories and recommended actions are regarded as the light leading the Thai people out of darkness to a bright future.[21]

Footnotes

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[2] วิทยากร เชียงกูล, **เศรษฐศาสตร์มิติใหม่**, โครงการวิถีทรรศน์, (2542).

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[17] พระราชดำรัสพระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัว พระราชทานแก่คณะเอกอัครราชทูตและกงสุลใหญ่ไทยประจำภูมิภาคเอเชีย-แปซิฟิก ณ พระตำหนักจิตรลดารโหฐาน, วันพุธที่ 26 กรกฎาคม 2532.

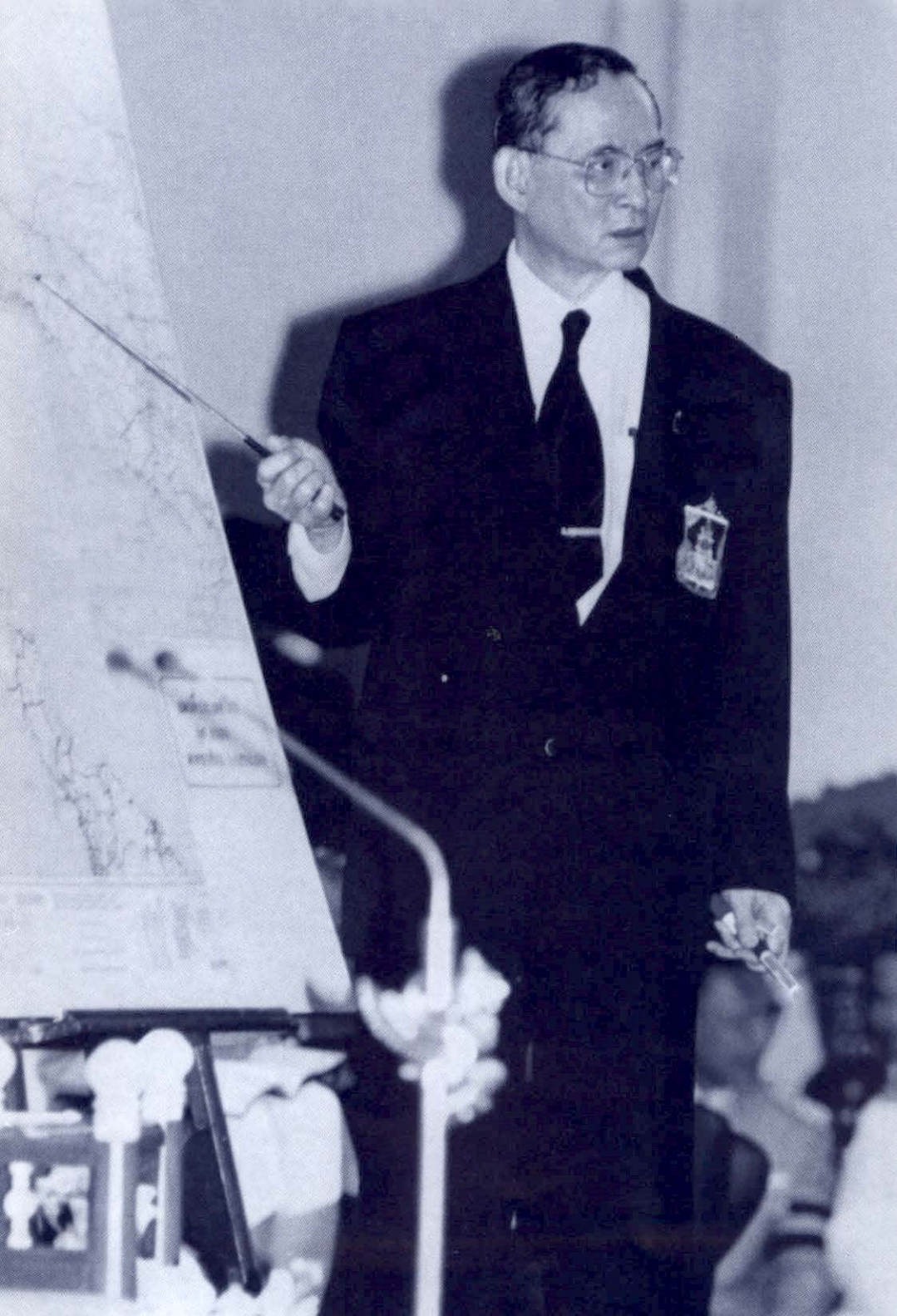
[18] พระราชดำรัสพระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัว พระราชทานแก่คณะบุคคลต่างๆ ที่เข้าเฝ้าฯ ถวายพระพรชัยมงคลเนื่องในโอกาสวันเฉลิมพระชนมพรรษา ณ ศาลาดุสิดาลัย สวนจิตรลดา พระราชวังดุสิต, วันพฤหัสบดีที่ 4 ธันวาคม พ.ศ. 2540 และวันศุกร์ที่ 4 ธันวาคม พ.ศ. 2541.

[19] การนำเสนอแนวคิดหรือทฤษฎีของบุคคลต่างๆ ดังที่ได้กล่าวนี้ มีแนวคิดหลักสอดคล้องกัน แต่ก็มีรายละเอียดจุดเน้นแตกต่างกันไปตามแนวทางของตนเอง ประกอบด้วยกลุ่มนักพัฒนา เช่น บาทหลวงนิพจน์ เทียนวิหาร บำรุง บุญปัญญา อภิชาติ ทองอยู่ กลุ่มนักวิชาการ เช่น รศ.ดร.เสรี พงศ์พิศ รศ.ดร.กาญจนา แก้วเทพ ศ.ดร.ยศ สันติสมบัติ ผศ.ดร.ณรงค์ เพ็ชรประเสริฐ ดร.อานันท์ กาญจนพันธ์ และกลุ่มผู้นำทางความคิดในสังคม เช่น ศ.นพ.ประเวศ วะสี วิทยา ว่องสกุล ไพบูลย์ วัฒนศิริธรรม โสภณ สุภาพงษ์ เป็นต้น ดูรายละเอียดแนวคิดและวิธีการของแต่ละกลุ่มแต่ละบุคคลได้ใน ฉัตรทิพย์ นาถสุภา และคณะ, **ทฤษฎีและแนวคิดเศรษฐกิจชุมชนชาวนา.**

[20] ฉัตรทิพย์ นาถสุภา และคณะ, **ทฤษฎีและแนวคิดเศรษฐกิจชุมชนชาวนา**, หน้า 263 - 269.

[21] ตัวอย่างเช่น ศ.นพ.ประเวศ วะสี ได้วิเคราะห์ ตีความ และขยายความพระราชดำรัสเรื่องเศรษฐกิจพอเพียงนำออกเผยแพร่อย่างกว้างขวางและเป็นรูปธรรม เช่น "เศรษฐกิจพอเพียงและประชาสังคม แนวทางพลิกฟื้นเศรษฐกิจสังคม" ปาฐกถาพิเศษในงาน "ธรรมรัฐแห่งชาติฟอรั่ม" 9 เมษายน 2541 และ ศ.ดร.ฉัตรทิพย์ นาถสุภา ผู้นำสำนักคิดเศรษฐศาสตร์การเมืองแนวประวัติศาสตร์ ซึ่งเสนอให้มีการทบทวนแนวคิดทางเศรษฐศาสตร์ที่ใช้ชี้นำแนวทางการพัฒนาเศรษฐกิจในช่วงศตวรรษที่ผ่านมา ได้มีมุมมองต่อพระราชดำรัสดังกล่าวว่า "...หมายความว่าองค์พระประมุขของชาติทรงมีจิตวิญญาณและอารมณ์ความรู้สึกเป็นอันหนึ่งอันเดียวกับประชาชนในชาติทรงสะท้อนความทุกข์ยาก และทรงพูดแทนความปรารถนาของคนส่วนใหญ่ของประเทศ..." เป็นต้น

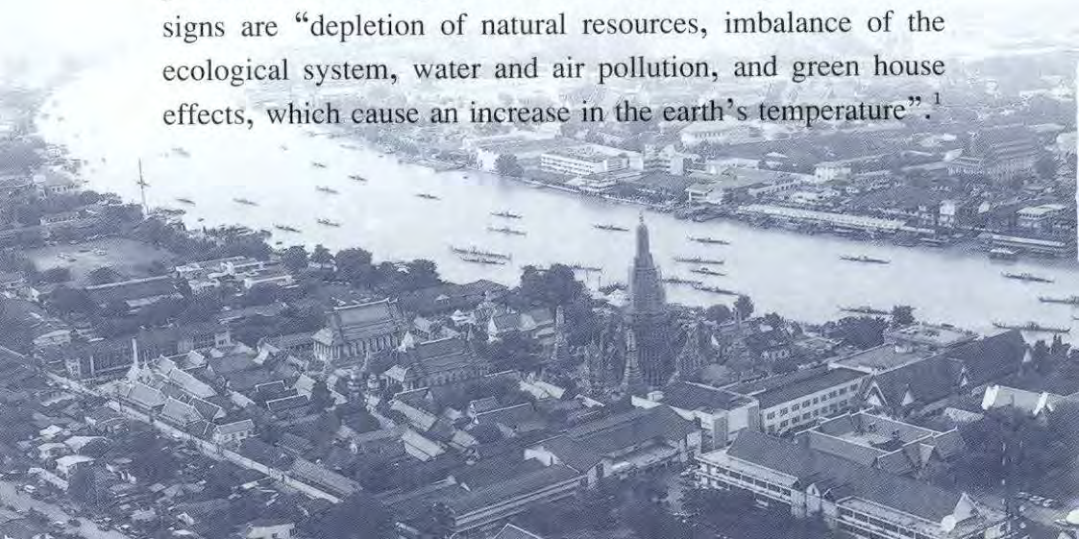
* ผู้เรียบเรียงขอขอบพระคุณเป็นอย่างสูงสำหรับ ศ.ดร.ฉัตรทิพย์ นาถสุภา แห่งคณะเศรษฐศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย ที่ได้ให้ข้อคิดและคำแนะนำในการวิเคราะห์และเรียบเรียงเนื้อหาในบทความนี้ อย่างไรก็ตามความรับผิดชอบต่อเนื้อหาและการตีความข้อมูลที่ใช้ในบทความทั้งหมดเป็นของผู้เรียบเรียงแต่เพียงผู้เดียว



His Majesty the King
and Solutions to Problems of the Environment and Urban Society

By Chidchanok Soonsinpai

The Industrial Revolution of the 18th century began in England and spread rapidly throughout Western Europe and the United States. Since then, industrial development has been accompanied by gross exploitation of the masses, and the destruction of natural resources around the world. However, the rapid growth of both production and consumption in the industrial societies, which gratifies consumerism, has subsided. In the latter part of the 20th century, man has faced several "environmental crises," each of which has signaled possible severe consequences for the future. Among these warning signs are "depletion of natural resources, imbalance of the ecological system, water and air pollution, and green house effects, which cause an increase in the earth's temperature".[1]



Another factor affecting the quantity of natural resources consumption is the world population. It was estimated the world population would increase to 9,000 million by 2005, and that the projected rate of increase in the developing countries would be even greater than that of the developed countries.[2] Population numbers continue to grow and it is not known exactly how many people the earth can sustain. Lester Brown, President of the World Watch Institute, mathematically estimated that the year 2050 could be a year of disaster. By that time, the world population could be as high as 10-12 thousand million, and there will be a shortage of natural and other resources necessary for the livelihood of people. Water for both drinking and agricultural uses will not be sufficient. Also, if as estimated, the earth's surface loses 10 thousand million tons of topsoil per year, then the available arable land could nearly be exhausted by 2050.[3]

As the Third World has followed "The Economic Growth Theory" of the western world and has tried to "leap" into economic industrialization, it has inevitably confronted the same environmental

problems previously faced by the western world. This effort to rapidly become industrialized has further diffused existing environmental problems throughout the world.

Although Thailand, a developing country that has followed in the footsteps of western civilization, has developed industrially, it has also become afflicted with various problematic social issues and imbalances. The most common maladies created by its rapid industrialization include pollution caused by inefficient infrastructure services in urban areas, the depletion of natural resources caused by inefficient management, abuse, and exploitation by powerful political figures.

The lack of policy planning, administrative upkeep, and the implementation of plans and policies cause most environmental problems in Thailand, including the depletion of natural resources. This was particularly true during the first through the third National Economic and Social Development Plans (1961-1976), which attempted to improve the people's standard of living by exploiting natural resources but ignoring or disregarding management planning. Moreover, industrial development was promoted only in Bangkok and its immediate environs,* thus causing industrial clusters in certain areas.

After 1976, the National Economic and Social Development Plans continued to emphasize the expansion of industrial sectors in the same areas, which led to the growth of pollution at an alarming rate. Although pollution control policies had been conceived, they

* Bangkok's immediate environs refers to Samut Prakan, Nonthaburi and Pathum Thani Provinces.

were not concretely developed or implemented. The seventh and eighth National Economic and Social Development Plans (1992-2001) launched concrete policies for pollution control and placed more emphasis on the conservation and enhancement of the environment. However, because it was very costly to solve pollution problems and the fundamental causes of pollution were not corrected, there was no success in actually reducing pollution levels.[4]

Bangkok and its environs play a very important role in national production, producing more than half of the gross national product. Thus Bangkok's difficulties and problems affect all of Thailand.[5]

Walden Bello, a Filipino writer, once wrote about Bangkok, "...as an examplar of the ecological crisis of urban-industrial society. Three decades, indeed, do make a difference. As recently as the late 1960s, one could refer, with some approximation to reality, to the 'placid canals and the pleasant, quiet, tree-lined streets of old Bangkok'. But beginning in the late 1970s, the opting for a strategy of rapid industrialization and modernization by the Sarit regime unleashed a burst of entrepreneurial energy that has transformed Bangkok from the "Venice of the East" to a veritable Leviathan. Indeed, the government has long since ceased to be able to control the forces of private capital that it let loose. In fact, from being the director of change, government has become the directed, and a great many of the city's problems stem from the dramatic failure of government to discipline the energies of the private sector."[6]

Walden Bello's viewpoint notably reflects the deterioration of Bangkok, as well as the work of the Thai Government. However, most capital cities share the same social and environmental crises that derive from mass consumerism and materialistic prosperity.

It takes time and efficient and capable management to resolve the problems.

Since the beginning of his reign, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej has been trying to enhance the livelihood of the poor in remote areas of the country. The emphasis of royal activities is on economic development with corresponding protection of critical natural resources like water, soil, and forests. The King, for many decades, also has been concerned about environmental problems in Bangkok, particularly during the last twenty years of the 20th century when people in Bangkok began to fall ill because of pollution. The King stepped in and worked with the government and the concerned governmental agencies to help solve the problems. While promoting development in rural areas, the King had, at the same time, to fight against poverty in Bangkok. To be successful, he had to take charge like a military commander to help save the city from the problems of traffic, floods, water and air pollution.

Traffic congestion is the biggest dilemma in Bangkok. It daily adversely affects the people and causes frustration and unhealthy mental fatigue. Moreover, the excessive pollution caused by the exhaust fumes of millions of vehicles also creates physical health hazards. This is a complicated and difficult problem caused by the

population's need to travel. It is a particularly acute national problem because Bangkok is the center of the country's growth, and about one in six Thai citizens lives in the greater Bangkok area. With population growth and with a high level of economic and social development, people earn more money and can afford to buy more cars. Unfortunately, while cars and people rapidly increase in numbers, roads and access to public utilities have not responded at the same rate to this "instant" growth.[7]

The King has a comprehensive and extensive understanding of the problem. In fact he first thought about finding solutions to the traffic problems in 1971, more than 25 years before the traffic network problem reached its current crisis. At that time Prime Minister Field Marshal Thanom Kittikhachorn and the Cabinet proposed to erect a statue of His Majesty the King to celebrate the *Rajadapisek* - the 25th anniversary of His Majesty's ascension to the throne.* The King did not consent to have a statue erected, wishing instead that roads be constructed.

"Field Marshal Prapas Charusatien, former Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Minister of Interior, told me that the government was planning the *Rajadapisek* celebration. I asked what the celebration was to be. Field Marshal Prapas said that they planned to build monument; I don't remember where. So I told him that it would be better to build a road than a monument; a ring road, because it had always been my dream. I have been looking forward to a ring road."[8]

* The royal ceremony was instituted on the occasion of His Majesty King Bhumibol's 25 years of ascension to the throne, on 9 June 1971.

(His Majesty the King's speech delivered on 4 December 1993.)

From his speech, it can be seen that the King foresaw that as Bangkok became larger and larger there would not be enough roads. The King spent many hours studying the problem using various sources. In one of his speeches, he said that he had made use of Information Technology including news from radio, television and newspapers. He also used aerial photos as a resource to collect the necessary information. Sometimes, he even went to a problematic traffic site in the middle of the night to gather data for his study.

As a preliminary measure to reduce traffic congestion, the King, in 1993, donated more than 10 million baht to the Royal Thai Police in order to furnish them with a fleet of motorcycles for official use and to provide in-service training to increase the efficiency of traffic policemen. The King indicated that he wanted the traffic police units versatile so that people could be assisted quickly and efficiently when they got into difficulties on the roads. While this was an interim solution to some of the traffic problems, it could not reconcile the disparity between the insufficient numbers of existing roads vis-à-vis the numbers necessary to handle the vastly increasing numbers of vehicles.

The King's initiative in correcting traffic problems is very systematic. He has compared the flow of traffic to flowing water, believing both should flow easily and conveniently. Accordingly, he launched the *Chaturathit* Project (Four Directions Project), the purpose of which was the construction of a network of North to South and East to West roads so that the traffic could flow easily in every direction. He also recommended that existing roads be extended and linked to increase the efficiency of the overall road network. Service and elevated roads were also constructed to ease the traffic.[9]

When the King began to consider solutions to traffic congestion and the attendant the environmental problems, he was careful and deliberate to ensure that potential solutions would not generate more negative impact on the environment. He held to scientific principles. For example, to construct new roads, most of Bangkok's famous canals had to be filled in with soil. Yet, before the canal water was drained into the sea, it was treated. At the same time, a drainage system was carefully planned and installed before the start of road construction to prevent future problems.

Water contamination is another environmental problem in Bangkok. In the absence of water treatment regulations, contaminated water in the greater Bangkok area has been primarily caused by household and factory waste. A study showed that in 1986, Thailand produced approximately 1,150,000 metric tons of toxic waste, and 70% of that amount occurred in the greater Bangkok area, the main industrial site of the country with 10,152 factories.[10] At that time there were no systematic standards for the treatment and disposal of toxic waste. Each factory took care of its own waste, and it was usually just deposited directly into the river. Thus the problem of contaminated water has been accumulating for a long time. At present, although there are rules and regulations to control the discharge of factory waste, the process of waste treatment of many factories does not meet the treatment requirements and there are some factories still ignoring the applicable rules and regulations.

According to the 1986 statistics, 231,000 tons of household wastewater were also being discharged into the river at that time. Seventy percent of this total (165,000 tons) originated in the central part of the country. Bangkok alone was responsible for 80% of the wastewater produced in the central region, or about 57% of the wastewater produced in the entire country.[11]

The King made it clear in his speech that one of the causes of waste was that:

"...In Bangkok, there is no place where waste can be disposed of properly. Indeed, more and more is being produced. The number of inhabitants in Bangkok has now reached ten million. People are no longer self-sufficient and can no longer live on the vegetables or crops they grow. They have to bring in food from outside or other countries.... After the consumption of food, humans excrete feces that cannot be broken down because there are no longer any plants to consume this waste. The waste, then, will be carried off in a sewer. Since there is no proper drainage system in either Bangkok or in Thailand itself, people make use of waterways as sewers. They throw all kinds of wastes into the waterways (which then flow) into the rivers and on to the sea."[12]

His speech reflected his insight about the origins of the problems. He has realized that the problems occur because nature is no longer able to cope with the dissolution cycle. Thus, he launched different methods to solve the problems of wastewater, abiding by the principle, "Nature cures Nature." His approach to solving these problems has proven easy, economical and effective, while simultaneously preventing environmental degradation.

"Good water drives away polluted water" is the King's theory of wastewater treatment. In searching for solutions to wastewater treatment, he used the Law of Gravity to develop a procedure whereby fresh water can be used to flush and dilute polluted water. At high tide, irrigation gates are opened to let water from the Chao Phraya River, or other sources, flow through connecting canals. When the tide recedes, the water flows out into the river. Thus, the polluted water can be diluted and the waste is flushed out.

It can be seen that the King's theories for environmental problem solving rely heavily on natural methods. In 1995, he noted that:

"...I had hoped to correct the notorious ecological problems of Bangkok 8-9 years ago, but I just had a chance to do it last year. We had free energy. We did not have to apply any biological system. We had the solar as well as lunar energy; that is, the high and the ebb tides..."[13]

Filtration by water hyacinths is yet another program that His Majesty has initiated to fight water pollution. The King's underlying principle is to make use of water hyacinths, which spread quickly and widely. The water hyacinths absorb organic and metallic substances in the polluted water through a photosynthetic process. With the help of oxygen, bacteria grow and dissolve pollutants in the water, thus improving the quality of the water.

This approach has been utilized to help purify the polluted Makkasan Swamp.* As the King has pointed out, "the Makkasan Project is a economical project. Water hyacinths are used in this water treatment project, because they absorb pollutants and make the water clean. They are natural filters reinforced by the energy of the sun and the natural growth of the plants...." Thus, a new environment was created for the Makkasan Swamp. This project is another example of the King's wisdom in implementing ecological principles to solve water pollution problems.

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* Makkasan Swamp is a large man-made lagoon located in the heart of Bangkok, dug by the Royal Thai Railway in 1931. It is 15 meters deep, 60 meters wide and covers an area equivalent to approximately 92 rais. (1 rai = 1,600 square meters). Over the years, the lagoon has become shallow because the Makkasan Railway Workshop has used it as a drainage and sewage basin. Now, resembling a swamp more than a lagoon, Makkasan also suffers from garbage and compost dumped into it by people from the 700 households living in the slums around it.

The King went even further in his studies and experimented with many different kinds of plants to discover their usefulness in polluted water filtration. He determined that to be successful, the roots of these plants must be bushy, scatter easily and hold soil. In this filtration process, polluted water flows through the plants, where toxic substances are trapped and the organic substances are dissolved before the water is deemed fit for human consumption or other uses.[14]

In addition to using irrigation gates and natural water filtration systems (like the water hyacinth), His Majesty has also addressed the problem of severe wastewater in the greater Bangkok area by using other than natural means. The King, realizing that the disposal of wastewater is a severe problem that has been increasing for many years, has suggested using "oxidation" to increase oxygen in the polluted water. He conceived this idea after observing the use of a

local instrument to scoop water, and from the knowledge he attained abroad about water treatment devices. Based upon this knowledge, he initiated the building and development of a prototype of a mechanical oxidation device called the "*Chaipattana* aerator." This is a floating mechanical surface aerator. With this device, water is exposed to oxygen rapidly and thoroughly, and the oxygen helps bacteria to grow, which quickly eliminates waste in the water. The efficiency of the Chaipattana aerator can be seen in the improvement of water quality. Evidencing the usefulness of the Chaipattana aerator, the device was issued a patent in the King's name on 2 February 1993. It is the ninth mechanical water aerator in the world to be patented, and it is the first patent to be registered and granted to a monarch.[15] At present there are numerous models of Chaipattana aerators available, and they are widely used to oxygenate and clean polluted water throughout the country.

Besides water pollution, Bangkok faces another special type of problem - flooding. Flooding has an impact on people's physical and mental health, causes loss of property, and can even bring about a halt in the national economy. Monsoons are the principal causes of the inevitable flooding. Heavy rainfalls in the past few years have caused flooding all over the country. Because there are insufficient reservoirs, flashfloods from the North flow swiftly South to the sea. But before these waters reach the sea, they pass Bangkok where they cause severe flooding since Bangkok is situated on a sinking plain. Bangkok's tendency to sink lower and lower is caused by the loss of underground water. The greater Bangkok Waterworks Authority has yet to develop the capability to adequately supply the complete water demand of the area. Therefore, local factories pump underground water for their use at the rate of 1.4 million cubic meters per day. However, only about half of this amount is returned so it has the

effect of draining the water table upon which Bangkok rests.[16] Thus, Bangkok has effectively become a water basin that is slowly sinking as the water is drained away.

The King has a profound knowledge and understanding of these conditions. Consequently, he likes to become involved and initiate solutions to resolve any problems he can. He often surveys trouble spots himself.* [17] The main principle guiding his proposed solutions is to reduce the effects Bangkok experiences by being located at the confluence of three different water sources. This phenomenon causes water to back up, especially at Phra Khanong – the lowest spot in Bangkok, and it contributes to extensive flooding until the water can be flushed to the sea.

This problem is particularly acute during the monsoon season, which falls in September–October. First, the water from the North flows down the Chao Phraya River to the central part of the country. Second, water is released from dams that are overflowing, particularly from the Chao Phraya Dam in Chainat Province. The water from these two sources can arrive at Bangkok at the same time when the tide (the third water source) peaks. As a result, floodwaters can inundate and devastate Bangkok for long periods of time. The King has suggested both long and short-term solutions, such as waterway dredging, and the construction of reservoirs and dikes at various points. In addition, green areas would be provided to act as drains so the water can flow past to the river or sea conveniently.

* In 1983, the King surveyed the flooding sites 6 times by helicopter, car and boat.

The King's capability in solving flood problems was publicly noted during the 1995 heavy flooding in Bangkok. Bangkok at that time suffered from the impact of very heavy tropical storms.[18] More than one million households suffered in some way from the flooding. Farm lands worth more than 10,000 million baht were destroyed (US$ 400 million at that time). People living in the Chao Phraya River basin in the central part of the country shared the same fate as the people of Bangkok. This disaster caused the economy to come to a halt.

In the midst of the people's suffering, the King urged that the agencies concerned and water specialists brainstorm and seek rapid solutions to the problem.[19] Further, the King assigned his own team of workers to gather data and information on the land and rivers. He also requested that aerial photographs be taken so he could assess the water flow. He kept a close watch on the situation and meticulously studied the data and information he received. The flooding prevention measure he recommended was to drain water via all canals from the Bangkok area to the sea as rapidly as possible. Tunnels were also dug under the roads for water drainage.

The King's great concern about the hardship of his people gave a boost to the people's morale. Government agencies, the private sector, and the general population together fought the flooding problems cooperatively, and under His Majesty's leadership Bangkok recovered from this heavy and prolonged flooding. However, His Majesty was not satisfied with this single victory. As a far-sighted person, His Majesty was worried that the people might again face the same kind of problems if no preventive measures were taken. Therefore, he decided to research more long-term measures to resolve this recurring problem.

One of the royal initiative projects that effectively solves much of the flooding problems in Bangkok is the Pa Sak Reservoir.* Each year the average capacity of the Pa Sak River is 2,400 million cubic meters of water, and it is incapable of holding the additional waters that come with each rainy season. As a result, the areas on both banks of the rivers are flooded and the flooding extends to the lower Chao Phraya Basin, including Bangkok.

Because the King foresaw a possibility for easing the flooding situation in the central part of the country, as well as the ability to make use of this surplus water, he suggested that the Royal Irrigation Department do a feasibility study for the construction of a series of dams. Besides limiting flooding during the rainy season, the dams would help prevent water shortages during the dry season. In addition to the construction of the Pa Sak Cholasit Dam in 1994, the King

* The Pa Sak River is one of the main tributaries of the Chao Phraya River. It is 513 kilometers long. The source of the river is at Phetchabun Range, Loei Province. It flows past Phetchabun, Lopburi and Saraburi Provinces, and merges with the Chao Phraya River at Ayutthaya Province.

also recommended the construction of the Bhumibol Dam in Tak Province and the Sirikit Dam in Uttaradit Province to prevent flooding and hold water for agricultural purposes. All three dams have proved efficient at meeting the objectives of their construction. The King has said,

"One mode of operation would be to retain the water uphill by keeping it within the dams; there are two big dams; the King's Dam and Queen's Dam. This year the King's Dam has retained 9,000 million cubic meters to prevent it from coming down and flooding the plains. At the same time, the Queen's Dam has retained 6,000 to 7,000 million cubic meters of water. This is estimated to be the minimum amount of water that was already being held back by the dams. If it hadn't been for these two dams, as much as 20,000 million cubic meters could have flowed into the central plains. In that event, would have happened? Thus, it is a very good thing that the Prime Minister has declared that the Pa Sak Project will be implemented. It will help to lighten the miseries. The Pa Sak Dam can retain about 800 million cubic meters of water. When there is a water shortage, this reserve can be released to make available the water necessary for crop irrigation, power production, and personal, commercial and industrial use."[20]

By 1998 the Pa Sak Reservoir was ready for use. The water volume measured at that time was 30.70 million cubic meters.[21] Subsequently, it reached 787 million cubic meters on 28 October 1999.[22] (The highest water level recorded to date is 960 million cubic meters.) These figures indicate that this dam will help solve the flooding problems in Bangkok and in the central part of the country, as well as act as a water resource basin for a farming area of more than 200,000 rais (80,000 acres).

Besides managing the flood system in North of Bangkok, the King also devised a flood management system for Bangkok called *"Kaem Ling"* (monkeys' cheeks).

The King has explained the theory behind this project in the following way. "If you throw a banana to a monkey, he will peel it and put it in his mouth, chewing it and keeping it in his cheek. The monkey can keep almost the whole bunch of bananas in his cheeks, then chew and swallow."[23]

The methods suggested by the King are simple but effective. As he has explained, he had observed the monkey's behavior and made use of it. He compared a monkey's cheek to a reservoir where water from ditches as well as canals flows into and remains when there are floods. When the water level at the sea recedes, the water in the reservoir will be drained and flushed out to the sea. This is comparable to the monkey swallowing the bananas.

The Kaem Ling Project is divided into two parts, located on the east bank and west banks of the Chao Phraya River. A big reservoir was constructed near the coast to hold water. When the tide is high, the water gate is closed and when the tide recedes, it is opened to drain the water to the sea. In the past, the Kaem Ling Project has worked well to reduce flooding and it has served as a water reserve resource during the drought.[24]

His Majesty's initiatives, like the construction of the Pa Sak Reservoir to store water before it reaches Bangkok and the founding of Kaem Ling Project to store water before it drains into the sea, reflect the King's wisdom and potential in systematic flood management. These preventive measures should be able to adequately cope with most flooding problems.

Over the years, while the King was involved in fighting the degradation of the capital city, he was careful to put himself into the proper role. He did not work in place of the government, but he cooperated with the government in planning, analyzing and determining the solutions to the problems. He did not instruct but he advised so that the parties concerned could consider and find appropriate methods and implement them. By taking a leading role in solving the flooding, he was able to bring hope while raising the people's awareness of the conditions in Bangkok.

On 4 November 1992, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) presented the UNEP Gold Medal of Distinction to His Majesty for his distinguished dedication to Nature and Environmental Conservation.[25] This gold medal signifies that the King's environmental activities are worthwhile and of benefit to all the people of the world.

King Bhumibol Adulyadej is the first Thai monarch to encounter the problems associated with the growth of major cities in this era of globalization. He realizes that the deterioration of Bangkok and other Thai metropolitan areas could bring about social and economic problems that can become national problems. The King has applied the principle that man and nature have to depend on each other to solve the problems. While the economic development of the country is progress, people have to be concerned about and maintain the environment at the same time. His approach to environmental problem solving is truly based on the balance of these two elements so that the country can be developed in a sustainable way.

"...I have an idea to build a new city, which is not the same kind of city built by others that have caused problems. The city I have in mind will be like a city of angels. What I mean is that I would like to rebuild Bangkok as a spacious, tidy, beautiful and historical city like the city of angels. Bangkok will not be relocated, but it will be improved for the better.... "[26] (His Majesty the King's address given on March 22, 1994.)

Footnotes

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[3] น.พ.ประสาน ต่างใจ , "ฉากสุดท้ายสิ่งแวดล้อมโลก", **วิถีทรรศน์ : กลียุคกับหายนะเศรษฐกิจไทย**, โครงการวิถีทรรศน์, (สิงหาคม 2540), หน้า 212.

[4] ศุภจิต มโนพิทักษ์, "นโยบายสิ่งแวดล้อมของประเทศไทย", เอกสารถ่ายสำเนา.

[5] ดร. ไพจิตร เอื้อทวีกุล, **สิ่งแวดล้อมปี '36 ประชาชนต้องมีส่วนร่วมในการจัดการสิ่งแวดล้อม**.

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[7] รศ.ดร.ครรชิต ผิวนวล, "สรุปสภาพปัญหาการจราจรและแนวทางการแก้ไขสำหรับพื้นที่ กทม.และปริมณฑล", **สิ่งแวดล้อมปี'36 ประชาชนต้องมีส่วนร่วมในการจัดการสิ่งแวดล้อม**, องค์กรพัฒนาเอกชนร่วมจัดการสัมมนาสิ่งแวดล้อมปี'36, (ธันวาคม 2536), หน้า 234.

[8] เอกสารถ่ายสำเนา "โครงการพระราชดำริเพื่อแก้ไขปัญหาจราจรกรุงเทพมหานคร", กรุงเทพมหานคร.

[9] ประมวลจาก "โครงการพระราชดำริเพื่อแก้ไขปัญหาจราจรกรุงเทพมหานคร", **เนชั่นสุดสัปดาห์** , ฉบับที่ 29, กรุงเทพมหานคร, (ธันวาคม 2538 - 4 มกราคม 2539), หน้า 16 - 19. และ**ในหลวงกับสิ่งแวดล้อมไทย**, กรมส่งเสริมคุณภาพสิ่งแวดล้อม กระทรวงวิทยาศาสตร์ เทคโนโลยีและสิ่งแวดล้อม, (พฤษภาคม 2541).

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[11] ไชยยศ บุญญากิจ, ธีระ พันธุมวนิช, "สิ่งแวดล้อมไทยในทศวรรษหน้า", **สถาบันสิ่งแวดล้อมไทย สัมมนาประจำปี 2539**, (กรกฎาคม 2539), หน้า 3.

[12] พระราชดำรัสพระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัว พระราชทานแก่คณะเอกอัครราชทูตและกงสุลใหญ่ไทยประจำภูมิภาคเอเชีย-แปซิฟิก เมื่อวันที่ 26 กรกฎาคม 2532 ณ พระตำหนักจิตรลดารโหฐาน.

[13] พระราชดำรัสพระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัว พระราชทานแก่คณะเอกอัครราชทูตและกงสุลใหญ่ไทยที่ประจำการในต่างประเทศ 77 นาย เมื่อวันที่ 17 สิงหาคม 2538 ณ พระตำหนักจิตรลดารโหฐาน.

[14] ประมวลจาก **แนวคิดและทฤษฎีการพัฒนาอันเนื่องมาจากพระราชดำริในพระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัว**, สำนักงานคณะกรรมการพิเศษเพื่อประสานงานโครงการอันเนื่องมาจากพระราชดำริ, (พฤษภาคม 2540), หน้า 100 - 147.

[15] อ้างแล้ว, หน้า 148 - 152. และปราโมทย์ ไม้กลัด,"พระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัวกับการแก้ไขปัญหาเรื่องน้ำ", **ราชภัฏเฉลิมพระเกียรติ เนื่องในวโรกาสฉลองสิริราชสมบัติครบ 50 ปี**, (โรงพิมพ์คุรุสภา ลาดพร้าว, 2539), หน้า 68 - 88.

[16] วอลเดน เบลโล เชียร์ คันนิงแฮม ลี เค็ง ปอห์, แปลโดย สุรนุช ธงศิลา, **โศกนาฏกรรมสยาม**, หน้า 177 - 178.

[17] **ในหลวงกับสิ่งแวดล้อมไทย**, กรมส่งเสริมคุณภาพสิ่งแวดล้อม กระทรวงวิทยาศาสตร์ เทคโนโลยีและสิ่งแวดล้อม, (พฤษภาคม 2541).

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[19] ประมวลจาก **เนชั่นสุดสัปดาห์**, ฉบับ 29, (ธันวาคม 2538 - 4 มกราคม 2539), หน้า 9 - 15.

[20] พระราชดำรัสพระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัว พระราชทานแก่คณะบุคคลต่างๆ ที่เข้าเฝ้าฯ ถวายพระพรชัยมงคลเนื่องในโอกาสวันเฉลิมพระชนมพรรษา ณ ศาลาดุสิดาลัย สวนจิตรลดา พระราชวังดุสิต วันจันทร์ ที่ 4 ธันวาคม 2538 , (อมรินทร์พริ้นติ้งแอนด์พับลิชชิ่ง จำกัด (มหาชน), หน้า 77.

[21] "โครงการพัฒนาลุ่มน้ำป่าสักอันเนื่องมาจากพระราชดำริจังหวัดลพบุรี - สระบุรี", **97 ปี กรมชลประทาน**, กรมชลประทาน กระทรวงเกษตรและสหกรณ์, (มิถุนายน 2542).

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[23] พระราชอรรถาธิบาย ของพระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัว จาก **แนวคิดและทฤษฎีการพัฒนาอันเนื่องมาจากพระราชดำริในพระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัว**, สำนักงานคณะกรรมการพิเศษเพื่อประสานงานโครงการอันเนื่องมาจากพระราชดำริ, หน้า 170.

[24] ประมวลจาก **แนวคิดและทฤษฎีการพัฒนาอันเนื่องมาจากพระราชดำริในพระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัว**, หน้า 166 - 177.

[25] มานพ เมฆประยูรทอง, **พระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัวกับสหประชาชาติ**, สมาคมแห่งสหประชาชาติแห่งประเทศไทย, (โรงพิมพ์เทคนิค 19), หน้า 29.

[26] **ในหลวงกับสิ่งแวดล้อมไทย**, กรมส่งเสริมคุณภาพสิ่งแวดล้อม กระทรวงวิทยาศาสตร์ เทคโนโลยีและสิ่งแวดล้อม.

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