CHAPTER – I
INTRODUCTION

The main attempt of this chapter is to address basic issues such as the place of Buddhism and examine the structural aspects of governance in the politics of Thailand. In the present discourse, it tries to examine how Buddhism and monarchy are treated as essential elements of the political system in Thailand. Thailand, officially known as the Kingdom of Thailand is strategically situated at the centre of the Southeast Asian mainland. In Southeast Asia, Thailand is the only country which had never been occupied by any European or other foreign powers, except during the Second World War. Thai rulers always followed tremendous flexibility in the affair of the country’s foreign policies though it was caught in the power rivalry between two big powers of England and France during the Second World War. (See map of Thailand in Appendix-i)

The country had been ruled by absolute monarchy from 1782 to 1932, when rebels seized power in a coup and established a Constitutional Monarchy. Since then, Thailand has witnessed various civil and military regimes (Wilson 1967:11). Four main ‘institutions’ such as the King, Buddhism, Nation and Democracy provide the pillars of political legitimacy in Thailand. Wilson comments that the king or the Monarchy is a symbol of political conservatism, while Buddhism is a symbol of cultural conservatism and unity. However, more importantly, the king and Buddhism are vital for the nation as a whole in uniting all sections of society (Wilson 1968:33-39). Democracy also carries the meaning of freedom and the right of political participation. Although built upon a foundation of broad unity of thought, the ruling class is divided on the matter of emphasis. Here, it can be mentioned that Thailand has a mixture of both the civil and common traditional laws. Due to it’s unique history of Buddhism and its development in Thailand, the civil/constitutional laws in the country remain in conformity with the traditional laws derived from the teachings of Buddhism (Kittayarak 2005:108).

It is also worth mentioning here that politics in Thailand has always centered around very few people. Kings, royals and nobles reigned supreme during...
the Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, and Bangkok eras; and the 1932 coup, which overthrew the absolute monarchy did bring some fundamental changes in the pattern of rule. After the coup, bureaucratic elite replaced the monarchical elite. They created the first Constitution in Thailand and forced the King to relinquish his absolute status and became a constitutional monarch. However, the government that emerged was essentially dominated by the military, which did not let the people participate in the affairs of governance. The people, therefore, for the past many years had little participation (Rabihadana 1979:11). As argued by Phongpaichit and Chris Baker (1999:245-246) the major decision makers in contemporary Thai national politics have been the top-level bureaucrats, high-ranking military officers, royal members, distinguished journalists, directors of large businesses and corporations, intellectual, and politicians.

**Political System of Thailand**

The transition from absolute monarchy to a democratic parliamentary state was not smooth; there were 18 military coups and 16 constitutions from 1932 to 1992. The 17th Constitution was adopted in 1997. This period of 60 years, from 1932 to 1992 can be seen as attempts by the Thai state to create a true people's democracy, where two kinds of transitions have taken place, which, though, are yet far from over. One was the transition from monarchy to people's elected government and other from militarily intervened ‘Thai-style democracy’ to a completely civilian democracy (Sukatipan 1999:8). But, it actually has not happened since another military coup took place on September 19, 2006.

It can be said that the last constitution of Kingdom of Thailand (Buddhist Era) B.E. 2540 (1997) was drafted by the Constitution Drafting Assembly composed of 99 members selected from each province throughout the country as well as academics in public law, politics, and public administration. It was the first time the Thai people had an opportunity to draft the entire Constitution on their own (Chambers 2002:4-6). However, unfortunately it lasted only for 9 years.

McDorman, of the University of Victoria in Canada observed that constitutions in Thailand have been seen as nominal rather than normative. That is, they have served to validate the power of the ruling group, rather than lay down ground rules that everyone must obey. “Most political commentators have accepted that the role of a Constitution in Thailand has been to legitimize the authority
exercised by the then-dominant political forces." This is one reason why the country had a new constitution virtually every time when power changed hands (McDorman 1993:16).

As Hongladarom argues, a country like Thailand has to find its own way, which according to him is becoming more and more involved in interactions among nations. The resulting form of government, while clearly retains much that is peculiar to the historical development and other circumstances of the country cannot diverge too much from what the world community finds acceptable (Hongladarom 1995:3). There is another argument suggested by M.R.Kukrit Pramoj:

"Thai form of democracy is not like that anywhere in the world. This Thai constitution is not like that of any country in the world. Members of the Thai upper House are not like those anywhere else in the world. The present Thai Government is not like that of any other country in the world. Thailand is not like any other country in the world. The Thai people are not like any other people in the world. And a member of the Upper House like me is not like a senator anywhere in the world." (Wilson 1979:271)

Arguments purport to show that democracy is unsuitable to Thailand, then, unsuccessful. Democracy is not necessarily an alien system from an alien tradition imposed on the countries of the Southeast Asia. When students led a mass of people against the army in 1976, and on Ratchadamnoen Avenue in Bangkok, Thailand in 1992, when unarmed citizens rose up and battled soldiers with automatic rifles and tanks-attest to the fact that democracy has represented the aspirations of the citizens in this country for better lives (Race 1974:192-193). The actual outcomes of such struggles might not have been perfect, and there are undoubtedly many more obstacles to overcome before genuine democracy is fully realized, but these struggles are important steps toward building a fairer society by the citizens themselves.

Somvichian (1979:154) suggests the Thai tend to admire most a leader who is tough in dealing with certain public problems, yet soft in giving them enough freedom to pursue their daily way of life. In the current of Thai martial law, for example, there was not once, whence a curfew was seriously imposed, or rigorous press censorship enforced. The Thai authoritarianism has always been mild, restrained, flexible, and most people even an enjoyable one. Nonetheless, it still exhibits authoritarian features. Pasuk Phongpaichit (2001:46) comments that even though the World Bank does not want to touch on the issue of political reform. Thailand's recent experiences in combating corruption, however, highlight the importance of political reform and the role of social movements working from
Participation of the people is critical to the success of efforts to put in place new independent institutions to ensure human rights, community rights, and the rights of citizens to investigate the behaviour of politicians and bureaucrats.

In fact, Thailand's governmental structure has undergone gradual evolution in response to the socio-political changing environment. Ever since 1932, democracy became the country's political system. Its structure has been a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentarian form of government. The bicameral parliamentary system is composed of popularly elected representatives and senators. There are roughly three major institutions in Thai politics. The first and foremost is His Majesty the King who is the head of the armed forces and upholder of Buddhism and all other religions. The Constitution provides that His Majesty the King's person is sacred and inviolable. His sovereign power emanates from the people, and he exercises his legislative power through the parliaments, executive power through the cabinet headed by a prime minister who is designated from among members of the House of Representatives and judicial power through the court system (Funston 2001:349). The current monarch, King Phumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX), is held sacred and dear by all Thais (Principal Government Officials 2007:15) (see appendix details the king of Thailand from Sukhothai to Rattanakosin i-).

Executive and Legislature

The 1991 Constitution treats the king as the head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. The Cabinet is headed by a prime minister, who in theory is the country's chief executive official. By the 1992 amendment to the Constitution, the prime minister must be an elected member of the House of Representatives. The Prime Minister may take any steps necessary to preserve the stability of the throne to maintain public order, or to ensure that the economy functions smoothly. In practice, however, high-level military officers play a major role in government (Uwanno, Borwornsak & Attorney Wayne D. Burns 1993:10).

The Constitution of Thailand of 1997 has put great emphasis on establishing the rule of law in Thailand. Justice is a prerequisite for achieving such a goal; the Constitution has placed great importance to the issues of due process in the criminal justice process. As a matter of fact, there have long been attempts to overhaul the criminal justice system plagued by various problems it is encountering, namely, the abuse of powers and the lack of adequate check and balance among the
authorities involved, the inefficiency in investigation, prosecution and the trial process, the violation of human rights, etc (Government of Thailand Office of Judiciary 2001:2-3).

Legislative power in Thailand is vested in the bicameral National Assembly (Rathasapha), which is made up of the House of Representatives (Sapha Phuthaen Ratsadon) and the Senate (Wuthisapha). Constitutional reforms drafted in 1997 revised the number of members in these bodies. The number of members in the House of Representatives increased from 392 to 500 in the general elections of January 2001, with members elected to four-year terms. Of these, 400 members are directly elected, and 100 are appointed from party list. Prior to the Constitution of 1997, the king appointed all members of the Senate. However, following elections in March 2000, the Senate is now directly elected, with its 200 members serving six-year terms (Ibid, p., 4).

Administrative Units

Thailand is divided into 76 provinces. The capital province is Bangkok, also known as Krung Thep Mahanakhorn. Appointed governors administer 75 of the country's 76 provinces. The Bangkok Metropolis Administration is administered by an elected governor and is divided into 38 districts. Each district comprises of subdistricts (Tambol) with villages (Moo ban) each with their own administrations. The representatives of these entities can be quite powerful at their local level (Guest 2004).

Scope of the study:
History of the Buddhism and “Monarchy” in Thailand

Monarchy is the oldest form of government in which the ruling power is vested in a single person who wears a crown. He holds his office by virtue of hereditary succession, though we may trace some instances of his election by the influential sections of the community as well. He may be having the title of a king, an emperor; the essential point is that the government works according to his will. In its widest sense, any government in which the supreme and final authority is in the hands of a single person is a monarchy, without regard to the source of his election or the nature and duration of his tenure. In this sense, it is immaterial whether his
office is conferred by election (by parliament or people) or is derived by hereditary succession, or whether he bears the title of emperor, king, czar, president, or dictator. It is the fact that the will of one man ultimately prevails in all matters of government which gives it the character of monarchy (Johari 2004:412-413). Since monarchy is the oldest form of government, its prevalence may be seen in the history of all states of the world. It declined with the growth of democracy in modern times. For instance, France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Italy, Russia, Turkey, etc. became republics. Thai monarchy is “sacred” (Saksit). Modern academics use this word to explain the monarchy with a new meaning which is not so different from being worshipped and revered. But the “sacredness” in the cultural constitution has an ancient type of meaning, which can be translated literally to mean having mystical power (sak) and might (sit). In olden times, the monarchy in almost all societies was “sacred” in this sense (Aoesivong 1991:4). The difference between a parliamentary democracy, that is, a constitutional monarchy and a republic is considered more of a difference of detail than of substance, particularly in the common case in which the Head of State serves the traditional role of embodying and representing the nation. Such constitutional monarchs are symbols of the unity of the nation or empire: as such, they are useful, visible personifications of the State (Jahari.p.,415). The constitutional monarchy in Thailand is different from other countries in the world.

For Thailand the concept of monarchy has its origins in Sukhothai, (1238-1368), Ayutthaya (1350-1767) founded monarchy in the early part of the 13th century and generally regarded as truly independent Thai capital. A paternalistic ruler alert to the needs of his people and his duty to guide them, a view markedly different from the divine kingship practiced by the Khmers was born particularly under the reign of the great King Ramkhamhaeng (1275-1317). With the founding of the Chakri Dynasty, in 1782, and the establishment of Bangkok as the capital, Kingship was based primary on adherence to the Buddhist concept of virtues. The Bangkok period produced a succession of unusually able rulers, capable of meeting a variety of challenges both to the country and to the monarchy itself (Rabibhadana, 1979:5-7: Polachan 2007:3-10).

Thai rulers were absolute monarchs whose office was partly religious in nature from 1238-1932.
Thus, Thailand's political system is a constitutional monarchy, meaning the real power is with elected and appointed leaders. They derived their authority from the ideal qualities they were believed to possess. The king is the moral model, who personifies the virtue of his people, and his country lives at peace and prospers because of his meritorious actions (Ungpakorn 2008: 8-9). The king fully conscious of the changing nature of life, the monarchy in Thailand is constantly adapting itself to ensure that it fits in with the modern world and is able to respond to the needs of the people and society. The Thai monarchy has a unique quality, and that is its adaptability to change, which has enabled it to flourish to this day. It has always shown exceptional compassion, relevance and vitality, particularly in the contemporary world.

**Buddhism as a factor in Thai Politics: The Sukhothai Period (1238-1350)**

It is important to make a brief summary of the stages of development of Buddhism in Southeast Asia, especially in Thailand from the Sukhothai Kingdom. Sukhothai polity has been described as a paternal government. It has been a monarchical tradition, followed by the rulers of the Ayutthaya and Chakri Dynasties (Bangkok Era). The King was regarded as the father of the people to whom respect was paid and in whom the people had faith. The King's task was no sinecure. His...
duties were arduous (Wyatt 1984:245). The early Kingdoms were divided into provinces (in Thai Jungwat). These in turn were subdivided into town and villages, and further subdivided at times into divisions and groups. The headman of the village was called Pho Pan, meaning the father or elder of the village. The King himself was called Pho khun or the great father. In Sukhothai period there were no castes or slavery. All men were equal. The province exercised substantial autonomy. Geographical differences and distance made administrative decentralization necessary. The first Thai capital at Sukhothai was administered by the King (Mcvey 2004:1048). Here, we will not discuss the administrative structure of the ancient Sukhothai era. Rather, the main focus will be on how Buddhism impacted on the polity and society of Thai people of this period (Suraphol 2005:23 in Thai).

The paternalism of Sukhothai may have been reinforced by certain Buddhist values. For example, the Buddhist principle regulating the social relationship between parents and children delineates the rights and duties of the two parties. Respect, gratitude, obedience, and love towards parents are strongly emphasized (Pisanaka 1969:152; O'Connor 1991:273-276). It is very probable that the kings of Sukhothai utilized the Buddhist concept of kingship to enhance and maintain their political power. The notion that Dhamma was the supreme code for regulating the social order and a moral guide for government was espoused by King Ram Khamheang and his successor (Somboon 1993:34). King Ram Khamheang was succeeded by his son Lithai. King Lithai used Buddhism as a tool of an ideology to support the political purposes and status quo for social control as well. It is shown in his own book Traphum Phra Ruang (The Three Worlds of Phra Ruang). The book analyzed the structure of the universe cosmography, the relationship between the merit and power. The book also described the nature of each level, the conditions of existence for its inhabitants, how they came to be there and how they might change their status. Buddhism was used by King Lithai as an instrument for political and social order, he made the concept of merit to justify his right to rule. The statement below shows on how King Lithai drew legitimacy of his rule through Buddhism.

2 Sukhothai (13th - 15th Century) the state that is still regarded by Thai historical tradition as the "first Thai kingdom" was Sukhothai. There were, in fact, contemporaneous Thai states such as Lanna and Phayao, both in present-day northern Thailand, but the Thai historical imagination has been most stirred by Sukhothai. Even today, the evocative ruins of Sukhothai and its twin city Sri Satchanalai conjure up images of material prosperity, artistic greatness, and serene Buddhist piety. Indeed, Sukhothai is remembered as much for its art and architecture as for its political achievements.
"One who had made and accumulated merit in previous lives by paying homage, honouring and revering the Triple Gems (The Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha), as well as having gratitude to them, adhering to Dhamma, observing moral precept (Sila), practicing meditation when he dies, goes to heaven. When he is reborn, he is born a ruler or in a higher caste with power, wealth and subordinates... with greater merit than others. He becomes Chakravartin King of Kings. Those who are born in the ruling class or king, should be aware that it is because they had good Kamma (good action), and had accumulated merit in previous lives. It is not so because of natural cause... It is merit that determines one's destination; (that is why) some people are born with wealth, wisdom, beauty, power, and have long lives as against the ones who are born with poverty suffering, ugliness, idiocy, and have a short life. Merit and demerit determine who will be the rulers and who will be the slaves or servants or governed." (Cited in Somboon 1993: 38-39)

The Traiphum Phra Roung (The Three Worlds of Phra Ruang) can be considered as a political as well as a religious treatise. It is shown how religion can help stabilize the social order and maintain the political power of the King. He created the fear of hell in the minds of his subjects; it discourages social and political protest. It also encourages either meek acceptance of suffering and present status or withdrawal from the tribulations of human society (Tambiah 1984:73-75; Reynolds 1976:203-205). Thus, from the accounts mentioned above we can conclude that, during the reign of King Ram Kamheang and King Lithai, the Sukhothai kingdom reached the zenith of political glory. But after their death, their successors were weak rulers and they were unable to protect their kingdom from the rulers of Ayutthaya. As a result, Ayutthaya captured the Sukhothai kingdom and in 1378 it became Thailand’s new capital. We will discuss below in terms of Buddhism and political integration and its impact on social order of Thai people (Hans-Dieter 1987:754-755).

3 However, whereas according to Inscription One Ram Khamhaeng had a bell hung in front of his palace to hear the complaints of his people, some Thai and foreign intellectuals may today still be in search of a similar facility to complain about the royal endorsement of last year’s coup. The increasing seclusion and ceremonial mystification of the monarchy during the past years makes it more and more difficult to draw a parallel between Ram Khamhaeng and Bhumibol.
Ayutthaya Period (1350-1767)\(^4\)

The first ruler of Ayutthaya was King Ramadhipati. Ayutthaya was situated in the fertile land – middle of three fertile rivers namely: Cho Phraya, Pasak and Lopburi. According to Hazra during Ramadhipati’s rule in 1369 AD, the Thais were able to capture and annex Angkor. King Ramadhipati also introduced the Thai Law Code. The Ayutthaya Kingdom changed during the 15th century from a small to a big state with a centralized kingdom wielding tight control over the states of its territory as well as having loose authority over a string of tributary states (Hazra 2000:25). The greater size of Ayutthaya’s territory, as compared with that of Sukhothai, meant that the system of government could not remain the same as during the days of King Ramkhamhaeng. The paternalistic and benevolent Buddhist kingship of Sukhothai would not have worked in Ayutthaya (Wyatt 1965-66:108-109).

The King stood at the apex of a highly stratified social and political hierarchy that extended throughout the society. In Ayutthayan society the basic unit of social organization was the village community composed of extended family households. Generally the elected headmen provided leadership for communal projects. Title to land resided with the headman, who held it in the name of the community, although peasant proprietors enjoyed the use of land as long as they cultivated it (Erika 2007: 75-128).

With ample reserves of land available for cultivation, the viability of the state depended on the acquisition and control of adequate manpower for farm labour and defense. The dramatic rise of Ayutthaya had entailed constant warfare and, as none of the parties in the region possessed a technological advantage, the outcome of battles was usually determined by the size of the armies. After each victorious campaign, Ayutthaya carried away a number of conquered people to its own territory, where they were assimilated and added to the labor force (Wyatt 1999:66-67). Thai society during the Ayutthaya period became strictly hierarchical. There were, broadly three classes of people, with king at the very apex of the structure. At  

\(^4\) For 417 years the kingdom of Ayutthaya was the dominant power in the fertile Menam (River) or Chao Phraya Basin. Its capital was Ayutthaya, an island-city situated at the confluence of three rivers, the Chao Phraya, the Pasak, and the Lopburi, which grew into one of Asia’s most renowned metropolises, inviting comparison with great European cities such as Paris. The city must indeed have looked majestic, filled as it was with hundreds of monasteries and crisscrossed with several canals and waterways that served as roads.
the bottom of the social scale, and the most numerous, were the commoners (freemen or *phrai*) and the slaves. Above the commoners were the officials or "nobles" (*khunnang*) while at the top of the scale were the princes (*Jaow*). Only classless sector of Thai society was the Buddhist monkhood, or Sangha into which all classes of Thai men could be ordained. The monkhood was the institution. The Buddhist monasteries being the center of all Thai communities both urban and agricultural could weld together all the different social classes (Manickavasagom 1986:19)

**Buddhism and the Enhancement of Royal Power**

According to Ishii the flamboyant paraphernalia of Hinduism in enhancing royal dignity, the Hindu guise of Siamese kingship as expressed in the *Indrabhiseka* (coronation) should not blind us to the supremacy of Buddhism in legitimating the Ayutthayan monarchy. Ishii further argues, "The Siamese King was, first and foremost, a Buddhist. Buddhism has never surrendered its central position in the spiritual hierarchy to any other religion adopted by the Thai. The Brahmans who officiated at court rituals were treated in Ayutthaya bureaucracy as merely one category of experts, along with a Chinese captain of the royal junk or a Portuguese gunner. Later, the court Brahmans in Siam was made Buddhist monks before they could officiate at court rituals." (Ishii 1993:187) The religion – political ideology, the concept of kingship, the administration, and political institutions of Ayutthaya were influenced by the interwoven traditions of the Khmer and Mon, of Hinduism and Buddhism working in combination (Girin 1981:22-23).

Another example is when the King Songdham of Ayutthaya seized power from a rightful heir and established himself as King (1610-1628) and sought legitimacy through his religious acts. Somdet Phra Maha Samanachao explained thus:

"The king realized that he had illegitimately seized power, and he had to be conscious of his unpopularity among the masses. Although at that time there was no one who dared to challenge his power, he sought support from the masses. Being accomplished in Buddhism and knowing that it was held in esteem by the people, he sought popularity and legitimacy through the religion... The king revised the Jataka, (Former Birth of the Buddha) and

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5 The term "*Jaow*" used at the beginning of the names of royalties in these testimonies is the term "*Jaow*" in Thai, an honorific expression that signifies one’s royalty.
ordered the compilation of Tipitaka (Pali Canon). He himself regularly attended the sermons" (somdet Phra Maha Samana chao 1971:273).

The imported Angkorian concept of dewaraja (god king) had little significance in Ayutthaya beyond enhancing royal dignity, since Hindu divinities had no place in the Buddhist faith of the populace (Prince Dhani Nivat 1969:100-101, cited in Ishii 1993:192). Thus, we can conclude how Buddhism influenced the politics in the Ayutthaya era in the following way. Buddhism affirmed the role of kingship as the expression of Dhamma and righteousness, and as the fountain of justice, as well as the ordering principle of society.

(1) Its moral principles ensure that the King should be measured against the law.

(2) Buddhism played by far the most important role in sustaining the established social order (Ibid, p., 184).

(3) The Ayutthaya king continuously used Buddhist symbols to enhance his political authority. Conspicuous expenditure for the construction of religious edifices and luxurious royal processions to centers of pilgrimage both served this purpose (Ibid, p., 187).

Ayutthaya king, fearing the Buddhist Sangha was enjoying a degree of autonomy that might turn it into a haven for those hoping to evade their duties, eventually instituted an ecclesiastical examination under the pretext of screening the worthy monk from the commoners. The strengthening of secular intervention in the Sangha which appears to have marked these centuries, along with the administrative development of the Ayutthaya kingdom, foreshadowed the total submission of the Buddhist Sangha to the state represented by the permission of the Buddhist Sangha to the state represented by the promulgation of the Sangha Administration Law in the beginning of this century (Elliott 1978:76; Dhanasarat 2004: 8-13).

Buddhism and the Sangha have sometimes been used as a tool for the achievement of certain political ends up to the present day. That control was coupled with greater support and patronage of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. When a king was weak, protection and supervision of the Sangha also weakened, and the Sangha declined. This fluctuating pattern appears to have continued until the emergence of the Chakri Dynasty in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.
Rattanakosin 1767-1932 (Chakri Dynasty) Period

Ayutthaya finally fell through the Burmese invasion of 1767. The capital was looted and burnt, and many of its population, both monks and laymen, fled. Eventually General Taksin forced back the enemies and restored Thai freedom. The destruction of Ayutthaya by the invader, resulted in great loses to the country. Many historical records were lost or destroyed. Hence, the reign of Taksin and Phrabuddhayodfah (Rama I) was a period of rehabilitation. He was considered as the founder of modern Bangkok (Tambiah 1999:2-3) Taksin built his capital at Dhonburi on the opposite side of the Chao Phaya River. Rama I constructed his palace on the opposite side of the river at Bangkok. Here, we will make a brief summary on Buddhism, Politics and Kingship in Bangkok era before the King Rama VI stress more on Chat, Sasana, Phra Mahakasat (Nation, Religion and King) to bring about a unity for the kingdom of Thailand. Rama I (1782-1809) moved the capital of Thailand to Bangkok (Hazra 2000:48). He tried to restore or copy the method of administration of the Ayutthaya period. Much energetic spending was given to the construction of the new capital, suppression of the uprising and subduing of crime. The administration of religious affairs was not changed. But there was a rewriting of Pali Canon (tipitaka) and appointing of a new head of the Sangha. Many times the King had to issue decrees concerning the behaviour of the Sangha and punishing the violators. There were many cases of grave offences of parajika (monastery discipline) but the heads of the monasteries and royal ecclesiastical dignitaries could do nothing with out the ousters and radical measures taken by the King (Kirsch 1977:245; Sternstein 1984: 43-68).

In the second reign, Rama II (1809-1824) did not show his great interest in the administration of the government's affairs. He was fond of literature, religious monuments and palace extension. During the reign of King Rama III (1824-1851), there were many engagements both in war and businesses with Britain. By this time, the world seemed a more threatening place to the Thai. The British were beginning their colonial involvement in the Malay Peninsula and entering into war with Burma. Rama III faced increasing pressure from the British to open up Siam's

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As is well known, in the wake of the disarray resulting from the fall of Ayutthaya, there emerged for a while a capable warrior, Taksin, who tried to consolidate the kingdom with its center at Thonburi, but whose mind became deranged, and his reign was abortive. Chaophyraya Chakri, a capable general, was invited to assume the throne in 1782 as King Ramathibodi, and became known later as Rama I.
Following the British victory over Burma in 1826, the Thai government agreed to sign a treaty with Britain that allowed British merchants some trade concessions in Siam. The Thai signed a similar treaty with the United States in 1833. Jory comments “at the same time that Siam suffered under unequal relationships, it prospered with the development of the international rice trade, which provided the major source of finance for the modern Thai state.” (Jory 2005:1095). He further points out that the extension of rice lands led to a rapid expansion of settlement throughout the central Thai plain. Bangkok developed into a major trading centre, in which (as in colonized South-East Asia) European firms dominated large-scale international activity and immigrant Chinese took roles as shopkeepers, middlemen and labourers. Central control over Siam’s remaining territories was strengthened, though not without alienation people in the north, northeast and south who were still loyal to their customary chiefs. Although unrest was rigorously suppressed in 1910, Bangkok’s authority in these regions never penetrated as deeply as in the central plain (Wyatt 2001: 3-65).

In the 1830s and 1840s Siam went to war with the Vietnamese over Cambodia and Laos, emerging with its dominant position grudgingly recognized. As the end of Rama III’s reign approached around 1850, Siam faced a renewed threat from the West (Sar, Desai 1994: 189). By this period the Buddhist Sangha of Thailand had sunk to a very low level of degeneracy. They set aside the study of the Dhamma and the Vinaya (discipline) and they restored to the study of astrology, medicine and devil worship. Because of these reasons mentioned above Buddhism have to be reformed (Jory 2000:351-373).

At that time Mongkut was only twenty years old and was not a well-known figure in Thailand’s political world. He had no experience in the affairs of state. When he saw his brother Phra Nang Klaow (Rama III) on the throne he then announced his desire to remain as a monk in the Buddhist Sangha. He was known in the monastery as Makuta Bhikkhu, Mongkut the Beggar. He initiated a series of religious and social reforms which helped set the mold for the modern Thai state, including an effort to upgrade the standards of the Thai Sangha, modifying certain royal ceremonies to conform more closely to Buddhist ideas of kingship, and denigrating numerous traditional beliefs about cosmology and astrology (Hazra 2000:61).
King Mongkut and His Religion Changed

In order to make this section clearer, an attempt will be made to analyze the relationship between Buddhism and kingship. Kingship began to change during the reign of King Mongkut (Rama IV:1851-1868). King Mongkut had been in the monkhood for 27 years before assuming the throne. As a monk he had gained a reputation for being a reformer influenced by the Monk tradition (Maffat 1968:12-15). King Mongkut was dissatisfied with the old practices of Buddhism; the prince-monk had launched a reform programme to make Thai Buddhism as close as possible to the Pali Canon of Theravada Buddhism. This involved the reform of monastic discipline, changes in details of rituals, and the redefinition of the Canon. Most important, he established a new order called Dhammayutta Nikaya within the Thai Sangha (Kirsch 1977:265). More details about the King Mongkut and his religious policy will put precisely in chapter 3.

Modernization under the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V 1868-1910)

During King Mongkut's reign, there were manifold cultural, economic, and social changes in Southeast Asia. After King Mongkut's death in 1867, his son King Chulalongkorn succeeded him and launched further modernization programmes (Wyatt 1994:281). King Chulalongkorn was very concerned with the modernization of Siam. His long reign had brought many changes, for example, administrative, judicial and financial reforms and political development and the growth of social services such as of modern communication and bureaucracy development.

The reform of monastic standards began to be translated into institutional forms to benefit the entire Sangha. In other words, the political support given to the Thammayutnikaya greatly contributed to the expansion of its initial influence. The reign of Rama IV or King Mongkut marked the end of Devaraja as an official doctrine, although the quasi-adoration of the King undoubtedly continued in popular sentiment for many years to come. This softened the master-servant concept of kingship and revived the old paternal concept of the Sukhothai period.

King Chulalongkorn's long reign (1868-1910) brought Thai society into the modern world. It is important now to analyze the socio-political change and religious development in two periods, each representing a distinct type of regime:
from 1868-1932 (the period under absolute monarchy), and the constitutional era beginning 1932 (Kemp (1991: 312-326).

**Concept of Nation: Reform under King Chulalongkorn**

During the reign of King Chulalongkorn, he abolished the centuries-old practice of prostration in the royal presence and commanded his subjects to stand on their feet before him. Most people were shocked at what they considered an affront to the monarchy, and to this day most Thais still are uncomfortable in obeying this particular royal decree. Its symbolic significance is obvious. The king is not a god-king, not a devaraja; rather, he and his subject are both human beings and should treat each other as such (Wyatt 1999:277). Influenced by Buddhist morality and western examples, he gradually abolished both the Corvee system and the institution of slavery, a momentous and positive change for Thai society.

During 1890-1910, King Chulalongkorn launched a major administrative reform, establishing virtually all of Siam’s modern government. The existing departments were reorganized into twelve ministries, including ministries of war (for a new army), justice, education, interior (for administration of the countryside), and public works, as well as specialized departments for such things as postal services, railroads, and hospitals. Chulalongkorn also established new, modern schools and encouraged study abroad. The kingdom’s new administration made tax collection possible (Ibid.,p.,278). The government used the tax revenues to finance reforms and to create jobs for the many modern educated people emerging from the kingdom’s new schools. Wilson pointed out that Rama V did not abandon the idea of some specification of royal power. At the height of his reign in a speech discussing the need to reorganize the government completely he said:

"There is no law which specifies the royal power in Siam because it is believed that power is beyond law and that there is no rule, thing, or person which can regulate or prevent it. But in truth and act the king must be appropriate and just. For this reason we have no objection to a law which specifies the royal power" (Wilson 1967:102).

Moreover, he (King Rama V) specifically discouraged any idea of a parliament, which, he said, would be powerless against him which he held the love of the people and would serve only to terrify the population (Ibid.,). The most striking fact borne out by the data on the King Rama V is that, in 1884, with reports coming in about fighting between the Burmese (Myanmar) and the British and about
the Franco-Burmese negotiations in Paris, King Chulalongkorn grew so anxious about the European threat to Siam that he questioned Prince Prisdang, then minister to Paris, about how the kingdom’s independence could be preserved. In January 1885 they submitted to King Chulalongkorn a proposal known as “The Presentation of Opinions on Governmental Reform Submitted to King Chulalongkorn from the Royal Princes and the King’s Servants”, a document signed by eleven people (Prince Prisdang 1930:45-50 [In Thai Language] Quoted in Murashima 1988:83-84).

According to Murashima this proposal appears to be the first petition to the king advocating the adoption of Western political principles. The proposal noted that these had become the standard for measuring civilized nations and needed to be adopted to preserve Siam’s national independence and to make it into a modern nation-state (Murashima 1988:80).

After opening with the following words, relying on both the power of our gratitude to the King and the power of loving our Nation (Chat Banmuang) the proposal thereafter made frequent use of expressions of Chat. The statement is a summation of this important document:

"The present problem facing Siam is to maintain national independence and a stable government. To resolve this problem, Siam must be accepted and respected by the Western powers as a civilized nation. Hence there is no choice but to bring about a new government modeled after the Western pattern, or at least after Japan, the only country in the East following the European way. According to European belief, in order for a government to maintain justice it must be based on popular consensus. Cabinet ministers must be selected from the elected representatives of the people and must be responsible to all the people. No nation (Chat) in Europe can believe that Siam maintains justice since everything is decided by the king. It would also be dangerous for Siam if it should happen that the throne becomes vacant" (Murashima 1988:84).

In his reply on the proposal on 29 April 1885 the above statement, King Chulalongkorn agreed with the views expressed regarding the international situation, but did not agree with a number of the main recommendations. He has replied thus:

"He was not the same oppressive absolute monarch as those in European history and was not as short-sighted as a frog inside a coconut shell. Therefore, he was not an obstacle to the prosperity and security of the country. He himself had only just recently recovered executive power from his conservative ministers and only after a long struggle going back to 1868 when he had ascended the throne at age of fifteen. Now he had finally gained the power to begin making governmental reforms. Any limitation or distribution of his power

7 Prince Prisdang, a grandson of King Rama III, studied in England from 1871 to 1876, graduating from King's College. He was appointed Siam's first minister of legation, initially to London in 1883.
would not contribute to these reforms. On the contrary, there could only be a bad effect on them. Hence a parliament was no use in Siam because not only were there any suitable and able people to participate in it, but a parliament itself would hamper and corrupt the reforms” (Ibid. p. 85).

Among other things, the petitioners suggested that the absolute monarchy be replaced by a constitutional monarchy, that a Cabinet be formally established, and that the heads of government departments be allowed to wield greater authority. While referring to the Thai political-territorial unit, the wording of the petition used both the traditional signifies as well the term chat and CHAT BAAN MOUNG (Nation and the Country). In 1889, Phraya Phatsakorawong, a leading official in King Chulalongkorn’s administration, in his article entitled “Varjirajan Viset” (วารีรัจพุธษ) used the term Chat, meaning nation, in the context of a discussion of the traditional Buddhist theory of kingship.

“It is understood that all the land of the kingdom belongs solely to the king. The king abides by the royal customs established by our ancestors who came together to form a Chat. This gathering of people chose from one family a capable man to be the leader of the Chat. This man was very able and intelligent and one the people could rely on to be their protector. This chosen leader guarded both internal and external security and brought happiness to the people. This had not been brought about by the opinion of the majority; rather it had been through the leader’s one authority. The people who were organized into the Chat were loyal to him and followed his every advice.” (Barme 1993:16-17).

Thus, the Thai monarchy, which placed its legitimacy in Buddhism, was inextricably linked with Chat. But this “Chat” was not identical with the European concept of the nation. It was argued by Phatsakorawong, “Chat was a gathering of the people that elected the king after which the king was given power over everything as the sustainer and protector of the people under the moral law of Buddhism.” Phraya Phatsakorawong argument was slightly different from the speech by King Chulalongkorn, except for his use of Chat (Murasgima 1988:86). Phraya Phatsakorawong also upheld the traditional Buddhist theory of kingship, but what is important in his statement is his incorporation of the idea of Chat into indigenous political thought without fundamentally changing it. The Thai elite could now manipulate the Chat (Nation) symbol in order to bring about the political integration of Chat under their leadership. King Chulalongkorn the reforms in this reign had increased the transformation of the society. Further more, King Chulalongkorn did not neglect the traditional legitimizing functions of a Buddhist

18
king, namely the promotion and purification of Buddhism and the Sangha (Suksamran 1993:51).

**Buddhism and the Bureaucracy**

Thai Buddhism was a potent source of the perspectives and attitudes of Thai bureaucrats. Buddhism contributed to the reformation by its tacit, passive, continuing legitimation of the social order. Providing with a supply of literate manpower from the temple schools, but its impact also lay in the worldview and the values. Thai nurtured important traditional values in Thai society, including values which had been reflected within the bureaucracy over the centuries.

These values did not resist the reformation, but it does not contained no equivalent of a "Protestant ethic." And its normative and symbolic content was tolerant with performance-oriented public administration, (Siffin1966:130). Siffin observed, the old administrative system as an "archaic and untouched pattern of traditional bureaucracy," and notes that the reforms made, especially during the time of King Chulalongkorn, involved a "radical reformation," with basic reconstruction, (Siffin p., 132). Siffin views that the idea of Siamese bureaucracy played a fundamental role both in Thai society and in the processes of modernization. As he said:

"With the possible exception of Buddhism and the kingship, no Thai institutions outrank the bureaucracy as a force which has sustained the culture and maintained the vitality of the nation during most of the past century. The modern bureaucracy helped project ancient Siam into modern statehood. It produced solvency, order, stability, and diplomacy, sufficient to avoid excuses from Western seizure. Its needs gave rise to a system of secular education; and bureaucratic careers have also fulfilled the expectations (material things) from the system. The stable, neutral bureaucracy has carried on the work of government without breakdown in the face of depression, war inflation, and a dizzying succession of political changes" (Siffin:133).

Buddhism contributed to the Reformation by its tacit, passive, continuing legitimation of the social order and by providing a supply of literate manpower from the temple schools. But its impact also lay in the worldview and the values which it instilled in its adherents (Pinit 2007: 233-237).

The line between the religious and the bureaucratic ways of life is clear enough, but the separation is not total. Each male official is entitled to one leave-with pay period up to 3 months to allow him to serve in the priesthood. The upper
levels of the Buddhist religion are themselves bureaucratized to some extent, being organized in the form of a department of religious Affairs within the Ministry of Education. (At present, it is changed into Office of National Buddhism 2006). For all practical purposes, however, the distinction between a religion career and a bureaucratic career is a sharp as any in the society.

Change in Modern Thai Religion and society

As we have mentioned earlier that, King Mongkut’s reforms encouraged the Budhaization process; and the thrust of these reforms was continued by his son King Chulalongkorn (Rama V). King Chulalongkorn continued the religious and social reforms initiated by his father. For example, he formalized Mongkut’s Sangha reforms by recognizing the Dhammayutta Sect as a part of the larger Thai Sangha, in addition to the Mahanikaya monks, who followed a more traditional mode of monastic discipline. Dhammayutta monks and temples subsequently spread throughout the kingdom, serving as exemplars of a more rigorous monastic discipline (Phra Anil Sakya 2008). Kirsch points out that King Chulalongkom also sought to rationalize the administrative structure of the kingdom, and he established the national secular school system. Chulalongkom also initiated the rationalization and centralization of the Sangha, paralleling the organization of the government. National standards were set for monks, and eventually Buddhist Universities were located in Bangkok to improve their training (Kirsch 1977:266).

King Chulalongkorn’s reputation as the founder of modern Thailand would be assured given the fact that virtually every piece of the legislation and the action that created this state carries with it some ingredient, some component of King’s own ideas, or thought, or hard work, or painful decision, or determined will that it must be done. This interpretation is the product of the transitional period of nation building in Thailand, the fruit of the necessity of inculcating in the Thai educational system, precisely those qualities still in some measure deficient in the nation. King Rama V died in 1910 at the age of 57. He had reigned 42 eventful years. His in script greatest accomplishment was the preservation of the independence of his kingdom by skillful diplomacy and hastening to adapt and adopt the methods of the West (Wilson 1967:9). He was succeeded by his vivacious son, Wachirawut (Rama VI), who in turn, was succeeded by his younger brother, Prachathipok (Rama VII).
King Wachirawudh Rama VI (Ruled 1910-1925)

When King Wachirawudh (Rama VI) came to the throne, he faced a difficult situation. His immediate predecessors had managed to preserve the basic integrity of the kingdom in the face of the colonial power threatening its borders from both east and west, but the situation was still precarious, and it soon became obvious that some degree of involvement in World War I was political necessity (Reynold 1977: 274). King Wachirawudh (Rama VI) made a royal speech to his military officers in which he used words similar to those expressed by King Chulalongkorn. He stated

“...I am very pleased that the army has conferred upon me the title of field marshal, because it is evidence of your loyalty to myself and to the country (Pheandin Siam)...I intend to develop the army to keep pace with the time so that the independence of the Thai Nation (Chat Thai) can be entrusted to your keeping and can be done so in the full conviction that our military will be able to confront any enemy that might try to trample down the nation and religion.” (King Wachirawudh speeches 1929:4, Cited in Murashma, p. 91).

King Wachirawudh’s reformulation, the three pillars of Thai civic religion were identified as the Chat (the nation conceived in terms of both territory and people), the Sasana (the specifically religious dimension, identified primarily with Buddhism), and the Phra Mahakasat (the king or monarchy). These three symbolic components constituted the pillars of the Thai nation; each depended on the other and had to be preserved if the Thai nation was to survive and progress. The king implored the Thai to unite in body and spirit to defend the nation, the religion, and the monarchy from the incursions of enemies, mainly Western colonial masters. In the course of defending and protecting the three institutions, the king maintained that it was legitimate if the soldiers killed enemies. As the King put it, in the following manner:

“For those who have to fight in war in the defense of our nation, some may think that it is against the teaching of the Buddha which prohibit killing...But we are not intending to wage war against one another, but to protect ourselves. In this case, the Buddha once said that it was the duty of able men to fight against enemies who invade with the intention to take our land, to jeopardize Buddhism, and to destroy our sovereignty. Let us make it known to the world that we, the Thai, are determined to protect our nation, religion, and monarchy, and to preserve them as they were in our ancestors’ time... We shall fight with swords and guns; sacrifice our bodies as fences for protecting and preserving them... It is not against the Buddha's teaching... Protecting our nation is indispensable, just as we have to protect Buddhism and Dhamma” (Barme 1993:30).

These speeches came to be known as “Instilling the Wild Tiger Spirit”, and in them the king gave a detailed explanation of the three loyalties “King”, “Nation”
and “Religion.” These speeches therefore have been an important vehicle for conveying the official state ideology to the Thai People. King Rama VI, in order to strengthen people’s adherence to Dhamma, introduced Buddhist daily prayers in schools, police stations, army garrisons, government departments, and even in prisons and mental hospitals (Renolds 1988:275; Wakeman, G.1999:31, Phra Thedilok 2006:37 in Thai). The king sought to legitimize this link between religion and martial activity by claiming that the Buddha believed that the military was essential for protecting the nation, and that the strength and vitality of the religion was dependent on national security. Furthermore Rama VI suggested that if instability developed, Buddhism would be doomed, thereby precipitating the total collapse of the Thai nation, which would then become the ‘slave’ of other more unified power (Ibid., p.,38-39).

According to King Rama VI, all members of the national community should be regarded as relatives and the king is the member who dignifies this national community. The king, who is regarded as elected, is entrusted by the people with the sovereign power of the national community. Thus, his status as king is regarded as ultimately dependent on the will of the people. Murashima argues that, although King Wachiravudh was a monarch who was not elected in any sense of the word, he stressed the elected nature of Thai kingship. This paradoxical fact can be explained by the historical circumstances of his reign. At that time the Thai monarchy was becoming more absolute and, consequently there was greater need to legitimize the king’s power by referring to the tradition of elected king (Murashima 1988:93). With regards to Buddhism and the Thai Nation morality, King Wachiravudh had told thus:

“A nation filled with morality will prosper: on the other hand, a nation insufficient in morality will become badly disordered and divided. When each member has no morality, does not care about justice and behaves without consideration for his neighbours, there must be conflicts and there can be no happiness among them. In such a situation, it becomes impossible to live together as a community which can only lead to the destruction of the national community” (Ibid.,).

He emphasized the very close relationship between religion and nation; only by relying upon the stability of the country can Buddhism last permanently. When a nation goes to ruin, religion cannot be preserved. Conversely, when religion vanishes from the nation, people will no longer have morality; and a nation insufficient in morality will go to ruin and destruction. Barme comments that the
discourse of Nation, Religion and King developed by King Wachiravudh was a well-conceived rejoinder to such critics. The inter-relationship he drew between these three elements was based on a simple logical argument, with the emphasis on the centrality and necessity of the monarchy. On the one hand, the king was identified as the embodiment of the nation (as the people’s representative) and also as chief warrior whose task was to defend ‘Thainess’ or independence, and Buddhism, the moral basis of the nation (Barne 1993:31).

Hewison argues that there is also a tendency for this approach to produce arguments which rely on cultural determinism for their explanations. There is a heavy emphasis on Buddhism as an explanatory factor for social and political action. Such explanations, essentially impossible to test-suggest that culture exists independently of people in society. In fact, cultural values are not unchanging and are themselves influenced by the course of history (Hewison 1997:6). To explain social or political action by simple recourse to assumed cultural values obscures the significance of the way such values change and the broader political and economic changes taking place in society.

Hence, King Wachiravudh articulated the well-known triumvirate of “Nation, Religion and King.” It is considered the ideological foundation of Thai government till date. It has become the civic religion of Thai socio-political life. Leaders of the country have followed the political exploitation of the religion in this respect; especially Sarit legitimized his authoritarian regime by a development and nationalistic ideology strengthening the Thai nations, Theravada Buddhism, and the King (Dhiravegin 1988:101). The monarchs then launched a series of reforms, aimed at changing various aspects of the Thai nation and culture, including the administrative structure, the educational process, and the military system. The whole reform process served the purposes of self-preservation vis-à-vis the West. Siam, under the Thai elite’s leadership, underwent a process of emulation so as to become the modern West’s equal (Ishii 1968:866).

We can say that the construction of a king-centered ideology of Thai nation had made Thais all over the country aware of the nation’s totality, with the king the focal point of their loyalty and unity. At the same time, King Rama VI tried to make Siam part of the civilized countries, but since he had to preserve “Thainess” because it was the cultural root that supported the power structure of absolute monarchy, he stressed that Thainess that was preserved and inherited by kings throughout the ages.
was civilized, that is, having a universal essence that was no different from Western civilizations. This was to allow “Thais” to feel proud of their “Thai nation,” and to feel grateful of the king’s magnanimity which helped make “Thai nation” civilized, free, and able to see eye-to-eye with Western nations (Sattayanurak 2002:101-124). Prince Patriarch Wachirayanwarorot helped delineate the ideology of “Thainess” that centered on the king who led Thailand to achieve Western-style civilization, in such a way that made it clear and memorable to people across all social classes. He did this by transforming the ideas regarding “Thai nation” and “Thainess” as constructed by King Rama VI into Buddhist-based ideas ‘Buddhistization’ that was disseminated via sermons and monastic educational reforms. He also composed numerous Buddhist texts that were used by monks and apprentices in their examinations. The use of Buddhist ideas in defining a king-centered concept of “Thai nation” helped create a clear, indivisible ideology of “nation, religion, and kingship.” (Ibid.,p.,103). This ideology was widely known among monks, most of whom came from lower-class populace both in the cities and the countryside. Many Buddhist texts written by Prince Patriarch Wachirayanwarorot became part of the monastic curriculum up to the present day (Hallisey at el 1989: 18-19).

It is also worth noting that, because he intended to frame the idea of “nation, religion, and kingship” as a Buddhist idea, Prince Patriarch Wachirayanwarorot was forced to focus only on the worldly part of Buddhism (lokiya dhamma), without any means to link it to the spiritual part. This is because the spiritual portion would have made the “nation, religion, and kingship” idea devoid of substance or dependable identity (Ibid.,p., 124).

As a result, the religious aspect of “Thainess” became extremely important, because being a Buddhist meant having beliefs and opinions that are profoundly attached to “Thai nation” and “Thainess.” For instance, a ‘proper’ Buddhist was one who accepted the virtues of “Thai-style governance,” swore utmost loyalty to “the king,” fully understood the meaning of governance in accordance with Buddhist virtues (Raja Dhamma), and was proud of all Thai art and culture for which “Buddhism” was an important progenitor (Phrathepdiloka 2007: 58-59 in Thai).

More recently, the symbolic slogans of nation, religion, and the monarchy have been invoked by certain political movements and activists of the 1970s’ to provide legitimacy for their political ideology and activities. Buddhism has become the foundation of the “civic religion” of Thai socio-political life (Swearer 1995:63).
Thus, it shows that the concept of the three pillars loyalty to *Nation, Religion* and *King* had its origin in the reign of King Chulalongkorn. *Chat* (ข้าต) in the sense of a national political community became a popular word in the Thai vocabulary in the latter half of his reign when Siam faced a most critical threat to its national independence. King Rama VI inherited these political ideas from his father's generation and formalized them into the official state ideology in an effort to shore up a shaky monarchy. He accused advocates of liberalism of believing in a cult of imitation and insisted that the Thais had to strengthen their civilization using the foundations of Thai traditions. They had to build a modern nation that was distinctly Thai and not a corrupted imitation, fabricated from European political principles.

Finally, these political ideas set down by King Vachiravudh retain traditional characteristics peculiar to Thai culture and have become the principles which underpin the modern Thai state. The fact that these traditional ideas persisted, even after the 1932 constitutional revolution, has made the concept of democracy in Thailand's distinct from Western ideas of democracy. That is why Thailand constitution different from all countries in the world.

Riggs (1967: 110-111) Vatikiotis (1996:137:141) have commented the process of modernization in the Thai bureaucracy, according to the historical periodization to show the stages by which the transformation was accomplished. There were five periods.

The first period, from 1851-1873, was a time during which the groundwork was laid, creating a favourable environment for basic structural change, This was the period of King Mongkut’s reign, during which doors were opened for the interaction with western influences, but the basic organization of government remained intact.

The second period began in 1873, when King Chulalongkorn took over effective control of government, and continued through 1891. In this period several new, functionally specialized departments were created, which the help of Western advisers, to carry out essential new activities of limited scope (Ibid.,).

The third period began in 1892 with a sweeping reorganization of core governmental structures, in which many of the old courts and chambers were eliminated, their duties and some of their personnel being absorbed into new ministries. In a sense, 1892 was a year of 'silent revolution.'

The fourth period, which ran from approximately 1900-1932, was a stage of consolidation, readjustment, and expansion.
The fifth period began in 1932 with the revolution. Riggs further commented that, as far as the structure of bureaucracy is concerned, this was a period of the acceleration and consolidation of changes which had already been launched, the deepening of the pattern of functional specialization. But the most important change of 1932 was a basic recasting of the political control structure (Ibid.,).

Thus, King Chulalongkorn, as we saw earlier, abolished slavery and was the father of modern education in Thailand; but he also showed Thais the way to modernize without losing their sense of identity (Sattayanurak 2006:5). The absolute monarch became stronger and more stable with the aid of the modern standing army, revenue and taxation, communication and transportation, and education system. For example, in the late 1890s Buddhism was institutionalized in accordance with the reform movement. Ecclesiastical commissioners were posted to all regions of the country. The government surveyed rural monasteries and schools, and reconstituted the ecclesiastical hierarchy (Wyatt 1999:217-218). Channels of communication were opened through which religious practices, texts, rituals, and ideas could flow from Bangkok to the provinces. Buddhist reform almost achieved a uniform and common Buddhism for the kingdom (Aphornsuvan 2003: 1-3).

King Rama VI (Wachiravudh) had instituted an experiment of democratic polity, providing one of his own palaces for this purpose. And during his reign, the first democratically oriented coup d'état was also planned by a group of educated elites and military heads, which they claimed as the representatives of the people. So this period witnessed the idea of people's power against the monarchical absolutism.

During his tenure, the nation's budget was spent wastefully on his favorites and personal pursuits, resulted his younger brother and successor, King Prajadhipok (Rama VII 1925 – 1935), to reduced massive national expenses due to bankrupt. Meanwhile, the worldwide economic crisis known as “The Great Depression,” also hit Siam in 1930, further intensified the country’s financial troubles. Although King Prajadhipok favored modest democratization with the help of his skillful elderly uncles, besides his political changes, dissatisfaction grew within the kingdom, especially among the foreign educated youths, who were against the tight political control of the monarch, and they believed in radical social and political changes.
Prachathipok (Rama VII), Overthrow of the Absolute Monarchy and Political Allegiance

It is useful to first look at briefly the factors which led up to the overthrow of the monarchy on 24th June 1932. Not long after coming to power, King Prajadhipok, the seventh monarch in the Chakri dynasty, made the following prophetic statement, which read as follows:

"The position of the king has become one of greatest difficulty. The movements of opinion in this country give a sure sign that days to Autocratic Rule are numbered." (Batson 1984:263, cited in Barne 1993:63)

This assessment was based on three concurrent factors. First was the diminution of the psychological power of monarchy. It is generally believed that Rama VII was personally interested in granting a constitution that allowed more people's freedom in social and political arenas, and the policy liberalization and modernization is the main objective of the dynasty. This plan is said, however, to have met strong resistance among his advisers, and nothing was done before the revolution of 1932. The second factor was the development of an attitude of professional expertise among officials especially those educated in Europe, who resented the tendency to royal monopoly of power. Third were the financial difficulties in which the government found itself as a result of its previous extravagance and the developing world depression (Wilson 1968:15). As the situation worsened, King Prajadhipok delivered a speech that included the following passage:

"The financial condition of our country is indeed very hard. Even experts contradict one another until they become hoarse. Each offers a different suggestion. I myself know nothing all about finances and all I can do is to listen to the opinions of others and choose the best. I have never experience such a hardship; therefore if I have made a mistake I really deserve to be excused by the officials and people of Siam" (Bangkok Times, February 13, 1932, cited in Wyatt 1994:240).

The 1932 coup'etat which ushered in military ruler is commonly referred to as 'revolution' as is often the case in countries which have undergone a coup. Elliott (1978: 86-87) observed the goal of the coup was to establish a constitutional monarchy and the coup promoters were undoubtedly influence by European constitutional governments as models. The most powerful institution in the post 1932 governments has been the cabinet, which has usually been controlled by the military. While most of its members immediately after the coup were old official
who had served the absolute monarch for a long time, the in-fighting and maneuvering of the following year or two soon produced a ruling coterie which consisted mainly of junior military officers who replaced the senior officers and civilians (Ibid., p. 87-88).

As Wilson pointed out, on June 24, 1932, at dawn the troops which were under the command of coup group moved to seize certain key positions in the city of Bangkok and various high officials of the government. The end of the absolute monarchy was proclaimed, and the king was invited to rule under a constitution. The coup, organized under the name People’s Party, appointed itself as provisional parliament, and a government acceptable to both the king and the People’s Party was formed (Wilson 1967:13-14, Wyatt 1994:234).

When he finally, abdicated the throne, on March 2, 1935, King Prajadhipok (Rama VII) specifically criticized the regime that had replaced him and, in a brief, public message, transferred sovereignty to the people of Thailand. In his message of abdication, the King made an important distinction between turning over power to the people, rather than to the government:

“I am willing to surrender the powers I formerly exercised to the people as a whole, but I am not willing to turn them over to any individual or any group to use in an autocratic manner without heeding the voice of the people.” (Wyatt 1999: 249)

In these events, Thai democratic government began, and the sentiment of this ideology has characterized Thai democracy even to this day. During the 1970s these words became a rallying cry for the democratic movement which rose up in opposition to the military government.

Following the 1932 revolution which imposed constitutional limits on the monarchy, Thai politics was dominated for a half century by a military and bureaucratic elite, in collaboration with a dozen or so oligarchs commonly known as persons of influence. Changes of government were effected primarily by means of a long series of mostly bloodless coups (Thawilwadee Bureekul and Albritton 2004:5-6).
The Early Constitutional Period: The 1932 Temporary Charter

On 24 June 1932, the People's Party, a coalition of civil servants, princes, and army officers, seized power in a bloodless coup. A provisional constitution was sent to King Prajadhipok along with an ultimatum from Party leaders. On 26 June, the King met the Party leaders and refused to sign the charter. The next day, the King met the leaders again and signed the charter. The People's Party leaders generally followed the British parliamentary structure for the temporary charter. However, there were key differences, particularly regarding the powers of the monarch (Murashima 1991:3). He further argues, however during the thirteen years from 1932 to 1945 that the People's Party held power; it never recognized that principal element of European-style democracy, namely the multiparty system. In fact for most of the period that the People's Party controlled government, political parties could not legally exist (Ibid. p.4).

Apart from marking a shift in state power from the royal class to the bureaucracy, the constitution an included a three-stage plan for introducing a 'democratic' political system to the country. During the first stage, which began on 27 June 1932, the appointed National assembly was to exercise power on behalf of the people (Nuechterlein 1967:33-34). In the second stage, to begin within six months or when order was definitely established in the country, it was planned that National Assembly would be expanded to include an equal number of elected members. This meant that half of the assembly would be composed of second-category members picked essentially by the People’s Party which assured the party’s ability to maintain the political power it acquired after the revolution.

Sivaraksa described the word “democracy” appeared in the First Declaration of the People’s Party which was announced and distributed to the public on 24 June 1932. It states: “It is necessary that the country has a government like in a democracy; that is, the country’s head of state must be a commoner elected by Parliament to assume the position for a specified period. Citizens, expect to be cared for in the best ways. Now, the word “democracy” often refers to a presidency or a republic. To avoid any misunderstanding or fear, democracy is further clarified to specifically mean “a democracy with the monarch as the head of state” that is, a constitutional monarchy. We must be clear about the first fifteen years of democracy in Siam (Sivaraksa 2006:23). The military leaders of the People’s Party simply
wanted to get rid of absolute monarchy, so that they could be the new masters of the
country; that is, replacing absolutism with a military dictatorship. Sivaraksa further
observed, the early days of the constitutional regime were exciting, especially for
those who had no real idea of the meaning of the words ‘constitution’ and
‘democracy.’ There were those who thought democracy (prachathipatat) was King
Prajadhipok’s brother, or constitution (Ratthadhammanoon) was a relation of Phraya
Phahon. In 1932, there were scattered reports of junior monks challenging their
seniors’ supposing they were in step with the times (Ibid.,). According to Wyatt it is
not surprising that electoral participation was extremely low—under 10 percent—
in the first elections of November 1933 (Wyatt 1994:250-251). A probable majority of
those elected (as opposed to the equal number appointed) were supporters of Pridi,
who as minister of interior returned to a leading role in the government which still
was led by Phraya Phahon as prime minister. (Thawilwadee Bureekul and Stithorn
Thananthichot 2002:4-5), (see appendix for prime ministers- vi-x).

The historic role of the constitution in Thai politics reflects its unique
position in the continuity of the government. After the abolition of the absolute
monarchy, the country had not been able to establish new institutions and customs to
legitimize the transfer of power by force. In the old Thai government tradition, the
palace coups and the use of force to overthrow or take over the king's power was
justified and legitimized by the Buddhist concept of merit and power. According to
traditional beliefs, the righteous behavior of the leaders was a precondition for their
possession of power (Aphornsuvan 2003:2). That meant that those who had power
were thought to be good and deserving of it. But the legitimacy of a modern regime
stems not only from the elaborate process of having constitutions, calling for new
elections, appointing respectable figures in the governments, and declaring loyalty to
the monarchy, but more so from the regime's ability to maintain authority and retain
power (Ibid. p.,3).

A recipe for the change toward greater democracy for Thailand, then,
has to start from the reorientation in the thinking of the Thai citizens; that is, they
need to come to see that they are indeed free and equal as participating members in a
polity where no one gains unfair advantages due to accidents of birth, wealth, or
other social positions. The reorientation has to come from within conditions unique
to the experience of the Thais and could be generated by a realization that their core
belief system the beliefs that together constitute being Thai can, after some
translation or interpretation, provide a foundation for a democratic society (Thossaphol 2007). One might, however, try to accomplish the task of bringing democracy to Thais by attempting to base the beliefs in freedom and equality on Buddhist teaching. Thus, a typical way of argument on this line would be this: Since Buddhism actually promotes freedom and equality, as for example evidenced in the Buddha's abolition of the caste system and his showing of ways to achieve non-violent resolution of conflicts, Buddhist teachings could then promote democracy by engendering these beliefs, which are then practiced in the political arena. This line, however, would be possible only insofar as it is firmly kept in mind that Buddhist teachings as such cannot enter directly into the political arena, since the other constituents in the society such as the Muslims do not share the same tradition and beliefs as Buddhists (Imliyaz 2007, Bangkok post 10, October).

Since the overthrow of the absolute monarchy in 1932, Thailand has had 18 constitutions and charters. Throughout this time, the form of government has ranged from military dictatorship to electoral democracy, but all governments have acknowledged a hereditary monarch as the head of state (Thawilwadee, Bureeku and Albritton, Robert 2004:15-17). According to the Constitution, the King's status can be defined in five important roles: he is the Head of State; he is a symbol of respect and worship; he can do no wrong; he is the defender of the Buddhist faith; and he is the head of the Royal Army, Royal Air Force and Royal Navy (Thailand, Constitution of Thailand kingdom 2007).

The Chakri kings have been pursuing the role of Phra Dhammaraja, who ruled with power, decisiveness and the aim of further promoting Buddhism. As Head of State, the King has the duty and obligation to look after the well-being of his subjects. His relationship with his subjects is very close. The ancient Thai belief is that kings are those who have practiced virtue at the highest level in previous lives, before they were born to be kings. When they become kings, they are determined to continue pursuing virtue at the highest level, defending the land, looking after the welfare of the people, and promoting and supporting Buddhism. The meaning to Buddhism as one important component of Thainess by making people aware that the worldly part of Buddhism was the source of various aspects of Thainess, such as Thai art, Thai decorum, Thai characters, as well as Thai-style governance that is full of kindness, because Thai-style rulers firmly uphold Buddhist ethics, which made them righteous and use their power justly, so that check-and-
balance mechanisms became unnecessary (Renard 2006: 300-301; Kemp 1978:68-70). Since the overthrow of the absolute monarchy in 1932, Thailand has had 18 constitutions and charters. Throughout this time, the form of government has ranged from military dictatorship to electoral democracy, but all governments have acknowledged a hereditary monarch as the head of state. The constitution of Thailand is modified by the following table below:

**Table: 1 Constitution of Thailand from 1932-2007**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Constitution of</th>
<th>Date Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Constitution of B.E. 2475(1932), temporary (Buddhist Era)</td>
<td>June 27-December 10, 1932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>B.E. 2475(1932)</td>
<td>December 10, 1932-May 9, 1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>B.E.2489(1946)</td>
<td>May 9, 1946-November 8, 1947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>B.E. 2490(1947) temporary</td>
<td>November 9, 1947-March 23, 1949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>B.E.2475 revised</td>
<td>March 8, 1952-October 20, 1958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>B.E.2495(1952)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>B.E. 2511 (1968)</td>
<td>June 20, 1968-November 17, 1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>B.E. 2515 (1972)</td>
<td>December 15, 1972-October 7, 1974</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Foreign Law Bureau Office of the Council of State: Constitution of Kingdom of Thailand:2007*
Buddhism and Monarchy

Stuart-Fox described the relationship between Buddhism and politics in Thailand is unique for several reasons. Firstly, Thailand continues to remain independent under constitutional monarchy. Secondly, there has always been a close relationship between state power, king and the Sangha (Stuart-Fox 2006:13). When King Bhumibol was crowned in 1946, in his Oath of Accession to the Throne, as his ancestors had done, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej to "reign with righteousness for the benefit and happiness of the Siamese people". In his sixty years' reign, he has not deviated from that pledge. Indeed, he has earned the love, admiration, and trust of his people in a manner that cannot be fully comprehended by foreigners. The significance of his reign relates to three main themes: the well being of his subjects, the security and stability of his nation, and national unity, (Ibid. p. 14). The king, being a Buddhist, was in effect a “Dhamma Raja” that is a monarch upholding the rule of Buddhist righteousness, ruling in a style of kingship in the Chakri Dynasty.

King Bhumibol's political activeness has often invited conflict and cleaved deep fissures among his people. Although promoted as leading the way for pluralistic, liberal democratic, the palace instead became a boundary with limited activities. Political, social, and economic activity were free as long as they remained within the narrow domains of the throne's needs and interests, within the king-focused ideology of nation, religion, and monarchy(Paul, Handley 2006:24).

As His Majesty has said on the occasion, he was ordained. “From the training which I have received as well as out of my own personal belief, it is my view that "Buddhism which is our national religion" is one of the great religions of the world. ....As for the affairs of State, it is hoped that all will go well. With the approval of the House of Representatives, I have appointed the queen as Regent. I should like you all to help maintain the peace and good order allowing the affairs of State to proceed smoothly.” A devout Buddhist, King Bhumibol Adulyadej entered the monkhood for two weeks in 1956, as most Thai men are expected to do at some point of time in their lives. Throughout the year, he participated in numerous merit-making ceremonies at various temples and personally visits many of Thailand's most venerated monks. His majesty's concept of studying Dhamma in tandem with practicing the principles taught was contained in the royal address given to the 30th
General Assembly of Buddhist Associations Nationwide on 25 December 1982. These are as follows:

"I have spoken to you several times about the preferable ways and means to promote Buddhism and the principles of morality. This time, I would like to touch on another important means that should be considered, that is, the right way of studying Dhamma and morality. In fact, it was established in Buddhism that the accomplished way of studying Dhamma comprises theoretical and practical studies, properly and equitably conducted, so that an insight is attained, that is, getting the result and seeing the result of Dhamma oneself. Therefore, no matter how much one learns, if an insight is not attained, the learning is not accomplished, with no real result realized. And then further propagation or teaching of that Dhamma can never be properly done. To study Dhamma at any level, one needs to become well versed in the teaching, and put it to practice in action, in speech, and in thought. Only then can insight be achieved" (The Government Public Relations Department 2002).

The idea of righteous kingship has an honourable role in Thai history and religious tradition and command obedience from its people. However, a noted social critic like Sivaraksa says that today, reform is necessary if the institution has to live up to its best ideals. He approaches this question from the standpoint of a radical conservative. On the one hand, he feels that constitutional monarchy is the best possible system for the country, especially for the maintenance of national cohesion and provision of moral guidance. Thais have a lot to be proud of their kings and royal family members, of the 'golden age' enjoyed under the rule of righteous and enlightened kings Dhammaraja (Sivaraksa 2006). By righteous and enlightened kings, it means, monarchs who relied mostly, but not exclusively, on Buddhism to make the people accept their authority. They were kings because they ruled righteously. Broadly speaking, they had to uphold the (Pali) Dhamma, (Sanskrit Dharma) maintain cultural diversity and ecological sustainability, and promote traditional knowledge and spiritual development.

It is in this context that the Buddha in Pali Canon discussed the importance and the prerequisites of a good government. He showed how the country could become corrupt, degenerate and unhappy when the head of the government becomes corrupt and unjust. He spoke against corruption and how a government should act based on humanitarian principles. The Buddha once said, "When the ruler of a country is just and good, the ministers become just and good; when the ministers are just and good, the higher officials become just and good; when the higher officials are just and good, the rank and file become just and good; when the rank and file become just and good, the people become just and good" (Anguttara Nikaya of Pali...
canon, Vol.I:1995:143). It is therefore desired that His Majesty, the King possesses the following ten guiding principles for a ruler as per the teachings of Buddhism on Cakkavatti-vatta (Pali Canon of the Digha Nikaya Translated by Rhyd Davids1995, Vol. IV, Part III, p. 59).

To be liberal and avoid selfishness,
To maintain a high moral character
To prepared to sacrifice one's own pleasure for the well being of the subjects,
To be honest and maintain absolute integrity,
To be kind and gentle,
To lead a simple life for the subjects to emulate
To be free from hatred of any kind
To exercise non-violence
To practice patience, and
To respect public opinion, and to promote peace and harmony, (Ibid.).

According to Lord Chamberlain, Keowkhwan points out that of all the world's reigning monarchs, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand is recognized internationally as “The Working Monarch” for his life-long dedication to rural development causes (Keowkhwan 2007:5-6 in Thai). However, several of the more complex problems faced by Thai society require more than a straightforward charitable solution. His Majesty the King approaches every issue with wisdom and sensitivity, especially if cultural, ethnic or religious minorities are involved. His Majesty declared.

“I don't wish to see anybody succumb to anybody else. I am for democracy. But we must create genuine and appropriate democracy. Democracy without wisdom will turn into chaos. And that chaos will develop into anarchy... we must respect the dignity of humans, the dignity of individuals. We should think of how to promote people's dignity.” (Royal Addressed by His Majesty the King 1976)

By the above statement, one can see that, His Majesty's efforts to help the rural poor began to pay off as rural livelihoods improved noticeably in areas where his projects had been implemented. The general point is that the mobilization of traditional institutions, notably Buddhism and the monarchy, in aid of political stability in Thailand, has been remarkable. In other words, Buddhism and the monarchy have together functioned traditionally as the most visible symbol of national unity. Suksamran comments that in the late 1980s, the king remained an
important symbol, and public ideology insisted that religion, king, and nation were inextricably intertwined. Opposition groups have rarely attacked this set of related symbols. Some observers have argued that the acceptance of religion, king, and nation as ultimate symbols of Thai political values was misleading in that the great bulk of the population—the Thai villagers—although attached to Buddhism and respectful of the king, often resented the particular manifestations of government in local communities and situations (Suksamran 1993:64). It seemed, however, that whatever discontent there was with the political, social, and economic orders, most Thai remained at least passively committed to a national identity symbolized by the king and Buddhism (Suraphol 2005:242-243). The political legitimacy given to monarchy by the Buddhist worldview in Southeast Asia survives now only in Thailand (and to a lesser degree in Cambodia). King Bhumibol wields great political influence by virtue of the high esteem in which he is held by the Thai people. Anyone doubting the political power of the Thai monarch has only to recall how the king summoned generals Chamlong and Suchinda to put an end to the street violence of May 1992, when both men in the full glare of television advanced on their knees before the king. There will be no further coups while this king is alive, so it can be argued that credit for the political stability of Thai democracy is in large part due to King Bhumibol (Bunbongkarn 1992: 218-223).

Whether his successor will have, similar power is, however, less certain. However in the recent past there was military coup once again after 15 years despite the existence of promising Monarchy and democracy, and it is explained more details in the following page. The great number of charters and constitutions is indicative of the degree of political instability Thailand has faced in its modern history. The majority of charters and constitutions were the direct or indirect result of military coups. Charters and constitutions for much of Thai history can be thought of, not as instruments of the people to control the government, but as instruments by which a government controls its people (Aphomsuvan 2003:10). The cause of the coup is in the next section.

The absence of direct colonial master was an important factor in enabling Thailand's society to remain a relatively open social system, with egalitarian Buddhist beliefs contributing to this. Periodic shifts in power relations and political-economic alliances occurred through competition and co-operation among rival factions, without the direct intervention of outside forces (Samudavanij 1997:42).
Ungpakorn comments that, shift in power have occurred mainly within elite circles, although more popular participation was not completely absent or repressed. In some circumstances, mass movements, either organized or spontaneous, helped facilitate intra-elite struggles for power. While the locus of power has not shifted away from a small group within the elite, socio-economic changes have brought new elites into being, with aims and claims not dissimilar to those of their predecessors (Ungpakorn 2008:9). Thus, this characteristic of the political elite seems to negate one of the conventional concepts of political development.

It is significant to briefly examine the causes of the coup in a system where such form of monarchy still prevails.

**Causes of the Coup on 19th September 2006**

Many causes of the coup were identified, both by the junta as well as by independent observers. Initial reasons stated by the junta were the Thaksin government’s alleged creation of an “unprecedented rift in society”, corruption, nepotism, interference in independent agencies, and insults to the King (Kate 21 sept, 2006 BBC News). Later reasons stated by junta leaders included Thaksin’s alleged vote buying, plans to provoke violence and weakening of the military.

Independent analysts identified widely differing reasons for the coup. Thitinan of Chulalongkorn University alleged that the coup was due to conflicts between Thaksin and King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Kate 2006, 21, Sept BBC News interview Thitinan, Pongsudhirak). Biographer Paul Handley noted that “the coup masterminds” did not want Thaksin in a position to exert influence on the passing of the Chakri Dynasty mantle to Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn.”(Kate 2006 BBC News)

Ungpakorn (2006:65) in his article “the Monarchy in Modern Thailand: Invented Tradition or Ancient Institution?” claimed that the coup was due to class conflicts between the rural poor (who supported Thaksin) and the urban elite (who supported the junta). Some Thai analysts argue that the King must have at least been in favour of the coup. "The role of the king was critical in this crisis," said Thitinan Pongsudhirak of Chulalongkorn University, adding that "This coup was nothing short of Thaksin versus the King. He is widely seen as having implicitly endorsed the coup." Thitinan said, “He believed the King had allowed the coup to take place as it was the best option available.” What we were heading for otherwise was
violence in the streets.” (Kate, *BBC News* 21 September 2006 interview Thitinan Pongsudhirak).

Sivaraksa suggests that “Without the king’s involvement, the coup would have been impossible.” Surak added that the King is very skilful. He never becomes obviously involved. If this coup goes wrong, Sonthi will get the blame, but whatever happens, the King will only get praise. “If the king didn’t give a nod, this never would have been possible,” said Surak Sivaraksa, a prominent social critic. “Thaksin failed to realize that the king has been on the throne for 60 years and he’s no fool. The man is old, and Thaksin thought he could play around with him - and it was a dangerous game,” said Sulak. "He felt he could belittle the king, and that's something the king cannot stand" (Kate 21, Sept 2006, interview Sivaraksa, Bangkok: BBC News). According to Handley many Thai people, along with political and monarchy experts, see it as another example of the constitutional monarch's behind-the-scenes power, which he has exercised sparingly but effectively in his six-decade reign (Paul 2006:24).

There was not one event that led to Thaksin's ouster, but a series of missteps that prompted many to accuse the prime minister of challenging the king's authority an unpardonable act in Thailand. Although a constitutional monarch with limited powers, the king is held in reverence by almost all Thais because of his lifelong dedication to helping the country's have-nots. Regarded as semi-divine by some, the king spent decades mingling with common folk in backwater villages where he seeded hundreds of development projects. He believes that Thais and their leaders should adhere to Buddhist principles - that people should live simply, not strive for excesses and not flaunt their wealth (Richard 2006).

Even though the king's involvement in the coup was noticed, the public response to the Coup was mixed reaction though it was appreciated by large number of the populace. Thus former Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai said of the events, “As politicians, we do not support any kind of coup, but during the past five years, the government of Thaksin created several conditions that forced the military to stage the coup. Thaksin has caused the crisis in the country” (*Fox News* interview Chun Leekpai former prime minister 20 September 2006). But Anand Panyarachun, (former prime minister of Thailand) one of Thailand's most respected intellectuals, head of drafting committee of the 1997 Constitution, and former coup-installed Prime Minister, noted his criticism of the coup in an interview with the Far Eastern

"You have to remember that since 1992, we have had four general elections; we had peaceful transfers of power; we had governments who served full four-year terms. The military in 1992 had gone back to the barracks, and up to a few months ago there were no speculations and rumors about a possible coup. The armed forces, particularly the army, had gone back to the barracks and had become real professional soldiers. So to me what happened must be considered to be an extremely unfortunate dead-end street. So let's hope that there will be a new civilian government, fully engaged in some of the reform measures, including the revision of the present Constitution" (Ibid.).

Yet, Anand later qualified his disapproval, by noting "a coup d'etat has a different meaning in the Thai context," and blaming the coup on Thaksin, "Over the past five years Thaksin and his party have become too powerful. They have consolidated their hold over the government machinery and certain sectors of the armed forces and parliament. So I think it's a more precarious situation," (Ibid.). After the historical coup, certain developments took place in Thai politics. The Council for Democratic Reform, an interim Constitution was formed because of the Coup. The Junta (Military Government) argued that the King had no role in the coup though it is still a debatable issue.

Thus, it is argued by Jory that the 19th September coup is a "royalist" coup, not a "military" coup. But we cannot call it a royalist coup because of the prohibition on the discussion of the monarchy. So the military have had to play the role of "fall guys" for the royalists, because the monarchy can obviously not be seen to have played a role in sending tanks and heavily armed soldiers to depose a democratically elected government. Therefore, the coup group has had to play quite a delicate game (Jory 2006:1-4). It has had to demonstrate to the Thai people that the King has endorsed the coup in order to legitimize it. For example, the junta's name in Thai translates as "Council for Democratic Reform with the Great King as Head of State." He furthers comments the coup group has been trying as hard as it can to disassociate the King from the coup. Keen observers of the media may have noticed that a few days after the coup the official English name of the junta was changed from the "Council for Democratic Reform under the Constitutional Monarchy" to "Council for Democratic Reform" (Ibid.).
Since, Western-style democracy was introduced to Thailand through the 1932 revolution by the People’s Party, the nation has preceded democracy, but the monarchy has always prevailed above all symbolic national pillars including Buddhism and the constitution. The Thais would try by all means to glorify or defend the King and the nation, even if they have to halt the development of democracy (Kittiarsa 2006:1-3). He further argues that the protagonist of Thai-style democracy try to make sense of the coup based on (i) their Buddhist-oriented frames of reference to validate the coup as one of a necessary political act of problem-solving, (ii) the cultural construction of power, which disqualifies Thaksin in his ambitious attempts to dismantle the existing structures of politico-economic power and culture, and (iii) the particularly impatient character of the Thai elitist leadership and the public, which has been historically shaped by the social memories produced in the hero-oriented national historiographies (Ibid.,4). As Thais and as a nation are constantly structured to yearn for the great elitist leaders, who are morally qualified and charismatically capable of performing their masculine heroism for the good of the nation, but it is not democracy (Winichakul 2006:2-3).

The Monarchy over the last 150 years has shown itself to be remarkably adaptable to all circumstances and able to gain in stature by making alliances with all sorts of groups, whether they are military dictatorships or elected governments. The Monarchy may have made mild criticisms of the Taksin government, but this did not stop the Siam Commercial Bank, which is the Royal bank, from providing funds for the sale of Thaksin’s Shin Corporation to Temasek holdings. Nor should it be assumed that Thaksin and Thai Rak Thai (TRT) were somehow “anti-Royalist”. For over 300 years the capitalist classes in many countries have learnt that conservative Constitutional Monarchies help protect the status quo under capitalism and hence their class interests. However, it is also clear that the Thai King is more comfortable with military dictatorships than with elected governments. This explains why the Monarchy backed the 19th September coup (Ungpakorn 2007:28).

The catalyst for reshaping the constitutional order was normally effective intervention by the armed forces. Such intervention usually resulted in the abrogation of the Constitution, abolition of Parliament, and suspension of party politics (in the broad sense of the term). With almost no exception the military proceeded to re-establish Parliamentary institutions of some kind following its foray into the political arena. Yet, sooner or later, a crisis erupted, leading to another
challenge by the armed forces to the civilian authorities. This pattern of government became known as the “Vicious Circle of Thai politics” (See Figure 2).

According to Uwanno, the beginnings of the vicious circle of Thai politics, it started in 1947; a military coup d'état overthrew a civilian government. He observes that the Thai political development would repeat itself right up to the last coup which occurred in 19 September 2006, (Uwanno 2006:2). Uwanno further explains these circle stats with increasing public pressure on the civilian regime (normally functioning with the approval of the military usually fomented by its social, political and economic dysfunction. This dysfunction is typically exacerbated by the media reporting on the regimes’ over corruption. This in turn provokes increasing political conflict between factions in the government coalition (Ibid, p., 3). Finally in compliance with the bureaucracy, the military steps in to restore order and establish a functional legislature, able to pass the laws the bureaucracy has drafted. Usually an interim constitution is quickly implemented followed by a permanent constitution with possibly an election to create an ostensibly civilian government. Once the government is running up, it is allowed a honeymoon period where everyone settles.
back to the business of state affairs. Then, rumours of corruption arise yet again. And renewed social and political turmoil causes the governmental factions to again turn on one another. And the vicious cycle begins yet again (Ibid. p., 10).

Thailand has dictatorship that shows few if any serious signs of a desire to reintroduce the democratic process. In a country where coups and countercoups were so numerous that merely tallying them becomes a major research task, the present military regime has provided an element of uncharacteristic stability. Despite the revolution of 1932 against the monarchy (which was retained as a symbol of Thai sovereignty) and several periods of liberal democracy accompanied, to the chagrin of many, by almost unrestrained political activity, Thailand’s ruling elite is, in fact, even more closed today than it was at any time since the 1932 revolution. The Thai constitution is unstable and less durable, there were 18 constitutions so far; since 1932 to 2007, but there was little reason to believe that it would inaugurate a new era of a successful liberal democracy (Wilson 1979:272; Slagter and Horold R. 1999: 55-56). Despite some liberal democratic trappings, the constitution provided considerable insulation for the executive from outside influence and guaranteed that political power would remain in the hands of the military leadership. Thai government has been relatively effective, but how long it can remain both closed and legitimate in the face of a growing awareness of its past shortcomings is questionable.

Till date, on the religious front, the present Constitution has no formal religious declaration, yet its undertones denote political origin, which is overwhelmingly religious of special importance of Buddhism.

**The Role of Buddhist Sangha in Thai politics**

In Thai politics, Buddhism remains an important institution for creating social order and a medium through which order can be maintained. In Thai politics, for instance, it is necessary to keep the members of society within standards and procedures for peace, happiness and security. To this end, the Thai political mechanism has issued acts, decrees, regulations and procedures to be enforced throughout the kingdom (Sri Dhammananda 1996:494). These regulations are merely physical constraints applying to external behavior. It is to be expected that Buddhism will have an important role to play in helping to train and induce its followers to conform to those social and political procedures, and also have an
influence on mentality and create a moral awareness conducive to following the political order (Phra Dhammapitaka 1994: 7-8).

In addition to the above role played by the Sanghas in Thai politics, the Sanghas have the time, knowledge and ability to benefit the people on a very wide scale since they closely live with people who together for local communities. The people’s faith in Buddhism is increased by the support of the Sangha, which is rendered without any expectation of reward. The householders do not forsake Buddhism, but rather, assist the Sanghas to combat their (people’s) problems of livelihood, correcting and improving the quality of life and the environment. The Sangha’s shouldering of responsibility in community development is in fact a psychological response arisen from its long-standing close relationship with the people (Sivalaksa 2004:4-5).

Buddhism in the region also plays an eminent political role in uniting the majority people of Thailand. Although the monks renounce worldliness, they, out of necessity, maintain close relationships with the lay community, whose members must supply them with food, shelter, and clothing. Since then, the Thai government has made anti-Communism the keystone of its policy both domestically and abroad. Although the Sangha has been involved in the modernization of Thailand for a long time, the institutionalization of its role in politics is a recent phenomenon. In this connection, the governments since 1958 have tried to mobilize various important institutions of which the two in particular are the monarchy and the Buddhist Sangha (Dhiravegin 2005:1-4 in Thai). The decision to use the Sangha to carry out government policies might have come from the fact that government could not effectively integrate certain groups which are ethnically or culturally different from the majority, such as the case in the northeast of Thailand. Of the two traditional bases of political set up, as discussed above, Buddhism and monarchy, we find that with the rise of Thailand as a nation, not only the traditional foundation of stability (through interdependence between enlightened monarchy and Buddhism) has denuded, but because of politics by the military or civilian secular governments or these two, the political set up of Thailand is still evaded by a peaceful, inclusive and stable civilian parliamentary democracy.

Buddhism in Thailand provides the state with an ideological basis and political legitimacy and is widely used to facilitate government policies and to maximize its legitimacy. In Thailand, where over 94 per cent of the people are
Buddhists; there is a traditionally close political connection between Buddhist professionals and political rulers. The links between religious and temporal power are reflected in the fact that the present monarch, King Bhumipol Adulyadej, must profess and defend both the Buddhist dharma and the Sangha (the body on monks). However, reflecting the prevailing power arrangements he must also reach a modus vivendi with the most powerful social group—the military—because of its traditional political role as power broker (Samudavanija 1997:29).

The interaction between Buddhism and political rulers in Thailand is taken as a case of reference because, first, since the formation of the Thai state, Buddhism has uninterruptedly been the dominant religion of a great majority of its people. Second, unlike, for example, Laos, Burma or Cambodia, Thailand did not experience the effects of colonial rule. Third, as a result, its traditional mode of government has recognisably continued for many centuries (Suksamran 1993:109-10). The general point is that the mobilization of traditional institutions, notably Buddhism and the monarchy, in aid of political stability in Thailand, has been remarkable. In other words, Buddhism and the monarchy have together functioned traditionally as the most visible symbol of national unity.

The research attempts to study the political mobilizations, abuse, and misuse of Buddhism by the government and the Buddhist sects from within during the period between 1963 and 1992.

Research Questions

From the above introduction, it is clear to examine a set of questions that are pertinent to the present research in point. The first question pertains to the interlinkages between the Socio economic and political set up of Thai society and various Buddhist sects. In the context, that Buddhism is embedded in the lives of Thai people, the socio political economic affairs of Thai society are equally influenced by these sects and hence the significance of examining how these key parameters of social organization are inherently reinforced with each other.

Question two centres around the role of Buddhism in state politics. What is the character of Buddhist Monastery and its role in political modernization of Thailand? As argued in the first question itself, state politics of Thai society cannot be understood without reference to its relationship with Buddhist Sangha and hence the question relating how state apparatus controls these Sanghas will be examined.
Question three discuss about how has Buddhism responded to the democratic popular movement in Thai society? In this attempt, there will be inquiries on how Buddhism has been involved in the secular village affairs.

Hypotheses
1. Government's mismanagement and misuse of the religion to legitimize oppressive, corrupt and self-serving governance as in the period under study, has made the general socio-political interdependence between government and Buddhism uneasy.
2. The economic growth has brought new social occupations and changes in society which has caused both tussles and cooperation between Buddhist Sangha and government resulting in social crises.

Objectives of the Study
1. The main objective of the study is to examine and delve into the role of religion especially Buddhism in Thai politics over the period of years from 1963-1992. The existing literature shows that Buddhism has been an integral part of Thai politics. It is in this context that the present study intends to examine Buddhism as a factor in the Thai politics.
2. To bring out a critical study as to why the Thai politics failed to check the feeling of insecurity among the minorities' religions even after the abolition of Buddhism as the State's religion in 1997. The sense of insecurity of the Thai people of different religious persuasions has prompted us to argue in favour of making Buddhism as the State's religion while at the same time giving proper security and protection of the minorities' religions. Such approach has been necessitated by the present widespread feeling and experience of less security across different religions with the Thai people. In a nutshell, the study attempts to examine religion, politics and its impact on the people of Thailand.

Methodology
This study will be an analytical and comparative evaluation. Attempts will be made to look at national archives of both Thai government and Buddhist
monasteries and also main centers of Buddhist studies in Bangkok, such as Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidyalaya and Mahamakuta Rajavidyalaya. Primary sources of information will be collated through interview with members of the Sangha in Bangkok and other areas where hermitage monks are living. The secondary sources of information are journals, newspapers, articles, reports of governments, NGOs and other institutions that are working on issues pertaining to Buddhism and politics.

Tentative Chapterization

Chapter I - Introduction will address basic issues like the place of Buddhism in the politics of Thailand and explain structural aspects of governance. The attempt will be to examine how Buddhism and monarchy are treated as essential elements of the political system in Thailand from Sukhothai period to Bangkok era.

Chapter II will study new Buddhism such as Dhammakaya, Santi-Asoke and Buddhhadasa. It will examine the process in which Dhammakaya made Buddhism an instrument to reinforce the temple economics and Santi-Asoke’s emphasis on returning to a very simple way of life. In this context, it will also study about Dhammakaya sect and its role in Thai society. This chapter will look into the important events of Buddhist movement and demonstrate the positive and negative roles of Buddhist Sangha. The various government policies and agencies for reaching faster economic growth have brought new social occupations and changes in society which was not in accordance with traditional Buddhism. It has not only caused tussle between Buddhist Sangha and the Government but has also caused serious social crises for rising middle classes.

Chapter III will examine the role of Buddhism in state politics. In this chapter, the main focus will centre on the Buddhist Monastery and the Sangha with specific reference to the case of Phra Phimoladham and the abbot of Mahadhathu temple. And also the role of Sangha in political modernization of Thailand and the state’s control over Sangha in twentieth century with reference to Sangha Administration. The Sangha Act entered the Dark Ages through the influence of a military dictatorship. It became a retrogressive structure for four decades now. It has kept the Thai Sangha in the dark ages of a military dictatorship despite Thai society’s populace based revolutions of 14th October 1973, 6th October 1976 and May, 1992. Within the emerging framework, the government has assured the
political public that this new constitution will be promulgated when conditions permit. But the problem of assimilating a parliament to the system of bureaucratic dominance is the salient, ideological and institutional question of Thai politics. While it has been possible to postpone a confrontation of this issue, the problem remains.

Chapter IV deals with the Buddhist Sangha's participating in political processes along with the government and this chapter will try to examine that aspect. This chapter will focus on how Buddhist Monks were involved in secular village affairs for democratic movement in Thailand. And also, focus on the role of two Buddhist Institutions, Maha Chulalongkorn Buddhist University and Mahamakuta Buddhist University in the political process of Thailand. This chapter will examine the Buddhist monastery as the center of village life and Buddhist monks as its cultural leaders. It also examines the role played by the Buddhist Monks through the preaching of Dhamma to the tribal in the north and northeast along with developmental activities like education, medical care and occupational advice undertaken with a positive political plan to convert the hill tribes (who are not Thais) into Buddhism. An attempt will be made to analyze the consequence on how Thai state exercises control over the sangha (Buddhist order) and has moved to exclude dissident religious groups from the officially sanctioned order. In other words, the state has arrogated to itself the right to determine what does not constitute true Buddhism, the consequence of which has been the downfall of former Prime Minister Thaksin's government.

The chapter V focuses on monarchy, democracy and King's political intervention in Thai politics and the relationship between the two institutions. An attempt will be made to understand these two important institutions taking into account the reign of King Bhumibol and his political interventions, and also the emerging wave of mass movements. The chapter also tries to seek an answer to whether a constitutional monarchy is at all desirable in Thailand and if it is in the affirmative, how could it be sustained. While dealing with these aspects, the chapter also analyses the place of Sangha in Thai politics and their demand for Buddhism to be made a state religion. Special mention has also been made of the economic policies under king Bhumibol.

Chapter VI, the conclusion will bring out the analysis and summarization of all the chapters. The concluding chapter would make an attempt to bring out with an
alternative perspective, with concluding observations. For example, the observation, nowadays, the Sangha leans closer to the state so much so that that the former became an extension or even a tool of the latter. Such a relationship contributes to the rigidity of the Sangha since it affects a powerless bureaucracy under the control of a corrupt one which creates nothing but inertia towards destructive change. The State’s domination of the Sangha is never for the sake of Sangha or religion, but only for the state itself. As a consequence of political interfering in the Buddhist affairs and oft-corrupt political governments, the Buddhist movements and bodies might well be dragged into open politics in future.