

## **Political Economy of Development in the topic of Modernization of Siam**

The complex interconnection between the economics and politics under the prominent monarchy of Thailand had incentive changed Siam in the mid 19th century period of the Western colonialism. The transition society signified the end of the old traditional Siamese monarchy toward modernisation of Siam as well as the beginning of the special relationship with Britain, Chinese, and America. There was political tension under British and France at that time that forced Siam to increase their defence and policies in order to maintain the Siamese sphere of influence. Chakri Dynasty, King Monkut and King Chulalongkorn, had brought much technological advancement and absorbed many Western systems into the people of Siam and was able to prove to those European that Siam was equally developed. The change in social structure absolutely had an impact on the economic development of Siam. This essay had elaborated the issues on this period from the individual level to better understand the importance of political economic development and analyzing public change in solving the conflict related to foreign policies.

The economic modernisation can be seen through the upturn of the spread of knowledge and technology in Siam at that time. King Rama IV or King Mongkut had embraced those Western innovations and initiated those from a political perspective—modernization of the country—to culture reforms. Denying the fact that, this policy brought a shock to those religiously Siamese, for instance; the scientific revealing about the Earth's shape which was opposed to the Buddhist's scripture, the Siam's education system, armies troops and weapons, and printing press was improved. The geo-body of Siam or a paradigm of culture, government, and power, however, it was described as barbaric, inferior, and ignorant. The Western influx continued to shape traditional culture to be what they referred to 'civilize'. From this information above, it was clear that this political decision had opened Siam to the global and resulted in the Bowring Treaty. This cultural convergence prepared Siam to deal with the international

laws, even though this treaty was considered unequal according to the envoys, the abolition of the Royal Storage ended the monopoly on foreign trade and reached Siamese people. The Bowring treaty has proved to be one of the economic and social revolutions of Siam, on the other hand, the Royal House lost its most important sources of income which is immense taxation. The western powers had also encouraged the Siam to have a central bank issuing information about bankings and savings. Having a central bank could be seen as a central medium for trade and economy.

To be extended, this relation to economic modernisation, Siam generates into the global economy means that they also became a sale market to the new investment for the Western industrial goods. The Siam agricultural and raw materials began to expand which increased the country's exportation. More importantly, taxation has also been reduced and the right to trade freely in every seaport. This can be criticized in the Smithian way, the opening of the market motivates the exchange not just products but knowledge among people resulted in specialization and a substantial benefits which is a natural force occurred in Smith's theory.

Furthermore, in the reign of King Chulalongkorn, his first reform was to establish the "Auditory Office" that was responsible for tax collection in order to replace corrupt tax collectors since the tax collectors had been under the protection of nobles. In 1874, Chulalongkorn had established the Council of State just like in the British council. However, it was not successful, he still began modernization and centralization reforms in the Western fashion. He also abolished the traditional Nakorn Bala, which is the methods of torture in the judicial branch, which Westerners considered it as inhumane and barbaric. Despite this abolition of government-interfered trade had to do with the emergence of free trade, he was influenced by the nationalism that flourished when Chulalongkorn was in Europe, there was a call for liberty, hence, the idea of liberalism also increasing among the people. He was the first Siamese King to visit other leaders and

discuss foreign affairs, European finally recognized Siam as a fully independent power. Since the unsuccessful attempt to establish the legislation in the parliament, there was an introduction of the abolition of prostration which created more sense of equality within the upper-classes.

Kantian theory had explained about the human dignity which the Western culture had an impact on this era was the abolition of slavery in Thailand. This kind of deontological idea had reasoned in the way slaves can be royalty toward their owner. It is quite similar to libertarian aspect as determination of self worth and value, however, children of slaves also became slaves. In 1900 the Employment Act stated that all workers should be paid, so mutually consent slaves also get paid. Kantian respects human rights and also believes in human capability. This is the fundamental of morality which is based not on political force and consideration. Even if a slave was consented to their owner but it was about universalizing your maxim to fuller the power of the state to strengthen the modernized society.

For four decades that Thailand was gradually organized and developed, most importantly was the modernization of communication systems with the introduction of post and telegraph services. Making the central governing reached the common people and easier control of their defence. The Royal State Railways of Siam was built in 1890 ordered by King Rama V to be set for the town planning. Mass transportation, people were migrating around the country which later encouraged the Chinese immigrants that allowed new knowledge to flourish. It can be said that this period, a more centralized and bureaucratic political structure is formed. Thailand became much more to catch up to the world and balanced the colonial powers against the colonisation sphere.

Then, Rama VI or King Vajiravudh reigned over the country subsequently. After America joined the WWI, he realized that American side would win certainly, so Siam entered the same side as America. Siam sent some army to march around

celebrating victory. Also, Siam was part of the Treaty of Versailles which made Siam get the privilege that they were treated equally as the Westerners. The participation in the War allowed Siam to later negotiate with the Western Powers on 'unfair' treaties made before. Extra-territorial power in Siam was also cancelled by the US. Rama VI banned chewing betel because it looked bad in the eyes of foreigners.

According to the Affluent society which John Kenneth Galbraith had published in 1958. It claimed and proved Thailand came out of the war with a new phenomenon. The Opening of the commercial rice market had changed the Thai economy from being one of subsistence to cash, the open market lines globally, and the capitalist orientation which largely supported the private sector to emerge for the first time in Thailand. The early economy had been oppressed by poverty, and economic abundance. With wisdom and the importance of the individual decision of the leader helped us understand the context of political economy of development in a way that can be applied to in the future.