3 Creating a modern bureaucracy through education

Introduction

We have seen in Chapter 2 how King Chulalongkorn worked to gain control of political and fiscal power in order to establish an absolutist state. To the same end, he built up a modern bureaucracy and promoted nationalism. His efforts strengthened monarchical rule in the immediate future but also planted the seeds of its undoing. Even before his reign ended, the introduction of western-style education and state nationalism led to conflicts within the absolutist state.

The king intended to build up a modern bureaucracy and inculcate a royally centred nationalism without substantially changing Siam's social order.[1] This concept was flawed, for although the royalty and nobility enjoyed greater access to the new educational institutions than did the commoners, the latter showed themselves much more highly motivated to take advantage of the new opportunities and to acquire knowledge. Thus the non-elite classes penetrated all levels of the bureaucracy, and the attempt to maintain the old social structure was ultimately unsuccessful. Attempts made by the king and his ministers to block this process were half-hearted, for four main reasons.

First, the modernisers' desire to preserve the social order was at odds with the need to defend Siam and increase the king's power by creating a modern bureaucratic apparatus. Second, they were influenced by the meritocratic ideas that were part and parcel of western education. Third, the elite classes remained aloof from the new approach. Traditional ideas and institutions discouraged royal and noble participation in a meritocratic system, and powerful nobles and princes saw educational opportunities only as useful patronage gifts for their lower-class clients. Fourth, as modern education replaced presentation at court as the essential qualification for entry to the bureaucracy, it was harder for officials to believe in the king's favour as the source of their position and livelihood. The creation of the nation in the minds of the officials ultimately raised the question of whether king and nation were identical, and if not, where their loyalties lay.

From the king's point of view, the most radical priority was to create modern bureaucrats from idle royals. Only a few high-ranking members of royalty had played an active part in the traditional bureaucracy; the remainder enjoyed social prestige but were a financial burden upon the Privy Purse. At a time of bureaucratic expansion, they appeared to the king to constitute an appropriate source of bureaucratic talent; they belonged to the old ruling class, and if they could be induced to enter salaried employment, the king's burden of supporting them would be relieved.

King Chulalongkorn was so determined to incorporate royalty into the bureaucracy that he actively discouraged their participation in commercial pursuits. When one prince sought permission from the king to go to the north to trade timber, he was told that as a member of the royalty he should try to obtain training to enter government service rather than to involve himself in trade, which was not sufficiently profitable to satisfy a prince's honour.[2]

Thus, the early education policy concentrated on turning royalty and nobility into modern bureaucrats. Quite a number of royal princes and sons of the nobles were sent to study abroad.[3] In the modern bureaucracy, high-ranking princes would come to occupy the top-level posts, low-ranking royalty and nobility would staff the middle level, and, as in the traditional system, literate commoners would staff the lowest levels. It was assumed that this class composition of the modern bureaucracy would guarantee social stability.

In the traditional state, the criterion for recruitment into the bureaucracy had been family. King Chulalongkorn told Prince Damrong how recruitment to the bureaucracy had been managed in the past:

> Formerly, sons of *phu di* [the ruling class] who were to enter the royal service of the king, presented themselves as clients to the king [*thawai tua*] and became pages at a tender age. While pages were around the court, the king got to know them. Some had positions serving in the Department of Royal Pages before they served as nobles in other ministries.[4]

Thus, the traditional system emphasised the king's personal relationship with the nobles, a relationship based upon the notion that the king was the sole source of their status, prestige and well-being. As such they should feel gratitude to him. This relationship of obligation was the main pillar of the old system.

Only the sons of the nobles were allowed to be presented to the king as pages. There were two types of royal pages. Those who actively served were called "pages on duty" (*mahadlek wen*). Usually, they came from families with a tradition of serving in this capacity. Second, there were those who were presented to the monarch and were then appointed to

various departments; these were called "special pages" (*mahadlek wiset*). Only the latter had the right to attend the king's daily audiences where top-level business was conducted, and this is how they learned the art of government.[5] Their serving as royal pages also gave the king the opportunity to become personally acquainted with his future officials; this personal contact was the basis of the trust relationship between king and officials.

Some families gave their own training to their offspring, and a young man was trained as an apprentice in his father's department either before or after being presented to the court. This form of training was also given to the sons of the lesser nobles whose status did not justify their being presented to the king. Literate commoners could also seek ministerial patronage to enter the bureaucracy as clerks.

Most government business was conducted verbally. At the daily royal audiences, reports were read out to the king, and he gave oral instructions. Written communications were kept to a minimum, and those received by the king were commonly petitions and accounts.[6] Literacy was not considered important by the nobles, who left pen-pushing to clerks.

Although birth was the most important criterion for recruitment to the traditional bureaucracy, and sons tended to be appointed to their father's position, merit played some part. A page's ability to deliver oral reports well was recognised by the king and influenced future appointments.

The creation of the absolutist state with its modern bureaucracy fundamentally changed the way official business was conducted, as literate skills were now indispensable. The king's daily audiences became perfunctory, and the most significant business was carried out in various ministries generating streams of paperwork. Literate officials were needed from the outset in 1872, when the king established a corps of salaried officials who were to keep office hours and carry out their business in offices.

Thus, education became the criterion for entry to the new bureaucracy, and King Chulalongkorn's fundamental and most immediate need was to train literate officials. There was also a need for foreign-language skills, for both the king and Young Siam recognised that if Siam was going to be westernised, its future leaders should be able to use English. This skill was also needed in administrative areas such as foreign affairs, customs, postal and telegraphic services. It was necessary that the future elite had the English-language skills to grasp the meaning of such concepts as "finance" and "budget", let alone those concepts for which Thai culture had no equivalents, such as "government" and "nation". In the king's words:

> the administration needs to rely upon the models set by westerners who have acted upon them hundreds of times. We need people with a knowledge of Western administration [reflecting the newness of the concept he used the Thai transliteration of the word "office"] to set a model for us.[7]

In the rest of this chapter we will consider the ways in which this ambition was pursued, and the problems that it created. The chapter includes the following topics: education and social mobility, professional education, social mobility and the question of loyalty, and implanting nationalism through education.

Education and social mobility

This section deals with attempts, made at different stages in the reign, to develop bureaucrats through education.

Three forces militated against King Chulalongkorn's efforts to educate the ruling class. First was resistance from Old Siam, whose members harboured deep resentments against the king's reforms and refused to accept that modern education should be necessary for entering the bureaucracy. The American Consul wrote in 1880:

> There is . . . [a] strong party of the old regime who do not approve of education in any form, in foreign languages and studies, who believe implicitly in the wisdom of their ancestors, and obstinately oppose themselves to any attempt at removing the ancient landmarks wherever posted.[8]

Second, literacy had hitherto been taught in such a way as to dissuade students from continuing to study beyond a basic grasp of consonants and simple vowels.[9] Such traditional teaching was generally responsible for the low level of literacy in Thai society; it generated a pessimistic attitude towards education in society as a whole, so that the prospect for widespread literacy seemed grim. The idea of education itself posed a psychological block.

Third, members of the commoner classes recognised the career opportunities to enter the bureaucracy and earn salaries offered by modern education. The commoners consisted of the growing and increasingly prosperous mercantile community (mostly immigrant Chinese in origin), poor urban dwellers as peasantry in outlying provinces.[10] These families had relatively more to gain from educating their children than had ruling-class families, and by the time the latter began to take a serious interest, they found themselves in a poor position to compete. These problems are discussed in greater detail below (pp. 73–74).

Socialising the elite in the Royal Pages Bodyguard Regiment

The first move by King Chulalongkorn towards setting up the modern bureaucracy was to establish the Royal Pages Bodyguard Regiment in 1870.[11] The regiment was established in order to give younger members of the elite who were close to the king some modern military training and

other types of education befitting their future roles as directors of a modern state. It operated as an alternative to the traditional means of entry through apprenticeship in the Royal Pages Department. In its first year of existence, the Royal Pages Bodyguard Regiment included the king's half-brothers and some of his former personal pages who had been recruited into a small bodyguard corps; together they formed the core of the king's lieutenants. Other members were sons of the nobility who had served as pages or were about to join the Royal Pages Department, but instead had been persuaded to join the new organisation.[12]

In 1872 the Royal Pages Bodyguard Regiment expanded to six companies, drawing recruits from royal, noble and some well-to-do commoner families. Because it included large numbers of both royalty and nobility, the Royal Pages Bodyguard Regiment was highly prestigious. The king himself commanded it, with the title of colonel. Bodyguard cadets were paid high salaries, issued uniforms and modern weaponry, and given full board within the palace – where the cuisine was excellent.[13]

In many respects, the regiment clearly and consciously copied the practice followed by the ruling class in some European countries – for instance Prussia, where sons of the junkers joined guards regiments before embarking on their bureaucratic careers. The king may or may not have been aware of the precedent; his reason for following this course of action was that, traditionally, royal pages also functioned as the king's bodyguards.[14]

The attempt to teach literacy to the cadets was carefully planned. A new set of textbooks emphasising learning drills, the *Munlabotbanphakit*, was commissioned,[15] and a Thai medium school was set up for them in 1871. The school, which would include not only cadets but also other pages in the Royal Page Department and noble sons not yet presented to the court, aimed at initiating a new style of learning which pupils would find less painful than in the past. In his proclamation canvassing support for the school, the king guaranteed that its scholars would be taught in a proper manner and neither caned nor scolded with foul language. Like the cadets, other candidates were also offered uniforms and per diem expenses.[16]

The proclamation promised that literacy was the key to other knowledge, government customs and practices, and that "once they have acquired a literate education, goodness, beauty and prosperity will be with them to the end of their days". Read in the context of the king's attempt to build up the modern bureaucracy, the proclamation transmitted a very important message to the ruling class: henceforth education was to be a key criterion in recruiting for government service, allowing one to attain a better life than that under the old system.[17]

Another important move in educating the elite occurred in 1871 when the king sent twenty princes of *mom chao*[18] to study in Singapore. However, only three of them were sent to further their education in Europe, The rest returned to attend an English medium school in 1872 after a qualified teacher was found. This school was established for the

king's half-brothers and the Royal Pages Bodyguard Regiment. The history of this short-lived school – in existence for only three years – shows that only a few the high-ranking princes benefited most. Prince Damrong, who studied there, wrote that the morning session was reserved for the royal princes, whereas the other students studied in Thai and practised military drills in the mornings, and only attended the afternoon sessions. The latter gradually dropped out of the English school altogether. Prince Damrong's explanation was that they possibly found this timetable too strenuous;[19] A further factor may have been the unwillingness of the ruling class to be pushed further into an educational system of uncertain value. Thus the king's policy of educating in English was unsuccessful. Only a small number of the king's brothers shared his zeal for westernisation, and pursued the study of English with sufficient stamina to stand them in good stead when they went on to make their careers. These included the two most powerful ministers in King Chulalongkorn's reign, Prince Damrong and Prince Dewavongse.

Almost all of King Chulalongkorn's half-brothers who went to the English school were responsible for helping him set up various modern organisations, and after 1892 they served as ministers in the western-style cabinet. Thus, in this first phase of King Chulalongkorn's establishment of the modern bureaucracy, the royal princes clearly emerged as the future elite who would dominate its top levels. Many members of the Royal Pages Bodyguard Regiment left the regiment in the early years of the reign and became senior officials in various ministries.[20]

Thus, the palace school and the Royal Pages Bodyguard Regiment acted as a nursery for the civil and military services. Yet King Chulalongkorn's early efforts to educate the ruling class for a leading role in the bureaucracy were not entirely successful. There were three main reasons for this. First, as mentioned earlier, the unwillingness of the old noble class to support the king's reform efforts posed a major obstacle in the first period. Second, cultural inhibitions still relevant at this point meant that "pen-pushing" was not considered a proper occupation for the upper strata of society. Those of its members who did attend school tended to leave after completing only four of the six textbooks comprising the *Munlabotbanphakit*, partly because they found it too difficult, and partly because the demand for even low levels of literacy was so high that they could always find employment in the ministries.[21]

Third, the government failed to restrict student recruitment to candidates with an appropriate social background. Already in the late 1870s, the Royal Pages Bodyguard Regiment had been infiltrated by people of common stock. In 1880 Prince Damrong was to complain of the social background of many of these new recruits; "they are pages on duty (*mahadlek wen*) or come from bourgeois families."[22]

Thus, in the first decade of modern education, the commoners captured places in this prestigious institution because there were insufficient

applicants from the ruling class. In the 1880s, changes in the class composition of the elite schools became even more evident. Now the Old Siam generation was dying out, and the royal and noble families were coming round to accepting that modern education was essential for their children's future. At the same time, commoner families were increasingly motivated to secure employment within the bureaucracy, and the evolving modern bureaucratic elite included representatives of both the traditional ruling class and the commoner class. One result of this was the extension of modern schooling outside the court. To examine this, we move forward to 1879.

The Suan Anan and Suan Kulap schools

The Suan Anan school was established in 1879 because of a need to provide English and Thai education at the secondary level to the sons of royalty and the nobility. When Dr McFarland, the American missionary, expressed his wish to see an institution similar to Robert College in Constantinople, he was invited to take charge of setting up the new school. The king's intention was clear from the outset – to train the ruling class to serve in the modern bureaucracy. The king laid down the guidelines: the school was to offer sufficient training in reading and writing for clerks, but should also provide such subjects as mathematics, arts and sciences, which might be useful to the country. The teaching of Christianity was strictly prohibited. It was to be run as both a boarding and a day school.

Initially, Suan Anan school had 100 pupils from royalty and the nobility. It quickly achieved high educational standards. It was well received by the ruling class and, at first, had more applications than it could accommodate. But after five years, we find the school facing a fate similar to the palace school: participation from the ruling class declined and the school admitted a growing number of commoners. In this case it was the prosperous Chinese mercantile community and some poorer Thai families living near the school. By 1883, it was reported that only seven of the original fifty noble pupils had passed the first level (*prayok*). Wyatt suggests that the school's inconvenient location (on the Thonburi side of the river) and its overly advanced syllabus were the reasons for the school's failure to attract the ruling class. Most important, he points out, was the competition from another recently established elite school, Suan Kulap. This second school drew away elite participation, and had the effect of diverting government financial support from Suan Anan to Suan Kulap.[23]

The Suan Kulap school had been established in 1880. It was designed to educate the royalty, who were in general responding poorly to the new curriculum, and to give them a head-start over the commoners. It taught at primary and secondary levels, and in 1881 introduced English to the curriculum. The king was open about the school's objectives: on the occasion of a prize-giving ceremony he explained that he had established the Suan

Kulap school in order to educate the low-ranking members of the royalty (at *mom chao* and *mom ratchawong* ranks)[24] who were then numerous and traditionally not part of the bureaucracy. The king argued that this was particularly unfortunate because many of them were intelligent, and that entering the school was equivalent to presenting oneself at the court. He also announced that he planned to educate his own sons there in the future.[25] He thus used both traditional and modern arguments to justify his promotion of the school.

In its first year, the Suan Kulap school recruited only royalty of *mom chao* rank. Even when it did begin to recruit from the nobility, members of royalty were given special treatment.[26] The stress on royalty and the drive to make the school an elitist institution guaranteeing a bureaucratic career were soon successful, and places were in great demand. In 1881 the number of students exceeded the number of officer appointments in the Royal Bodyguard Regiment that could be made available to graduates, and the king decided to abandon his original strategy of depending solely upon the regiment to train recruits to the bureaucracy. Henceforth military training was no longer a prerequisite for entry to the middle and higher levels of the bureaucracy, and graduates of Suan Kulap were able to move directly into the administration.[27]

Under the guidance of Prince Damrong, Suan Kulap remained an elite school serving the ruling class, but there were changes in terms of class composition. In the first four graduating years (1885–1886, –1887, –1888, –1889) all but two of the nineteen graduates to pass through both the primary and secondary levels (*prayok* one and two) came from the royal family. But in the next six years, less than 15 per cent of all graduates (ten from a total of eighty) were royal.[28] The family names of some – and the fact that others did not have family names at this time – suggest that many graduates came from commoner backgrounds.[29] Although we do not have the full list of all students, the available data suggest that the Suan Kulap school was not entirely immune to the effects of the desire for social mobility. For example, among those pupils who received awards in 1890, we find many from families of lesser officials, commoners and of Chinese background.[30] A more detailed picture is provided by the class composition of the graduates at the primary level in 1896. Of twenty graduates, only one was royal. Four were sons of high-ranking nobles (from *luang* upward) and five from lesser noble parents. Eight were commoners and a further two were Chinese.[31]

The school was even less able to restrict entry at the secondary level. In order to meet the demand for educated officials, it had to increase its intake of secondary-level students, and this forced it to recruit from classes other than royalty and the nobility. Some came from much lower social levels. For example, Nai Bun came from Supanburi, over 80 kilometres from Bangkok, and was of a peasant family which also engaged in the rice trade. He came first in the primary-level examination taken in Bangkok,

and his family then decided to send him to stay in the capital with a guardian who was known to his parents. There, an acquaintance of this guardian introduced him to the school.[32]

There is further supporting evidence that the elite feared an invasion of the school by commoners. In 1889 a school fee of twenty baht per annum was introduced in order to prevent *khon leo* (people of a low, common stock) from gaining entry to the school.[33] Seen in the context of the current school class composition, this was a reaction to the ongoing situation rather than a pre-emptive measure. By the end of the reign, the school appeared to have lost its elitist status. By then, Phraya Wisutsuriyasak, the director of the Education Department, was of the opinion that the students' quality was much lower than when the school was first established because of the differences in family background: "Then, the students were selected from the royalty and the nobility. Now it can be seen where they come from."[34]

Parallel with the establishment of homegrown institutions was the policy of sending members of royal and noble families abroad, reflecting the consistent policy of giving priority to the ruling elite in joining the modern bureaucracy. The outcome of this expensive policy was as dismal as the internal efforts. By 1892 many Thai students under the royal support were sent home due to their poor performance. The reason for this failure was obvious, these young men were sent abroad thanks to their family background and personal qualifications were not taken into consideration whatsoever. This policy also attracted heavy lobbying for the royal sponsorship, and this was blamed for the high rate of failure in educating the Thai elite abroad.[35]

Mass education

The development of an absolutist state demanded not only the education of the elite; it also required an army of clerks to staff the bureaucracy. King Chulalongkorn chose to use the traditional centre of learning, the *wat* (temple), to carry out the task. The government involved itself by supporting the production of new textbooks and paying salaries to both monk and lay teachers.

The effort began in 1875 when King Chulalongkorn issued a proclamation encouraging those monks who ran temple schools to be conscientious in giving education and not to shrink from forcing lazy students to study. He suggested that all temples under royal patronage should aim at having at least five monks or lay teachers to teach reading, writing and traditional arithmetic. Teachers who attracted students would be paid a salary of six baht per month and supplied with textbooks. The king explained that he was ready to invest in this education because it was beneficial to the Buddhist religion, the country and the children themselves.[36]

The establishment of schools in the monasteries was a logical choice for

the Siamese elite since monasteries had traditionally been the centre of education. Furthermore, monasteries had buildings called *sala* (pavilions) which could be used as schools, thus saving the government the cost of purchasing land and buildings. Prince Damrong also reasoned that setting up schools outside the monasteries might have one or two negative effects. Either the government schools would become so popular that the monastery schools would lose their support from the lay community, or parents would continue sending their sons to monastery schools at the expense of the government schools.[37]

However, it was easier to proclaim policy than implement it. A wide gulf separated traditional practice and the methods called for by the proclamation. At that time, the traditional system tended to discourage all but a minority of their students from achieving the level of literacy desired by the modern bureaucracy. Outside the religious sphere, education had offered few "career prospects", and most commoners had little understanding of the new priorities.

After the proclamation, there was no further government intervention until 1884, when the king instructed Prince Damrong to implement policy along the lines laid out in 1875. According to the plan, monasteries were encouraged to develop new schools; the government paid teachers' salaries and provided textbooks, while the administration of these monastery schools was given to the monks.[38] But only a few abbots and high-ranking monks could be persuaded to join the government scheme.[39] This reflected the deep resentment by the *sangha* of King Chulalongkorn's reforms. In common with other members of Old Siam, the senior monks realised that their position would grow increasingly marginalised if the king's reforming zeal persisted.

At first, commoner families were also reserved in their support, fearing that enrolment in government-supported monastery schools would render their sons liable to military service. The abbot of Wat Mahan, the first monastery to accept Prince Damrong's scheme, found that on the first day after conversion to a state school almost all the pupils enrolled in his temple school had disappeared.[40] Their families realised that the government's involvement in monastery education would, for the first time, give it access to a reliable source of information on the *phrai* because all pupils had to submit vital information concerning their age, parentage and domicile; and this might mean that they would be summoned to service.[41] The government issued a proclamation denying any connection between education and military service, and the panic subsided. Within a month, pupils at the Wat Mahan school had returned.[42]

By this time literacy was clearly seen as the ladder to a better life for commoners. The minimal literacy of *prayok nung* (primary education) offered an entirely new route to recruitment and promotion in the bureaucracy. It had also become obvious to many noble families that the traditional system of elite socialisation by becoming royal pages would no

longer be the key to success in the modern bureaucracy, and so more and more children of noble families enrolled in schools.

However, the education given did not entirely satisfy the needs of the state. The demand for clerks was now so great that any literate man could get a position in any department he chose. This led to a problem: the individual had no cause to prolong his education beyond this basic level. The king summed up the situation:

> These days there are many positions in various departments which need to be filled by salary-paid clerks. These departments cry out for qualified school leavers. But there are not enough people to meet the demand and the departments compete for them with salaries. At the moment, clerks are scarce. They were very valuable and in very great demand.[43]

In an attempt to encourage higher education among commoners, the king issued a proclamation (1885) stating that an annual examination would be held and that those who passed the test on the six textbooks satisfactorily would be given a certificate which guaranteed the level of literacy they had achieved and qualified them for organised, government secondary education. Those commoners who graduated from secondary school would lose their *phrai* status.[44] This applied not only to the school graduates in question, but also to their offspring. It was a popular move. A contemporary observed that for many people, the incentive to rid themselves of *phrai* status was greater than the urge to work for a salary.[45] Not surprisingly, many more people now reached greater levels of literacy by prolonging their education.

We now look at the broad picture of social participation in the education system. In 1896, 115 primary school pupils sat their graduation examination at the Suan Kulap examination centre (which was apparently the only such centre in the country). Their family backgrounds were as follows:

royalty	2
high-ranking nobility	13
lesser nobility	14
commoners	66
Chinese	18
Tributary states	2[46]

These figures indicate that the children of commoner and Chinese families constituted the two largest groups in school. The next largest group came from low-ranking noble families, and the high-ranking noble and royal families made up a small minority. The commoners responded to the inducement of education to such an extent that in 1901 the regulations on exemption from the *phrai* status to school graduates were tightened.[47]

It is thus evident that the primary and secondary schools which developed during the first half of King Chulalongkorn's reign served as a vehicle for social mobility. We now turn to see how the two most important education objectives set during the second half of the reign were fulfilled. They were the creation of professional schools and the dissemination of education throughout society so that "the people are knowledgeable and are of better behaviour".[48]

Professional education

Professional education was set up in the second half of the reign, after the administrative reorganisation in 1892, in order to train future bureaucrats with specialised skills in addition to literacy. During this period King Chulalongkorn also started to send his own sons who had come of age to Europe to staff the top of the bureaucracy. Among the first four princes sent to Europe, two of them, Prince Nakhonchaisri and Prince Chanthaburi assumed the leading role in the army and the Ministry of Finance whereas the other two, Prince Ratburi and Prince Chumphon were responsible for establishing the Law School and the Naval Academy.[49]

In this area of professional education too, we find that the official attitude towards social background remained ambivalent. Although attempts were made to restrict professional education to the high-born, in practice increasing numbers of commoners were able to take advantage of this opportunity for social advancement, and the government was forced to pay elite students as an inducement to attend.[50] We can see this in the situation at three professional schools: the Training School of the Civil Service (later, the Royal Pages School), the Law School and the Military Officers' Academy.

To call professional education during the reign of King Chulalongkorn "tertiary education" would be misleading because these specialised schools, run by the ministries concerned, offered only very basic training. For example, the first group of law students needed little more than a year of part-time study to graduate as a barrister-at-law.[51] Besides, all except the Law School found that they needed to provide secondary education to ensure that students were sufficiently literate. Soon after the Training School of the Civil Service (henceforth, the Training School) was established, it abandoned its original plan of teaching academic subjects and concentrated instead on practical, work-related training. Its syllabus was divided into three levels. The lowest level taught sufficient general education, the intermediate level dealt with subjects necessary for work (such as writing reports) and the highest level provided field training.[52] When the Military Officers' Academy was established in 1887, only a minimal level of literacy was required for this least popular of professions, and the curriculum lasted four years (in 1906 it was extended to six years).

These three key professional schools attempted to prevent commoners from gaining admission. The regulations of the Law School, formally established in 1896, stated that candidates needed to have approval from the Minister of Justice or some person delegated by him.[53] The most ambitious school in this respect was the Military Officers' Academy, which stated clearly that candidates must be high-born, either members of the royalty or sons of nobles.[54] Such exclusiveness was not unquestioned, however. Early idealistic schemes for bureaucratic training disregarded birth. Chaophraya Phatsakorawong was most extreme and proposed that the civil service training school should accept anyone who expressed an interest to join, regardless of qualification and birth.[55] Phraya Wisutsuriyasak, the ambassador to the Court of St James and the guardian of King Chulalongkorn's sons, proposed that recruitment should be strictly on merit, with no one allowed in by the patronage system.[56]

After initially refusing, Prince Damrong decided to take responsibility for setting up the Training School himself. It was to be managed by the meritocratic Phraya Wisutsuriyasak, who ruled that candidates must be as well qualified as those who in the past had been presented to the court as royal pages.[57] From the tone of his letter to the king, we can infer that Prince Damrong became impatient with such liberal ideas and felt that without his intervention which was urgently needed, the school would either not be established or would set off in an undesirable direction.[58]

In the first two years after the Training School was established in 1899, 252 students were recruited.[59] The high number of secondary-school graduates suggests that they were recruited regardless of their social background. In 1905, the director of the Training School proudly announced that it had started to attract more high-born young men than previously.[60] This point is substantiated by a letter from the Director of the school in 1906, making plain that originally the school did not discriminate against those of commoner birth.[61] This letter was written as a comment on a request made by Phraya Suriyanuwat, the Minister of Communications, asking that a quantity of those students who were high-born be trained for supervising railway and other government construction works. The Director was querying how he could supply as many as requested, given that the school did not make any requirements of elite birth. The relative absence of discrimination is confirmed by the fact that poor students were paid a stipend of thirty baht per month. And when it was suggested that all students wear the royal pages' uniforms, in line with the re-designation of the Training School as the Royal Pages School (a point taken up later in this chapter), it was proposed that the school buy them for those students who could not themselves afford to pay.[62]

While seeking to introduce bureaucratic values, the school also demonstrated attempts to maintain traditional norms. Thus, as in the other professional centres, some school places were awarded on a patronage basis. Yet this practice, too, was made for the promotion of commoners,

who sought placement through favouritism in an institution which welcomed elite recruits. Indeed, it seems that even King Chulalongkorn gave places in the Royal Pages School as patronage to commoner clients.[63] So although the Training School of the Civil Service succeeded more than the other professional schools, the birth restrictions proposed by Prince Damrong were not enforced. Indeed, only a few years after its establishment, the school lowered the educational requirements demanded from sons of the elite and insisted only on primary-school qualifications, in order to ensure that commoner entrants did not swamp the Training School.[64]

Other factors beside these relaxed qualifications attracted members of the elite to the Royal Pages School, as the Training School was retitled in 1902. Prince Damrong was active in encouraging likely upper-class candidates to enroll, and the kind of training offered was very likely to be appreciated by the old ruling class. Students were trained not only as modern administrators but also as royal pages according to the traditional system, and thus this training enjoyed prestige. Also, a career in the ministry did not suffer from cultural stigmatisation as did a legal career, which was frowned upon by devout Buddhists who considered it sinful to put people in prison, or as did a military career which was generally identified with conscription for war (the notion of a professional army being novel) and thought to be sinful because it involved killing.[65] And when nationalist unrest began to bedevil the bureaucracy, graduates of the Royal Page School appeared largely immune. The success in recruiting from the elite, the traditional nature of the training given, and the good opportunities for career advancement in the Ministry of the Interior indicated that the school's graduates were relatively content bureaucrats.

The legal profession, too, offered very promising career prospects. For example, upon graduation as barrister-at-law, Laoo Khrairoek (later Chaophraya Mahithon) was immediately promoted to the position of Judge of the Criminal Court, on a salary of 280 baht a month (at that time a clerk's salary averaged twenty baht). One year later he was appointed Head of the Civil Court and earned 400 baht.[66] Prospects in the legal profession were so good that one student turned down a king's scholarship to study in the West in order to enroll into the Law School (a decision which he did not regret because he was later sent to England to study law). The Law School attracted bright young men regardless of social background. The training followed the British and Indian systems of jurisprudence and required considerable intelligence and perseverance; thus talent became a far more important qualification than social background. It also inculcated social values and ideas of the state which were sharply at variance with those expressed in the traditional system, and so laid the basis for alienation from the royal principle.

A survey of the lists of Law School students and graduates shows that students of commoner background usually outnumbered those from noble

families. The ranks of commoners included a few Chinese. For example, in 1907, students who passed the first legal examination consisted of six from noble parents, one from the lesser nobility, six commoners and one Chinese.[67] Similarly in 1910, students passing at the same level consisted of three seniors and two of lesser nobility, eight commoners and two Chinese.[68] Of the nineteen second-class barristers-at-law in 1913, six had noble parents, one was from the lesser nobility, twelve of commoner parents and two of Chinese parents.[69] Yet their participation in a common profession made them more or less equal in a new and distinct social category. Thus the legal profession demonstrates the early development of a new social class which consisted of both upwardly mobile commoners and the descendants of traditional office-holders.

Of the three professions, the army was the least successful in fending off commoners. The *phrai* system had given the military profession the social stigma of belonging to society's least fortunate, those who were pressed into service. Thus, the Military Officers' Academy found itself attracting only children of the lesser nobles or low-ranking army personnel.[70] The commoner class, for that matter, only slowly understood the opportunities offered by the army for career advancement. It seems that the prejudice against the army was so strong that the promised stipend of twelve baht (a considerable sum of money in 1880s) and *sakdina* of 400 on entry to the Academy by the cadet was insufficiently lucrative.

King Chulalongkorn and the new army leadership (headed principally by Prince Chira, King Chulalongkorn's son who graduated from Denmark in 1897) found the disinterest worrying, especially in view of their hopes for a large, modern conscript army. In 1897 arrangements were made for the Military Officers' Academy to recruit as many lesser royalty as possible. Four high-ranking young princes were attached to it in 1899 in the hope that, if royalty was seen to enter into a military career, the common prejudice against soldiering would diminish and more of the higher-born would be encouraged to enlist.[71] As a result of the strong royal support and the growing popular awareness of a military career as a potential source of upward mobility, the army did indeed begin to gain popularity. In 1901, the number of graduates rose from around ten a year in the previous decade to twenty-two. In that year, the king deemed it possible to make public the plan for replacing the corvée system with conscription to a modern army. The edict on conscription promulgated in 1905 was assured by the figure of the 1904 Military Officers' Academy graduates which was as high as forty-eight. These military graduates, coming from both the commoner and ruling classes, would become leaders of those conscripts under the new system.

With the growing popularity of the military profession, we see efforts to restrict entry to the Military Officers' Academy. In 1906 the regulations were changed to the effect that applicants had to be sponsored and guaranteed by a commissioned government official (that is, someone of noble

rank). They had to be children of reputable parents and to pass an examination set by the committee of the Academy. In 1909 the admission regulations were changed to the effect that only members of royalty and of a few related families (for instance, the Bunnags) and of officer families could enroll in the three lower years at the Academy (which offered a six-year curriculum). Others could join in the fourth year. Moreover, a special junior class was created for young princes and the sons of high-ranking officers "to instil a preference for the military".[72] The real objective of these measures was to ensure that the army was dominated by the aristocrats and the military establishment. At the same time, the army offered the highest opportunities for social mobility, and as a result, the officer corps had the most mixed class composition of all the professional elites. This trend had the long-term effect of turning the army into a hotbed of nationalist unrest – as we shall see in future chapters.

Thus, the bureaucracy developed in such a way that it increasingly went against the principles of social hierarchy on which the regime rested. In the next section we deal with King Chulalongkorn's response to this problem.

Social mobility and the question of loyalty

It was obvious not only that the advancing tide of commoner officials posed a threat to the king's plans, but also that the modernisation of the bureaucracy was undermining his relations with the ruling class. Traditionally, the king needed to retain his status as patron of the new bureaucrats in order to retain his authority over them. But a bureaucrat who moved into and up in the bureaucracy because he had earned educational qualifications instead of being the king's client was unlikely to feel the gratitude that tradition demanded. Thus the basis of noble loyalty to the monarch was seriously undermined. The king responded by emphasising his role as the protector of the *nai* class against the rising tide of commoners trying to push into the nobility.

First, as we have seen, the king tried his best to ensure that the noble class was able to participate fully in the modern bureaucracy, overcoming both the attitudes and the educational disabilities that had marked Old Siam's negative response. In 1885, five years after the Suan Kulap school first opened its doors to the ruling class, he felt sufficiently secure to announce that, in the future, anyone who was not educated to specified levels would not become a noble.[73] These announcements served notice to young nobles who were wondering whether or not to be trained for a career. He then turned his attention to the old institution of presenting the nobles' sons to the court. This announcement placed in difficulty many royal pages who had dropped out of modern schooling before gaining any formal qualifications. In 1887 the king attempted to harness such talent by issuing a proclamation instructing those pages who had passed the age of

sixteen to prepare themselves for an examination within three months. This would test such skills as spelling, handwriting, precis from memory, arithmetic and knowledge of the (traditional) bureaucratic system.[74]

These measures screened pages for the modern bureaucracy and also hammered home the message to the ruling class that the old world had eventually died away. The conduct of bureaucratic business had consequently changed. The king would no longer listen to oral reports at daily audiences, where their delivery had previously decided bureaucratic promotion. Now promotion was to be won with literacy skills.

This was easier said than done. The examination was postponed for over a year, the official explanation being that the pages were engaged in too many ceremonies to respond to the new regulation. In the second proclamation on the subject, the king said that he had a premonition that the extra time had not been taken advantage of, and that the pages might feel that if the majority of them failed the examination, then individuals would not be too humiliated. He reminded them that being high-born and wealthy was not enough to be qualified to maintain the family's name and its high social stature; by doing well in the examination they would not only perform their duty as nobles, but would also show gratitude to their families.[75] There is, however, no evidence that the examination was actually held. Judging from the general atmosphere, it seems probable that the pages still found it difficult to come to terms with the strict requirement to acquire educational qualifications.

The king thus continued to face the dilemma of wanting to preserve the old ruling class while having to appoint commoners to join its ranks because of the need to staff the modern bureaucracy. In 1890 he issued a proclamation expressing his perceptions of the problem; his difficulty was obvious:

> It has come to His Majesty's knowledge that these days young men who are sons of nobles tend not to get training in the office but hang about doing nothing and enjoying themselves in activities which are not beneficial. Those who work in offices are often ordinary people who are poor and want to earn salaries by working as clerks. After some time they become more acquainted with the work, and it is natural that their head of departments should value their worth. When there is a vacancy it is imperative to promote those who can do the work. Sons of officials who have done nothing are always at a disadvantage compared with those who have shown their worth. His Majesty is worried that as the situation stands he does not know how sons of officials whose families have been in the nobility for generations can continue to serve in similar positions. Some groups or individuals might think that he does not want to *chup liang* [give a position in the bureaucracy] to the descendants of officials but prefers to promote those with no family to serve in official positions. The old official families might be aggrieved. So he commands that a proclama-

> tion be issued to remind all officials who have sons and nephews who should be in the service that it is His Majesty's great desire to have sons of officials who belong to noble families serving in those departments in which their fathers have served, or even in greater capacity, and he prefers them above those who have no family. But if those with family have neither knowledge nor capacity and are promoted to serve in senior positions then the service will be jeopardised or even fail. His Majesty cannot allow the service to be jeopardised. He must give priority to the service and *chup liang* those who are low-born but knowledgeable in the service according to their merit [*khun wicha*].[76]

The rest of the proclamation shows how the king hoped to solve the situation. He urged sons of the nobles not to dismiss the idea of starting their careers as clerks in government offices by joining any government office and learning from the job, as in the past.[77] What he did not mention was the new requirement that they needed to be literate, and this omission implies that he would not reject sons of nobles who might not be fully literate but were prepared to start their careers on the lowest echelon. This was a concession to the noble families; it gave an alternative to those who had failed to send their sons to schools after the Royal Pages Department had ceased to operate as the route into the administrative establishment. He would offer them no other privileges, and they had to be content with a clerical salary. (One royal prince chose this route into the bureaucracy because ill-health prevented him from pursuing his study. His nanny was incensed and curtly reminded his father that the salary barely covered the young prince's medical bill.)[78]

The king said he realised that his suggestion might not bring results in spite of his full commitment to the young nobles' cause. Even so, they were assured that birth would still count after they were established in their careers. When a member of the noble class and a commoner started their careers at the same time and they were equally proficient, the former would be promoted first.[79]

This proclamation reflected the problem which would become increasingly serious in time. All secondary-school graduates would start their careers in the bureaucracy at the same level, and once they reached the middle level they could join the nobility. The king was willing to promote able commoners to noble status provided that they never constituted more than a minority of the nobility. Already, by the end of the 1880s, those commoners who had proved themselves in the various ministries were being appointed to the *khunnang* class. The bureaucratic heads who were primarily concerned that their organisations should run efficiently often promoted talented subordinates regardless of their social origins. Indeed, Prince Damrong, the Minister of the Interior, promoted talent so zealously that the king complained that he did not personally know these newly appointed young *Khunnang*.[80]

The unease which the ruling elite felt towards the penetration of commoners into their class was reflected in the ambivalence of even the most ardent modernisers. On the surface they demonstrated snobbery, an extreme form of which was expressed by Prince Damrong when he denounced the company of commoners. Phraya Wisutsuriyasak, who had earlier argued that recruitment to the Training School of the Civil Service should be made purely on merit, complained by the end of the reign about the difficulty of teaching the commoners because they lacked certain social skills which were ingrained in their superiors.[81] It was also argued that these newcomers were inept at court etiquette. The king once remarked that, from his experience, it seemed impossible to find an official serving in the upcountry who was not ill at ease in a royal audience.[82] Their awkwardness undermined the sanctity of the monarchy, the pivotal characteristic of pre-modern kingship, which the king wanted to maintain in the absolute monarchy.

But most importantly, the new system of recruitment destroyed the system of personal relationships upon which traditional loyalties between the king and officials depended. The king's complaint that he did not know the new nobles personally reflected his worry as to how the recruitment system affected the relationship between the monarch and the nobles. He was worried about the lack of trust between himself and the nobles, and the feeling that the nobles' loyalty was not as strong as in the traditional system.

Prince Damrong, who felt personally responsible for appointing more commoners into noble ranks than any other cabinet minister because he headed the Ministry of the Interior, the fastest-growing sector of the bureaucracy, came up with an ingenious plan to quell the king's anxieties in dealing with the nobles sprung from commoner stock. In 1896 he proposed that:

> in order to solve the problem a school should be established in the Royal Pages Department. Students would be presented to the King and have a chance to be in his audience, which would provide him with the opportunity to get to know them. Moreover, they would study court etiquette along with basic knowledge of administration.[83]

He believed that this would restore the symbiotic relationship between the king and the nobles; the king would be able to trust the nobles, and the nobles would feel loyalty to the king.

Initially, students of the Civil Service Training School were presented to the king between completing their classroom study and receiving field training. As this practice did not give the students enough time in the king's audience, the presentation was moved back to between the first and second levels. The king gleefully approved the revised plan and remarked that "this will consolidate trust between the king and the officials".[84] And

since so much emphasis had been placed on adding training appropriate to royal pages, Prince Damrong suggested that the school be renamed "The Royal Page School". King Chulalongkorn also welcomed the second suggestion with equal enthusiasm, claiming that he had considered this kind of name before, but had been worried that it might sound out of tune with the times.[85]

After presentation, the civil service students would wear the uniforms of the royal pages, but with less elaborate decoration. Prince Damrong reported the success of his project thus:

> Whenever the King travelled to the provinces he had these pages mixed with his personal pages. King Chulalongkorn showed kindness to them by greeting them, asking them to run errands for him, and also by examining them about their work.[86]

Thus the Royal Page School provided the king with the means to establish personal contacts with his future officials. Adorned with the aura of glorified royal servants, they appeared to have been socialised rather successfully into the old cultural mould of clients to the supreme patron, the king. As we noted earlier, graduates from the Royal Pages School were not among those who rose to challenge the absolute monarchy in 1912.

Class and individual patronage were not the only means King Chulalongkorn used to maintain loyalty among the newly created officials. Education was used in order to inculcate an awareness of the nation – the invention of the European absolutist state which long out-lived its creator. We shall see that by establishing the nation-state as the centre of loyalty, the Thai absolute monarchs, like their European predecessors, eventually faced the fatal question of whether royalty was better suited to the role of spokesman for this newly created political entity.

Implanting nationalism through education

The new breed of bureaucrats generated by education reforms began to coalesce into a new social group which will be called here the "modern bureaucrats". Its members differed distinctly from the old noble class in that they identified their interests and values with the institution of the modern bureaucracy rather than with the throne. This phenomenon would eventually lead to the demise of the absolute monarchy, the legitimacy of which was challenged by the new class in the name of the nation. Ironically enough, when we trace the development of the new concept, we find that it was implanted by the king's new education system.

Nationalism was promoted not only by King Chulalongkorn, but also by other prominent members of the ruling class. They had three goals in mind. First, nationalism aimed at creating acceptance and encouragement of positive participation in a changing world environment. This motive was

shared by the king, Young Siam and, to a certain extent, by Conservative Siam. Second, nationalism was useful for centralising royal power and legitimising absolutism, a motive specific to the king. Third, it contributed a moral imperative for social stability, a motive shared by the king and both Young Siam and Old Siam.[87]

We shall illustrate the way in which nationalist ideas were inculcated by using a leading textbook series called *Thammachariya*, a title which conveyed the idea of moral education. In order to understand its importance, we need first to consider the role of these textbooks in the emerging modern educational system.

Ministry of Education officials responsible for compiling textbooks consisted mainly of two groups of people. The first were those who had left the *sangha* and, as in the traditional system, found themselves most useful in the service of the Department of Religion, which now became the Ministry of Education. The second, a very small group, consisted of western-educated officials, of whom a young educationist, later known by the name Chaophraya Thammasakmontri, was the leading light. As King Chulalongkorn was convinced of the inadequacy of Buddhist scholars in dealing with subjects outside religious studies,[88] it is not surprising that textbooks directed towards such an important goal as inculcating state values would come from the second group and especially from Thammasakmontri.[89]

Thammasakmontri was born into an old noble family. His father had died when he was very young, and as the son of a minor wife his career path was more typical of a commoner than a member of the ruling class. He attended a monastery school at the primary level. However, he was given an opportunity to join the Suan Kulap school at the secondary level and later moved to the Teachers' Training School, where he won a scholarship to study in England for two years between 1896–1898.[90] Upon his return, he was made responsible for producing textbooks in the Ministry of Education, and in the same year he was sent to inspect the education system in India. He was then called to supervise production of the six volumes of moral studies in the *Thammachariya* series. Four volumes were written during King Chulalongkorn's reign; the analysis that follows deals with these initial volumes (one, four, five and six). Authors for the succeeding two could not be found until later.[91]

The series reflected the new ideas coming into Siam, especially through the foreign-educated elite. These ideas offered vehicles to bring European enlightenment to the Siamese people and to make them "modern" and prosperous. Analysis of the textbooks suggests that their main purpose was to encourage active participation in the world economy. This corresponded with the attitude of the ruling elite, especially prominent during the last part of King Chulalongkorn's reign when the need to train bureaucrats was nearly satisfied at the lower levels, that modern education should foster more effective economic production.[92]

Thammachariya suggested that the location of the individual was in an

economic rather an ethical universe. The concept of interdependency in the capitalist world economy was explained. It was pointed out that an individual's existence was impossible without the support of the material and social worlds.[93] The material and social worlds were interconnected, and their relationship provided a clue to the stage of development that a society had reached. Negroes were offered as an example of uncivilised people who lived in a pre-agricultural society. The main reason for their "backwardness", it was claimed, was that they lacked contact with the outside world. In other words, their material world was determined by the scope of their social world.[94]

One distinguishing characteristic of the "civilised world" was the existence of the division of labour. This led to the exchange of goods both internally and externally, and thus to a "civilised" way of living.[95] Thus, in *Thammachariya*, the term *siwilai* had a specific meaning that was closely related to the notion of an economic system which engaged in international trade. Sometimes *siwilai* was interchangeable with "progressive" (*charoen*). In this context, being civilised or progressive referred to the degree to which the society had moved from a closed economic system into the money economy and the capitalist world economy. And how far the society moved into the money economy depended upon its productive system. Thammasakmontri developed from this a description of the role that the state expected the individual to perform that would benefit not only himself, but the state in general. The author argued that, before an individual could fully contribute to economic progress, one needed to develop both spiritual and technical qualities:

> What if the people are uneducated, or are educated but behave in a foolhardy manner like rogues ? How then can they earn a living righteously? Because the country is determined to generate production, an individual must have knowledge and be trained in technology so that he is capable of working and of earning his livelihood.[96]

Apart from teaching about the new economic order, Thammasakmontri also wished to inculcate a new set of core values which corresponded to the order's needs. The topics discussed in *Thammachariya VI* included cleanliness, perseverance, proper manners, discipline, punctuality, truthfulness, frugality, preservation of public property, gratitude, kindness, etc.[97] These core values were not presented in terms of a universal ethical system, but instead were related specifically to the world economy. For example, tolerance was presented in terms of willingness to trade with countries professing different religions. The writer pointed out that this marked a departure from past practice, when unauthorised involvement of Siamese with foreigners, either in trade or religion, had elicited severe punishment. Lack of tolerance was detrimental to trade, and consequently to progress.[98] Thus, morality was shifted from an ethical system to a matter of utility.

Thammasakmontri explained state formation within the context of economic development. The earliest formation of the Thai state was the tribal system, which was the extension of the kinship system, and its economic system was pre-agricultural. Once strong leaders had managed to control them, these groups of people began to settle down, and hence the economic system developed on an agricultural basis. The leaders were not only military commanders but also the regulators of agricultural production.[99]

The author explained that, when the state became powerful and spread over a wider territory, it was formed into a country called Siam, and its leader became king. But the state failed to progress because it spent so much time fighting with its neighbours in order to gain more territory and to round up more manpower. This early Thai state, which spent most of its energies in waging wars and paid little attention to trade, was still in the dark ages. The beginning of trade with European powers was the turning point when Siam stepped out of the dark age of barbarianism and entered civilisation.[100]

And this new beginning took place during King Chulalongkorn's reign. Thammasakmontri went on to argue that trade with Europe changed the characteristics of Siam's international relations. The state began to enjoy peaceful relations with other states, and could now afford to concentrate on maintaining internal peace and order, and to develop the country so that people were sufficiently intelligent and educated to contribute to its progress. This abstention from fighting wars gave the Thai government the opportunity to organise a sound administration and to achieve rapid progress. The *Thammachariya* series did refer to the threat from the colonial powers, but only as a danger which was already past, thanks to King Chulalongkorn's great ability in developing the country.[101]

The state was the vessel for a cultural community – the nation – which furnished the fundamental identity of those living within its jurisdiction. As a unit of the labour force, the individual was seen as the most important component of the state. Thus, the role of the individual as a member of the cultural community coincided with that of the producer in the economic order and subject of the state.

The new stress on the nation-state involved developing a new vocabulary. Originally the word *chat* meant birth, and its use in the sense of "nation" was an innovation that seems to have originated in the middle of the nineteenth century when Siam was concluding trade treaties with Britain.[102] In *Thammachariya*, this idea was popularised; the individual was told that he belonged to a cultural community called *chat Thai*, and that the whole community lived in a country (*muang Thai*), which was their fatherland.

> Remember that *muang Thai* is our fatherland [*ban kird muang non*] and we have to love it very much. We have to love it more than the school where we study. Moreover, we have to love our fellow Thais, in

> other words our nation. This is because we are born Thai and belong to the same group of people. We are of the same nation and speak the same language, so how can we not love each other more than we love other people who belong to other nations and speak other languages? If someone speaks untruly and criticises *muang Thai* by saying that it is not good in such and such a way, we cannot bear to listen because it hurts as though somebody stabs our heart with a sharp knife.[103]

And in order to add a further distinction between "us" and "them" and to create pride in the fatherland, the word *Thai* was used in the sense of freedom: "We are Thais because we are nobody's servants."[104] But these notions did not have general usage; in 1883, students of the English-language course at Suan Anan school found it impossible to translate the word "nation" from English into Thai.[105]

Students were called upon to demonstrate a sense of duty and to sacrifice their lives to the nation in the same way that past generations had sacrificed themselves for the fatherland:

> The sacrifice of one's life to the country has always been respected by the people both in the past and now in the present. And this is the greatest honour for the sacrificers, for although one might be dead one's name will live on forever.[106]

The author attempted to make national boundaries coincide with those of the cultural community by defining the community's components. The first component was language:

> We are of the same nation and speak the same language, so how can we not love each other more than we love other people who belong to other nations and speak other languages?[107]

This suggested that the Thai nation would necessarily exclude those living on Thai soil but speaking other tongues. The author tended to gloss over the logical complications arising from this definition. Two fundamental issues were involved: the distinction between Thai and non-Thai languages separated the culturally Thai from the culturally non-Thai; and the distinction between "proper" (cultivated) Thai as opposed to Thai dialects separated high Thai culture from low. With the first, the question arose as to whether assimilation into the national community, through language conversion, was possible or desirable; the question was ignored. With the second, people were positively encouraged to move upward to high Thai culture by spreading (indeed, insisting on) the "standard" version of the language.[108]

Religion was the second component of the cultural community. Here, one sees a sharp distinction between textbooks produced by the ministry's Buddhist scholars and the ones by those who were westernised. Previous

textbooks written by other Ministry of Education officials had employed Buddhist principles as an exclusive basis for teaching moral education, but in his sections on moral education, Thammasakmontri abjured such an obvious framework. He was more selective in making reference to Buddhism, and the topics in the moral reading series were chosen to teach the lessons not only of Buddhism but also of the state. He used a variety of sources for this. For example, the topic of honesty in *Thammachariya III* was illustrated with selections from the Jataka tales, a poem from *Wachirayan* magazine, English and Thai history, King Chulalongkorn's writings and a quotation from Plato.[109] Thus, the concept was based on Buddhist ideas but widened by references from elsewhere.

The new educational system treated Buddhism as an element of national identity and did not explicitly propagate the values of Buddhist philosophy. For example, the writer of *Phutthachariya* (*Buddhist Ethics*) gave little attention to explaining religious principles, but instead concentrated on showing their importance in Thai culture. He discussed the role of the *sangha*, the monasteries, religious ceremonies and monuments, and how all these elements involved people in their everyday lives.[110] Thus, the teaching materials on morality taught that language and Buddhism formed integral parts of the Thai nation. The general material on history and geography further helped to create the sense of national identity, and of Siam as a cultural community.

Thammachariya identified families as the basic units of the nation-state. Home was a very important unit for modelling the individual's relationship with the state and the world. A happy, loving, kind, just and responsible family produced human beings who were capable of seeking happiness, and of contributing to the benefit of the world. Thammasakmontri argued that love and involvement within the family would lead to love and involvement at school, and that these qualities would eventually be transmitted to the nation and the state.[111] Thus the inculcation of love within various social units led to nationalism.

Other important qualities of family relationships were obedience and respect, which reflected the unequal relationship between parents and children, or between superiors and inferiors. Parents had the responsibility of looking after their children and of teaching them well. The children's basic responsibility towards their parents was to obey their instruction willingly and promptly because the superiors knew very well that obedience will also be beneficial to other people. This is the reason why they must give instruction to children.[112]

> Children must totally trust that their superiors will not teach anything that is wrong and not good for them because the superiors know better than the children what is right and what is wrong. Besides being the guardians of the children they probably do not want the children to turn into rascals.[113]

The need for children to be obedient towards their superiors was as strictly upheld as that for soldiers towards their officers.[114] When obedience was enforced within the family, the individual member was trained to submit himself to the command of his rulers.[115] This was because the government rules over the country in the same manner as parents rule over the family.[116]

Students were told to submit themselves without question to the command of all authorities, including the ruler, because these authorities enforced the rules that guided the community; one had no choice but to comply, since one could not make these rules oneself.[117] There were two reasons for obeying the government. First, those who were in authority were knowledgeable and sufficiently intelligent to rule and enforce their command. Second, the government was the source of all justice in the country. If the government was bad and did not observe justice, and granted privileges to one class rather than to others, then disturbances and unrest were inevitable. Thus obedience to the government was not intended to be blind, and only a good government deserved good citizens.[118]

The last core value expected to be inculcated in the national family was gratitude. The students were reminded that they owed gratitude to their parents, who had brought them up from birth and had protected them from all kinds of danger. Students should always remember their parents' virtues and should try to repay the debt of gratitude whenever the occasion arose.[119] They could make this repayment by being honest, caring for their parents and paying them respect.[120] This sense of gratitude should also determine relations with teachers, and, one step on, with the monarch. The people should feel gratitude to the monarch because his rule brought peace and happiness to the country.[121]

Thus we can see, at this stage of absolutism, the relationship between monarch and people was still portrayed in terms of the traditional ideology; the monarch contributed to the happiness and well-being of the country and its people, and at the same time, the people should feel gratitude and be loyal to him in return. However, the monarch was not closely identified with the nation. The continuing validity of older concepts can be seen during the Paknam Incident of 1893, when officials and people volunteered to fight the French in the name of their gratitude to the king, and the word "nation" was not mentioned. At that time, only handful of western-educated Thais expressed animosity towards the French in terms of nationalism.[122]

Moreover, when the legitimacy of the monarch was mentioned, it was still the legitimacy of the monarch as a person rather than as an institution. The activities of each king might affect the country differently: "Whether the country will be good or bad depends significantly upon the king . . . A good king will be of great benefit to the people."[123] Students were told to be grateful to King Chulalongkorn because he "has contributed to the utmost benefit of the country".[124]

This apparently reflects the traditional notion of the relationship between monarchy and people. It was written during King Chulalongkorn's reign, when he commanded respect for his achievements; whether or not the monarchy should be separated from the state was not yet a conscious issue. But in the next reign, when the personality and policies of the monarch were controversial, the negative implications were much more apparent, and questions of separating monarchical and state powers were debated.

We have seen that the *Thammachariya* series treated nationalism as the means first to mobilise the Siamese to serve the world economy, and second, to serve royal centralisation of power. Thus, Thammasakmontri claimed that there were two ways one could express nationalism:

> One has to devote oneself to the nation in spite of hardship and even sacrifice one's life for the nation. The other way is to earn one's living according to one's ability and skill, and to try to progress in one's own activity. This, on the whole, would contribute to the country.[125]

Thai nationalism of this time was optimistic and oriented towards change; we have to wait until the next reign for the defensive and reactionary "official nationalism" proclaimed by state ideologues,[126] and in particular the king, in order to preserve royal power. In the meantime we should bear in mind that many of the arguments advanced in the *Thammachariya* series could be turned to undermine the claim of the absolute monarchy. The introduction of the concept of the nation-state was itself very dangerous, as it had been in Europe, because it raised the question of whether royal or national interests had priority.

However, these ideas only became explosive when there existed significant groups of people who were looking for ideological justification for bringing about changes. Such groups were being created by the educational and structural reforms of King Chulalongkorn's modernisation effort. We have seen that the state failed to reserve the new professions for the old ruling class. At the same time, there began to emerge something that could be considered a bureaucratic elite, with its own consciousness of interest. It grew from the sprawl of royal ministers and their followers of office holders – some from traditional aristocracy, some commoners – that characterised the first decade of reform. The stage was being set for challenges to the system both from upwardly mobile commoners, and from office holders who identified their interests and values with the institutions of the modern bureaucracy rather than with the throne. In the next chapter, we examine the conflicts which turned nationalism into a weapon against the throne.