

สารนิพนธ์

THESIS ABSTRACTS

The Nature and Characteristics of a Political Party in Thailand: A Case Study on Seri Manangkhasila.

The study reveals that Seri Manangkhasila was one of the most prominent political parties that played an active role in government. Its existence was nevertheless rather short, from September 26, B.E. 2498, the day it was registered as legal political party, until October 20, B.E. 2501. It should be noted that this party was at the stage of embryo many years before its registration as a political institution. This resulted from the fact that while there existed no legal political parties before September B.E. 2498, there was also political gathering, actually an ex-government team functioning as quasi-political party in support of the government named "Legislative Committee" led by Field Marshal P. Pibulsongkram, the then Prime Minister. This Committee was politically powerful in government. Ministers were then drawn from this committee especially those who were the founders of the group. In the course of his address at the opening of the House of Representative on December 29, B.E. 2499, Field Marshal Pibulsongkram, the Prime Minister, confirmed that this group had been making preparations for a political party before the promulgation of the Political Party Act (B.E. 2498).

The formation of the government political party was therefore very interesting since it was one of the biggest and most powerful at that time. There were a considerable number of members who were famous and many of them were then Ministers. In terms of its structure, there were both the headquarters in Bangkok and agencies in various provinces. The strategy of the party consisted of giving money, power, and ranks as incentive to seek for members' support and cooperation. To join the party, members were more attracted by self-interest rather than political ideology. Without political commitment of any kind to political doctrine, the members were gradually pushed into political rivalry because of personal conflict and later to critical chaos and disintegration. This study obviously shows that the disruption of Seri Manangkhasila was caused by the maladministration of the party's secretariat headed by Police General Phao Sriyanondha. It reveals that political power was principally centralized in General Sriyanondha and made him one of the most powerful political figures in the country.

As regards party membership, it was principally based on three factors. Firstly, the members joined the party because of their belief in its political philosophy; this group was small in number. Secondly, they joined the party because of their belief in personal charisma of the party's leader, especially that of Field Marshal Pibulsongkram. This party is highly personalized. Thirdly, they joined the party because of self-interest motives. Because Seri Manangkhasila was mainly founded on personal charisma of its leaders and self-interest, the party was destined to be inactive and later disintegrated when their leaders were overthrown by the coup d' état in Sep-

ber 16, B.E. 2500 led by Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat. A lot of members of the party changed their loyalty to new leadership of government and joined the newly formed political party actively supported by Marshal Thanarat. Only a few still remained loyal to Seri Manangkhasila. In the general election on December 15, B.E. 2500, three months after the coup d'etat, only four members from Seri Manangkhasila were elected. The second coup d'etat on October 20, B.E. 2501, again headed by Marshal Sarit Thanarat, abolished all political parties including Seri Manangkhasila. Since then all political activities and movements were declared illegal.

As regards its administration, it was analyzed that Seri Manangkhasila monopolized its political power by mean of bribery. It also took indirect measures to oppress and sometime it went so far as to persecute the rival parties. There were then rumours about corruption in government. The downfall of the party was caused by the B.E. 2500 general election which was notorious for the ruses and frauds on the part of Seri Manangkhasila. There was a big demonstration opposing the result of the election and almost brought the country into a turmoil for sometime. The situation was deteriorated by the political rivalry between police General Phao Sriyanondha and Marshal Sarit Thanarat which led the coup d'etat of September 16, B.E. 2500 mentioned above.

It was obvious from the study that Seri Manangkhasila was actually characterized by autocratic political leadership. It defied democratic principles adopted in developed countries in the ruling of both the party and the country. It ignored the rights of minority by threatening its political opponents and tried to monopolize and sustain political power in the country. It also ignored the rule of the game practiced in democratic states and defied the rule of law. It strengthened its political mechanism in order to remain in power as long as possible. Nevertheless because the interests of the political rivals were in conflict, the party was divided and eventually disintegrated.

In view of the facts that Seri Manangkhasila was formed, organized and administered in defiance of the democratic rule of the game and the rule of law, it could not be accepted as an orthodox and disciplined political party in the true sense of what is in practice in developed democratic countries.

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