

**ABSTRACT**  
**The Public Attitude and Interest Towards**  
**The Bangkok Municipality**

Municipality as a process of self-government was adopted by Thailand more than thirty years ago. Yet though there are 120 municipalities at present, they are still weak and unstable. The central government has tried to improve the municipality system in many ways. The main effort has been to rearrange and amend the laws and regulations concerned. In 1958, the system of appointing the councilmen and executive members was introduced and put into effect. Does this method promote local democratic self-government? What are the other significant factors that will contribute to a successful local self-government?

With these questions in mind, the writer conducted this study in 1965. The people, as the grass roots of democracy, were focused upon for the nature of their political behavior. Heinz Eulau's Political Behavior Theory was utilized. The Bangkok Municipality was chosen as the locus of the study.

Bangkok was selected because it is the largest municipality in size and has the highest literacy rate. Moreover, it is the capital of the country and the center of political, economic, educational, and social activities.

The methods used in the collection of the data are both documentary and from field research. The field research was conducted through questionnaires and interviews. Questionnaires were mailed to heads of Thai households whose names were obtained from a random sampling. Of the 1,500 families (1.2 percent of the total families in the Bangkok Municipality area), only 25.9 percent filled out and returned the questionnaires. A group of well-trained seniors of the Faculty of Political Science of Thammasat University were sent to interview 741 additional families.

The result of the field research revealed that public attitude and interest were favorable to self-government in the Bangkok Municipality: 53.36 percent of the sample were aware of the fact that the councilmen and the executive members are appointed by the government; 76.02 percent were interested in the ceremony of delivering the City's Key to Bangkok's honorable guests; and 60 percent knew the kinds of work that are under the responsibility of the Bangkok Municipality. On the other hand, aspects of the municipality which the people paid less attention to were the number of the councilmen and executive members and the names of the present councilmen. Only 40.97 percent of the people realized that the Bangkok Municipality uses money obtained from taxes to provide for services responding to the felt needs of the people.

The system of appointing the councilmen and executive members did not encourage the people to participate in self-government process. Only 20.09 percent

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had ever gotten in touch with a councilman or executive member; only 15.04 percent had ever proposed their opinions to the Bangkok Municipality; and only 24.87 percent had ever informed the Bangkok Municipality of any uncleanliness found in the city. Even fewer people had expressed their views on the local sublaw (*Tessabanyud*) with which they did not concur.

It was found that 29.91 percent of the people went to the polls. This figure is higher than those who went to the London Metropolitan Borough Polls in 1919 (27.9 percent). At the next election, if possible, 34.34 percent of the people stated that they would encourage themselves or someone to campaign for the local seats. 50.71 percent had tried to develop some good things for their locality.

The councilmen and executive members were viewed by 50.97 percent of the people as agents of central government assuming local authority in Bangkok Municipality; 57.17 percent of the people did not agree with the government appointment of the councilmen and executive members. Most of them looked at the municipal services partly as the result of the government's orders and partly as a response to local needs. 50 percent of the people recognized the importance of councilmen and executive members and 60.8 percent knew the benefits which the Bangkok Municipality provided for themselves and their families. On a proposal that the municipality should be abolished, 54.07 percent would argue for and protect it. The majority of the people felt that the municipality should have some local autonomy without interference from the central government.

All of these figures prove that the Bangkok citizens have begun to learn self-government and have developed a favorable attitude and interest in local government. This attitude should be continually promoted. The writer recommends the Motivated Election Process (i.e. to let the people vote a number of the council members commensurable with their voting percentage) and institute a staggered term system. Secondly, he recommends that in matters of public expenditure, the activities of both the councilmen and the executive members should be publicized. Thirdly, the Public Relations and Public Reporting Units should be placed under the control of the council and their functions should be based on a specified program which would be evaluated every three years. The final recommendation is that the political role of associations should be promoted. At the same time the government should educate the people on the theory and the practice of self-government and the development of the Thai Government.

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