



Philanthropy: Raising Capital for Society

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INTRODUCTION

Reciprocity has always been the norm of Thai society and has always been manifested in everyday life. However, it has been remarked that, compared to other societies, for example the Chinese, Thais seem to lack philanthropic organization. In the case of Thailand, when a group of people want to arrange an activity to provide social welfare they usually lack financial support and have to rely for money from abroad, while the rich in Thai society tend not to give donations.

Some academics try to answer this puzzle by pointing out that Thais also make public donation, but that they differ from those of other cultures such as the Chinese or the West, in that Thais usually make public donation through a religious organization, that is, the temple. This is a kind of merit-making. However, nowadays, many temples have lost their social welfare function and cannot cope with structural changes and changes in public welfare needs. Some temples, though small in number, however, have managed to change their role in helping to provide for social welfare for modern needs (Ö, Ö 2539).

If Thais really do make a large amount of public donations, though through religious organizations rather than public organizations, it is surprising that this large amount of public donations seem to have disappeared, and the question must be raised regarding the whereabouts of its disappearance. Why is it that these money have not been spent to solve social problems? While Thai society is full of conflicts—on the one hand, some people are becoming richer, while on the other, poor people are deprived of many rights and opportunities—a question must be raised as to why Thais do not seem to change their way of donating. Is the mechanism of public donation through the temple really out of date, as some academics have remarked, or are there more complex underlying conditions? Most important, why cannot Thais and temples cope with the changing circumstances?

Today, many questions about capital for society have been raised, especially as modern society has become individualistic. Under this circumstance, capital for society will become important and necessary to social development, especially in providing social welfare to the less fortunate, to help increase social opportunity, and to provide more alternatives to society by providing supports to various ethnic groups to adapt themselves to better cope with changing social conditions. This will also lead to the protection of human rights, and to providing new directions for future social development. Social capital will become a powerful moving and creative force, but the problem is on what condition can Thai society raise its social capital and on what foundations.

To answer these questions, this article will pay attention to three issues. First, what were the traditional institutions that used to provide social welfare in Thai society, and on what thought system and ideology were they based? Second, on what thought system are non-governmental institutions in Thailand based, and how much have external ideas impacted on these groups? Third, how can Thai society provide support to independent organizations, especially in adapting existing relations to cope with modern structural change?

FOUNDATIONS OF THOUGHT SYSTEM AND IDEOLOGY ON WELFARE SYSTEM IN THAI SOCIETY

In the history of Thai society, despite the fact that politics was involved with power struggle, for the majority of people, politics must be justified on the grounds of prosperity. As appears in historical archives, in the age of prosperity, it was often assumed that the rulers were benevolent; in times of famine, the rulers's integrity was often blamed and, as a consequence, it signified the moment of a change of rulers (Ö'Ñ'i 2530).

This understanding as appears in history suggests that prosperity and fertility formed the most important foundation of thought system and ideology of good governance and was an important foundation for the rise of institutions that provided welfare for Thai society, and this was very much closely connected with all levels of political actions. This ideology has a long history in Thai society, dating back perhaps to before the acceptance of Buddhism. The ancient Thai society, which was an agrarian society based on natural uncertainties, advocated prosperity as a prime target of life, as manifested in various rituals and ceremonies called fertility rites.

One example of these rituals which is still being practiced today is the rain-requesting ceremony. This signified that the community has reproduced an ideology on fertility in symbols for more than a thousand years. Archaeological evidence, several drums made of bronze of thousand years old, were found in the North of Thailand and believed to be important instruments in the performance of the rain-requesting ceremony (ËÄÖÑi 2534, 132). Today, the rain requesting ceremony in the North and Northeastern provinces takes the form of flying rockets, and is usually celebrated before the rainy season. Anthropologists believe that flying rockets are meant to request rain, as the rockets are built to signify male sexual organs to be fired into the sky. This is in compliance with many religious ceremonies that worship sexual organs as symbols of fertility and reproduction of a new life (Davis 1984, 123-132).

The belief in fertility was important to society and it implied a powerful force in the form of rituals which acted as rules to regulate social

relations. In Lanna society, an idea of “khud” were taboos of actions that might have impact on balances between an individual, community, and the environment. Such balances were believed to be crucial for fertility. Therefore “khud” became taboos to draw a boundary of social control (©Àà'µÃ 2539). On the one hand, it provided a control on individual behavior not to break away from communal norms, as it was believed that this would bring bad luck to both the rule breaker and the community. On the other hand, these were rules to regulate social relations so that everyone equally received the same prosperity. An important example of actions considered as “khud” was the filling of all kinds of water sources.

As the breaking of taboos not only had impact on the rule breakers, but also on the community, taboos and traditions were important for regulating social relations to give security and guarantee the well-being of the community, and they became the foundation of the ethics of subsistence (cf. Scott 1976). This was based on the idea that if everyone was well-off, prosperity would be secured. Such an ethic was a foundation of many regulations and social bonds and was related to other beliefs such as the worship of the “heart of the community” and the worship of other spirits, such as the guardian spirit. Annual sacrifice to the spirit was considered a request to the spirit to provide the community with prosperity.

The first important principle, the norm of reciprocity might be considered as the first form of philanthropic action. This was erected on the social bonds of reciprocity as the mechanism of cooperation in various activities such as labor exchange in agricultural tasks or in house building. Most importantly, this principle was based on equality, and this had evolved into an important institution in guaranteeing social security. In the North, the norm of reciprocity appeared in the forms of cooperations, such as irrigation associations, or ad hoc formations such as a helping group to search for lost buffaloes. Other forms of cooperation included the exchange of other things for rice, to assist people who did not have sufficient rice to eat, and, at present, can be found in a form of funeral associations, where members contribute money to help prepare the funeral.

Another principle was that of communality, or “Nah Muu” in Northern dialect. This may be considered as a form of social capital. Mostly, this terminology suggests a common area, such as a communal forest, where community members may bring their livestock to graze, or where they may be able to draw water out of a common pond. This principle was based on communal participation. On the one hand, it allowed all members an open access. On the other hand, it implied a communal management. In the case of a communal forest, the community would set up regulations to govern the use of forest produce; for example, only a newly-wed would be allowed to cut timber to build a new house (©ÀÒ'ªÒÀÁÀÐ³Ð 2536).

Moreover, the ethics of subsistence were the foundations of two other important principles, that is, that of usufruct rights, and that of natural rights, both of which were important social capital as they recognized an equal access to resources. These two kind of rights were based on the principle of common utility and the idea that resources must be considered as communal or “Nah Muu.”

Usufruct rights referred to the rights of all members of the community who spent their labor in utilizing resources. As long as a member still utilized the resource his right over the resource remained, but as soon as he left the resource to its natural conditions, which was often found in the case of swidden land, others could claim the right to use the land when the original user refrained to use the land for specified time. This traditional practice suggests that the right of management was retained within the community.

Usufruct rights are closely related to natural rights. By natural rights, it is meant the rights of all human beings to utilize their labor to make a living from natural resources. This meant an equal access to resources or the prevention of monopoly in resource utilization. One example of utilization of resource based on the principle of natural rights was a case when people were allowed to collect natural produce, such as ants' eggs or mushrooms on the land which was being utilized by others. Another example was when people were allowed to catch fish in the paddy fields of others (©ÀÒ'ªÒÀÁÀÐ³Ð 2536, 60-62).

After the acceptance of Buddhism some 700 years ago, the ideology of “merit” have been added into the idea of fertility and the ethic of subsistence as an ideological social capital in building up social security through social welfare. This ideology of merit appeared in many traditions, and also in everyday merit-making (Tambiah 1968), both through the major Buddhist institution, that is the temple, and directly to those in need.

The role of the temple as the center of social welfare—to promote social learning, to provide political stability, and to provide security in life—has often been acknowledged (¹Ô,Ô 2536; 2539; Amara 1994b). This paper therefore will not elaborate further on these points.

However, an example of one tradition of merit-making, called Tan Khao Lon Batr (literally meaning excessive rice from the monk's bowl), will be given to show how such tradition was crucial in providing social welfare and security in life. According to this tradition, villagers brought new rice to the temple in the Fourth lunar month (Second lunar month in the central plain, or January). This was considered a paying back to the Mother of Rice (Mae Posop). The temple would keep the rice for use in temple affairs and give some to the villagers in need. Apart from this ritual, there are other rituals performed through the temple which helped provide for social welfare.

Apart from merit-making through the temple, the ideology of merit in Buddhism was another important factor in molding a benevolent personality. Other merit-making activities not performed through the temple also existed. For example, the ritual of Tan Tod (literally meaning leaving alms to the poor) involved leaving things necessary for everyday use to the poor; the givers would remain hidden but would make a lot of noise after things were left. When hearing the noise, the poor would come out and gather the alms without necessarily having seen the alms givers. The ritual of throwing coins to the poor at funerals was also an act of merit-making. Merit-making on birthdays, apart from food being provided to monks, may involve directly giving alms to the poor.

The giving of alms to the poor, which evolved within a society with differentiated social status, led to a social bond of gratitude, which further developed into a patronage system. In the North, the patronage system appeared in the form of a Pau Liang system. The Pau Liang,

indiscriminate assistance to the less advantaged grew, namely, missionary groups, which were the first official welfare organizations. They preceded Chinese philanthropy organizations, such as the Po Tek Tueng Foundation and the Ruam Katanyu Foundation, which receive money from overseas Chinese and Thais of Chinese origin. The main activity of these agencies is to bury the unclaimed dead: an important process in Chinese culture.

The first non-profit organizations were closely affiliated to the government. They were created by the wealthy class whose merit-making intentions were combined with Western concepts of public welfare and social services to provide charity and assistance for the "victims" within society. In 1890, Sapha Unalom Daeng, which later became the Thai Red Cross, was established. Following the Second World War, other foundations and clubs, such as the Women's Council and the Girl Guides Association of Thailand, were formed. The majority of these organizations assisted the needy through charitable donations to groups such as the handicapped and poor children, and provided help in times of crisis. During the period of military rule, these organizations were limited to providing social welfare only (Amara 1994a).

The expansion of the middle class facilitated the growth of charitable organizations, especially those concerned with children. The former, the educated class, made philanthropic donations based on merit-making intentions and Western views regarding welfare and humanitarianism.

The characteristics and basis of NGOs, as they are known today, most likely originated in the 1973 student movement against the military regime. Since the change in the governing system in 1932, democracy had gradually infiltrated Thai society and intensified under the military dictatorship's economic development drive of 1957. The transition toward a liberal system led to the historical student movement which involved a new generation and way of thinking. The protesters did not fit either the civil service or government role, neither did they belong to the rural agricultural class. Mainly students and business people, they rejected the traditions and customs of the patronage system and broke ranks with conservative respect for the governing authority. Today, those students, business and educated people would be called the middle class.

Some academics claim that members of the Thai middle class are unusual because they continue to have faith in the government even though their freedom is limited accordingly. Although liberal thinking has developed and taken root in Thai culture, support for patron-client relationships, where respect and allegiance is owed to those higher up in the hierarchy, still remains. The patronage system facilitates and is often the basis for dictatorship, but Thai academics have yet to establish an indigenous development philosophy (Ô, Ô 2536¢).

Nevertheless, the experience of fighting for democracy and the period which followed, when students worked to help farmers in rural areas, has led to a new way of thinking about development. This alternative development strategy has progressed into what we regard as NGO work, and contradicts the State's approach which had led to disparities between rural and urban standards of living. The past approach had often resulted in farmers receiving few benefits and being pushed to the margins of society as their resources were appropriated for national use. Under such discrepancies, students felt they owed a debt to the rural people, who had essentially paid for their education through taxes and hard labor. Consequently, the students attempted to turn society's attention to returning the benefits of development to rural communities and demanded justice for the equitable sharing of development benefits. In Western philosophical thinking, this is known as liberal humanism, an ideology that was transferred to the students through university education.

The development ideology espoused by students was at first rejected and branded as communist. When a democratic political atmosphere returned to Thailand, and the Communist Party faded around the 1980s, the middle class, influenced by liberal thought, once again performed humanitarian tasks. Many worked in the border areas alongside international agencies to assist refugees fleeing the Indo-Chinese war (Amara 1994a).

Since then the middle class, especially those who had participated in rural development activities as students, increased their efforts by forming non-profit groups (or NGOs) in order to seriously address the development of rural areas. Another contributing factor was a change in the direction of international development toward self-help methods. This approach reflected the failure of the Green Revolution which placed farmers into debt and further poverty. Thus, international NGOs became interested in supporting Thai NGOs which in turn provided the latter with a new approach to their lives and an alternative to the government's sole role as the engineer of development.

The new development direction taken up by NGOs is based on equity principles of a just society and encourages the participation of villagers in decision-making for the purpose of strengthening their authority, i.e., to empower society's disadvantaged sector. The concept is rooted in Commons Theory whereby the public shares responsibilities and decision-making regarding common interests or concerns. Originally, the theory was based on the village commons, or publicly shared grounds, where various social classes were able to enjoy the open areas without infringing on another segment of society. Currently, the theory is primarily applied to fisheries management where the ocean is the common area and communities and other people with an interest in the sea participate in deciding the use or development of the area. A mental parallel can be drawn between the logic behind NGOs' development strategy and Commons Theory: participation in decisions concerning their lives. The former is also a process of empowerment through participation. This method has reopened a channel for community interaction, e.g., a return to reciprocal community relationships, reestablishment of traditional communal rules and guidelines, as well as allowing new concepts of civil rights to be understood.

NGOs apply participation in two ways. The first direction encourages the participation of villagers in forming groups in order to increase their capacities and standard of daily life; examples include business ventures or health schemes. The second direction regards participation as a channel for villagers to understand society's structure, related problems and the relationships between government, the market and themselves. With this understanding, communities are able to find ways to empower themselves (Turton 1987).

NGOs pursuing the first strategy place value on spiritual well-being as opposed to material gains of villagers. They encourage the use of: local wisdom in problem solving; hold traditional ceremonies, such as annual merit-making, to revive community spirit and open a channel for philanthropy to collect project funding, to bring together city and rural peoples and foster feelings of social responsibility (Darlington 1990b). This direction criticizes the capitalist approach to development as lacking morals and suggests a development system based on a

combination of Buddhist principles and economic activities. For instance, villagers may draw upon a central fund for health payments or investment in joint projects.

The second strategy stresses the formulation of village groups to identify local needs and problems, as well as analyze its difficulties in dealing with establishments outside the community. The group will be gradually strengthened and villagers empowered as decision makers. They would use existing networks and relationships both inside and outside the community to bargain with the government and make business deals. A collective effort would be applied to create a "Commons," which can also be considered as a form of social capital. Initially, this method was used to tackle economic problems, but was later applied by NGOs to the problems of organizing natural resource management, such as community forestry.

Although both directions are based on a philosophy of liberal humanism, as well as adopt a cultural approach to development, one has slight anarchistic tendencies in its denial of the role of government by stressing the self-reliance of communities, while the other system emphasizes civil rights, which in turn requires the modern-day State to respect traditions and customs. They push for a new social structure that incorporates the needs of various communities and different backgrounds, i.e., demanding a return of the Commons, or decision-making power, from the State.

Urban NGOs have also used the issue of protecting rights as the basis for their work and to create their own "Commons." Their work concerns protecting the rights of slum communities, women, children and workers, and, at present, there are also NGOs working on the rights of HIV patients. Their method usually involves both the provision of welfare and pressure for policy change. These organizations also have been extended to include consumer rights protection, especially in the areas of health information, basic health and medicine awareness, for example, encouraging health policies and awareness of the danger of using the wrong medicines.

NGOs later turned to issues concerning natural resources and the environment, when they found that the development work they had been pursuing was not improving the status and quality of life of the poor since the environment had been steadily degraded simultaneously (e.g., watershed destruction and dwindling forests). They were especially opposed to large mega-projects, such as dam construction, which disrupt ecological systems. They pushed for changes in forestry policies to alter the government's encouragement of commercial forestry to supporting community forestry (Ruland and Bhansoon 1993). This policy would be linked with protecting the rights of highland ethnic groups whose settlement rights and participation in the management of forests had previously been taken away.

NGOs' work on the protection of rights has been significant in the expansion of civil society for the self-determination of both rural communities and the urban middle class, as well as giving them the power to pursue philanthropy. Nevertheless, there are different approaches for these conservation NGOs; urban and rural environmental NGOs have different priorities. The former concentrates on the protection of nature with little concern for the role of local people, while the latter regards conservation and community rights as essentially linked since they share the same common space. Local people are those who are most affected by the degradation of their surrounding environment and are often required to make sacrifices for the good of the whole, for example by reallocating, which in turn destroys their quality of life. Rural conservation groups therefore fight for the participation of villagers in the Commons, in order to enable them to protect their rights.

As the environmental issue received more interest it became the mainstream concern of the middle class. Various sectors of society began to open up channels for this trend: even private businesses have supported the establishment of environmental non-profit organizations to raise awareness in society to the environmental impacts of people's behavior. These NGOs, such as Think Earth and Community Development Association (Magic Eye), are based on the nature conservation philosophy which emphasizes the protection of the physical environment. They represent the new wave of philanthropic associations. Some are created by those who feel responsible to society or wish to improve society. Others were created to improve a company's image or involve companies whose business it is to conserve the environment. These organizations do not assign a great deal of attention to the right of minority or fringe groups to access natural resources (Hirsch 1996).

The problems, in particular those which affect lives of the poor and minority groups on the fringes of society, have intensified due to the conflicting demands of resources among different groups in society, namely the State, private businesses and the disadvantaged. The latter have adjusted to the wave of environmentalism by seeking funding and establishing networks to demand rights on the basis of local culture. One example is through ceremonies such as tree blessings, which can be considered as a combination of the Western idea of rights with local customs. To pressure the government to provide legal supports, such as a community forest law, they have demonstrated their empowerment through many forums demanding such changes from the State (Anan 1996b). The latest example of such an initiative is the Forum of the Poor Network, whereby 20,000 people from various areas joined together and walked to the Government House in Bangkok to demand their rights and voice their needs. Such a large gathering required extensive funding and can be considered as a landmark in the evolution of philanthropy.

PROBLEMS AND IDEAS IN THE RAISING OF CAPITAL FOR SOCIETY IN THE FUTURE

Despite the fact that Thai society already has an ideological foundation to support the raising of capital for society, and despite the expansion of independent organizations (NGOs?) advocating alternative development, human rights and environmental awareness, the 40 years of development in the direction of intensive industrialization, persisting patron-clients relations, and a strong centralized state, has created conditions which have become obstacles to the raising of capital for society. This has resulted in an insufficient expansion of donations to cope with increasing social problems, coming at the time when donations that Thailand once receive from abroad have greatly decreased.

The first problem or obstacle is evident in the case of the middle class, which has expanded greatly as a result of the expansion of capitalism, who still prefer self-care rather than demanding public welfare from the State. This is partly because they still receive benefits under the persisting patronage system, and partly because they receive benefits from capitalist development which permits the accumulation of wealth in the form of land. The accumulation of land, which is inheritable, and which lacks any control under any taxation

measurement, has facilitated the accumulation of individual capital while at the same time greatly reducing the size of capital that may be raised for society.

The second problem is the feeling of individualism which has become so strong under the expansion of industrial capitalism. This has resulted in a situation wherein people leave nearly no space for either the public or social sectors. This especially occurs among the middle class in the urban area, similarly to the situation that once took place in European societies wherein people became interested only in their own private world and abstained from involvement in the public sector (Sennett 1978). In Thai society, the feeling of individualism is manifested in the emphasis on personal this-worldliness rather than on paying interest to the public. When people make donations, they usually do so for self-interest rather than for any specific value, or else they donate for charity which gives a feeling of self-superiority rather than an understanding that they are also a part of the society.

Another problem in Thai society is the unlimited expansion of bureaucracy. This expansion of bureaucracy as a justification for nation building leads to a crisis (limit) of public participation. This is because bureaucracy can assume centralized control in nearly all aspects of public management, including the temple. This results in the exclusion of the middle class and the community from participation, until a state of “structural paralysis” is reached, wherein the community and various social components pay no interest in acting out their social roles but leave it to the bureaucracy to manage everything, as they have become used to having a bureaucracy to manage things for them, out of good intention. The social sector, especially the community, gradually lost its capability to manage its own problems. Hence some academics have dubbed Thai society as a Bureaucratic Polity, reflecting the image of a huge bureaucratic sector overshadowing all other social sectors.

Under such above-mentioned conditions, the raising of capital for society will still be limited. The ideological foundations are still limited to the idea of merit-making, social welfare, and donations as a form of self-aggrandizement rather than in the belief that philanthropic action should be based on a certain social value to give benefits to those we do not know (altruism), or as a feeling of love and care for other human beings (humanitarianism), as took place in the West. The questions that need to be asked are: How do such social values take place in Western societies? and then, If Thai society wants to promote such social values, how likely can it happen?

In the West, both in Europe and America, humanitarianism became a predominant value since 1750—the same time as the rise of capitalism, with a result that many people try to draw a connection between humanitarianism and capitalism. Most people, however, tried to explain it in terms of socioeconomic structural change. Lately, an additional explanation states that humanitarianism not only arose out of the growth of the middle class within the capitalist system, but had its roots in an important institution within the capitalist system, the market. This is because the market helped create a responsible moral bond often found in economic undertakings. Lifestyles within capitalist market relations created new habits which in turn initiated the humanitarian idea. Such habits are evident from two related lessons. First, the market created contractual bonds. Second, the market created an awareness of long-term consequences of one's own actions. These two lessons were responsible for the creation of a new morality which developed into a thought system that emphasizes responsibility to others (Haskell 1985).

In the case of Thailand, lifestyles under a capitalist market system have not fully developed because of the still predominant influence of kinship and patronage systems, as well as the influence of the centralized state. As a result, humanitarian consciousness and value have been slow to develop. However, some of these values are being demanded by NGOs, as mentioned.

Among intellectuals, the humanitarian ideology may be accepted faster than among other groups. For example, the writing of Dr. Prawes Wasi in a book on *The Rich and Social Development* (๒๕๓๒) tried to raise an awareness among the rich, that is, the business sector, to have more responsibility toward society, especially in intellectual development, such as the development of education and research. He also suggested the creation of a public venue to raise public awareness, in addition to the already existing social activities on social welfare, so that intellectual development might become independent from state control. In justifying his request, Dr. Prawes relied on the previous two lessons already mentioned, pointing out that man must live in a social system in which he must be related to others and, as such, a consequence of one's action may affect others. He calls this principle a new morality (ethic). He suggested that this is a “deep issue,” not yet aware of either by monks or laymen (๒๕๓๒:3). By this, he is probably implying that this new morality is not yet well-known and well-understood in Thai society.

Among other intellectuals who favor the new morality propagated by Dr. Prawes is Nithi Euisriwongse. In his lecture on “The Middle Class Helping The Poor” (1 March 2540), Nithi emphasized that the middle class cannot remain concerned only with its own interests while society is still full of poor people. He initiated the idea of “The Otherness” to explain the cause of alienation among social members, blinding people of their interconnectedness, despite the fact that, in reality, any action of one group of people will bear consequences upon other groups. Nithi defined poverty as a condition of “no alternative.” This is a result of lopsided development policy which favors only the benefits of the minority while refraining to be fair in letting others develop an alternative, leaving this latter group in poverty. Nithi urged the middle class to get rid of this otherness between themselves and the poor by trying to seriously study the problem of the poor from their perspective and by trying to publicize this knowledge to the wider society. At the same time, more alternatives from the standpoint of the poor should be broadened (๒๕๔๐). Nithi's request is based on the principle derived from the second lesson (already mentioned) which, in the case of the West, developed out of lifestyles in a modern capitalist market system.

Despite the fact that the Thai intellectuals understand the principle of the “new morality” and try to urge Thai society to accept this humanitarian value, general understanding of this value is still limited. If one wishes for this value to gradually evolve out of a capitalist market lifestyle, as it did in the West, one may become discouraged, because the influence of the bureaucratic sector in Thailand is still predominant, so much so that the public space beyond the bureaucratic sector is very limited. Even the market and business sectors have their limitations, as discussed. To create humanitarian value as a foundation for philanthropic movement in the future will require the elimination of the above-mentioned problems, and support for the idea that favors the reduction of the size and monopolistic power of the

bureaucratic sector. This must be accomplished simultaneously with the expansion of the space of the social sector beyond the influence of the State, in other words, expanding the public space. Meanwhile, the significance of the personal sector should be given less emphasis. A public space is like a venue which will provide an open access to various ethnic groups, providing them with more opportunity to participate, to be able to understand and respect the rights of others, and to be able to cooperate as a strong association, in order to commonly maintain the new values and morality. The modern terminology of this public space is “civil society” (cf. “[civil society](#)” 2540, and [Figure 1](#)).

In Thai society, the civil society should have more potentiality than other sectors within the society to develop new values for society. This civil society should replace the market, which had given important lessons to the West to develop (Western) new morality. The civil society has clearly proved, ever since the past decade, that it can raise cooperation from among differential social sectors, whether they be the community, the middle class, or the business sector. One evidence of such cooperation is the success in the movement for political reform and the success in the rally directed to the parliament to pass the new constitution of 2540.

As a matter of fact, the civil society in Thailand has been gradually formulated for quite some time. According to Thirayuth Boonmee, the civil society, or what Thirayuth calls “strong society,” has developed in four stages. In the first stage beginning around 2500, after facing various problems resulting from modern economic development, Thais raised a social awareness to replace the communal awareness because they realized that they are a part of a lifestyle which is larger than the traditional community and they sensed that they must take a part in solving societal problems. The second stage was during the period when various kinds of organizations were established, for example, social welfare organizations, occupation organizations, various kinds of interest groups, mass media organizations, and community organizations. The third stage, the present, is the time of common construction of shared societal ideology emphasizing virtues as values and moral guidance for society. The last stage is still in the future. It is the period when shared societal ideology will be crystalized and become an institution having roles and functions acceptable to society at large (, 2536).

Despite the fact that “civil society” has different meanings for different academics, there is still a certain shared idea. For example, Nithi paid attention to the importance of social relations. He thought that a civil society would arise when people believe that they belong to the same group and they must accept the rights of others. The strength of the civil society depended on internal organization within the association and the building up of a network with other groups (2540). This is quite similar to Thirayuth’s idea, especially on the point of social consciousness, although Thirayuth paid more attention to the issue of common problems; and while Nithi paid attention to mutual respects of rights, Thirayuth would call this a shared ideology. As a result, Nithi considered the rise of civil society as a movement which has only appeared in the past decade (2530), especially after the time of a popular cooperation demanding rights, and after it is evident that others respect their rights to make a demand. Anek Lauthammatas called this phenomenon a proud political expression. All in all, this does not mean that a civil society is a space to express only cooperation. According to Kasien Techapira, the basis of a civil society must lie in the ability to manage conflicts in a civilized manner (2540). In other words, this should mean the management of conflicts which is acceptable to all those involved .

From such understanding we may see that for the past decade the civil society has gradually evolved more and more clearly within Thai society. When crises arose people did not leave them to the responsibility of any one organization but had tried to take part in various forms and activities to solve the crises (2540, 177).

Apart from political crises which resulted in movements for political reforms, movements have expanded into many of the provinces. Attempts have been made to strengthen local powers. Civic movements to solve environmental crises, for example the protests against constructions of large dams, and the large network of campaigns for conservation of forests and beaches, have resulted to a movement to make a plea to government to support the community forestry decree (2536). Within the urban sector, movements among associations within slum areas—the JS 100 radio listeners network, and the urban forum—have arisen. Within the public health sphere, networks of community health care groups to fight against AIDs have arisen (2536).

Other networks include the association of monks fighting against AIDs (2536) and the network of Northern NGOs fighting against AIDs (2540).

These civic movements indicate attempts to create some new values and morality in Thai society, based on two important connected ideologies—first, the dignity of humanity expressed through ideas on rights, and second, the idea of identity which is considered as a power of a group standing firm not to be excluded of its rights. These two ideologies comprised a value, similar to the idea on community rights, to give a guarantee to protect the rights and power of all ethnic groups and to promote equal participation of various groups, which, in other words, is the principle of mutual respect of equality in democratic society. Community rights, therefore, is a kind of value, accepting the rights of all kinds of groups. When exclusion takes place, the civic movement will fight for the rights of the excluded group to determine or participate in the determination of their status, rather than leave it for others to do (2540 and [Figure 2](#)).

From research on the movement in support of the community forestry decree, an interesting point has emerged suggesting that the idea favoring community rights is highly dynamic and is still in the process of continual adaptation. Many groups in Thai society, especially the community, the middle class, and in some part the business sector, have helped construct this idea of community rights, amidst the movements and networks to fight against inequality and monopoly of ideas. Tactics included protests, denial of mythologies, adaptation of local rituals and values based on the ethics of subsistence such as reciprocity, “Nah Muu” (right of communal usage), usufruct rights,

_____. 2540. ^{a1a}Ñé_jÀò§^{aè}ÇÀàÈÄ×Í¹¹. ; ð^ã°ÀÄÀÒÄ·ÖèÊ[¶]Ò°Ñ'ÇÒ°ÑÄÊÑ§^αÁ ÁÈÒÇÒ·ÀÒÄÑÄ^aÖÄ§^ãÈÄè.

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èÒÄ^aÒÇ^oéÒ'ã^j; ÒÄ^{3/4}ÜáÄÈØç^αÀÒ^{3/4}çÍ§^μ1àÍ§. ^aÖÄ§^ãÈÄè: Ê[¶]Ò°Ñ'ÇÒ°ÑÄÊÑ§^αÁ ÁÈÒÇÒ·ÀÒÄÑÄ^aÖÄ§^ãÈÄè.

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Í§»ÄÐà·Èä·ÁμÑé§áμèÁØ^α'Ò_j'Ó°ÄÄ^{3/4}ì¹¹¶[¶]Ö§ÉÄÑÄ_jÄØ§ÉÄÖÍÁØ, ÁÒÄÒ^aÍÒ³Ò^oÑ_jÄÉÄÒÄ.
; ÄØ§^{à·3/4}Í: ÈÓ'Ñ_j^{3/4}ÒÄ^{3/4}ÈÖÄ»ÇÑ²¹, ÄÄÄ.

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»ÄÐ^aÒ^αÇÒ°ÑÄ ©Ñ^o·Öè 8.

ÍÒ'Ñ¹·ì ; Ò^{13/4}Ñ¹, Øì. 2530. “; ÒÄáÄ×Í§^ã·ÑÈ¹·Ò§ÁÒ'ØÉÄÇÒ·ÄÒ” á¹ *ÇÒÄÒ^αÒ'áÄÐ^αÇÒÄá^α×éÍ^aÈÇ·Ò§ÈÑ§^αÁ*,
ÍÒ'Ñ¹·ì ; Ò^{13/4}Ñ¹, Øì. ; ÄØ§^{à·3/4}Í: Ê[¶]Ò°Ñ'ÇÒ°ÑÄÊÑ§^αÁ “ØÍÒÄ§_íÄ³ÍÁÈÒÇÒ·ÀÒÄÑÄ.

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ÇÒ·ÀÒÄÑÄ^aÜÜ^aÖÄ§^ãÈÄè ÈÈÇÒ·ÀÒÄÑÄ^aéÒ¹¹Ò.

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©ÁÍ§ ÈØ¹·ÄÒÇÒ³Ò^aÄì (°₁). ; ÄØ§^{à·3/4}Í: ÈÁÒ^αÄÈÑ§^αÁÈÒÈμÄíáÈè§»ÄÐà·Èä·Ä áÄÐÈÓ¹Ñ_j^{3/4}ÒÄ^{3/4}ÍÁÄÖ¹·Äì.

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â^αÄ§_íÒÄÇÒ°ÑÄáÄÐ^{3/4}Ñ²¹Ò»ÄÐ^aÒÈÑ§^αÁ. ¹Ä^α»^oÁ: ÁÈÒÇÒ·ÀÒÄÑÄÁÈÒ¹·Á.

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