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The 1932 Siamese Revolution and The New Regime

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I am really thankful to our honorable scientific and review committee for spending much of their time in reviewing the papers for this event. I am also thankful to all the participants for being here with us to create an environment of knowledge sharing and learning. We the scholars of this world belong to the elite educated class of this society and we owe a lot to return back to this society. Let’s break all the discriminating barriers and get free from all minor affiliations. Let’s contribute even a little or single step for betterment of society and welfare of humanity to bring prosperity, peace and harmony in this world. Stay blessed.

Thank you.

Malika Ait Nasser

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BESSH-16**The 1932 Siamese Revolution and The New Regime**

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Abstract

The 1932 Siamese Revolution was a crucial turning point in 20 th century Thai history. The revolution was transition on June 24, 1932 which changed the system of government in Siam from The Old regime - an absolute monarchy to The New Regime - The constitutional monarchy. The Revolution was brought about by a group of military and civilians The Siamese Promoters / the *Khana Ratsadon* (Peoples' Party). It was a product of global historical change as well as domestic social and political changes. It also resulted in the people of Siam being their first constitution.

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Keywords— The 1932 Siamese Revolution, The New Regime, Siamese Promoters

Introduction

Before the Revolution of 1932, in The Old regime, the Siamese kingdom had no written constitution. In The Siamese Old Regime was an absolute monarchy. In 1932 The Siamese Promoters was revolution then The New regime was began. The revolution 1932 originated the constitutional monarchy.

In The Siamese Old Regime, The monarch was the originator of all laws and the head of the government. The king was the president of the government, consulted with his councillors, mainly his relatives. Though the significant reform happened in King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) , the kingdom still had no national assembly. The young generation of students and intellectuals studying in Europe began criticizing the crown's government as backward, corrupt, and ineffective. On June 24, 1932, The Siamese Promoters was Revolution. troops in Bangkok seized government buildings and some key ministers. The Siamese Promoter took place. Its leaders were both bureaucrats and young military officers, crying for the national reform, including the first written constitution. After negotiation with King Prajadhipok, (Rama VII), the changes took place, ending absolute rule by the king. The New Regime was establishment, the constitutional monarchy (Marndarath Suksanga, 2016). Whereas king remained the titular head of state, but the constitutional government ruled the country with the prime minister as its head. The general election was held with the birth of the first national assembly.

The two perspectives on causes of the 1932 Siamese Revolution

The Traditional perspectives

Thai political history was little researched by Western Southeast Asian scholars in the 1950s and 1960s. Thailand, as the only nominally "native" Southeast Asian polity to escape colonial conquest, was deemed to be relatively more stable as compared with other newly independent states in Southeast Asia (David Van Praagh, 1966). It was perceived to have retained enough continuity from its "traditions", such as the institution of the monarchy, to have escaped from the chaos and troubles caused by decolonisation and to resist the encroachment of revolutionary communism. By implication, this line of argument suggests the 1932 Revolution was nothing more than a coup that simply replaced the absolute monarchy and its aristocracy with a commoner elite class made up of Western-educated generals and civilian bureaucrats and essentially that there was little that was revolutionary about this event. David K. Wyatt, for instance, described the period of Thai history from 1910-1941 as "essentially the political working out of the social consequences of the reforms of Chulalongkorn's reign" (David K, 2003). The 1932 revolution was generally characterised as the inevitable outcome of "natural consequences of forces set in motion by Rama IV and Rama V" (Benjamin A Batson, 1984).

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Alternative Perspectives

Since 1990, recent scholarship does not disagree with the macro-causes raised by the traditional interpretations, but it tends to delve more into the power struggles between various factions in the labyrinthine world of Siamese politics. They argue that traditional perspectives over emphasize the role of abstract political and social forces, and essentially assume the "Western" experience of revolution as the "model" by which all socio-political upheavals are judged and thus ignores the specific historical circumstances in Thailand in 1932. They fail to consider that the 1932 revolution took place in an era when most of the populations were kept out of politics and that the political sphere was the domain of military and bureaucratic elites (Judith Stowe, 1991). For example, Benjamin Batson's influential 1984 study of the end of the absolute monarchy in Siam and Judith Stowe's 1991 study both emphasise the actions of prominent individuals in The Promoter 1932 such as Pridi Banomyong and Luang Phibulsonggram and their political intrigues. A more recent and controversial study by Paul Handley suggests that the root cause of the 1932 Revolution was the steadfast refusal of the Chakri monarchs (both Rama VI and VII) and aristocracy to share power with the new "commoner" elites (Paul M. Handley, 2006). He argues that the insistence of both Chakri monarchs that protecting the powers of the absolute monarchy was equivalent to protecting the sacred royal prerogatives of the Chakri dharmaraj a kingship forced the "commoner" elites and some high-ranking nobility to support or acquiesce in the Promoters' bid to seize power through military force in 1932.

The Siamese Promoters 1932

In February 1927, in a hotel on the Rue du Sommerard in Paris, France, a small group of seven military and civilian students assembled to debate the founding of a party to try to bring change to Siam (Judith Stowe, 1991). Intent on not wanting to repeat the failure of the 1912 plot, they laid out a clear and coherent plan to change Siam. This group included two young students: one a soldier and an artilleryman Luang Phibulsonggram, the other a law student and radical Pridi Panomyong (Christopher Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, 2005). The group called themselves the Siamese Promoters, hoping to return home to try to promote change. In Bangkok itself, the new and emerging middle class was dependent on the patronage of the aristocracy for jobs and positions. As a result, they realised that a "mass revolution" was not possible and only a military-led coup d'état was possible. For this purpose they were formed themselves call named that the Khana Ratsadon (the People's Party) / the Siamese Promoters.

When The Siamese Promoters/ the Khana Ratsadon eventually returned to Siam by the end of the 1920s, they quietly expanded their lists of contacts and party membership. Pridi became a leader of civilians and civil servants. It was the job of the others, such as Luang Phibulsonggram, who had by then received his title Luang Phibulsonggram, to try to gather supporters within the army. A young naval captain, Luang Sinthusongkhamchai, was doing the same for the navy. (Judith Stowe, 1991). The numbers of the party increased and separated into two branches, the civilian and the military (Nakaran mektrirat, 2010).

24 June 1932 and the New Regime

Despite their precautions and preparation, word of the plan's existence eventually leaked to the police. On the evening of 23 June 1932, the director general of the Police made a call to Prince Paribatra, asking for his authorization to arrest and imprison all involved in the plot. The prince, recognizing many names on the list that included many influential and powerful individuals, decided to delay the order for the next day, a delay that would be crucial for the plotters.

On that same evening, one of Luang Sinthu's supporters in the navy commandeered a gunboat from its dock on the Chao Phraya River, and by morning was aiming its guns directly at Prince Paribatra's palace in Bangkok. Luang Sinthu himself mobilised 500 armed sailors ready to take the Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall, at the centre of the capital and part of Dusit Palace. Following them was Prayoon, who later that night took command of a cadre of young officers to seize the post and telegram offices around the capital—one of the officers was Khuang Abhaiwongse. All communications between the princes and senior members of the administration were thus disabled. All their houses were also under surveillance and guarded by both civilian and military party members.

At about 04:00 on the morning of 24 June, Phraya Phahol and Phraya Songsuradet were already carrying out their part of the plan. Phraya Phahol and some supporters gathered near the Throne Hall waiting for the signal, while Phraya Songsuradet went with a couple of the conspirators to the barracks of the First Cavalry Regiment of the Royal Guards, where most of the armoured vehicles in Bangkok were kept. On arrival, Phraya Songsuradet reprimanded the officer in charge of the barracks for sleeping while there was a Chinese uprising taking place elsewhere in the city—all the while opening the gates of the barracks and mobilizing all the troops. The armoured vehicles, including some tanks, were commandeered and all were ordered to head toward the Throne Hall. Phraya Ritthi, after hearing of the success of Phraya Songsuradet, went to the barracks of the First Infantry Regiment. After successfully mobilizing the infantry, he too headed towards the Throne Hall. Having been told weeks before that a military exercise was happening, other troops in the vicinity of Bangkok joined the plotters, thus unknowingly participating in a revolution. Other units loyal to the monarch decided to take a passive role by shutting themselves in their barracks. (Judith Stowe, 1991).

By the time the infantry and cavalry arrived in the Royal Plaza in front of the Throne Hall at about 06:00, there was already a throng watching the assembled military. Confusion gripped the plaza, many not completely sure if the Chinese uprising was real, or if the military were only at the square to exercise. *Phraya Phahol* climbed onto one of the tanks and read The Siamese Promoters Manifesto/the *Khana Ratsadon* Manifesto, a declaration proclaiming the end of the absolute monarchy and the establishment of a new constitutional state in Siam. The Siamese Promoters cheered, followed by the military, probably more out of deference than full comprehension of what has actually happened.

Pridi, its leader of the civilian, with the help of his supporters, blanketed the capital in The Siamese Promoters/ the *Khana Ratsadon*'s propaganda leaflets, pamphlets and radio broadcasts, all supporting the revolution. The text of manifesto of The Siamese Promoters/ the *Khana Ratsadon* (written by Pridi) criticised the monarch in harsh terms:

“ *All the People,*

When this king succeeded his elder brother, people at first had hoped that he would govern protectively. But... the king maintains his power above the law as before. He appoints court relatives and toadies without merit or knowledge to important positions without listening to the voice of the people. He allows officials to use the power of their office dishonestly... he elevates those of royal blood to have special rights more than the people. He governs without principle. The country's affairs are left to the mercy of fate, as can be seen from the depression of the economy and hardships... the government of the king has treated the people as slaves... it can be seen that from the taxes that are squeezed from the people, the king carries off many millions for personal use... The People's Party has no wish to snatch the throne. Hence it invites this king to retain the position. But he must be under the law of the constitution for the governing the country, and cannot do anything independently without the approval of the assembly of the people's representatives... If the king replies with a refusal or does not reply within the time set... it will be regarded as treason to the nation, and it will be necessary for the country to have a republican form of government...”

Even before the arrival of The Siamese Promoters's telegram the King *Prajadhipok* was aware of something going on in Bangkok. He was playing a game of golf at the summer villa's course with the queen, two princely ministers, and some courtiers. The King *Prajadhipok* and the princes discussed many options, which included fleeing the country, staging a counter-revolution or full surrender. However, by the time the actual telegram arrived from The Siamese Promoters, the king had already decided. He quickly replied he was willing to remain on the throne as a constitutional monarch and that he had always favoured granting the people a constitution. The king, later, wrote of his decision of refusing to fight, "I could not sit on a throne besmirched by blood." One point which the king did not concede was when the party sent a gunboat to carry him to Bangkok. He refused and, instead, travelled back to the capital by royal train, stating that he was not a captive of the The Siamese Promoters (Queen Rumphipanni, 1973).

In the immediate aftermath of the revolution, The King *Prajadhipok* and The Siamese Promoters/ the *Khana Ratsadon* immediately set about granting the Siamese people their first constitution. The temporary charter was signed on 27 June 1932 at 17:00. It was a draft document written by Pridi in advance. The constitution began by announcing that: "the highest power in the land belongs to all people." The constitution created a People's Committee and an Assembly of People's Representatives made up of 70 appointed Members.

Democracy for Siam was, however, to be given to the people in installments. The assembly members were to be appointed by The Siamese Promoters. The first session of the People's Assembly convened in the Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall on 28 June 1932. However, Throughout the aftermath of The Siamese Revolution of June 24, 1932 the Counter-Revolution was began. (Nattapoll chaiching, 2010).

Conclusion

The Siamese Revolution of June 24, 1932, brought to an End the rule of the absolute monarch in Siam. The change in regime was organized by a group of middle-level civilian and military officials, termed collectively by The Siamese Promoters / the *Khana Ratsadon*. The New Regime was established and the first constitution - the constitutional monarchy -was issued soon after, virtually stripping the monarch of all political power. The king remained the titular head of state, but the constitutional government ruled the country with the prime minister as its head. The general election was held with the birth of the first national assembly.

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