

German Connection and the Establishment of the First Military Youth Movement in Thailand

บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้เป็นการวิจัยเบื้องต้นเกี่ยวกับขบวนการยุวชนทหาร (the Yuwachon Thahan, YT) ในประเทศไทย ขบวนการนี้ถูกก่อตั้งขึ้นเป็นครั้งแรกในปี พ.ศ. 2478 สมัยรัฐบาล พ.อ.พระยาพหลพลพยุหเสนา โดยได้รับอิทธิพลจากการโฆษณาเผยแพร่ของเยอรมัน ในสมัย ฮิตเลอร์ ซึ่งกระทำผ่านกลุ่มผู้นำทหารไทยในคณะราษฎร ที่มีความสัมพันธ์กับประเทศเยอรมนี ทั้งโดยตรงและอ้อม ผลการศึกษาพบข้อที่น่าสนใจว่า แม้ยุวชนทหารในประเทศไทยได้ดำเนินรอยตามแบบอย่างของนาซี-ฮิตเลอร์ แต่กลับมีลักษณะเฉพาะอันเป็นแบบฉบับของตนเอง ที่แตกต่างไปจากต้นกำเนิดอย่างมีนัย เช่น การเข้าร่วมเป็นสมาชิกขึ้นอยู่กับความสมัครใจมากกว่าการบังคับ และ

สมาชิกส่วนมากมาจากชนชั้นกลางมากกว่าชนชั้นล่าง ที่สำคัญคือ การเคลื่อนไหวของยุวชนทหารไม่ได้เข้าไปเกี่ยวข้องกับต่อสู้ในเชิงความรุนแรงทางการเมือง ตรงกันข้ามกลับมีลักษณะเป็นแนวทางสันติวิธี โดยแสดงพลังออกในรูปแบบของการเดินขบวนอย่างสงบ เพื่อสนับสนุนนโยบายชาตินิยมของรัฐบาลในขณะนั้น คำถามพื้นฐานที่ตามมาก็คือ ทำไมยุวชนทหารจึงแตกต่างไปจากต้นแบบอย่างเด่นชัด เพื่อการค้นหาคำตอบที่สร้างความเข้าใจได้ดีขึ้น ผู้วิจัยเห็นว่า ควรใช้วิธีการทางวัฒนธรรมศึกษามากกว่าแนวทางอื่นๆ โดยเริ่มต้นจากการพิจารณาขบวนการนี้ ในเชิงการถ่ายทอดทางวัฒนธรรม และการทำให้เป็นท้องถิ่น (Localization) สำหรับการวิจัยในขั้นลึกต่อไป

Abstract

This article is a preliminary research about the first military youth movement known as the Yuwachon Thahan (YT) in Thailand. Founded in 1935, the YT was influenced by the Hitler propaganda through a small group of Thai soldiers who had connections with Germany. Yet even though the YT and its movement proceeded to expand along the lines of the Hitler Youth (Hitler Jugend, HJ), they were not quite same as their counterpart in Germany. Interestingly enough, they had their own characteristics. Simply put, the YT's membership was voluntary and originated mostly from a middle class rather than a working class. More importantly, the YT and its activities were not involved with political matters in violence and strife. Instead, their main activities appeared in various forms of peaceful actions to support the military policies in promoting nationalist campaigns for the period of Phibun's government from the late 1930s to mid-1940s. The simple question rises here is why the YT and its movement were so different from their counterpart in Germany. To better answer the question, I would suggest for a future research that we should not consider the YT as a simple matter of emulating that

of Hitler. Instead the YT should be considered as a cultural phenomenon in terms of "localization".

Introduction

The Yuwachon Thahan (YT) was introduced by the Hitler propaganda. One of the cornerstones girding Adolf Hitler's 'thousand year Reich' was the youth of Nazi Germany. Hitler's interest in children, and especially his efforts to 'nazify' the young people of Germany, were notorious. In addition, Hitler firmly believed that if the 'Third Reich' was to win loyal friends abroad, Germany would have to capture the minds of the young for Nazism throughout the world.¹

Upon being commissioned German Chancellor in January 1933, Hitler became aware immediately of the 'poor press' that his brutal, totalitarian regime stimulated around the globe. One of his answers to combat the unfavorable opinion towards Nazism was to unleash the greatest propaganda campaign the world had ever witnessed. In May 1933, the German Foreign Ministry and the Minister for Propaganda and People's Enlightenment (headed by Joseph Goebbels) were ordered 'to improve the mood abroad'. As part

¹ The Foreign Minister, "Minutes of the Conference of Heads of Departments, Wednesday, May 24, 1933, at 5.00 p.m.", Documents on German Foreign Policy (hereafter DGFP; Washington, 1957-), Series C. Volume I, Document Number 483, cited in Donald M. McKale, "Hitlerism for Export! The Nazi Attempt to Control Schools and Youth Clubs Outside Germany", *Journal of European Studies* 5 (1975): 239.

of this campaign, the National Socialist Party (NSDAP) busily undertook to win for Hitler the children of approximately two million Reich citizens living abroad and many non-German children in the Third World.²

In Thailand, a militaristic youth organization called “the Yuwachon Thahan” (YT) was initially founded in 1935 by Colonel Luang Phibunsongkhram (popularly known as Phibun) a Minister of Defense and later Prime Minister before and during the Second World War (1938-1944). Admittedly, Phibun’s creation of this organization had been seen as one of the strongest indications before 1938 of the kind of Fascist-state activity that appealed to the Thai militarists.³

Although most Thai and American scholars who have studied this period agree that Phibun’s youth was influenced by Hitler’s campaign⁴, some argue that it was influenced by the Japanese or both of them.⁵ Nevertheless, surprisingly no one makes it clear how and why Thai leaders

adopted and/or adapted this movement into Thai society. More importantly, they have never demonstrated how the YT was similar to or different from that of Hitler Youth or that of the Japanese after it was established in Thailand. Above all, there are no studies of the YT culture that seek to explain this movement as a cultural phenomenon.

Generally, I agree that the establishment of the YT was introduced by Nazi Germany rather than the Japanese, and its movement proceeded somewhat along the lines of the Hitler Youth (the HJ). The movement was aimed at school and college students, who were relatively few in number and concentrated exclusively in Bangkok and a few other urban centers. The Yuwachon movement, therefore, contrasts significantly with the strong rural emphasis of Japan’s mass movements.⁶ In order to comprehend the formation of the first military youth movement in Thailand, I would suggest that we first should find who acted as agencies of the German

² Ibid.

³ Walter F. Vella, *The Impact of The West on Government in Thailand* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), 382-383.

⁴ See, for example, E. Bruce Reynolds, *Thailand and Japan’s Southern Advance, 1940-1945* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 27-27; and Benjamin A. Batson, “Siam and Japan: The Perils of Independence” in *Southeast Asia under Japanese Occupation*, ed. Alfred W. McCoy (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies Monograph Series No.22), 270-272.

⁵ See, for example, Lily Abegg, “Thailand sees Great Progress in ten years as Modern State”, *The Japan Times and Advertiser*, 28 March (1942): 1-23.

⁶ For more details, see Richard J. Smethurst, *A Social Basis for Prewar Japanese Militarism: The Army and the Rural Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

culture-Hitler influence, and why they adapted this culture into Thai society because the concept of youth as a political force was relatively new and had never existed in Thai society before.

My study will focus on a group of Thai military who had connections with Germany and/or were impressed by the achievement of Nazism. Among this group, there were three prominent political figures; Colonel Phya Phahon Pholphyuphasena (Phahon), Phibun, and Lieutenant Prayoon Pamormontri (Prayoon). This group was the core of the People's Party and became its leaders after they were successful in overthrowing the absolute monarchy in 1932. They admired Hitler and hoped that fascist/national socialist techniques might help foster the spirit and discipline needed to unify and strengthen their power and the nation. Partly due to this, they set up the YT and proceeded to expand it along the lines of the HJ.

To explain the first military youth movement in Thailand, I applied collective biography or prosopography as the methodology of interpreting the modern Thai elite.⁷ Following this, I will begin with analyzing backgrounds of the new elite or the

People's Party and then the group of Thai military called a pro-German group in order to understand how they were involved in politics and became the new political leaders. Next, I shall analyze the rise of this group after the 1932 coup by focusing on the Phahon-Phibun regimes as agencies of the Hitler influence to explain how and why they tried to adapt the Hitler policies and techniques into the Thai socio-political context. Finally, I will concentrate on the YT and its movement in comparison with their counterpart in Germany to illustrate how they were so diverse. In conclusion, I would suggest that we should view the YT and its movement as a result of German influence and indigenous adaptations, and recommend a cultural approach "localization" for a future study that hopes to find some interesting answers to why they were different from the HJ.

Collective Biography of the People's Party⁸

The People's Party was transformed by the coup in 1932 in one stroke from a small and unknown conspiratorial detachment to the new governing elite, who

⁷ For an interesting survey of its literature in 1971, see Lawrence Stone, "Prosopography", *Daedalus* 100 (1971): 69-85; and for more updated aspects of this method, see Sorasak Ngamcachonkulkid, "The Seri Thai Movement: The First Alliance Against Military Authoritarianism in Modern Thai History" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005), Chapter 1.

⁸ For a full account of this study, see Sorasak, "The Seri Thai Movement", Chapter 6.

would serve to perpetuate the exclusiveness of the group involved, to sustain it in power, and to set up national policy. Originally, the new elite were a bunch of middle-low level military officers and civilian officials. They consisted of 'senior' and 'junior' cliques. The senior faction was composed of the older members of army officers. The junior splinter group consisted of the younger members, dividing into three factions, namely the army, navy and civilian sections. There were about 114 men: eight army officers in Phya Phahon and Phya Song Suradej's higher faction; twenty-three army officers in Phibun and Luang Tasnainiyomseuk's lower division; eighteen naval officers led by Luang Sinthu Songkhramchai;⁹ and sixty-five civilians headed by Pridi Banomyong.

Like Hitler and other German leaders, members of the People's Party were composed almost entirely of commoners. They grew up mostly in the peasantry, the low-ranking military and the civilian service, the Chinese or the Sino-Thai lines, while less than a quarter came from the monarchs, the landed gentry, or well-to-do families. They were a new class of professional officers and officials. Nearly all had been able to advance their careers by moving away from their hometowns and estab-

lishing themselves in Bangkok. Some had opportunities for training abroad and then rose to moderately high positions. Exclusive of only a few senior members, they were of low-middle bureaucratic positions with limited possibilities for economic and social advancement.

In view of that, the new elite were not significantly different in their social origins that made them split. More specifically, instead of social origin, age and wealth, the new elite were divided by their education and occupations into the three distinct sub-groups, within each of which there were similarities of its leaders, characteristics, members, education, occupations, experiences and ideologies. Along these lines, the three sub-groups of the new elite were not distinguished by family milieus, but by their schooling and livelihoods.

In general, the new elite, unlike Hitler, were characterized by a high degree of educational attainment. Of the 114 men, at least 97 held university degrees. Among them, forty-nine graduated from the military colleges both the Military Cadet Academy (thirty-one) and the Naval Academy (eighteen), and twenty-six graduated from the Law School. Nevertheless, even though the new elite were characterized by a

⁹ Lt. Commander Luang Sinthusonggramchai R.N., or Luang Sindhu Songramjaya, or Sihthu Songkhramchai, or Sin Songkhramchai, is the same man.

high degree of edifying attainment, just approaching one in five had received foreign instruction. Of the 97 men above, only twenty-one had studied abroad. Except for a few, they had been in Europe. There the military leaders of both senior and junior groups later became a pro-German faction and were generally infused with a taste for progress and modernism if not for democracy.

Prominently, most of the new elite were not familiar with the British political version. Unlike members of the Thai traditional elite, the leaders of the People's Party had been sent to study in France and Germany rather than in Great Britain. At that time, London was the place where most members of the royal family and the nobles had been and dominated the association of Thai students there. By contrast, the place where the leaders of the new elite formed and played a leading role in the association of Thai students was in Paris. Of the twenty students abroad in Europe, eight had studied in France, five in Germany, four in England, two in Switzerland, and one in Denmark. All of these students abroad entered government services at the middle levels in several departments and ministries in the 1910s-1920s.

Occupationally, the new elite, as already mentioned, were bureaucrats and divided into three sections: the army, navy,

and civilian, each of which had its own political base and ideas of how to develop the political system and modernize the country after 1932. If the Thai traditional elite--the royal family and the aristocracy--were dominated by soldiers, the new elite were also marked above all by the same profession. The single largest occupational category in the new elite was that of the forty-nine lower-ranking officers. They were further divided into thirty-one in the army group and eighteen in the naval officers. The rest were several junior officials, lesser-known lawyers, and private small businessmen. The overwhelming majority of the civilian services, dissimilar to those of the two long-established Thai elite groups, were neither judges, legal professionals nor governors, but technicians in various fields, all of which were more independent than those of the armed forces led by a pro-German group.

Backgrounds of the Pro-German Group

In consideration of the pro-German group in the Thai leader context, I will choose three prominent figures from the People's Party: Prayoon, Phya Phahon, and Phibun. The first two men had connections to Germany, either by birth or German training, while the latter admired the strong leadership of Hitler and was impressed by the triumph of Nazism. They became leaders

and played a major role in the establishment of the first youth movement in Thailand since they were the core of the Party and had a successful coup in 1932, which put an end to the absolute monarchy and replaced it with a constitutional system.

Prayoon was one of the two founders of the People's Party and approached two key military officers, Colonel Phibun and Colonel Phya Phahon, to join his party. Prayoon linked to Phibun as a classmate from their cadet days while he used his mother's influence as a former German teacher to reach Phya Phahon. Undeniably, Prayoon's personal connections made it possible for his party to set up a revolutionary group and then reach its goal in 1932.

Prayoon was born in Berlin in 1900, the son of a junior official at the Siamese (Thai) legation, married to a German woman.¹⁰ When his father returned to Thailand during Prayoon's boyhood, he was presented as a page to the Crown Prince, later to become King Vajiravudh or Rama VI (1910-1925). Under this royal

patronage, Prayoon attended the Military Cadet Academy in Bangkok and obtained a commission in the Brigade of Guards. In a short time, he sought to broaden his horizons by obtaining permission and a royal allowance to travel to Europe, and spent several years there drifting around before ending up in Paris to enroll for a course in political science.¹¹ In the course of his variegated career in Europe, he had made a lot of useful acquaintances both Thais and Germans.¹²

On Prayoon's arrival in France in 1925, he first met Pridi, a Thai law student in Paris, and they decided that absolute monarchy could not work in Siam anymore and if they could find enough friends they would try to change the system to that of a constitutional monarchy.¹³ At that time, there were already some people to whom Prayoon felt closely attached. One of them was Phibun, a classmate from the Military Cadet Academy in Bangkok currently studying at the French artillery school at Fontainebleau.¹⁴

¹⁰ Prayoon Phamonmontri, *Chiwit ba phaendin khong khaphachao* (My Life in Five Reigns) (Bangkok: 1957), 4. But some scholars mistake and tell that he was the son of a German officer and a Thai mother. See, for instance, E. Thadeus Flood, "Japan's Relations With Thailand, 1928-1941" (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1967), 273.

¹¹ He apparently did not complete this degree.

¹² For more facts, see his work, Prayoon, *Chiwit*.

¹³ Vinita Krairiksh, "The Politics of Pibul: The National leader, 1932-1944" (Ph.D. diss., The American University, 1975), 4.

¹⁴ Judith A. Stowe, *Siam becomes Thailand* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), 11.

Phibun was born into the family of an orchard owner in central Thailand in 1897. Attracted by the handsome military uniforms, he joined the army, attended the Infantry School and later on the Military Cadet Academy. He graduated in 1914 and entered the artillery. His fine service record earned him advanced military training in France from 1924 to 1927, during which time he met Prayoon again and became a leader of the young students then beginning to plot the military overthrow of the absolute monarchy.¹⁵

At one time, while taking a trip to Germany, Prayoon took the opportunity to ask Phibun to join his group and he agreed.¹⁶ Within this group, Pridi came to be known as the mentor of those intent on promoting the end of the absolute monarchy while Phibun styled himself as Captain and Prayoon readily assumed the role of organizer and contact-man.¹⁷ When its members realized that they needed the help of more senior officers, Prayoon came up with a solution. His mother had given German lessons to Phya Phahon

thirty years earlier before he had gone abroad to study; this old contact was reactivated, and indirectly it was discovered that Phya Phahon was thinking along the same lines as the Prayoon Party. From there the conspiracy rapidly expanded.¹⁸

Phya Phahon was born in 1880. He had finished his studies with academic distinction in the same school of Prayoon and Phibun. In 1904, he was awarded a scholarship to study military science and spent about nine years in Germany, where he improved his knowledge of army methods, political progress and modernism. After finishing his military science studies, he was appointed a Lieutenant in the German Army.¹⁹ Then in 1928, he became a colonel in the Thai Army. Shortly before the 1932 coup, he was transferred to be Deputy Inspector of the Artillery Section in Bangkok. At this time Prayoon was the liaison who succeeded in winning over Phya Phahon. They agreed that by changing from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy the country would progress faster.²⁰

¹⁵ David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 252-253.

¹⁶ Jiraporn Witayasakpan, "Nationalism and the Transformation of Aesthetic Concepts: Theatre in Thailand during the Phibun Period" (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1992), 94.

¹⁷ The memoirs of Thawee Bunyaket and La-ia-d Pibulsongkram, in Jayanta K. Ray, *Portraits of Thai Politics* (Delhi: Orient Longman, 1972), 63 and 192.

¹⁸ Prayoon, Chiwit, 40.

¹⁹ Kenneth Perry Landon, *Siam in Transition* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 25; Krairiksh, "The Politics of Pibul", 7-8.

²⁰ *ibid.*, 10.

Phya Phahon expanded the goal by contact with his German-training classmate from cadet days and became the leader of the senior faction within the People's Party. In 1904, when Phya Phahon went to study in Germany, he was soon joined by another government scholarship winner, Phya Song Suradej²¹, who by 1931 had also risen to the rank of colonel with the position of Director of Education at the Military Cadet Academy.²²

Another of Phya Phahon's friends and German trainees was Phra Prasas Pittayayudh (Prasas). After his graduation, Phra Prasas went to study military science in Germany where he met Phya Phahon and Phya Song in the same school.²³ In 1930, while Phya Phahon worked as Deputy Inspector of the Artillery Section in Bangkok, he and Phya Song tried to win over several of their classmates from cadet days who had command of troops. Some declined, but Colonel Phya Ritthi Akaney, commander of the First Artillery Regiment of the Royal Brigade of Guards based in Bangkok, was more amenable and shared his friends' goal.²⁴

These four senior leaders above were later known as the 'Four Tigers' and led

the People's Party to overthrow the absolute monarchy on June 24, 1932 and establish a constitutional system. This successful event provided the pro-German group with an opportunity to enter the political arena and take action as agencies of the Hitler propaganda campaign, particularly when both Phya Phahon and Phibun became Premiers after the 1932 coup. During the Phya Phahon regime (1933-1938) and in the early years of Phibun administration (1938-1944), the Hitler influence was evident. While these two prime ministers introduced and adapted some of Hitler's policies into Thai society, Prayoon was considered to be very knowledgeable on German affairs, and had visited Germany several times in the late 1930s.²⁵

The Rise of the Pro-German Group and the Hitler Influence in Thai Society

Although the initial 1932 coup was bloodless, its aftermath was very different. The major issue facing the People's Party after 1932 was the struggle to remain in power. In this situation, Phya Phahon found Parliament difficult to control and finally decided to retire by handing his power

²¹ Col. Phya Songsuradet (Thep Panthumsen) or Phya Song Suratej is known as Phya Song.

²² Stowe, *Siam becomes Thailand*, 14.

²³ Krairiksh, "The Politics of Pibul", 8.

²⁴ Stowe, *Siam becomes Thailand*, 15.

²⁵ Flood, "Japan's Relations With Thailand", 273.

to Phibun. This change affected the nation's politics and paved the way for rule by a strong military dictatorship, personified in Phibun and the Army and based of course mainly in the new elite.

Under this struggle, Phibun and his pro-German group's political status, therefore, become more prominent and moved closer to the Hitler style. They realized that it was necessary in mobilizing nationalist sentiment in order to build a unified nation under strong leadership. It was quite natural for them, trained in military and having come to power by the coup, to admire the strong leadership of Hitler and adapt some of his techniques into the Thai socio-political context because of domestic conflicts and the nationalist campaigns of Hitler.

After 1932, the new elite faced problems of extreme domestic politics, which were threatened first by the aristocracy,

second by the royal family, and last by the local elite in the National Assembly.²⁶

In addition, there was still some residual competition among factions within the new elite. On June 24th 1932, the People's Party seized power from King Prajadhipok or Rama VII (1925-1941) and placed the monarchy under a constitution.²⁷ After the coup the King was invited to remain as a constitutional monarch, a figurehead without real power. At the same time an Assembly of seventy appointed members was set up. Phya Mano, an old aristocrat who had taken no part in the 1932 coup, was asked to head the new government, in which the coup leaders merely held posts as ministers without portfolio. The 1932 coup leaders nevertheless were at first willing or felt it necessary to maintain some continuity with the old order. Real power, however, now lay not in the Cabinet but in the Army and the Assembly, which were

²⁶ These four Thai elite groups were the foundation of political life in Thailand during the first twenty years of the new regime (1932-1952). The new elite or the 1932 Promoters were members of the Khana Ratsadorn, usually known in English as the People's Party. The royal family consisted of both senior and junior princes of the Chakri family. The aristocracy were senior officers and officials who held the two highest bureaucratic ranks, Chao Phya and Phya. The local elite were those who were elected members of the National Assembly or of Parliament (MPs). For more points of the four elite groups, see Sorasak "The Seri Thai Movement".

²⁷ For an appealing work of the 1932 coup, see Benjamin A. Batson, *The End of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam*. (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1984); Charnvit Kasetsiri, 2475, *Kanpatriwat Sayam* (1932 Revolution in Siam) (Bangkok: Munnithi Khrongkan Tamra Sangkhommasat læ Manutsayasat, 2000); Copeland, Matthew Phillip., "Contested Nationalism and the 1932 Overthrow of the Absolute Monarchy in Siam" (Ph.D. diss., Australian National University, 1993); and Nakharin Mektrairat, *Kan Patriwat Sayam Por Sor 2475* (The Siamese Revolution of 1932) (Bangkok: Foundation for Textbook Projects on Social Science and Humanities, and the Sixty Years of Democracy Project, 1992).

dominated by the People's Party.²⁸

The attempt of the People's Party to share power with the aristocracy, however, resulted in failure. Conservative elements among the nobles, particularly the newly appointed Premier Phya Mano, increasingly came into dispute with the more radical members of the Party. In this dispute the upper classes were supported by some more conservative members of the Party itself. Within a few months of the 1932 coup an open split between the Party and the aristocrats on the one hand and within the Party itself on the other hand had developed. The famous episode which finally ended co-operation between them was the controversy which arose over the Economic Plan drafted by Pridi, a radical civilian member of the Party. The Plan was condemned by the landed gentry

and the King Rama VII as communistic, and the drafter was forced to leave the country temporarily.²⁹ The aristocrats' next move was to dissolve the Assembly because it was dominated by the Party. Finally, the 1932 coup leaders including Phya Phahon themselves were forced to resign from their posts in the Army.³⁰

Nonetheless, on June 20th, 1933, Phibun again staged a coup d'état in order to remove the landed gentry and their supporters from power and persuaded Phya Phahon to head the new government.³¹ Hence Phibun's political status became more prominent. More importantly, in October 1933, Phibun was successful in defeating a counter-coup of the royalists led by former Minister of Defense Prince Boworadet who deeply resented the power monopoly of the People's Party.³² This

²⁸ Charnvit Kasetsiri, "The First Phibun Government and Its Involvement in World War II", *Journal of the Siam Society* 62 (1974), 27.

²⁹ For the superb analysis of this controversy, see Kasian Tejapira, *Commodifying Marxism: the formation of modern Thai radical culture, 1927-1958* (Kyoto, Japan: Kyoto University Press, 2001), 35-41.

³⁰ After the 1932 revolution, Phahon occupied the post of Commander in Chief of the Army. The aristocrats replaced him with someone more sympathetic to their outlook. On June 10, 1933, the four senior leaders resigned from the State Council and the Army on account of ill health, but their resignations from the army were to be effective as of June 24, 1933. The decision of the senior army faction of the new elite to resign from the State Council and from the Army was quite a surprising. There are several versions about this story. One of them is that Phya Song and his senior faction came to persuade Phya Phahon to resign. They together with Phya Mano's faction were prepared to further consolidate their positions, isolate Phya Phahon and Phibun, and undercut many of the new elite. See Krairiksh, "The Politics of Pibul", 22-36; Thawatt, *History of the Thai Revolution*, 183-184; *A Century of Suphasawat*, 96-102; and Thawee in Ray, *Portraits of Thai Politics*, 70-72.

³¹ *Ibid.* 36-54; and for a remarkable analysis of this coup, see Thamrongsak Petchlert-anan, *2475 lae 1 pi lang kanpatiwat* (The 1932 revolution and the aftermath) (Bangkok: Sun Nangsu Chulalongkon mahawithayalai, 2000).

victory led Phibun to be regarded as a national hero. As a result, he was appointed Minister of Defense in 1934 and rapidly became a major power in the government of the Phya Phahon period. Phibun was considered an apprentice heir to Phya Phahon given that he was usually assigned to act on Phya Phahon's behalf as prime minister or for any position of the prime minister, such as commander-in-chief. In other words, he held the real power in the Phya Phahon regime from behind the scenes.³³

With his rise to power in 1933, Phibun and his supporters including Phya Phahon looked to Germany, which had so successfully built up her strength and challenged Britain and France, as a model for Thailand's future. As early as 1934, Phibun was a forceful exponent of Thailand's need for strong leadership in a time of nation building and world crisis. He wrote frequently on this theme and encouraged

the publication of books and articles admiring authoritarian leaders like Hitler and Mussolini.³⁴

Phibun's actions cannot be understood without reference to the rising power and prestige of the dictatorial ultra-nationalistic states, particularly Germany. While Phya Phahon and Phibun rose to power in 1933, Hitler also took a power as German Chancellor and made the greatest campaign in order to combat the unfavorable opinion toward Nazism. In spreading Hitler's propaganda in the German schools abroad, several organizations within the National Socialist Party became deeply committed to this task, but three were predominant: the Foreign Organization (AO), the Nazi Teacher's League (NSLB) and the HJ.³⁵

Although these three organizations above did not always succeed in combining their resources to make friends of children outside Germany, they nevertheless worked in foreign schools and guided

³² After the second coup in 1933, Prince Bowaradet and most of the extreme royalists found it impossible to do anything else but to drive the new elite out by force. The forces of regression had their reasons to stage the so called Bowaradet Rebellion. They began to build another royalist-aristocrat alliance to stall the advances that the new elite leaders had demands. The advances included the Pridi economic plan and the military involved in politics as the protectors of the Constitution. The revolt was generally regarded as the royalist and reactionary. The rebels claimed, in Prince Sithiporn's words, to be 'merely doing our duty to Country and King', and they specifically cited the return of Pridi and the danger which they believed his doctrines posed to Siam. See Batson, *End of the Absolute Monarchy*, 247. This belief was still in the royal family and the aristocracy until the early postwar period.

³³ Chao-Tzang Yawngghwe, "The Politics of Authoritarianism: The State and Political Soldiers in Burma, Indonesia, and Thailand" (Ph.D. diss., The University of British Columbia, 1997), 223.

³⁴ Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History*, 253.

³⁵ McKale, "Hitlerism for Export!", 239.

(often covertly) Hitler Youth groups and other youth organizations abroad. The main target of the three organizations was the foreign German school, which was the pride and joy of a vast number of Germans living together in closely-knit communities (or colonies) that had developed since World War I in many countries. Numerous colonies had sprouted especially in South America, South-West Africa, and parts of the Far East, namely China, Japan, and the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia).³⁶

In Thailand, Germany too had far less influence than Britain, France, or Japan, but Hitler's sway did have contacts in high places. Apart from Prayoon's continuing links with the land of his birth, several members of the senior military clique within the People's Party, as already mentioned, had studied there. They included Phya Phahon and Phra Prasas who, it transpired, had been a classmate of Goering, one of Hitler's leading henchmen.³⁷ This contact would continue to work well all through the Phibun regime.

When Phibun became prime minister in 1938, he employed these connections to enhance Thai-German relationships. Not

surprisingly, during this time the political role of the pro-German group was promoted in parallel with Germany's rise in the 1930s. While Phibun sent Phra Prasas to Berlin as Thai Minister with express orders to re-establish contact with Goering and cultivate his friendship,³⁸ he utilized Prayoon for liaison with the Germans.³⁹ Prayoon also became Phibun's right-hand man in educational matters, assuming the vice-rector of Chulalongkorn University and, took over the leadership of the YT. As a result of these contacts in high places, in 1939, Hitler invited Phibun officially to go to Germany.⁴⁰ It is possible to say that Hitler spread his influence through these Thai leaders on the one hand and through German schools on the other.

These Thai leaders including Phibun and numerous young military men were impressed by the success of Hitler. Needless to say, in this admiration they were joined by countless other Asian nationalists of the time. For instance, as Burma's Ba Maw later recalled: "we must never forget the tremendous spell that Hitler and the Axis cast over the East generally. It was almost hypnotic. The Axis leaders were believed

³⁶ Ibid, 240.

³⁷ Stowe, *Siam becomes Thailand*, 126.

³⁸ Ibid, 130.

³⁹ Reynolds, *Thailand and Japan's Southern Advance*, 26.

⁴⁰ There were many Thai newspapers such as *Krungtep Varasap* (daily newspapers) printed as the headline "Hitler Invited Luang Phibun Officially to go to Germany", However, Phibun has never gone to meet Hitler.

to be irresistible. They created a new world order, as they declared they would and were actually doing; and the East as a whole was longing for some kind of a real new order."⁴¹

Colonial subjects like Ba Maw hoped that such wholesale change would bring liberation for his nation while the leaders of Asia's three independent states--China, Japan, and Thailand-- hoped that fascist/national socialist techniques might help foster the spirit and discipline needed to unify and strengthen their nations.⁴²

Germany's considerable prestige in Asia further enhanced the appeal of national socialism. Asian military officers admired Germany's nineteenth-century success in nation building, its military and technical capabilities, and the discipline of its citizenry. A number of them had trained in Germany, including three of the four senior army officers who led the 1932 coup in Thailand. Although all three independent Asian states had joined the Allied side during World War I, they had done so for pragmatic

reasons, not because of any particular enmity toward the Germans. Germany's recent phoenix-like rise from the ashes of defeat had rekindled admiration for that nation's strengths.⁴³

In Thailand, German favour was clear after the 1932 coup. Phya Phahon and his group promoted German culture and Hitler's campaign through both governmental and private agencies. In 1933, these Thai military leaders together with Germans including Dr. Asmis, the German Minister, established a Thai-German cultural association under the chairmanship of Phya Phahon, and the secretary of Prayoon, who later served as Phibun's military secretary.⁴⁴ There were lots of activities promoting German culture such as sports and films.⁴⁵ German language courses were also started by the Goethe Institute within this association. The activities of the association, therefore, have become very popular in spreading German knowledge and culture.⁴⁶

Throughout his regime (1933-1938), it

⁴¹ See Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma: Memoirs of a Revolution, 1930-1946* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 33.

⁴² Reynolds, *Thailand and Japan's Southern Advance*, 26.

⁴³ On Germany's image in Asia, see William C. Kirby, *Germany and Republican China* (Stanford, 1984).

⁴⁴ *Hundert Jahre Deutsch-Thailandische Freundschaft* (100 years of Thai-German Relations) (Bangkok, Thailand: Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, 1962), 65.

⁴⁵ There are no details about these activities. But by using McKale's article, it is possible to say that these activities were supported by the AO and HJ. For instance, the AO and HJ sent propaganda films to the youth in most German schools.

⁴⁶ Manich Jumsai, *History of Thai-German Relations* (Bangkok, 1978), 88-89.

is not an exaggeration to say that Phya Phahon took steps as an agent of Hitler's campaign and introduced German culture in several ways. He not only directly established the Thai-German cultural association but also always credited the nationalist campaigns of Hitler with bringing progress in Germany.⁴⁷ Because of his actions, it is not surprising that the time of the nationalist campaigns of Hitler were contemporary events which were well-known in Thailand.⁴⁸

Additionally, in early Phya Phahon's leadership, a new youth movement along military lines, the YT, was founded in 1935 on behalf of Phibun as Minister of Defense. In creating this movement, Phya Phahon credited it as a part of national progress under the Constitution. In a speech over the radio Phya Phahon said: "We are imparting to the general public the knowledge of military work: for instance, the establishment of the Yuwachon movement, and the various talks given by Military Officers over the radio broad-

cast weekly".⁴⁹

The attempts to instill ultra-nationalism and militarism were greatly expanded after Phibun became prime minister in 1938 seeing that Phibun was clearly impressed by the triumphs of Hitler. He believed that the Fascist and National Socialist ideology of Mussolini and Hitler would fit into the new Thai society.⁵⁰ In other words, he viewed those campaigns in Germany as the most suitable means to unite the Thai nation and bring progress to the country.⁵¹

Conversely, those campaigns also would help Phibun to strengthen and legitimize his power. In the early years of his regime (1938-1944), Phibun developed the Hitler's campaign into Thai socio-political context farther than that of Phya Phahon. Trained in the military, infused with a taste for progress and modernism rather than for democracy, having come to power by the coup, and having established his rule by authoritarian power, it was quite natural for Phibun to admire the strong leadership of Hitler and adapt some of

⁴⁷ *Krom Khotsanakan, Kitchakan khong Samnakngan Khotsanakan* (The work of the Department of Publicity) (Bangkok, 1934), 2-3. In this text, it shows that the Phahon government always credited the nationalist campaigns of Hitler and Mussolini, and also Atatürk, with bringing progress in their countries.

⁴⁸ Jiraporn, "Nationalism and the Transformation of Aesthetic Concepts", 100.

⁴⁹ Phya Phahon Pholpayuphasena, "Siam's Progress Under the Constitution", *Siam Today*, January (1937), 4.

⁵⁰ Ray, *Portraits of Thai Politics*, 75; Jirporn, "Nationalism and the Transformation of Aesthetic Concepts", 98; and Saengduan Siyawong, "The Rise to Political Power of Colonel Luang Phibun Songkram, 1926-1938" (M.A. thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1991).

⁵¹ For an interesting analysis of Phibun and his army faction's political ideas, see Charvut, "The First Phibun Government", 27-34; and Saengduan, "The Rise to Political Power of Colonel Luang Phibun Songkram".

his policies and techniques, such as militarism, cultural reforms, and economic nationalism.⁵²

Thai militarism had been instilled in the youths since 1935 when Phibun set up the YT in various schools.⁵³ Hence he emphasized military dictatorship by promoting an authoritarian rule in order to build a unified nation under strong leadership. Phibun's predilection for authoritarian rule had been widely publicized in 1936 when he told a local Bangkok newspaper that he was in favor of a dictatorship in Thailand.⁵⁴ In 1937, he stated in a public speech that Thailand would advance as its military might advanced. He held up to the Thai the examples of Germany, Italy, and Japan, whose progress and independence, he stated, were a result of their military power.⁵⁵

In an attempt to further his aspirations, Phibun sent Prayoon as his military secretary to Germany in mid-1937 with

express instructions to study the organization and methods of government under the dictatorship of Hitler.⁵⁶ In other words, Prayoon had gone at Phibun's behest to study how Hitler had set up his dictatorship.⁵⁷ Prayoon spent a year in Germany.⁵⁸ On his return from Germany in 1938, we do not know yet what Prayoon learned from Germany and advised to Phibun. But after Prayoon came back home, it seems that Phibun knew more about Hitler's techniques and developed them into his regime farther than that of Phya Phahon.⁵⁹

Not surprisingly, after Phibun became prime minister on December 26, 1938, he soon gave Prayoon in charge of the YT and proceeded to expand it along the lines of the Hitler Youth movement.⁶⁰ Moreover, in the course of the first nine months of his government, Phibun began with ultra-nationalism and militarism by creating a similar type of chauvinistic order

⁵² Jirporn, "Nationalism and the Transformation of Aesthetic Concepts", 100; Reynolds, *Thailand and Japan's Southern Advance*, 26.

⁵³ B.J. Terwiel, *Field Marshal Plaek Phibun Songkhram* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1980), 11.

⁵⁴ Great Britain, Foreign Office, Annual Report 1936, F.O. 371/21053.

⁵⁵ Virginia Thompson, *Thailand: The New Siam* (New York, 1941), 306-307.

⁵⁶ Great Britain, Foreign Office, F.O. 271/21054, 7 July 1937.

⁵⁷ Stowe, *Siam becomes Thailand*, 100.

⁵⁸ According to Thai Official announcement, Prayoon went to study military science. But we do not know about what he did a year in Germany.

⁵⁹ In his work, Prayoon does not talk about this topic.

⁶⁰ Stowe, *Siam becomes Thailand*, 100; Reynolds, *Thailand and Japan's Southern Advance*, 26; and added facts, see Prayoon, *Chiwit*, 42-65.

in Thailand.⁶¹ In promoting Thai nationalist-militaristic campaign, Phibun used two appeals that paralleled key elements in the Nazi program: the scapegoating of a highly visible domestic minority group; and irredentism based on a claim of racial affinity.⁶² The Chinese, whose economic domination was quite real provided a ready target in the first instance. And the return of territory lost to the French Indochina became the objective in the second one.

In the first instance, the government concern about the Chinese community in Thailand dated from the early twentieth century. The Phibun government attempted to deal with the Chinese issue by imposing immigration restrictions, arresting and deporting suspected Chinese nationalist agitators, and closing Chinese schools and newspapers. The government also sought to encourage Thai economic advance by preserving certain occupations for citizens and by establishing state-sponsored enterprises to compete with the Chinese in various fields. These programs were in no way comparable in severity to the brutal Nazi repression of the Jews, and the concerns that inspired it were cultural and political, not racial, since some key members of the new elite had Chinese blood them-

selves. Still, there was always the danger that overzealous officials might push matters too far. Already, Luang Wichit Wathakan, the Phibun regime's chief propagandist, had stirred controversy by publicly referring to the Chinese as the "Jews of the East" and suggesting that Nazi-style measures might be appropriate.⁶³

In the second one, the militaristic-nationalistic program was aided immeasurably by the popularity of a pan-Thai movement that the military sponsored. The pan-Thai movement was based on the ethnic and historic connections between the Thai of Thailand and the Thai-speaking peoples in the Indochinese state of Laos and Cambodia, the Shan states of Burma, and Yunnan Province of China. The propaganda connected with the movement bears some resemblance to the German claims to Austria and the Sudetenland. The military clique's interest in asserting territorial claims had been made apparent in 1936 when Phibun circulated maps depicting the nation's "lost territories". Although land also had been sacrificed to the British, the irredentists focused on the more extensive and more "essentially Thai" areas taken by the French Indochina. In their view, France had stolen nearly

⁶¹ Jirporn, "Nationalism and the Transformation of Aesthetic Concepts", 99.

⁶² Reynolds, *Thailand and Japan's Southern Advance*, 27.

⁶³ See details in G. William Skinner, *Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957).

one-half of the nation's territory, almost half a million square kilometers. This claim was started in 1939 and led to fight between Thailand and French Indochina during 1940-1941. As a result, Thailand obtained an area of about 90,000 square kilometers from French Indochina. Phibun was credited with a great victory and awarded the title of "Field Marshal".⁶⁴

Admittedly, with Hitler's techniques, Phibun could strengthen the government by eliminating or weakening all active opposition factions and older elements in politics to the point where the new elite became the only organized political force within the country. Above all, he also affirmed the task of the military in guiding Thailand towards a democracy answerable to people's economic, social and political needs within the height of ultra-nationalism. Hence his affirmation made the forces become dominant in politics to a greater extent. In fact, throughout the late 1930s and early 1940s, the military leadership in the political affairs of the nation was a tough one, influencing nationalist policy and practice. Essentially, the military argued that the only effective response to internal political transition and governmental instability was the establishment of a durable administration devoid of any opposition.

In this fashion, needless to say Phibun's leadership was questioned and then labeled as an autocracy. Yet, through his office, parliamentary forms of government, along with elections were basically retained, Phibun was forced out in July 1944 seeing as he joined with Japan in the Second World War.

To sum up after the 1932 coup, the Hitler influence-nationalist campaigns became evident in the Thai socio-political context because the pro-German group rose to power and sought to create a similar type of chauvinistic order in Thailand. Accordingly, Phibun and his group exercised an authoritarian policy through popular consent by promoting nationalist-militaristic campaigns. In these promotions, the first significant effort to popularize the role of the military was Phya Phahon-Phibun's creation of the militaristic youth organization, the YT.

The YT and its movement

There is no question that the establishment of the YT was introduced by the Hitler Youth because the concept and form of the youth organization as a political force was relatively new and did not come into existence in Thai society before. In Thai society, children were taught to "wai"

⁶⁴ For more features, see Charivat Santaputra, *Thai Foreign Policy 1932-1946* (Bangkok: Thammasat University Press, 1985).

(putting the palms of their hands together and bowing down toward the hands) to say “phu yai” (a person who is older in age, rank, and title) since they were very young. A proper respect for elders was very important to the child’s future. When the child grows up, if he or she goes to school, the same idea of “phu noi” (one who is younger in age and rank or title) paying respect to “phu yai” comes up every often. With this kind of long tradition of submissiveness, there were not any young activities in Thai socio-political context until the mid-1930s.⁶⁵

Instead the first youth movement, the YT, came into existence in Thailand in the nineteenth century with the rise of the “Young Europe” movements. The movements occurred during periods of rapid urbanization, industrialization, and nationalist struggle over political independence and constitutional reform. All of these factors stimulated young people’s awareness and enthusiasm for increased participation in politics.⁶⁶ Among these

movements, the most influential was the Hitler Youth. When Phya Phahon and Phibun set up the YT, it seems that they were aware of the usefulness and power of the young’s participation in the constitutional regime. To them and their men the best way of gaining youth support was to awaken, focus and mobilize them along military lines.

Undoubtedly, the YT was imported into Thai society by Hitler’s campaigns all the way through the pro-German group of the People’s Party. After this movement, the concept of youth as a political force, in Thailand could propagate militarism, ultra-nationalism, and Phibun’s influence among the young. The new youth movement had its beginnings in 1935, and by the end of 1937 was known all over Thailand.⁶⁷ Like the HJ, the YT was provided with military training because its object was to train the youth in physical culture, military discipline, and organized co-operation.⁶⁸ The youths were supplied with uniforms, drilled as soldiers, and had oc-

⁶⁵ King Rama VI set up a kind of young organization, but it was not a youth movement.

⁶⁶ See exciting details in Richard G. Braungart, “Historical and Generational Patterns of Youth Movements: A Global Perspective”, in *Comparative Social Research*, ed. Richard F. Tomasson. (London: Jai Press Inc., 1984), 3-62.

⁶⁷ J. Crosby, F.O. 7676/216/40, 2; and see details in Scot Barne, *Luang Wichit Wathakan and the Creation of a Thai Identity* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993), 104-137.

⁶⁸ The Hitler Youth commanders stressed the importance of obedience to Nazi leaders, particularly Hitler. At that same time, members were provided military training which, potentially, could make them effective Storm Troopers. Norbert A. Huebsch, “The ‘Wolf Cubs’ of the New Order: The Indoctrination and Training of the Hitler Youth”, in *Nazism and the Common Man*, ed. Otis C. Mitchell (Minnesota: Burgess Publishing Company, 1972), 79-92.

casual reviews by military officers. Its purpose was to instill a military spirit in the young men.⁶⁹

On the record, the YT, similar to the HJ, was divided into three groups by age, and girls had their own group as well.⁷⁰ The first, or practice stage, was for boys 10 to 14 years of age whose parents were willing to have them trained. The boys had to be recommended by their school teachers. The second, or fully trained stage, was for boys 14-16 or in the secondary grades at school. The boy had to be at least 145 centimeters tall and had a doctor's certificate for physical fitness. The third, or officer grade, was for older boys 16-18 or for students at Chulalongkorn University. Students who left school might continue in the Yuwachon movement if they desired.⁷¹ It meant that they could start training any time and at different levels of education, secondary level, pre-university or the university level. If they passed the university level, they could

launch their career as a Sub-Lieutenant if they so desired.⁷²

A slogan was invented to encourage the boys to join the military when they grew up: "The boy of today is the man of tomorrow. He who makes investment in time and money in the lives of the boys today writes his name in large letters tomorrow. Whose name will be written in letters of gold by the historians of tomorrow".⁷³ Girls also were encouraged to help the country in the time of need by joining the "Yuwanari" group (Young Female Military Corps). They would be trained as nurse aids. There were similar levels as the boys, but the girls would not have military rank once they passed the training.⁷⁴

Unlike those of the HJ, there were neither any specific or political education nor schools, for particular training of the YT.⁷⁵ Yet after Prayoon headed the YT in 1938, its ideology moved close to that of the Hitler Youth, particularly militarism,

⁶⁹ Landon, *Siam in Transition*, 57.

⁷⁰ The term "Hitler Youth" is used in reference to the broad structure of the Nazi youth organization which included boys and girls from six to twenty-one years of age. The HJ in its narrowest meaning refers to a specific youth element of boys, ages fourteen to eighteen. Under Gruber, however, the Hitler Jugend was divided three ways by age: boys 10 to 14 joined one group, boys 14-16 another, and older boys 16-18 still another. Girls had their own group as well. David Crawford Poteet, "The Nazi Youth Movement, 1920-1927", (Ph.D. diss., the University of Georgia, 1971), 213-223; and Huebsch, "The 'Wolf Cubs' of the New Order," 79-82.

⁷¹ Landon, *Siam in Transition*, 57.

⁷² Krairiksh, "The Politics of Pibul", 182.

⁷³ *Thai Chronicle*, July 20, 1939.

⁷⁴ Krairiksh, "The Politics of Pibul", 182-183.

⁷⁵ In Thailand there were no any specific schools which were similar to the Adolf Hitler Schools.

and ultra-nationalism.⁷⁶ According to the magazine of this organization, Yuwachon thahan, sponsored by the Army during the Phibun regime and first published in 1939, anti-Chinese sentiment and ultra-nationalism were a constant theme in indoctrination.⁷⁷ In the first publishing of this magazine, for instance, there are various articles talking about anti-Chinese measures, which were necessary in order to give the Thai control over their own economy and society.⁷⁸

One of the most popular articles of course is Wichit Wathakan's, the Phibun regime's chief propagandist.⁷⁹ Wichit compared the Chinese in Thailand to the Jews in Germany and implied that Hitler's policies toward them were worth considering.⁸⁰ To indoctrinate this new theme, the Thai educational system, however, did not

change so much in either school curriculums or structure. In Germany, Nazi political education consisted of inculcating racial theories, notions of German supremacy, distorted history, details of the national socialist movement, and other points of the new Weltanschauung.⁸¹ But in Thailand there were not any of these kinds of political education in schools or universities that could compare with those of the Nazis.⁸²

Also boys and girls in the YT, unlike those of the HJ, were voluntary. It seems that among the youth organization in the world only in Germany did the Nazi youth organization become compulsory for all youths.⁸³ In Thailand up until the early 1940s, the total number of members never exceeded twenty thousand. When the YT was instituted in Bangkok in 1935, there

⁷⁶ The Volkische ideology of the Hitler Youth included anti-liberalism, anti-parliamentarism, anti-Semitism, ultra-nationalism and belief in the Führerprinzip. Howard Becker, *German Youth: Bond or Free* (Westport CT: Greenwood Bettelheim, 1976), 153-161.

⁷⁷ Like the HJ, the YT constructed a sophisticated press and propaganda network with its own newspapers and magazines. The magazine of the Yuwachon thahan (weekly) was first published in 1939.

⁷⁸ See the magazine of *the Yuwacho Thahan* (1939) v.1, no.1.

⁷⁹ For an interesting account of Wichit, see the works of Barne, *Luang Wichit Wathakan*; and Jirporn, "Nationalism and the Transformation of Aesthetic Concepts".

⁸⁰ See *Ibid.*

⁸¹ See details in Peter D. Stachura, *The German Youth Movement 1900-1945: An Interpretative and Documentary History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), 121-158; and Huebsch, "The 'Wolf Cubs' of the New Order", 83-89.

⁸² See details in Wendell Blanchard, *Thailand: its people its society and its culture* (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files Inc., 1958), 444-461.

⁸³ See Stanley K. Shernock, "Politics and Opportunity in the Post-Revolutionary Generation: The Cases of Nazi Germany, Stalinist U.S.S.R., and Maoist China", *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, 12 (Spring 1984), 137-159.

were only 400 members.⁸⁴ Two years later it had already been established in ten districts (local branches) and comprised of some 3,000 boys.⁸⁵ In addition, of the Department of Youth Corps of the Army was set up for the enrollment of Young Military Engineering Corps, Young Professional Corps.⁸⁶ Under the leadership of Prayoon, the YT had grown to become a considerable force, and there were estimated to be 11,000 members in 1939.⁸⁷ Before the Second World War broke out in Asia in 1941, it increased to 20,000 boys and had been set up in seventeen districts.⁸⁸ Most members came from middle-class families in Bangkok and other urban centers.⁸⁹

Although the YT organizations were

not large in comparison with their counterpart in Germany⁹⁰, their impact was essential to urban areas, particularly in Bangkok and its vicinity.⁹¹ Yet their actions were not involved in political violence and strife, unlike that of the HJ.⁹² Instead the main activities still appeared as peaceful demonstrations to support Phibun and his nationalist-militaristic policies. The first demonstration came as a part of mass rally of soldiers to express support for Phibun to become prime minister in 1938.⁹³ But the most popular march occurred during the irredentist campaign.

In order to drive this campaign, the return of territory lost to the French Indochina in 1940-1941, Phibun needed mass support for his irredentist procedure. In this manner,

⁸⁴ *The Yuwachon Thahan* (1939) v.1 no.1, 39.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 39; and J. Crosby, F.O. 7676/216/40, 2.

⁸⁶ Suchit Bunbongkarn, "Am naj thang karn moeng khong phu namThaharn Thai suksa prierp thiep rawang Chomphon Po. Phibunsongkhram kab Chomphon Sarit Thanarat" (The Political Power of Military Leaders: A Comparative Study between Field Marshal P. Phibunsongkhram and Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat), in *Rak moeng Thai* (Love Thailand) (Bangkok: Thai-watthanaphant Press, 1976), 196.

⁸⁷ *The Yuwachon Thahan* (1940) v.4 no.3, 45.

⁸⁸ *The Yuwachon Thahan* (1942) v.5 no.1, 29.

⁸⁹ Most members came from families, which were military officers, civil servants and academics, salaried employees of the majority of modern business, small businesspersons and shopkeepers, and independent professionals. See *The Yuwachon Thahan* (1939-1942).

⁹⁰ The HJ had grown by 1939 to the largest youth organization in the world.

⁹¹ See Batson, "Siam and Japan: The Perils of Independence", 278.

⁹² Violence in its many forms was a permanent feature of the last years of the Kampfzeit for the HJ. The HJ was especially prone to radicalization because of the traumatic effects of a lost war and hard economic times, which bred bitterness and a savage, coarse outlook on life among the lower classes who were the most severely hit. See details in Peter D. Stachura, *Nazi Youth in the Weimar Republic* (California: Clio Books, 1975), 177-198.

⁹³ Stowe, *Siam becomes Thailand*, 105-106.

Prayoon manipulated the occasion to stress the justice of Thailand's demands for its lost territories and insisted on the YT to join in the struggle.⁹⁴ As a result, the irredentist agitation quickly spread through the schools and university in Bangkok. On 8 October, 1940, about 3,000 military youths from Chulalongkorn University and its affiliates paraded to the Ministry of Defense and met Phibun. These military students went there to donate money and demonstrate unity in claiming back the ceded territories.⁹⁵ On the same day, about 5,000 students from another university such as Thammasat proposed a march to present their support for the government's policy.⁹⁶ A few days afterward, there were spontaneous parades in several provinces, with the backing of the YT, in order to hold up the policy.⁹⁷

To be brief, even though the concept and form of the youth organization was introduced by the Hitler Youth, the YT and its movement had their own characteristics. The YT was providing military training, and it could propagate militarism and ultra-nationalism among the young.

Interestingly enough, the YT was the first youth movement that stimulated young people's awareness and enthusiasm for increased participation in modern Thai politics. Yet its impact was limited in urban areas, particularly in Bangkok and its surrounding area as well as some provinces. In addition, the YT became a considerable force and participated more and more in politics for the duration the Phibun government. Still it was a non-violent movement and could not develop to be a social mass organization. After the military regime was ousted in 1944, the YT was also declined and then abolished into another youth, British model, a boy scout. On December 31, 1946, the civilian government led by Phibun's enemy, the Pridi-led camp, passed a bill abolishing the YT, and on the same day was passed the Boy Scout Act.⁹⁸

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, the YT was introduced by the Hitler campaign through the group of Thai military who had links to Germany and/or were impressed by the achieve-

⁹⁴ Ibid., 153.

⁹⁵ *Publicity News*, v.3 no.7, October 1940, 1557.

⁹⁶ *The Yuwachon Thahan* (1940) v.10 no.2, 9.

⁹⁷ *The Yuwachon Thahan* (1940) v.11 no.3, 3.

⁹⁸ See Stanton, *Fortnightly Summary of Political Events in Siam for the period December 16- December 31, 1946, January, 1947*, 892.00/1-847, RG 59, United States National Archives, Washington, D.C. and Maryland (USNA).

ment of Nazism. This group was the core of the People's Party and became its leaders after they were successful in overthrowing the absolute monarchy in 1932. They admired Hitler and believed that fascist/national socialist techniques might help foster the spirit and discipline needed to unify and strengthen their power and the nation. Partly for this reason they established the youth organization and proceeded to expand it along the lines of the Hitler Youth.

The YT and its movement, however, were not quite identical to their counterpart in Germany. They had their own story, a story in which the Hitler youth was a small but essential part. Even though the YT and its movement proceeded to expand along the lines of the HJ, the membership in this organization was voluntary. Unlike those of the HJ, most of them grew up in the middle class rather than working class. Moreover, they were not involved in violent behavior and fighting. Their activities occurred in the forms of the peaceful demonstrations to support the armed government's policies. Under the government's patronage, the YT became a considerable force and participated more and more in the Thai socio-political context. Its movement could propagate

militarism and ultra-nationalism among the young, yet its impact was limited in urban areas. Notably, the YT could not magnify as a mass movement.

Why were the YT and its movement so different from their counterpart in Germany? To answer this question, there are several ways depending on methods used. If we take a political economy approach, it is clear why they were different. The major factor that made the YT different from the Hitler Youth was the working class. In Thailand, at that time there was less working class as a consequence of less economic developments. The Nazi success in the 1930s was not only due to the structural condition of unemployment but also due to the politicization and mobilized violence attributed to the resistance offered by socialist workers and communists against Nazi strong-arm tactics. The three years of resulting conflict made the middle class receptive to the promises by the Nazis to restore law-and-order.⁹⁹

The Hitler Youth took place and developed its movement under such situations. This Youth came of age during the late 1920s and early 1930s when Germany was facing the aftermath of military defeat, massive unemployment, violent ideological conflict and political

⁹⁹ For a fascinating analysis of this topic, see Anthony Oberschall, *Social Conflict and Social Movements* (NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973).

instability. In the election of 1930, 4,600,000 first-time youthful voters went to the polls and brought Hitler his first major electoral victory.¹⁰⁰ In this sense, there is no question why the YT and its movement were different from those of the Hitler Youth because Thai political and economic developments were lesser. Moreover, the YT did not share similar experiences with the Hitler Youth since there were not any political and economic crisis situations in Thailand that could compare with those of in Germany.

Then again, if we take a cultural approach, we may find some more interesting answers to better understand why they were so different. Like Fascism or nationalism, the Hitler Youth movement must be viewed as the global phenomenon for the reason that it spread not only in Europe but also in Asia, Africa, and South America. In this regard, we thus should not consider the YT as a simply matter of emulating that of Hitler. Instead it should be considered as a culture phenomenon in terms of "localization". In other words, the YT and its movement emerged as a result of German influence and local adaptations. I hope that this approach will contribute new insights to

the history of the first youth movement in Thailand. In my preliminary overviews, I found there are no studies that sought to explain the YT as a cultural phenomenon.

In this view, the process of transculturation and localization must be primary and given full credits. A history or genealogy of anything is by no means a simple duplication from its "stem cells". Rather, it involves other conditions and factors at the locations and moments of its development. This means that after we looked at the origins and the spread, our attention should be shifted to the moments and locations of "translation", in which the new influence and the existing ones come into contact, exchange their meanings and values, and resolve any conflict or tension or simply produce the hybridization. In doing so, I expect to contribute to a more nuanced and empirically grounded understanding of the YT and its movement. These also pose an array of interesting problems in terms of facts and concepts, whose significances are more appropriate for a future research.

¹⁰⁰Herbert Moller, "Youth as a Force in the Modern World". in *Youth and Sociology*, ed. P.K. Manning and M. Truzzi (NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 215-237.