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Intellectual Discourse
Vol. 28, No. 1, 2020

Contents

Editorial

Ishtiaq Hossain 1

Pathways of Becoming Political Party Activists:
The Experiences From Malay-Muslim Grassroots Party Activists
*Wan Rohila A. Ganti Bt. Wan Abdul Ghapar &
Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid* 5

Mediation and Interreligious Discourse: Prospects and
Challenges in Resolving Interreligious Skirmishes in Malaysia
Haslina Ibrahim & Ainul Jaria bt. Maidin 35

Examining the Role of ‘Ulama in the
Islamization Process of the Malay World
Mohd Noh Abdul Jalil & Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor 61

Role of Judaism, Christianity and Islam
in Promoting Human Values in the Strife-Torn World
Israr Ahmad Khan 77

Mathematics Anxiety and Performance among College Students:
Effectiveness of Systematic Desensitization Treatment
Najihah Akeb-urai, Nor Ba’ Yah Abdul Kadir & Rohany Nasir 99

Faith and Practice: Islamic Perspectives on Robert Browning
Rehnuma Bint Anis & Md. Mahmudul Hasan 129

Syariah Criminal Law Enforcement in
Hisbah Framework: Practice In Malaysia
*Alias Azhar, Muhammad Hafiz Badarulzaman,
Fidlizan Muhammad & Siti Zamarina Mat Zaib* 149

Imperialism, Colonialism and their Contribution to the Formation of Malay and Chinese Ethnicity: An Historical Analysis <i>Khauthar Ismail</i>	171
Removal of Despotic Political Regime: The Abū Dharr’s Legacy and Its Legitimacy <i>Mohd. Shah Jani & Raudlotul Firdaus binti Fatah Yasin</i>	195
Nigeria’s Foreign Policy Goals in Peacekeeping Operations in Africa <i>Sani Safiyanu, Roy Anthony Rogers, Wan Sharina Ramlah Wan Ahmad & Amin Jaffri</i>	215
Ecological Modernization in Malaysia: A Review of Pakatan Harapan’s Manifesto During the 14th General Election Within the Context of Ecological Modernization Framework <i>Noor Asyhikin Binti Abd Razak & Nor Azlin Binti Tajuddin</i>	241
Education for the Production and Re-Production of Docile Civic Bodies: The Problems of Civic Education in Thailand <i>Siwach Sripokangkul</i>	261
Revisiting Southeast Asian Civil Islam: Moderate Muslims and Indonesia’s Democracy Paradox <i>M. Khusna Amal</i>	295
Conceptualizing Islamic Ethics for Contemporary Muslim Societies <i>Fethi B. Jomaa Ahmed</i>	319
<i>Book Reviews</i> States of Separation. Transfer, Partition, and the Making of the Modern Middle East. By Laura Robson. Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 2017, pp. 247. ISBN 9785229215427 Reviewer: <i>Kaoutar Guediri</i>	345

Our Constitution. By Shad Saleem Faruqi. Subang Jaya,
Malaysia: Sweet & Maxwell, 2019, pp. 425.
ISBN 9789672187059 (paperback).
Reviewer: *Ramizah Wan Muhammad*

349

Metodologi Penyelidikan Dalam Pendidikan:
Amalan dan Analisis Kajian. By Ghazali Darusalam &
Sufean Hussin. Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Malaya, 2019,
pp. 630. ISBN: 978-967-488-009-5.
Reviewer: *Khairil Husaini Bin Jamil*

353

Education for the Production and Re-production of Docile Bodies: The Problems of Civic Education in Thailand

Siwach Sripokangkul*

Abstract: In the protracted political conflict which has plagued Thailand for over a decade, Thai traditional elites and old-style bureaucrats have stated that the problem of Thai political development derives from a lack of ‘citizenship’ characteristics in Thai people. In their view, the best solution has been to educate the masses and to cultivate civic education by teaching both it and Thai ‘core values’ as a subject to students. As a result, the students have become patriotic “saviours”. They are expected to be strong citizens who can solve the political development problem under the ‘Democratic Regime of the Government with the King as Head of State’. This article seeks to understand the result of a curriculum including the two subjects of civic education and history which have been taught in Thai schools for 12 years, covering both primary and secondary schools. What type of Thai citizen does this curriculum desire to produce and re-produce? The author rigorously analyzed a corpus of civic education and history textbooks and argues that the contents of these subjects are designed to transform students into ‘docile’ bodies. They have become “objects” which are ordered and imposed on by the state ideology, which produces and re-produces them to be ultra-royalists and ultra-nationalists.

Keywords: Citizenship, Civic Education, Docile bodies, History, Thailand

Abstrak: Dalam konflik politik yang berlarutan menimpa Thailand selama lebih dari satu dekad, orang elit tradisional Thailand dan kumpulan birokrat cara lama telah menyatakan bahawa masalah perkembangan politik di Thailand berpunca daripada kurangnya ciri ‘kewarganegaraan’ yang terdapat pada orang Thai. Pada pandangan mereka, jalan penyelesaian yang terbaik

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adalah dengan mendidik masyarakat mereka dan membudayakan pendidikan sivik dengan mengajarnya melalui nilai-nilai teras Thailand sebagai satus subjek kepada pelajar-pelajar mereka. Hasilnya, para pelajar telah menjadi “penyelamat” yang patriotik. Mereka diharapkan dapat menjadi warga negara yang kuat serta dapat menyelesaikan masalah pembangunan politik di bawah ‘Rejim Demokratik Pemerintah dengan Raja sebagai Ketua Negara’. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk memahami hasil kurikulum terutamanya bagi dua mata pelajaran iaitu pendidikan sivik dan sejarah, yang masing-masing telah diajar di sekolah Thailand selama 12 tahun, merangkumi pada peringkat sekolah rendah dan di peringkat sekolah menengah. Apakah jenis warga Thailand yang ingin dihasilkan dan dibentuk semula oleh kurikulum ini? Penulis menganalisisnya dengan teliti korpus buku-buku teks pendidikan sivik dan sejarah. Beliau berpendapati bahawa kandungan mata pelajaran tersebut dirancang untuk mengubah pelajar-pelajar menjadi anggota masyarakat yang patuh dan taat setia kepada negara mereka. Mereka telah menjadi “objek” yang diperintah dan dipaksa oleh ideologi negara, bagi menghasilkan dan menghasilkannya semula uspanya mereka menjadi warganegara yang paling taat dan paling nasionalis sekali.

Kata kunci: Kewarganegaraan, Pendidikan sivik, Anggota masyarakat yang patuh, Sejarah, Thailand

Introduction

Since the mid-2000s, Thailand’s protracted political conflict and ensuing political polarization has been affecting Thai society in multiple ways. When focusing on the area of education, it becomes evident that the prolonged conflict has prompted Thai traditional elites and old-style bureaucrats to increase their efforts to indoctrinate students through mandatory subjects such as history and civic education. This occurred as Queen Sirikit, who is a strong advocate of conservatism, publicly complained in 2008: “...Thailand’s ancestors have sacrificed their lives and given their blood to protect this land. But it is regrettable that the Prime Minister now does not allow [people] to learn about their history. I also don’t understand this... our country’s soil was soaked in our ancestors’ blood so that all of us can live in harmony together in our nation, and now we do not allow them to learn about history anymore” (Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards, 2015, p.4). This statement was made with reference to the government of Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej, who had ordered the dispersal of the protests of the Yellow Shirts, an anti-democratic pressure group.

The Queen's observation, however, was factually incorrect. Thailand had, of course, not abandoned the teaching of history as such an order would surely be beyond the powers of the prime minister. Not only that, the country's history is in fact being taught from elementary school to university and is continuously reproduced through movies, documentaries, television series, and popular books, as well as in statements by the Thai elite in the media. The Queen's statement caused a stir in the circles of education bureaucrats, who were eager to address the complaints of Her Majesty. Earlier, this group had provided similar support to the conservative elite, such as the Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards under the Ministry of Education, in its campaign to produce several school textbooks about history education and the development of Thai citizenship, based on the century-old manufactured nationalist concept of 'Thainess'.

In 2010, the Bureau amended the 2008 national core curriculum for the subjects of social studies, religion and culture and increased the mandatory learning hours for the subjects of history and civic education for the elementary and high school levels. The learning hours were increased from 20 hours to 40 hours annually for elementary school students and from 40 hours to 80 hours annually for secondary school students. In addition, the teaching content of the subjects history and civic education was harmonized with the objective "to educate the youth about Thainess including its origins, Thai culture, Thai wisdom, Thai traditions, and the bravery of our ancestors in order to instill love and pride, as well to maintain Thainess forever," established by Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards (2015, p.44). The Bureau justified the changes with the need to "respond to the policy to develop the teaching and learning of history in line with the order of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit" (2015, p.44).

After the coup d'état on May 22, 2014, the military junta, the 'National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO)', ordered further intensification of developing and teaching the curricula for both subjects. The NCPO claimed to follow the objective of promoting knowledge and understanding of the history of Thainess, love for the nation and religion, and admiration for the monarchy among children and youth so that they grow up to become good citizens in a democratic system. The Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards also organized several meetings and activities related to the teaching of

history and civic education. This included regular training sessions for educational supervisors, teachers and educational staff who occupied leading positions in local education offices throughout the country. The participants were expected to disseminate their newly acquired knowledge in their local areas. The Bureau also held a large number of conferences, bringing together the management personnel of education institutions in order to further develop the subjects of history and civic education. Moreover, the NCPO's '12 Core Values of Thai People', a foundation plank for Thai education from primary schools through secondary education designed to create a disciplined pro-royalist and pro-military unity of purpose, were included in the civic education curriculum. Personnel from the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), part of the Ministry of Defence, held lectures titled 'The History of the Thai Nation and the Debt of Gratitude to the Thai Monarch' and attended activities with students nationwide on many occasions (Kruapanich, 2015).

Based on a review of the curricula of the history and the civic education subjects, the author argues that despite the topic of citizenship being a broad area of study, Thai school students are prevented from coming to understand themselves as strong citizens and members of Thai society. The curricula of the two subjects are designed to order and impose docility, as described in the traditional education concept of John Dewey (1938) or the banking education concept of Paulo Freire (1970). In addition, students grow up experiencing anti-democratic incidents under Thailand's government. Before presenting the results of this research, the author will first propose a framework to investigate the definition of citizenship and citizenship education based on the models of Dewey and Freire.

Citizenship and citizenship education

Strong citizenship is considered an important building block of established democracies. Here, citizenship is defined internationally, without its meaning being reduced to the specific context of the democratic system of a particular country (Davies & Evans, 2002; Garratt, 2000; Hicks, 2001). The model of justice oriented citizens (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), which has been widely adopted by scholars of citizenship, goes beyond the models of the personally responsible citizen or the participatory citizen. It features three defining

characteristics: 1) critically assessing social, political and economic structures to see beyond surface causes, 2) seeking out and addressing areas of injustice, and 3) knowing about social movements and how to effect systematic change. This type of citizen is capable of creatively addressing and solving various problems in society and of asking questions about structural change and long-established systems. In addition, principles and important values of citizenship must at least include the principles and values of social inclusion, equality and justice (Garratt & Piper, 2003, p.130).

This definition forms a foundation of democratic societies and is relevant for any polities that strive to develop strong citizenship. It stands in stark contrast to citizenship models in authoritarian polities, which reject such definitions by naturally seeking to produce ‘subjects’. Regardless of whether referring to the rulers or the ruled, as citizens all people are equal and equipped with the right to politically participate on different levels. Another important difference between subjects and citizens is the ability of the latter to express critical thoughts (Merieau, 2014, p.29).

It must be noted that the educational objective to develop citizens with critical spirits has long been a subject of academic discussion. Freire (1970) wrote that the development of people’s critical consciousness (‘conscientization’) prevents people from falling for “destructive fanaticism.” Conscientization instills people with a spirit of liberation and non-surrender that enables them to reject attitudes of determinism and fatalism. In other words, a critical consciousness immunizes citizens from becoming subjects who are willing to live stagnant lives in fear of change and freedom to think differently.

It can be argued that a large number of polities, especially non-democratic ones, have adopted the concept of traditional education with the main goal to prepare the young for future responsibilities and for success in life, as critically observed by John Dewey (1938). However, this educational model imposes learning objectives, learning methods and a body of knowledge from above, rigidly and without any flexibility. The model expects students to adopt an attitude of docility, receptivity and obedience. Dewey (1938, p.18) writes: “Books, especially textbooks, are the chief representatives of the lore and wisdom of the past, while teachers are the organs through which pupils are brought into effective

connection with the material. Teachers are the agents through which knowledge and skills are communicated and rules of conduct enforced.” Through its emphasis on instructions, lectures and text-book learning to instill rules of social conduct, traditional education is characterized by external control and the ultimate goal to uphold the status quo in society. In progressive education, on the other hand, emphasis is put on students’ self-consciousness and learning through experiences, free activities and situation-based learning. The ultimate goal of this type of education is to change the world.

Freire (1970, p.71-72) coined the term ‘banking education’ to refer to models of traditional education:

“Narration (with the teacher as narrator) leads the students to memorize mechanically the narrated account. Worse yet, it turns them into “containers,” into “receptacles” to be “filled” by the teachers. The more completely she fills the receptacles, the better a teacher she is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are... Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the ‘banking’ concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits.”

Freire argues that banking education constitutes oppression and violence. “Functionally, oppression is domesticating” (p.51) because this type of education hinders humans in their pursuits of self-affirmation. “With the establishment of a relationship of oppression, violence has already begun” (p.55) while contributing to dehumanization as it prevents people from realizing their potential. In other words, this form of education views humans as manageable things that ought to be brought under complete control. As Freire (1970, p.73) puts it, “the banking concept of education regards men as adaptable, manageable beings. The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness.” Banking education is therefore a tool of state control to produce docile subjects rather than encourage students to understand themselves as citizens. Certainly, students cannot enter the struggle as objects in order to later become citizens.

Simultaneously, this form of education provides an arena for the state's ideological reproduction (Althusser, 1971). Students are coerced in direct and indirect ways to internalize knowledge nostalgic towards its origins through suppressive state structures. In turn, these structures are reinforced, and the state is further empowered to manage the education system without any public participation whatsoever. In summary, the relationship between oppressor and the oppressed can be compared to a prescription: "Every prescription represents the imposition of one individual's choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the person prescribed to into one that conforms with the preserver's consciousness. Thus, the behavior of the oppressed is a prescribed behavior, following as it does the guidelines of the oppressor" (Freire, 1970, p.47). In such an education system, the role of the teachers is reduced to being a mere medium for the state, whose orders they have to obey. In consequence, the system not only harms the students but also the teaching personnel.

Against this background, the objective of this article is to discuss the content of the history and civic education subjects, which have been taught in Thai schools for twelve years, including in both primary and secondary schools, as based on the 2008 National Basic Core Curriculum for the subjects of Social Studies, and Religion and Culture. After the military coup d'état in 2014, the curricula of both subjects were intensified in line with the objectives of the country's military government. The following discussion is based on a large number of sources, such as teachers' manuals, books, textbooks, lesson plans, exercise papers, exercises taken from school books, examination questions, teaching activities and instruction media. The author also visited three schools in Khon Kaen province in 2018 to observe lectures and activities facilitated by ISOC. Based on an analysis of these sources, the author argues that the History subject is designed to turn students into ultra-royalists and ultra-nationalists while the Civic Education subject aims to create docile subjects under the junta-backed notion of the 'Democratic Regime of the Government with the King as Head of State'.

Royal-nationalism history in the Thai History subject

The history subject as taught in Thai schools gives first and foremost importance to the history and the narratives of the monarchy and its

role in the nation-building project. It is claimed that the Thai nation was able to prosper from the medieval Sukhothai era to the early modern Rattanakosin era, solely because of the skills and intelligence of the monarchs. The subject focuses almost exclusively on teaching students about the heroic acts of the monarchs of each period. Students are instructed to memorize not only every monarch's year of birth, period of rule and a large number of other details but also the dates relating to other royals and aristocrats (Puangpis & Munsin, 2018).

It should be noted that all years and names discussed in this article are taken from the Thai history lessons, without checking actual factual accuracy. In first grade, students are introduced to the subject by learning the important royal holidays of the calendar and the nation's symbols, such as the national anthem, the national flag, the Thai language, and Thai foods. Other symbols of the Thai nation that students are expected to be familiar with are the royal portraits, the map of the country, and the Thai currency. Second grade focuses on Thai cultural heritage and wars with neighboring countries. In third grade, students learn about the history of each king and their roles in the development of the nation. In fourth, fifth and sixth grade, students continue to learn about acts monarchs' heroic acts, covering the historical periods of the Sukhothai (1238-1438), Ayutthaya (1350-1767), Thonburi (1767-1782), and Rattanakosin Kingdoms (1782-present).

In high school, the curriculum focuses on the same topics, but students are taught in more detail. For example, in seventh grade, the prehistoric period and the establishment of the Sukhothai Kingdom are covered. In eighth grade, the establishment of the Ayutthaya Kingdom, the first and second Burmese-Siamese Wars, independence and the establishment of the Thonburi Kingdom are taught. Students are also made familiar with the brave acts and achievements in nation-building of several royal individuals, including King Rama II (1473–1529), Queen Suriyothai (1511-1548), King Naresuan (1555-1556-1605), King Narai (1633-1688), King Taksin (1734-1782), King Rama I of Rattanakosin (1737-1809) and Maha Sura Singhanat (1744-1803). From the third year onwards, students learn about the establishment of the royal city of Bangkok, wars with neighboring countries, the loss of territories to the colonial powers of France and the United Kingdom, and the role of the monarch in national progress and national security up until the present. At the end of high school, the contents of the first years are repeated,

and the skills and intelligence of the Rattanakosin dynasty of monarchs, from Rama I to Rama IX, are reiterated in detail.

Based on an analysis of the curriculum of the history subject and examinations in grades 1-3, students are instructed to memorize historical narratives without any periodization, which is only emphasized in the later years of primary school. In the first to third year, elementary students are instilled with ultra-nationalist thoughts. The teaching content emphasizes the importance of the monarch and individuals involved in wars with neighboring countries. For example, one examination question refers to 'Grandma Mo' (1771-1852), a woman involved in the war against the King of Vientiane Anouvong: "How did Grandma Mo escape the capture by the Vientiane armed forces? A. She mobilized everyone to stand up and fight; B. She made a plan to gain the trust of the Lao soldiers; C. She pleaded for her life until she was released (Correct answer is B.)" or "Who captured Grandma Mo before she could escape? A. King Anouvong; B. Prince Sarawong; C. Khuang Aphaiwong (Correct answer is A)" (Sinthapanon, n.d.a). In third grade, exam questions test the memorization skills of the students with questions like: "The Chakri Day is related to what king?"; "What is the significance of King Si Inthrahit (1238-1270)?"; "What was King Si Inthrahit' previous title?"; and "What was an important heroic act of King Naresuan (1555-1556-1605)? A. Establishing Camp Bang Rachan; B. Winning the city by betting on fighting roosters; C. Fighting with the Burmese soldiers until the swords broke; D. Using war elephants to gain victory against Burmese Mingyi Swa (Correct answer is D.)" "How did Thao Thep Krasatri and Thao Si Sunthon manage to win against Burma when Thalang city had less troops? A. They used guerilla tactics; B. They negotiated for the Burmese troops to retreat; C. They used a trick to confuse the Burmese side; D. They pretended to treat the Burmese soldiers well to lure them into the city (Correct answer is C.)" The examination is focused only on rote memorization and covers content about battles. The students are not supposed to select any other answer than the one that is considered correct in the curriculum, even in highly ambiguous questions like this: "What is the effect of studying the heroic acts of the Thai ancestors? A. Pride; B. Perseverance; C. Sacrifice; D. Compassion. (Correct answer is A)" (Sinthapanon, n.d.b).

In the final three grades, the history subject begins to outline the mainstream hypothesis that the origin of the Thai nation can be traced

back to the ruling period of Sukhothai, and that Thailand flourished because of the bravery of the monarchs and the special talents of every king. The related examinations focus on memorizing answers to questions like “The Sukhothai Kingdom was established in what year and who was its first king?”; “Who was the last king of the Sukhothai Kingdom?”; and “Which is not considered a royal work of King Ramkhamhaeng? A. Inventing the Thai script; B. Building dams to retain water; C. Allowing free trade; D. Establishing the absolute monarchy (Correct answer is D.)”

and “In what year did King Ramkhamhaeng invent the Thai script?” Another key component in structuring the History subject is a focus on wars and the role of the monarchs. Examinations include questions like “What were the brave acts of King Ramkhamhaeng? A. Battling Khun Sam Chon, the ruler of the Chod; B. Building relations with Lanna; C. Ruling the country peacefully; D. Ruling over the Mon Kingdom (Correct answer is A.)” Apart from this, one lesson plan for the History subject instructs students to memorize and sing the anthem “The ancient city of Ayutthaya” in order to thematically introduce the Ayutthaya period before covering this historical period in-depth in the following years (Sinthapanon, n.d.c).

In fifth grade, elementary students are mainly taught about the brave acts of the royal rulers in the Ayutthaya and Thonburi periods. While most of the content is focused on many of the monarchs under the curriculum by the Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards, special emphasis is given to King U-thong (1314-1369), King Borommatrailokkanat (1431-1488), King Naresuan (1555-1556-1605), King Narai (1633-1688), and King Taksin (1734-1782). The content revolves around the two Burmese-Siamese Wars, Siam’s victory over its neighboring country, and the restoration of independence. The related examinations include questions like “After the first fall of Ayutthaya, who restored independence from Burma?”; “Who was the first king of Ayutthaya?”; “What monarch reigned the Ayutthaya Kingdom for the longest period?”; and “After the fall of Ayutthaya, where did King Taksin take his subjects to? A. Petchaburi; B. Chanthaburi; C. Rayong; D. Chonburi” and “By what method did King Taksin conquer Chanthaburi? A. He fooled the ruler of Chanthaburi into trusting him; B. He attacked the military encampments around the city; C. He closed off the city until the ruler gave in; D. He told his troops they would not

get to eat if they did not succeed in conquering the city (Correct answer is D)” (Watana Panit Publishing, n.d.a).

In the final year of elementary school, the teaching content continues to revolve around the role of the monarchy and focuses on praising the monarchs in the Rattanakosin period. The content is also essentially similar to the previous years as it reiterates narratives of Siam’s superiority over its neighboring countries. The ultimate goal is to provide an answer to the question about the most important factor in the Rattanakosin dynasty’s fortune and progress. The answer that students are encouraged to internalize is leadership: the country’s leaders, including the monarchs, royals and aristocrats played a crucial role in establishing security both in terms of defense and economy. Moreover, the curriculum continues to highlight the brave acts of the kings, like the role of Rama I in the Burmese–Siamese War (1785–1786). Focusing on the Rattanakosin period, the curriculum further provides a detailed history of King Rama I of Rattanakosin (1737-1809), King Rama V (1853-1910) and Maha Sura Singhanat (1744-1803) (Puttmee, 2018a). In the related examinations, questions reflect the content discussed previously: “Ban phi muang nong (sibling countries) refers to what countries? A. Laos and China; B. Thailand and Myanmar; C. Thailand and Laos; or D. Thailand and Singapore”; and “What was an important achievement of Maha Sura Singhanat? A. Reviving the art of drama performances; B. Establishing treaties with foreign countries; C. Leading the war against Burma; D. Renovation of Wat Arun Ratchavararam” (Sinthapanon, n.d.d).

When looking at the final examinations from other publishing houses, it is found that the content does not differ: “Thao Thep Krasattri and Thao Si Sunthon were important persons in the reign of which king?”; and “What talents are Thao Thep Krasattri and Thao Si Sunthon praised for? A. Talented mobilizers of people; B. Brave fighters; C. Smart strategists; D. Visionary developers (Correct answer is C)” as well as “What trick did Grandma Mo use against the troops of King Anouvong? A. She disguised herself as a man; B. She made the soldiers of King Anouvong drunk; C. She made a group of the soldiers surrender and ambushed the remaining ones; D. She made her people surrender this time (Correct answer is B)” and “For what reason did Thep Krasattri and Thao Si Sunthon trick Burma? A. To delay the battle; B. To stockpile food; C. To seize the weapons of the Burmese; D. To

find a way to ambush Burma (Correct answer is A.)” “What showed the cleverness of Thep Krasatri and Thao Si Sunthon? A. Setting up a military camp in defense against Burma; B. Collaborating to defend the nation; C. Asking for support from close by cities; D. Tricking the enemy in believing they had support in manpower and weapons (Correct answer is D)” and “What was not an achievement of King Rama I? A. Establishing the city of Rattanakosin; B. Visiting countries in the West; C. Battling Burma; D. Enacting the first Thai law (Correct answer is B) (Watana Panit Publishing, n.d.b).

Once students reach the first year of high school (seventh grade), the History subject returns to the origin of the Thai nation, with a focus on the Sukhothai Kingdom. In this context, it is important to note that Thailand’s current governing class’ imagination of this historical period is shaped by two beliefs. Firstly, the size of the kingdom is believed to have been of massive proportions, stretching all the way down to the Strait of Malacca. Secondly, King Ramkhamhaeng invented the Thai script in 1238 based on the evidence of the Ramkhamhaeng stone inscription. The teaching content thus covers the reign of the King in great detail as he is credited with having expanded the kingdom during the Sukhothai period. Eighth grade concentrates on the role of the monarchs in the Ayutthaya period, in particular King Naresuan (1555/1556-1605). The map of Ayutthaya used in class extends widely beyond the factual territory of the kingdom, stretching in the North into southern China and covering all of present day Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and parts of Malaysia. In ninth grade, high school students are introduced to important achievements of the monarchs of the Rattanakosin period. They also learn again about the loss of territories between 1888 - 1908 during the reign of Rama 5 including Sip Song Chau Tai in 1888, areas east of the Salween River in 1892, areas on the left banks of the Mekong River in Laos in 1893 and on the right banks in 1901, areas in Cambodia in 1906 (Battambang, Serei Saophoan and Siem Reap) and areas in Malaysia in 1908 (Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Terengganu).

Against the background of the discourse of lost territories, it is important to note that after the coup d’état in 2014, the NCPO ordered officers from the ISOC to give lectures titled ‘The History of the Thai Nation and the Debt of Gratitude to the Thai Monarch’ in schools across the country. The author attended these lectures in three schools and found that speakers stress the heroic acts of the monarchs throughout

Thai history. They also argue that the Thai nation suffered territorial losses 14 times because of a lack of unity in society, for example in the Ayutthaya period. The most recent incident, they claim, was the loss of the Temple of Preah Vihear to Cambodia. In the lecture, two video clips titled ‘The Song of Thailand Losing Land 14 Times’ and ‘Still Mourning the 14 Times [we] Lost Land’ are played for the students.

In the final years of high school, the topics from the first years are studied in more depth, covering the heroism of the monarchs in the Sukhothai, Ayutthaya and Rattanakosin periods. For example, one teacher’s manual provides instructions for students to memorize the names and periods of reign of the kings of Ayutthaya, and an extensive list of achievements of the kings of Rattanakosin is divided into aspects of economy, governance, society and culture. It is claimed that Rama V refused to install a western-style parliament and adopt a constitution because the nation’s people were not ready for democracy. However, the manual also points out that his successor, Rama VI, set up Dusit Thani, a democratic model city, before the absolute monarchy was abolished in 1932 while the people were not ready for democracy (Puangpis, n.d.).

Looking back at periods prior to the 2014 coup, Thai students used to learn similar content to that described above, and some might argue that this was appropriate for the political context of the nation building period and the Cold War. However, since then, Thailand’s society has undergone massive changes, including reforms of the education system several times in the past decades. It raises the question why students today have to learn and memorize content that has been taught intensively in the past or as if history is a static thing that does not move, is singular and completely predictable until the end. Prajak Kongkirati, a political scientist at Thammasat University in Bangkok, once criticized Thailand’s history teaching in the following way:

What is taught in Thai history lessons does not correspond with historical evidence, which in turn affects several discourses. Thais do not have sufficient knowledge of their own history and themselves as their education is based on a model from the 19th century. In the past, all states employed history as a tool to turn their people into docile citizens, which is not strange. It is just that the world of today has changed, and in this new era education has become a tool to ask questions and understand the past, and to realize that

the past is complicated and can be viewed from more than one angle. Therefore, today's children read various different textbooks, learn about the southern and the northern sides of the civil wars for example. However, in Thailand, teaching is still focused on instructing students to believe in a singular version of history. This has been creating a false discourse that is not in line with the truth. (Cited in Junvith, 2017)

An analysis of the teaching content described above suggests the following problems: Thailand's history education is based on an embellishing and selective approach. This kind of historical perspective attempts to identify the origins of history 'down time', which, in fact, is an impossible endeavor. Therefore, the embellishment and selection of historical facts can only be achieved through fashioning it up time. Benedict Anderson (2006, p.205) writes:

Because there is no Originator, the nation's biography cannot be written evangelically, 'down time,' through a long procreative chain of begettings. The only alternative is to fashion it 'up time' - towards Peking Man, Java Man, King Arthur, wherever the lamp of archaeology casts its fitful gleam.

In other words, the writing of history from the present to the past (up time) enables us to reconstruct history, to choose to remember selected parts and forget others at the same time. For example, Thai history can include the Sukhothai period because the monarchs of the Rattanakosin period came first, when viewed backwards from the present. This concept thus makes it possible to create continuity from the Sukhothai period up until the present. Likewise, the history of Thailand's loss of territories is fashioned as a continuous process seen backwards from the perceived loss of the Temple of Preah Vihear to Cambodia.

This selective approach to historiography and remembering is the invention of the Siamese elite as a form of royal-nationalist history. It argues that Thailand has existed since the Sukhothai period and endures today because of the achievement of its monarchs, who saved the country from falling under the dominance of foreign powers. This narrative repeatedly emphasizes wars and struggles for independence in each and every historical period. However, research tells us that, in fact, Sukhothai was not the first Thai kingdom and that the stories of monarchs' battle victories have either been embellished or completely

fabricated (Terwiel, 2013). With regard to Thailand's loss of territories during the Rattanakosin period, it must be understood that at the time, the modern nation state had not been invented yet. Ancient mainland Southeast Asian states of that period did not know the concept of spatial territory (Winichakul, 1994). Polities in Lanna, Isan or Vientiane were never under the direct territorial control of the Siamese state. Instead, they sent tributes to Siam in the same manner that Siam sent tributes to larger countries like China. Therefore, Thailand never lost any territories during this period because it did not directly control them in the first place. Thongchai Winichakul, a well-known historian, (2003, p.66) identifies three features of the conventional historiography of Thailand:

The first feature is the portrayal of Siam as the pitiful side in the land disputes. The second feature is the belief in the immemorial existence of the nation state based on the claim that various peripheral states had been part of Siam since the Sukhothai period despite the fact that the concept of the nation state was only adopted when map-making technologies reached the country. Hence they could make the bold claim that "we lost territories". And the third feature is adopting a Bangkok-centric historical perspective leading to a monopolization of all historical meaning-making that disregards any interest in perspectives from Luang Prabang, Vientiane, Nan, Chiang Mai, Xiangkhouang, Battambang or Phnom Penh.

This kind of history has been taught to several generations of Thai school students and reproduced in the country's education institutions. Emphasizing memorization, students are prevented from developing their own critical perspectives of the teaching content. With regard to the teachers, their role does not go beyond that of a 'medium' who is feeding student historical knowledge. At the same time, teachers are also forced to internalize this version of history without questioning any parts of the mandatory curriculum. Finally, it is found that the history education of both primary and secondary school students places a sole emphasis on royal history while avoiding any references to a people-centered national history. This type of history is completely incompatible with any effort for citizenship education as it treats people as subjects and not citizens (Garratt & Piper, 2003). It is remarkable that this type of history education does not allow for any inquiry of the content's accuracy, presumably, because any doubt could lead to a

questioning of the sacred status of the monarch and thus destabilize the positive image of the monarchy.

Therefore, it comes as no surprise that during the country's political conflict of the past two decades, a certain number of people who had absorbed the royal-nationalist history began to police other people's loyalty to the monarchy and pressed those who thought differently to leave the country despite the inherently problematic nature of the royal-nationalist historical narrative. In this context, criticism by Thai student Thongchai Ashayagachat, who talked about students' political awareness, is revealing:

It should be allowed to ask questions, argue and criticize in history class... History class should be a space for students and teachers to exchange because those people in bygone eras are not around anymore today. The kids would be able to think without limitations because there aren't any binding conditions and when they get to exchange their thoughts with the teacher it gives them a chance to develop themselves. It would be very good if they could criticize and receive criticism too. (The Potential, 2019).

His quote shows the way some school students see the world and how they would like to learn History. It also illustrates how there is no space in Thailand's national historical viewpoint for 'the people', as there is only royal-nationalist history.

Docile subjects in the Civic Education subject

Turning to Civic Education, the author argues that its sole purpose is to produce docile subjects under the 'Democratic Regime of the Government with the King as Head of State', regardless of the type of textbooks used or the principles and reasonings employed in the teaching resources. The turbulent political conflict in recent years has worked to expose the degeneration of several political institutions in the country. At the same time, a new generation of children grew up with a widened worldview and more knowledge about the outside world through the use of online media. This development has left the conservative elite worried that the new generation would stop placing any importance on the origins of 'Thainess' (Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards, 2015). The elite's objective thus became to instill Thai students with the concept of "Citizenship under

the Democratic Regime of the Government with the King as Head of State” (Assayo, 2014, p.18). This citizenship model is defined by the five pillars that students are instructed to learn about: 1) the history and the origin of ‘Thainess’; 2) the symbols and markers of nationhood; 3) the monarchy; 4) ancestors and 5) Thai wisdom and culture. The Civic Education curriculum is based on these pillars.

In the following, the curriculum of the Civic Education subject from the beginning of elementary school to the end of high school is examined. In the first elementary school grade, cartoons are used as a teaching resource to introduce students to the subject. The curriculum is divided into five modules. The first module focuses on ‘Thainess’ and teaches students through drawing assignments: 1.1 greetings and showing respect; 1.2 table manners; and 1.3 gratefulness. The second module focuses on nation, religion and the monarchy. Students are taught about the importance of the Thai language, as well as national, religious, and royal holidays. The accompanying cartoons feature two characters, a girl named Kaeo and her younger brother King. In the cartoon, Kaeo recites the 12 Core Values of Thai People, imposed by the NCPO, every day. Her parents tell her

As a child you express your love of the nation by correctly standing upright to pay respect to the Thai national flag. We show our love for the nation by decorating the house with the Thai national flag and the King’s royal flag on important days.

Not only that, the cartoon also clearly states the children’s other duties. Before going to bed, “the two children, Kaeo and King, sing the song ‘Children’s Duties’ cheerfully to their parents, who then applaud them.” The third module follows the character of Father Pho-Phiang (the name translates as Father Sufficient, a reference to Rama IX’s Philosophy of the Sufficiency Economy) and teaches the four principles of saving, economizing, morality towards others and material austerity. Teachers are instructed to give students homework to draw an image of King Rama IX at work. In the accompanying chapter, Kaeo and King return their drawings to the teacher. King is shown writing a note that says “I am proud to live in a house full of joy, the house of Father Pho-Phiang.” The fourth module focuses on “Being good for parents and teachers” and consists of four sections: 4.1 cleaning; 4.2 submitting work; 4.3 taking care of communal items; and 4.4 obeying orders from parents

and teachers. The fifth module focuses on accepting differences as something normal (Sommapa, 2017).

In second grade, the curriculum turns its focus to the teaching of manners such as prostrating, greeting (*wai*), speaking, standing, walking, sitting and dressing at home and in school. Students are also taught how to talk respectfully to their teachers and to accept authority. See for example, the following code of conduct:

1. When the teacher enters the classroom, the students must rise and stand up in respect of the teacher;
2. When talking to the teacher while he/she is seated, the students must kneel or stand with their feet close together;
3. Students must perform a *wai* before and after approaching teachers and when teachers walk past them. When coming to school, 1. students must arrive on time or earlier according to the school schedule; 2. students must respectfully greet their teachers at the school entrance every day; and 3. line up to pay respect to the Thai national flag at flagpole and quietly listen to the teachers' address and instructions without talking to each other.

Other sections of this module are designed to instill love for the nation, religion and the institution of the monarchy. The content traces the life of King Rama IX, how to be a good person to parents and teachers, and how to achieve reconciliation. In the accompanying teacher's manual, students are instructed to memorize the 12 Core Values of Thai People, as well as five topics taught in the first elementary level (Worakawin, 2011).

The lessons in third grade cover similar topics as in the two previous levels but expand the content on Thainess. For example, the first section teaches etiquette for receiving guests, appropriate behavior and verbal expression according to one's social status, appropriate behavior when attending auspicious events, expression of gratitude towards members of the community, and local etiquette for various occasions. In the second section about love for the nation, religion and monarchy, the teaching content includes the royal guidance and working principles of King Rama IX. The third section focuses on good democratic citizenship and teaches students to respect classroom rules, the use of communal items, rights and duties, the responsible use of freedoms, and about other school regulations. The fourth section covers reconciliation and the fifth

section covers personal discipline with identical content to the previous levels (Onnom, n.d.).

Beginning in fourth grade, the content of Civic Education gradually becomes more detailed. The first module focuses on ‘Thainess’ and teaches traditional forms of address in various rituals and ceremonies, expressing gratitude in a social setting and regional traditions. The second module focuses on love for the nation, religion and the monarchy. It is taught that one can express love for the nation by purchasing Thai products. The content also glorifies the monarchy:

Therefore Thai people admire the monarchy, which they can express by showing respect and conducting themselves in appropriate ways towards the monarch, members of the royal family and their royal symbols. This also includes showing gratitude and observing the royal duties, royal behaviors, royal speeches and royal working principles, as well as the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy.

In addition, the teacher’s manual outlines a learning activity for students to “pledge lifelong allegiance to the King” through a pre-printed form that they sign with their names and those of two witnesses. The third module focuses on good citizenship under the Democratic Regime of the Government with the King as Head of State by teaching students “to keep the school clean according to the three principles of cleanliness, convenience and tidiness, and respecting the teacher’s instructions for submitting assignments” (Keawpuang, 2015a).

In fifth grade, the content follows the same outline as in the previous grades. However, the topics are covered in more detail. The first module begins with dividing the topic of ‘Thainess’ into, first, the characteristics of the Thai people and, second, their art and culture. The first section on Thai people’s characteristics focuses on Thai manners and values, frugal spending, and the preservation of national resources and the environment. The second section introduces students to the meaning and classification of different cultural art types and participation in art and cultural life. The textbook reveals that developing Thai citizenship in children must include 1. learning Thai manners, 2. learning how to use sustainably, and 3. creative folk dances and instilling Thai culture. In references to the 12 Core Values, the textbook then mentions Value Five, preserving the beautiful culture and traditions of Thailand, and

Value Eight, being disciplined, following the law, and respecting hierarchy and superiority.

In the section on manners, students are further instructed in the do's and don'ts in general contexts. For example, students are taught not to complain about their individual fate and or their inferiority because it might cause others to look down upon them, not to talk to others about personal family matters, not to blame their parents who must be respected, and not to express hate or enchantment with another person. The section also teaches students manners when talking on the telephone and how to receive guests, among several other topics. The second module is titled 'Love for the Nation, Adhering to Religion and Admiring the Monarchy.' The curriculum proposes many activities for this module, such as "assigning students to perform plays to express admiration for the monarch who is to be portrayed as a role model of life." In the final examination, students are instructed to answer a large number of questions concerning their personal loyalty towards the monarchy, for example:

In the final class, the teacher gives the students the opportunity to learn freely in the classroom. Female student Ying decides to play Jackstone. Male student Top decides to play an online mobile phone game. Male student Tom decides to review parts of the lesson that he didn't fully understand. Female student Tim decides to braid the hair of her friend. The question is, who is following the royal working principle of "doing what is in order" the best? (Keawpuang, 2015b, p.49)

Another exam links citizenship with the suppression of consumer desires through the question:

Who is following the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy of King Rama IX most appropriately? A. Keng buys a bag in all available colors; B. Phraeo repairs torn-up pants; C. Phloi buys shoes according to what is in trend; D. Kaeo buys shirts in large numbers because the price was reduced. (Correct answer is B.)

In this example it is conceivable, of course, that Kaeo might want to buy these shirts to sell them and make a profit, which is permitted according to the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy. However, this is deemed incorrect.

In another textbook for grade five, it is specified that Thai citizens should be living their lives according to the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, Thai culture and Thai wisdom. Good citizens are defined as people who follow

“the duty to love the nation, religion and the monarch, as well as the democratic regime of the government with the King as head of state, the duty of protecting the country according to the objective of not letting any enemy interfere in national affairs or damage the independence of the nation, the duty of exercising the right to vote in national and local elections, the duty for Thai males to be subscribed into the armed forces, the duty to pay taxes, the duty to guard, protect and preserve Thai culture, folk wisdom and conserve natural resources and the environment. (Puttmee, 2018b)

The textbook for sixth grade covers the same topics as in the previous levels. It begins with Thai culture, manners, expressing respect, traditional greetings, the wai, standing, sitting, prostrating, sleeping, giving and receiving items and making conversation. In the succeeding chapter, personal conduct according to the guidance of King Rama IX is taught in a rigorous manner (Puttmee, 2018a). One textbook contains a learning activity in which students are asked to observe the royal works of King Rama IX by looking at a photograph of the monarch in conversation with villagers. Students are first asked to answer the question of how they can follow the role model of the king and then do a three-part quiz to test their knowledge about patriotism, religious adherence and admiration for the monarch. The first question asks whether wearing a wristband in the national colors is an expression of patriotism. The second question asks whether following the king’s role model in life is an expression of admiration for the monarchy. The third question asks whether following the principles of one’s religion is an expression of religious adherence. In order to pass the test, students have to answer all questions correctly (Tium u-tai, 2017, pp.31-33).

In seventh grade, the Civic Education curriculum follows the same basic outline as in elementary school. However, class teachers are instructed to use ‘character evaluation forms’ in order to continuously evaluate students’ behavior with regard to “love for the nation, religion and monarchy”, divided into at least six sections:

1. Standing upright when hearing the national anthem and the ability to explain the meaning of the anthem;
2. Exercising the rights and duties of a good citizen;
3. Supporting and collaborating with fellow students and members of the community in various activities;
4. Joining and participating in the organization of activities to create unity and reconciliation and benefits for the school, community and society and admire the Thai nation;
5. Joining religious events and following religious principles and being a role model of the community of believers;
6. Joining and participating in the organization of activities related to monarchy as specified by the school and the community in order to admire the royal achievements and the skills and talents of the monarch and the royal family. (Bureau of Academic Affairs and Educational Standards, n.d.)

In the final year of high school, the curriculum defines citizenship based on the lessons in the previous years of both elementary and high school. In one teacher's manual, citizenship is defined on the basis of duties, for example "The duty to "conduct one's life according to the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy and consume according to one's personal circumstances and exercise prudence and carefulness in financial spending" and "good citizens have the duty to protect each other and not let foreign culture damage Thai culture or the beautiful way of life of the Thai people." The manual further instructs the teacher to teach the 12 Core Values (Tongdhamachart, 2018, pp.66-69). Another noteworthy example is the multiple choice examination for Civic Education. One of the questions about Thai society asks students to identify the most important cause of social problems: "What personal condition is the most important cause for social problems? A. poverty; B. dependence on others; C. lack of responsibility; D. high level of personal confidence (Correct answer is C.)" In reality, all of the given choices, and especially poverty, related to Thailand's extreme wealth inequality, can be conceived as the cause of social problems. Another example is: "In the age of globalization, which of the following features won't continue to define Thai society? A. There will be less multi-generational families. B. Moral and ethics will deteriorate. C. Women and men will cohabit before marriage. D. Belief in prophetic signs and superstition (Correct answer is D.)" Of course, globalization

does not necessarily prevent people from holding superstitious beliefs. Other exam questions ask about authentic Thai culture: “What of the following cultural behavior is inferior to Thai culture? 1. The greeting of the wai; 2. Using Thai language as a means of communication; 3. Consuming sticky rice as main food; 4. Giving alms to the monks on important Buddhist holidays (Correct answer is 3.)” For the question “What is considered Thailand’s main culture? The correct answer is adherence to Buddhism, while the incorrect answers are wearing t-shirts and jeans, democratic governance, and modern medical knowledge. Another question is “Which of the following choices is wrong according to Thai society’s main culture? A. Placing importance on seniority; B. Having a luxurious lifestyle; C. Being loyal to the monarchy; D. Generosity and kindness for those who are suffering (Correct answer is B)” (Tongdhamachart, 2018, pp.35-38) It is problematic that some of these questions and answers define Thai culture as a closed system without providing any space for regional variation. For example, the consumption of sticky rice, which is a food staple in Thailand’s northern and northeastern regions, is labelled as not part of Thai culture. At the same time, a democratic system of governance is not included as a main pillar of the country’s culture. Considering democracy as a system to establish equality among a group of people, it becomes clear that this omission speaks to the lack of importance the curriculum places on egalitarian values.

Based on the provided examples, it can be argued that Civic Education has a single objective, which can be summarized as the creation of docile subjects. Its sole message is that Thai people cannot be citizens, only subjects.

Apart from the problematic nature of the learning content, Thailand’s culture of authoritarianism is also alive and well in the country’s schools, which dampens any hope that Thai students will have the opportunity to graduate as fully educated citizens. For example, news published a few months ago on the online website ‘Education for Liberation of Siam’ reported students being forced to sit for a long time under the scorching sun waiting for a new school principal to arrive; students sitting in the pouring rain waiting for the arrival of a royal representative, and a schools’ efforts to measure the volume of a student choir singing the national anthem, where the students were forced to sing it at least three times.

Teachers using force to discipline students and violently hitting their heads or punishing male students by cutting their hair have also repeatedly made the news in Thailand. At the same time, military culture is being introduced to students by using soldiers to teach them discipline in boy and girl scout camps. In these camps, students are made to eat under their tables, crawl on the ground, pass through barbed wire or endure punishment of being forced into a downward facing pose with hands behind their backs and their heads on the ground for extended periods of time. Other activities include instructing male students to suck on cucumbers and pass them on for female students to eat or forcing students to eat without cutlery. At the annual Children's Day, the military lets children and students interact closely with war weapons. In the same way, overly strict regulations are laid out for school students to follow, such as a ban of certain haircuts like fringes for girls, which one school in Chantaburi Province declared. The school management informed students that after three violations of the rule, female students would be expelled from the school. (Education for Liberation of Siam, 2019)

While these are only a few examples among many that have been making the news, they reflect the authoritarian climate in Thailand's education institutions in addition to the problematic teaching content described above. Additionally, this system works to brainwash students into docile subjects who are trained to refrain from questioning the repressive nature of their education, seniority and authority. Therefore, "the young gradually learn that to succeed in this abusive system, they need to become the abusers" (Ekachai, 2017). This observation is in line with the critique of Thippaporn Tantisunthorn and Thatsanavanh Banchong (2014), who write

"Thailand's present school system operates in conflict with democratic principles and values promoted to the students, as citizens in this simulated society, to live their lives and learn in an environment of freedom of expression and thought. Therefore, [the system] fails to provide advice and [space for] disagreement, reasoning, expression of opinion and criticism in a democratic manner.

Discussion and Conclusion

In the two subjects of History and Civic Education, teaching methods are employed that fall into the classification of traditional education that

emphasizes top-down knowledge transfer. According to John Dewey (1938, p.2), “all genuine education comes about through experience that is as an interaction between objective and internal conditions,” or what Dewey called a ‘situation’. However, the teaching of both subjects has removed any experience-based learning and is thus disconnected from individual life experiences. Moreover, there is a remarkable lack of freedom of expression and permission of different opinions as everything must follow a standardized system. All things considered, this type of approach to teaching stands conflicts, and is incompatible, with the core of democratic ideology. As Dewey reminds us (1966, p.87), “democracy [as] more than [simply] a form of government but as “primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience.”

Further, the teaching of the two subjects can be classified as banking education (Freire, 1970) since students are treated as ‘receptacles’ to be ‘filled’ by the teachers. At the same time, knowledge is treated as “a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing” (p.72). Importantly, Freire also writes that “the capability of banking education to minimize or annul the students creative power and to stimulate their credulity serves the interests of the oppressors, who care neither to have the world revealed nor to see it transformed” (p.73).

When looking at the sum of the employed teaching methods in the case of Thailand, it appears that not only are students treated as receptacles to be filled, but the teachers’ fate is not too different. Since the curriculum is determined by the central state, with an emphasis on multiple choice at all times, teachers must readily receive the content and prepare the lessons at the same time as they are pressured to raise their academic standing. Therefore, teachers function as mediums of knowledge and preservers of outdated knowledge. In the words of Freire:

The banking concept (with its tendency to dichotomize everything) distinguishes two stages in the action of the educator. During the first, he cognizes a cognizable object while he prepares his lessons in his study or his laboratory; during the second, he expounds to his students about that object. The students are not called upon to know, but to memorize the contents narrated by the teacher. Nor do

the students practice any act of cognition, since the object towards which that act should be directed is the property of the teacher rather than a medium evoking the critical reflection of both teacher and students. Hence in the name of the “preservation of culture and knowledge” we have a system which achieves neither true knowledge nor true culture. (p.80).

Against this background, it can be concluded that neither Thai students nor teachers read’ schoolbooks, textbooks, teachers’ manuals, or exercise sheets and exams at all. Instead, these books, textbooks, and so on, ‘write’ the students and instill them with instruction to become whatever is prescribed. In other words, the authority or the state exists not only outside of the student’s body but becomes part of the body itself through an institutionalized internalization that gradually controls them from within their minds. The objective of the two subjects is to silence and control the students’ bodies, which can be seen as a process of violent domination. It becomes clear that in the end, this education system, which accepts an abusive relation with the abuser, in the end shamelessly, functions as an enabler of the abuser itself.

As a result, banking education plays a crucial role in impeding students’ conscientization as they become docile listeners deprived of any space for discussion and exchange. This contradicts the precepts of a real education for liberation that fundamentally and radically values dialogue. According to information from Pat Yongpradit, the Chief Academic Officer for Code.org, an US-based computer science educational organization, in a 2019 education rating, Thailand was rated 62 of 141 countries in the digital vision category, 86 in the category of graduates’ preparedness to work, and interestingly, 89 in the category of teaching critical thinking (Matichon, 3 December 2019). Strangely, Thailand’s elite regularly laments Thai children’s lack of critical and creative thinking skills, which begs the question of how Thai students are supposed to develop these skills when the history and civic education subjects treat them as subjects. If the education system actively blocks any opportunity for students to learn to think independently, it is not possible to expect them to ever develop critical and creative thinking skills.

It must be stressed that the teaching content for the two subjects is currently being taught in Thai schools and continues to cause harm. According to Foucault (1980), in this kind of truth regime that society

has constructed, there exist multiple networks and mechanisms that determine what is true and what is untrue, what can be said and what cannot be said, and what is conceivable and what is not. Truth is then intimately intertwined with power relations. The main focus of the curricula for the History and Civic Education subject work is to provide legitimacy for what is determined by the government to be 'true'. By the same token, through new technologies of power, although schools are considered seats of epistemological power, they function as important institutions of everyday life that reproduce and maintain the truth regime. Even when students are forced to absorb content without being submitted to physical power or violence, they are forced by methods of rote memorization according to a set of rules of discipline, including techniques like strict staring by teachers at students who do not yet exhibit enough enthusiasm, recording students learning histories and developments, 'character assessment' evaluations, surveillance and, of course, examinations.

In this article, the author has looked at many examples of lesson examinations, examinations from lesson design plans, teaching content tests, working sheets tests and others. Based on this sample, it can be argued that examinations are a form of gazing with the aim to normalize the observation, judgement and penalizing of those who fail to uphold established standards. Examination is the last instrument of disciplinarization following hierarchical observation and normalizing judgment (Foucault, 1977). As Foucault (1977, p184-185) puts it:

The examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgment. It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify, and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them. That is why, in all the mechanisms of discipline, the examination is highly ritualized. In it are combined the ceremony of power and the form of the experiment, the deployment of force and the establishment of truth. At the heart of the procedures of discipline, it manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected.

In addition, examinations function to control individual's systems of thought and classify them case by case through measuring and recording

their scores as if they are objects that can be analyzed, calculated, categorized, hierarchized and compared with others. It arouses feelings of 'being wrong' in individuals, forces them to tell stories under the 'truth regime', and prove, through the examinations, that they are finally and completely obedient and docile. The crucial effectiveness of examinations lies in the power to instill individuals with different rules and knowledge that cannot be questioned. In the case of Thailand, the more examination scores affect the effectiveness of learning, the more powerful examinations become. Students have limited alternatives in their positions as subjects who are continuously forced to accept and endure being fed with knowledge.

Against this background, the question emerges of how the content and teaching and learning methods are disconnected from the objective to build citizens. The content that is being taught in Thai schools revolves around a chauvinist history of war, a history of debt of gratitude, a history of lost territories and others that have been embellished to misinform generation after generation. As a result of this education system, a large number of people in Thai society are left without reasoning skills, a self-understanding that their destiny is to be fanatic defenders of the nation, and a sense of suspicion towards fellow members of society whose level of patriotism, they believe, needs to be policed. In the same manner, royalist history, as taught in Thai schools, disregards the power of commoners to mobilize society to move forward and conceal the countless incidents of military suppression. It also perpetuates a narrow understanding of culture by exclusively promoting admiration for Bangkok's elite culture. At the same time, through multiple choice, students are taught that there is always only one correct answer to any question. In the civic education subject, instead of teaching students to become citizens with reasoning skills and empathy for their fellow citizens, students are instilled with a sacred code of conduct that aims to govern both their bodies and their minds. This code of conduct is taught through lessons on manners and etiquette, expression of religious respect and respect of others, prostrating, sitting, standing, walking, sleeping, receiving items, eating and how to be good and modest subjects who abide by the norms and laws without ever questioning the justice of these values and standards.

With regard to possible solutions to address the problematic nature of the Thai education system, parents sometimes do take matters into

their own hands by sending their children to schools abroad or resorting to homeschooling. Many sectors of Thai society have been criticizing the state's outdated school education approach in the social sciences subjects of History and Civic Education. In other words, there exists a background level of resistance against the state's domination. As Foucault (2000, p.167) notes, "resistance comes first, and resistance remains superior to the forces of the process; power relations are obliged to change with the resistance. So I think that resistance is the main word, the keyword, in this dynamic." In this perspective, Thai students can envision their liberation and resistance against an education of indoctrination. This should not let their children be treated as objects that are to be cultivated, trained, and corrected according to the vision of Thai traditional elites and old-style bureaucrats. At the same time, true citizens should oppose any notion of students' value being determined merely by their ability to obey. Further, Thai society, and especially its progressive sectors, must come together to seriously consider, reconstruct and write content for a curriculum that deals with history and citizenship in a meaningful way in order to overcome the state's mainstream meaning-making. Only then can we produce students who can develop a broad historical knowledge, study facts that have not been included in 'official' history writing, and have the skill to think critically as Thai citizens and citizens of the world.

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In This Issue

Editorial

Articles

Wan Rohila A. Ganti Bt. Wan Abdul Ghapar & Ahmad Fauzi Abdul Hamid

Pathways of Becoming Political Party Activists: The Experiences From Malay-Muslim Grassroots Party Activists

Haslina Ibrahim & Ainul Jaria bt. Maidin

Mediation and Interreligious Discourse: Prospects and Challenges in Resolving Interreligious Skirmishes in Malaysia

Mohd Noh Abdul Jalil & Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor

Examining the Role of 'Ulama in the Islamization Process of the Malay World

Israr Ahmad Khan

Role of Judaism, Christianity and Islam in Promoting Human Values in the Strife-Torn World

Najihah Akeb-urai, Nor Ba' Yah Abdul Kadir & Rohany Nasir

Mathematics Anxiety and Performance among College Students: Effectiveness of Systematic Desensitization Treatment

Rehnuma Bint Anis & Md. Mahmudul Hasan

Faith and Practice: Islamic Perspectives on Robert Browning

Alias Azhar, Muhammad Hafiz Badarulzaman, Fidlizan Muhammad & Siti Zamarina Mat Zaib

Syariah Criminal Law Enforcement in Hisbah Framework: Practice In Malaysia

Khauthar Ismail

Imperialism, Colonialism and their Contribution to the Formation of Malay and Chinese Ethnicity: An Historical Analysis

Mohd. Shah Jani & Raudlotul Firdaus binti Fatah Yasin

Removal of Despotical Political Regime: The Abū Dharr's Legacy and Its Legitimacy

Sani Safiyanu, Roy Anthony Rogers & Wan Sharina Ramlah Wan Ahmad Amin Jaffri

Nigeria's Foreign Policy Goals in Peacekeeping Operations in Africa

Noor Asyhikin Binti Abd Razak & Nor Azlin Binti Tajuddin

Ecological Modernization in Malaysia: A Review of Pakatan Harapan's Manifesto During the 14th General Election Within the Context of Ecological Modernization Framework

Siwach Sripokangkul

Education for the Production and Re-Production of Docile Civic Bodies: The Problems of Civic Education in Thailand

M. Khusna Amal

Revisiting Southeast Asian Civil Islam: Moderate Muslims and Indonesia's Democracy Paradox

Fethi B. Jomaa Ahmed

Conceptualizing Islamic Ethics for Contemporary Muslim Societies

Book Reviews

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