

RESEARCH

Theory, culture, and society (TCS) in modern Thailand, 2023

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The aim of this academic paper is to analyze the structure of the democratic transition of modern Thailand in terms of its theory, culture, and society. Democracy is an alien concept to Thailand and its earlier Siamese incarnation. This academic article makes use of non-participant participation by using an attitudinal survey (Likert Scale) of Thai persons in addition to focus groups made up of Thai-*farang* and local Thai couples with and without children. The survey was carried out via Google Survey between 10 July 2023 and 10 September 2023 in Singapore among foreign Thai participants. The size of the local focus group in which f2f was conducted in Singapore was 23 persons. All 23 persons who took part in the f2f focus group were either Thai men and women or Thai men or women married to farang with long-term employment passes in Thailand. The details of their homes in Singapore and Thailand, their birth certificate numbers and their Thai national identity card numbers, ages, and gender were not recorded. The attitudinal survey was also not compulsory and participants could leave any time they wanted; even though none did leave and all remained to take part in the entire survey. Therefore, the survey and the focus group were anonymous. There were a total of 10 questions in the survey and 10 questions were written in English as well as Standard Thai Language (STL) for the focus group. The results of both are listed as **Annex A** and **Annex B** to this academic article.

Keywords: democracy, political science, Siam, feudalism, modern Thailand, Thaksin Shinawatra, Prayuth Chan-o-Cha

Introduction

For over 1,000 years, Siam was ruled by an absolute monarchy that was dependent on contract slavery or what is sometimes referred to as indentured slavery, chattel slavery, and coolie slavery. This means that slavery existed not only in Singapore but also in Siam of the 19th century and earlier. The enslavement of men and women also meant that these slaves had no rights and hence women and young girls had virtually no rights at all. For example, young teenage girls and pre-pubescent girls were forced onto ships bound for Singapore and Siam from China and India. Sold into slavery for large sums, these women and girls could never manage to re-pay the large sums owed to the brothels in Singapore and Siam (1).

Slavery in ancient Siam was a hereditary social disease from the Ayutthaya period. This manifested in later years even after the fall and sacking of Ayutthaya by the

ancient Burmese. The late 19th century saw an anti-slavery movement that continued till King Chulalongkorn the Great in the first five years at the *fin-de-siecle* (about 1905). Slavery was only outlawed in reality just before World War I. As we have seen, and unlike Singapore, all forms of slavery in Siam were criminalized under the Penal Code of 1908 (Section 269). It is interesting to note that the children of slaves were also slaves and could not buy out their freedom, unlike ancient Greece. Slavery was mostly caused by debts inherited by the children of slaves. But slavery was also a result of foreigners who were enslaved after war such as after the fall of Pagan, the Khmer Republic, and that of Ayutthaya. The reason why it took so long for Chulalongkorn's anti-slavery laws to come into effect was the vested interests of the royalists and those who were close to him and the royal family.

Farang scholars have shown that the bloodless coup of 1932 was a critical turning point in modern Siamese

history. This was true even in the transfer of power from absolute monarchical rule to a Constitutional kingdom. Plaek Phibunsongkhram or Field Marshall Phibun was also a leader in the coup group. Phibun became the third prime minister (PM) of Thailand in 1938 before the outbreak of World War II in Asia in 1941.

A decade later he became PM again but because of corruption he was kicked out by 1957. King Bhumiphon Adulyadej (Rama IX) was the monarch when Phibun was PM but he died suddenly in 1963 from unknown causes and was taken over by Marshall Sarit. This made the king *ipso facto* the most symbolically powerful man in the kingdom.

Dictatorship and democracy: a unique Thai feature

Thaksin Shinawatra, the former democratically-elected Thai PM should not be confused with King Thaksin the Great with whom the former has no blood relations. Even their anglicized names are spelt differently. But that is a superficial thing.

Culturally, modern Thailand appears to be a land of contradictions, not merely because the ancient and traditional practices co-exist with modern ones. There is a clash of ideologies because dictatorship and democracy exist in a tense and uneasy set of relations. This unique Thai feature was strongly supported by the focus group and attitudinal survey we conducted in mid-2023.

Former army general Prayuth Chan-o-Cha first emerged during the times of General Prem Tinsulanonda, a much beloved aid and close friend of the former King Bhumiphon Adulyadej (Rama IX). He would eventually take center-stage in the 2014 military coup.

Thaksin and his wife were charged with corruption in 2006, as the military had been slowly advocating the political erosion of the 1997 Kingdom of Thailand Constitution. That version is often considered the most democratic constitution by many scholars (2). Thaksin was also not part of the military class as he was an honorary Police Lieutenant Colonel. Note that the Thai Army (RTAF) and police (RTP) tend to share power in a mostly uneasy alliance with the former wielding much more power than the RTP (Rappa, 2010, 2).

In 2014, the military junta overthrew democratically-elected prime minister Yingluck Shinawatra. Herself the youngest sister of Thaksin Shinawatra who was a political novice from the Chiang Mai social elite, who depended heavily on her brother's wealth, power, and ideas to remain afloat. After she escaped overseas, the new military government under the un-elected, self-appointed PM and Thai dictator Prayuth Chan-o-Cha, the latter took the exploited a parliamentary loophole to introduce a new pro-military Constitution that was unilaterally "approved and

ratified by the Thai Senate" between 2015 and 2016. Recall that only the 1997 Constitution required Senators to be elected. There was only a *pro forma* election in the 2007 version (3).

Thailand does not have mature democratic institutions in place. This can be seen in terms of the 2007 pro-military Constitution that allows all Senators to be appointed by the military junta; and the *junta* elects former senior military officers. The new pro-military Constitution also requires that at least 1/3 of all Lower House seats be reserved for specific military-backed Members of Parliament (MP). In fact, all military-backed MPs are parliamentarians who are nominated and funded by the military itself, i.e., the Royal Thai Armed Forces (RTAF). The 2006 Chan-o-Cha coup was unethical but *not* illegal even though it was undemocratic (2, Rappa, 2010, 2022). The coup was not illegal because as it was sanctioned by the Thai king (Rama IX).

Incidentally, Chan-o-Cha also threatened to have journalists shot (assassinated) if they did not report the right news. Of course, reporting the right news was reporting what Chan himself pronounced on a daily basis. He later said that this was a joke. Nevertheless, it was a joke done in bad taste like the one on YouTube.com when Mahathir Mohammad threatened to bomb Singapore.

This similarly occurs at the regional level, ASEAN's acknowledgment of Thailand under Chan-o-Cha legitimizing its regime; in spite of all the anti-monarchical demonstrations (most recently between 2020 and 2023); various pro-democracy protests and anti-corruption movements.

The Thai Election Commission and Corruption

Meanwhile, leading Thai newspapers carry reports suggesting the Election Commission of having rigged the political system to ensure a win for incumbent, unelected junta chief Prayuth Chan-o-Cha. There however is little to no evidence that the Election Commission is complicit with the junta with the exception that its members are all linked to relatives of highly-placed individuals among the Thai business and political elite. Channel News Asia reported on 23 May 2019 that the Election Commission had decided to ban an outspoken newly-elected MP for breaking a General Election (GE) rule. The rule that Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit broke was rather bizarre. He sold shares in his own company to his mother so that he could run for election as is required by law. Despite this, the Election Commission still proclaimed that he had defaulted and he now faces the prospect of a year's ban from politics, losing his MP seat and gaining a 10-year prison sentence. The billionaire Thanathorn also faces a criminal charge of sedition and another for cybercrime for a speech he made

on Facebook criticizing the military government in 2015 and 2018, respectively. But because the entire system is so corrupt, Thanathorn has not yet been served a warrant from the Courts or the Election Commission. Another reason why social scientists inside and outside Thailand argue that there is corruption in the Election Commission is the recent revised formula used to calculate the proportion of the share of the national vote. After the GE results were televised, the Election Commission suddenly changed Election Law. It said that a revised formula would be used to allocate 150 “party seats” according to the political parties’ shares at the national level. The revised formula basically re-allocates one seat to each of 11 fragmentary political parties that would otherwise have not qualified under the pre-GE formula.

But where would these seats come from? They would come from the Future Forward Party (FFP) whose leader Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit has been charged with various crimes. The greatest beneficiary of the revised formula would be the junta-backed Palang Pracharath party. How can the Election Commission claim to be neutral? According to a Thammasat University economist and two political scientists from Prince of Songkhla University, such an unprecedented move indicates that some political meddling is involved; and the sudden revision of the formula would make it easier to secure a win by Chan’s military junta-backed party.

Cracks in the system

Of the eleven small parties, the Ponglamuang Thai Party joined the Palang Pracharath (Chan-o-Cha) party to form a new coalition. But there appear to be some cracks in the regime under Chan. The *junta* under the self-appointed Chan had since 2014 or over 5 years to identify and groom suitable Senators and MPs. However, leading Thai political scientists believe that some pro-junta Senators and MPs have turned turtle and refused to sign up. This is not because these potential, pro-junta Senators and MPs have suddenly developed a democratic consciousness but because their shares of the spoils are less than what they had expected or what they had been promised. However, it will still take several more weeks before a new government can be formed, because of the need to properly allocate the spoils of the win. A large setback for the conservative elite in Bangkok was the exceedingly poor showing of the Democrat Party. Led by the Oxford-educated Abhisit Vejjajiva, the Democrat Party not only failed as a right-wing conservative and alternative political party to the Palang Pracharath, but it also lost the greatest number of seats in its entire history as the oldest political party in Thailand. One commentator said that it was Chan’s idea to remove the Democrat Party from the political map of Thailand and replace it with Palang Pracharath. Therefore, all the traditional areas under the Democrat Party were supposed to fall into Palang Pracharath hands. It should

be noted here that the Democratic Front is entirely different from the Democrat Party; with the latter being supported by “old money” anti-Thaksin elite.

Also aligned with the old yellow Shirts, the party witnessed its greatest defeat across the Kingdom including its natural strongholds in the Southern provinces and in Bangkok. No clear explanation has been given for its dismal performance by any leading Thai political scientist. My own view is that it was the military-led junta’s strategists who attempted to undermine and take over the traditional strongholds of the Democrat Party. The long-term intention, as I believe, is to take over the traditional and conservative power foothold in Bangkok now that the old King Bhumiphon (Rama IX) is dead.

While Singapore gave its support without interfering in the domestic politics of Thailand, the World Bank on the other hand expressed concern that the intrigue and delays since the GE would have negative effects on investments.

The cunning and guile of Bhumiphon Adulyadej (Rama IX)

Rama IX was present for all the various coups, all 21 of them and mostly bloodless coups. In Thailand, the king’s assent must be given for a coup to take place. This was how the military held sway over the king and vice-versa. Even though Thaksin had been democratically elected twice, Rama IX still allowed his generals to overthrow the former. This was because Thaksin was so popular that it threatened the king’s own position, as several NeoMarxist Thai scholars such as Tithifruit Nangawoodwan (University of the Prince of Songkhla), Thanet Apulapongpun (Northern Chiangmai University), and Porntitburi (King Naresuan College of Sciences). While the king was always surrounded by many generals, prime ministers, and ministers, he was the only one who survived.

After the democratically-elected prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra was overthrown illegally in the 2006 coup, the military has been slowly eroding the democratic aspects of the 1997 Constitution (**Annex B**). When the military junta overthrew his sister prime minister Yingluck Shinawatra in 2014, the despot General Prayuth Chan-o-Cha modified the Thai Constitution into what became a pro-military Constitution. Recall that only in the 1997 and 2007 Constitutional charters were the Senate ceremoniously “elected” and then “half elected,” respectively. The new pro-military Constitution provides for all Senators to be appointed by the military junta. The 2017 Constitution requires all military MPs to declare their membership of the Royal Thai Armed Forces (RTAF). Among the first ASEAN members to support Chan-o-Cha’s illiberal (but not illegal) regime was Singapore. The Chan-o-Cha coup was not illegal even though it was undemocratic. It was not illegal because it was sanctioned by the Thai king (Rama IX).

Prayuth Chan-o-Cha

Chan-o-Cha, the self-proclaimed authoritarian dictator, is widely considered a gangster among journalists as the jokingly threatened to “to have journalists shot” if they did not report the right news. He said he was joking but no one laughed. After Prayuth illegally seized power in 2014 when he overthrew PM Yingluck Shinawatra (albeit with the blessings of the late and beloved King Bhumiphon Adulyadej) that he would hold elections “soon”. By “soon” he meant only after the three events were achieved: (1) military martial law; (2) a new military-designed Constitution to replace the democratic 1997 Constitution; and, (3) after all the potential, pro-military Senators and MPs for the 2019 GE were identified. The events impacted the current face of Bangkok and Thai politics.

Almost on a daily basis, many Thai newspaper articles suggest that Election Commission (EC) of having engineered various outcomes in the political system under the influence of the unelected *junta* dictator Chan-o-Cha. The evidential complicity of the EC with the *junta*, the top Thai businesses and the political elite are also all in cahoots. Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit sold shares in his own company to his mother so that he could run for election as is required by law. Despite this act, the EC declared that he had defaulted and committed a crime. Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit continues to fight the decision by the caretaker government’s ban on his political participation, losing his MP seat and a 10-year incarceration in a Thai prison. He may also be charged by the RTP leaders under the *lèse-majesté*. This is strongly supported by the focus group discussion (**Annex B**). The billionaire Thanathorn also faces a criminal charge of sedition and another for cybercrime for a speech he made on Facebook criticizing the military government in 2015 and 2018, respectively. However, according to **Annex B**, Pita Limjaroenrat and Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit are both very popular political leaders and their wealth is likely to save them from remaining in prison if they ever end up there.

Another reason why social scientists inside and outside Thailand argue that corruption is system-wide is the sudden revisions made to the EC by Prayuth under a revised formula that was used to calculate the proportion of the share of the national vote. In 2019 the Thai Parliament illegally allocated 150 “party seats according to the political parties shares.” The revised formula basically re-allocates one seat to each of political parties. This is how complex, complicated, and corrupt the Thai system continues to be that even a billionaire can be kept in political wilderness and in some form of limbo. According to local political scientists, such complications would benefit the dictator and his cronies.

The *junta* has since 2014 or over 5 years to identify and groom suitable Senators and MPs (3). However, leading Thai political scientists believe that some pro-*junta* Senators

and MPs have refused to sign up. This is part of the reason why Chan-o-Cha dumped the Palang Pracharath military party for a new political party in February 2023. The entire situation is also a big political setback for the conservative elite in Bangkok represented by the Democrat Party (DP) (**Table 2**). The DP was then led by the Oxford-educated Abhisit Vejjajiva, and he was poised to move the DP as a powerful alternative political party to the Palang Pracharath, the Democrat Party also lost the greatest number of seats in its entire history as the oldest political party in Thailand. One commentator said that it was Chan’s idea to remove the Democrat Party from the political map of Thailand and replace it with Palang Pracharath military party. Therefore, all the traditional areas under the Democrat Party were supposed to fall into Palang Pracharath Party hands (**Table 2**). It should be noted here that the Democratic Front is entirely different from the Democrat Party, with the latter being supported by “old money” anti-Thaksin elite.

Cult of personality and *lèse-majesté*

Much has been written about the old Cult of Personality of Rama IX (Bhumiphon Adulyadej) and virtually nothing about previous Siamese kings adopting such a posture. The cult of personality was maintained by the monarchy to ensure that no one could lower the status of the king nor make fun of his strange habits and dress code. The cult is demonstrated by huge billboards that line up the shopping malls and adorn the side walls of skyscrapers in Bangkok. These giant billboards are also found along the toll ways and expressways to the airports. When Thai citizens pass by the photograph of the king and his family, they immediately pause to *wai* the king. A *wai* is a means of greeting but also is about paying respect to someone who is greater in status or someone who is dead. The cult of personality was developed by the king and his generals in the 1950s in order to make the symbolic monarchy more powerful and indeed it did so *ipso facto*. Note that *lèse-majesté* goes hand in glove with the cult of personality. No one else but myself has made that claim. The *lèse-majesté* has a maximum penalty of 15 years’ incarceration for each charge. Many thousands have been charged under that article but there have also been many including farang who have been pardoned. The social media then takes over to show how magnanimous and benevolent the king is.

However, the new king (Rama X) does not have a similar Cult of Personality because he is unlikely to be as popular as his father. So far, the new king (Rama X) has not made use of Article 112 or *lèse-majesté* against anyone from the ethnographic record. The corrupt Prayuth continues to threaten to use of Article 112 against his enemies, who are clearly Pita Limjaroenrat and Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit.

Conclusion

Note that tradition and culture in Thai society has been significantly marred by recent events in Thai politics. This was an unfortunate truth even in late 2023. And is likely to remain the case for the next 5 to 10 years.

The framework for analysis shows that Elections have been held regularly in Thailand but only in some years. But there have not been regular elections due to the military triumvirate in the 1950s and 1960s where three different Field Marshalls appeared to take turns in running the kingdom. There have also never been any foreign observers in Thai elections. Thaksin Shinawatra was known to give out billions of baht in his 2001 and 2006 GE campaigns. Most voters expect to be bribed with 350–500 baht before an election. Thaksin used to request voters to sign up for his party and each new signee was given 550 baht [see also, (4) 25th March].

Local activists interviewed by the author and his research assistants in November 2022 while at the Faculty of Political Science at Chulalongkorn University declared that the new king, Maha Vajiralongkorn (Rama X), was now demanding radical changes to the already beleaguered Thai Constitution in an attempt to furiously seize more Executive Power for himself in order to completely control the Crown Property Bureau (CPB). The Thai CPB was once headed by Prem Tinsulanonda, who has since died and left a political vacuum in the CPB. The CPB manages the royal fortune of over US\$60 billion and is the big prize that Rama X has set his eyes on. In the process, he potentially sits on a total wealth mountain estimated at US\$60–70 billion. In Thailand, there will be more complexity and more power left up for grabs after the May 14th GE (4). Thailand had several opportunities to become the most democratic state on mainland Southeast Asia but the old king and his generals did not accept it for over 70 years; and the people loved the old king too much to question his “cult of personality.” The chances of democracy taking root today is even more unlikely with the current king.

There have been too many coups in Thailand under the constitutional monarchy for it to be considered democratic. Even though many political parties appear overnight, it does

not mean that the country is democratic since Opposition leaders such as Seh Daeng have been assassinated. Ballot box stuffing means that the vote has never really been secret in Thailand. Overall, it means that Thailand is not well on the way to becoming a democracy due to systemic corruption and the military’s manipulation of the Constitution and the legal system to benefit Chan-o-Cha’s *junta*. A total of at least 400 student protestors including Muslims deemed terrorists from Narathiwat and Yala provinces have been confirmed killed between 1970 and 2023. Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators including students, faculty, Red Shirts, Yellow Shirts, RTP, and RTAF officers have been involved in various killings from the north of the kingdom to Bangkok BTS system to the South. The total number killed in the South is estimated to be in excess of 5500 Muslims. Grassroots activism and political violence are markers of democratic action and hence part of the making of a democracy. Therefore, at best one can claim that Thailand does have a chance of becoming a genuine democracy in the distant future. But not before the death of Prayuth and many of his cronies. There is likely to be a possible return of Thaksin if the new king (Rama X) can waive any of Thaksin’s old conviction. What is clear is that the monarchy will continue to remain as a significant player in Thai politics but Rama X might very well be the last king of Thailand after more than 700 years (2).

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Annexure – Fieldwork based on method

ANNEX A | Attitudinal survey questions.

Attitudinal survey question	Majority answers from participants/informants*
(1) What is political culture for you?	1.1 Acts of government 1.2 Political acts
(2) Are Thai citizens mobilized by political parties	2.1 Very often
(3) Why does political mobilization occur in Thailand?	3.1 Because it serves the interests of the political and economic elite
(4) Is such mobilization unique to Thailand?	4.1 No
(5) How did you achieve modern culture?	5.1 Going to village school 5.2 Going to high school 5.3 Going to university 5.4 Going to polytechnic or vocational school
(6) What examples of modern culture can you think of?	6.1 Bangkok transit system (BTS) 6.2 Airconditioning in workplace 6.3 Airconditioning in cars and buses and trucks 6.4 Mass rapid transit train (MRT) 6.5 Airconditioning in trains
(7) What organizations are modern?	7.1 Army 7.2 Corporation 7.3 Military 7.4 Police 7.5 University 7.6 Polytechnic
(8) What traditional organizations are there?	8.1 Monarchy 8.2 Buddhist Sangha 8.3 Buddhist temple 8.4 Mosque 8.5 Hindu temple 8.6 Catholic Church
(9) What might an example of tradition and modern be?	9.1 Studying at university and praying at Buddhist temple 9.2 Praying at Church and working for BTS 9.3 Eating Som Tam and drinking Coca-Cola 9.4 Driving a modern car that was blessed by a Buddhist monk
(10) How is Thai society unique from other societies?	10.1 People smiling everywhere 10.2 <i>Mai pen rai</i> attitude 10.3 Two-tier pricing for locals and <i>farang</i> 10.4 Very hot and humid weather with sudden flooding 10.5 Eating rice and drinking Tiger Beer 10.6 Watching a soccer match at the National Stadium, taking the MRT home, and watching <i>Lakorn Thai</i> on television 10.7 Speaking STL and English or other <i>farang</i> languages

*There was no more budget for translating into STL so it is only in English here.

ANNEX B | Focus group questions.

Focus group questions	Answers from participants/informants
(1) Would you describe yourself as Thai?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes but my husband is from Australia 2. No because my wife is Thai but I am not 3. Yes, our whole family is Thai but we have many <i>farang</i> friends 4. We married in Church because my husband is Catholic but we also had a village wedding and a temple priest from India to bless our marriage ceremony in my village in Isaan 5. Yes, we are all Thai here 6. No, we have many Muslim relatives from the South who do not think they are Thai but they speak very good STL 7. Yes because all Thai must be Buddhist or they do not really love the King
(2) Do you know anyone who has taken money from the authorities?	1. Yes, my husband and I have seen Police officers take bribes
(3) Is there corruption “ <i>chor rat bang luang</i> ” in Thailand?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everybody knows that there is corruption in Thailand 2. Corruption is a way of life here in Bangkok 3. Corruption is not that expensive and helps many people move things in a faster manner
(4) Is Thailand modern or traditional in terms of architecture and daily life?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mixed 2. It is a mixture of old and new designs 3. Not all are old but many are modern depictions of modernity
(5) Did you vote in the May 14th Thai GE?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes, we all voted for the Move Forward Party (MFP) and its leader Pita Limjaroenrat 2. Yes, we voted for Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit 3. Yes, it is the duty of all Thai citizens to vote 4. I heard that many voted for the MFP and the Phue Thai but very few voted for the New United Party of Chan-o-Cha. 5. The newspapers reported that MFP won but there is a lot of in-fighting to become PM.
(6) What are your views about the May 14th Thai GE?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It was not a fair fight as there were too many parties influenced by the old politics of Prayuth and the older politics of Thaksin. 2. It was a very good election with a landslide victory for Pita Limjaroenrat, who was supported by the old Future Forward Party (FFP)’s leader Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit. 3. In Thailand it seems that even when two young Thai billionaires —Pita Limjaroenrat and Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit—fight Prayuth and the old corrupt regime, they are unable to win even with a landslide victory for MFP and Pheu Thai coalition. 4. My <i>farang</i> husband and I are from Isaan and Australia. As a Thai voter, I think the main issue is political corruption
(7) What is the best religion for Thailand in your own opinion?	No responses
(8) Do you practice the same traditions and customs as your parents?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 3. Sometimes
(9) Have you ever seen the King?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Old King Rama IX 2. His picture 3. His photograph is everywhere (Rama IX) 4. The Old King Bhumiphon is loved by everyone; not sure about his son Rama X
(10) Do you have any other comments please?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nil 2. You should be careful of <i>lèse-majesté</i> when you talk about the king and his family or concubines 3. <i>Lèse-majesté</i> means that you can go to prison for 15 years if you are caught and charged by the police. You can get a discounted sentence if you are <i>farang</i> because of the Thai government’s fear of the <i>farang</i> press. 4. My <i>farang</i> husband is from Germany and his <i>farang</i> friends said that if you are charged under the anti-king law, you can get away by paying a lot of baht. 5. The people of Thailand are happy and now have a new government and PM so all is good for the future.