

## Transforming Thai public services delivery:

### From the past to the present

Saowalux Sukkawirach<sup>1</sup>, Pakarang Chuenjit<sup>1</sup>

& Wirayut Phonphotthanamat<sup>1</sup>

Corresponding author: sexy.saowalux.sensei@gmail.com

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#### บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์หลักของบทความนี้คือการศึกษาการเปลี่ยนแปลงการให้บริการสาธารณะของประเทศไทยโดยใช้แนวทางการศึกษาในเชิงประวัติศาสตร์และแนวทางการศึกษาแบบระบบเปิดซึ่งเกี่ยวข้องกับการเปลี่ยนแปลงสิ่งแวดล้อมในการบริหารรัฐกิจ การวิเคราะห์จะเป็นไปตามเงื่อนไขเวลาในการสำรวจวรรณกรรมและสถานการณ์ที่เปลี่ยนแปลงไปของการบริหารรัฐกิจของประเทศไทย มีการทบทวนวรรณกรรมที่เกี่ยวข้องกับภูมิหลังทางด้านการเมือง สังคม เศรษฐกิจทั้งภายในประเทศและภายนอกประเทศ รวมทั้งอุดมการณ์และทฤษฎีทางตะวันตกเพื่ออธิบายอิทธิพล สาเหตุและแบบแผนของการเปลี่ยนแปลง จุดเน้นของการวิเคราะห์นี้คือการเปลี่ยนแปลงสามครั้งในการบริหารปกครอง คือ กระบวนการทำให้เป็นตะวันตก การเปลี่ยนผ่านไปสู่การทำให้ทันสมัย และโลกาภิวัตน์ ในขณะที่การเปลี่ยนแปลงสองครั้งแรกอาจพิจารณาได้ว่าเป็นการบริหารรัฐกิจแบบดั้งเดิม การเปลี่ยนแปลงครั้งที่สามเป็นส่วนผสมของการจัดการภาครัฐแนวใหม่และประชารัฐ (หรือการบริหารจัดการ)

**คำสำคัญ:** การเปลี่ยนแปลง; การให้บริการสาธารณะ; การบริหารรัฐกิจ

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<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Political Science, Ramkhamhaeng University, Bangkok, Thailand

## Abstract

The main purpose of this article is to examine the transformation of public services delivery in Thailand employing a historical approach and an open system approach which concern the changing environment in public administration. The analysis runs along timeline in exploring literatures and changing situations regarding public administration in Thailand. A literature review on internal and international political and socio-economic backgrounds as well as western ideologies and theories is made to explain influences, causes and patterns of change. The focus of this analysis is on three waves of changes in governmentality : westernization, transition to modernization and globalization. While the first two phases of reform can be considered as the traditional public administration, the third one is the mixture of new public management and governance.

**Keywords:** transformation; public services delivery; public administration

## Introduction

Since the establishment of the first Thai kingdom in Sukhothai in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the governmentality (the art of government or the how of governing) has gone through several changes from Buddhist Dhamma Raja to the first reform of feudalistic Chatu Sadom in the 15<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> century during the Ayutthaya and early Rattanakosin period, to the second reform of western bureaucratic type of government in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the reign of King Rama V when Siam faced dilemmas from western colonization and internal aristocratic hegemony and unaccountability, to a transitional reform toward more modernized bureaucracy under developmentalist ideology during the Cold War in 1960s-1970s and, late but not last, to the age of globalization or the Digital Age from the 1980s through the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the third wave revolution of information and communication technology. Under this recent reform, two contested approaches namely new public management and governance have certain influences on transforming public policy implementation and public services delivery.

The focus of this article is to explore causes and patterns of change in Thai bureaucratic system since the second reform through to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This paper argues that the drives of changes are both internal and external and the ways of changes are under western influences of the theories and practices.

## Framework of analysis

This article employs a historical approach and an open system approach which vigorously concerns the changing approaches in public administration. The analysis explores literatures and changing situations regarding public administration in Thailand in the field of public policy implementation and public services delivery (public policy, bureaucracy, organization and management, budgeting system, personnel administration, etc.). This article reviews literatures, namely relevant political and socio-economic backgrounds as well as western theories and ideologies showing external influence and domestic incidents explaining causes and patterns of change. The focus of analysis is on three waves of changes in governmentality: westernization, transition to modernization and globalization. While the first two phases of reforms can be considered as the traditional public administration, the third one is a mixture of two new schools of thoughts and practices: new public management and governance.

## Westernization and the second reform of Thai bureaucracy (1892-1957)

The studies and practices on effective organization, management, and administration in the capitalistic society, both in public and private sectors, originated in Europe and America in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This was reinforced by the pronounced work of German

Sociologist, Max Weber, whose work was published in Germany in 1922--two years after his death--- but was not translated into English and made generally available until 1946. This famous work made him well-known on modern bureaucratic model since he presented the ideal type of bureaucracy using ideal-type approach to extrapolate from the real world the central core of features characteristic of the most fully developed bureaucratic form of organization. “Weber’s ‘Bureaucracy’ is neither a description of reality nor a statement of normative preference. It is merely an identification of major variables or features that characterize bureaucracies. His analysis of bureaucratic organizations provided theorists and critics with a reference from which to evaluate both the good and bad effects of bureaucratic structures”. (Shafritz & Hyde, 1997, p.5) Although his work on ideal type of bureaucracy had emerged after the second reform of Thai bureaucracy brought by King Rama V in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some Thai academics mistook that his work had significant influence toward such reform. Instead, it was the westernization brought by colonialism that had a great impact on the traditional way of governing since the old-fashioned form of government was unfitted to the situation of colonization.

The oldest government form of Thai kingdom, during Sukhothai period, was Dhamma Raja or paternalistic style. (Likit Dheravekin, 2011, p.17) The first reform was taken during the feudalistic Ayutthaya

kingdom in reign of Som det pra bor rom dtrai-lohk-naat, the 8th King who reigned from 1448 to 1488. The reform brought about 'The Chatu Sodom' government type comprising four main pillars or four core governing agents in carrying out the kingdom's missions: Viang, Vang, Klang, and Na, which represent the security, royal secretariat, public finance and agriculture respectively. (Likit Dheravekin, 2011, p.30) Such reform well served Thai feudalistic society by that time and functioned for almost 400 years. However, this type of governing did not have enough differentiation of work and clear vision of authority and was later found incompatible with the changing circumstances and threats in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Siam faced westernization and western colonization along with aristocrats' spill-over power in the royal court politics (when King Rama V first reigned, he was only 15 years old and the Regent from the 'Bunnak' family had almost absolute power). In other words, the old governmental system was considered inappropriate compared to the western bureaucratic system which was more modern and was able to better serve the nation. (Likit Dheravekin, 2011, pp. 113-122) Such deficiency in public services delivery engendered the shift of the second governmental reform in the reign of King Rama V when various initiatives were introduced to be implemented in the fields of education, military, court of justice, medical cares and hospital, infrastructures like railways, electricity, water supply, telegraph etc. (Likit Dheravekin, 2011, p.111)

The new and westernized Thai bureaucracy was established in the reign of King Chulalongkorn (King Rama V) after several state visits to Singapore (under the British colony), Indonesia (or Java under the Dutch colony), and Europe (twice). Such state visits brought about significant changes when King Rama V established two important councils in 1874: 1) the Council of State consisting of 10-20 members as advisors to the King and juries (important outcomes of this organization was the launching of an Act to free slaves and serfs, and an Act of taxation reform); 2) the Privy Council consisting of the king's private counselors. (Likit Dheravekin, 2011, p.116)

In 1887 King Rama V assigned Prince Thevan U-thai Vongse, his younger brother, to visit Britain in order to set up the first cabinet of the Thai kingdom; as a result, the central government was set up on April 1, 1892, which comprised of 12 ministries, including the Ministry of Finance under the direction of a Danish expert. In the regional level, there were threats from the British and French colonial aggression in the western and eastern part of the kingdom respectively. He had to centralize power by organizing 'Mandala' (or County) out of many scattered townships and appointed reliable and capable siblings to conduct the administration of those counties. This kind of government was called 'Tesaphibal', but was later divided into smaller units called 'Chang Wat' or province. The governor of each county was delegated authority from each ministry. In the local level, he initiated

‘Sukhaphibal’ as a form of political decentralization. The trial was in Bangkok and Tha Chalom Sub-district in Samut Sakhon Province. (Wichai Tienthaworn, June 2018).

Since the reign of King Rama V, Thai public administration changed dramatically and deserved a title ‘bureaucratic system’ when there were governmental offices or ‘bureaus’ instead of using aristocrats’ residents to do government jobs, the normal practices before the reform. Moreover, he established the training school for civil servant; which later was upgraded as Chulalongkorn University in the reign of King Rama VI.

In the reign of King Rama VII, the first ‘Civil Servant Act’ was launched in 1928; this was a quite remarkable change in personnel administration in terms of career-orientation, rank classification, tenure, fixed salary and fringe benefits, etc. When using Weber’s Ideal type of bureaucracy as a reference to compare with such the reform, it was found identical to some extents. (Weber, 1946, cited in Sharfitz & Albert, 1997, pp.37-43).

When the worldwide economic crisis, the Great Depression, broke out in 1930s, it partly led to the significant political change in 1932 in the reign of King Rama VII. Absolute monarchy was transformed into ‘constitutional monarchy’ or the king under a constitution, resulting in the adjustment of the governmental administration. State Administration Act for the Kingdom of Siam was

first launched in 1933 as a basis for identifying and organizing the state authority. The law has been changed from time to time to the present one in 1991 with important improvements in 2002 and 2008.

After the major political reform in 1932, Thammasat Lae Karn Muang University or the University of Thammasat and Politics was established in 1934 with the purpose to train new civil servants for government services.

Bank of Thailand was set up in 1942 as a vital institution to cope with financial and monetary policy. (Bank of Thailand, n.d.). The budgeting system was line-item, a system widely used in Europe and America until the decade of 1950s before Verne B. Lewis presented a theory of alternative budgeting in 1952 an important link to the planning programming budgeting systems of the 1960s and the zero-based budgeting systems of the 1970s in the United States. (Sharfitz & Albert, 1997, p. 173). Line-item budgeting is an incremental budgeting, using a budget of the previous year as a basis in adding up the expense of the next budgeting year. This system focuses on the control of inputs or resources rather than counting for results.

**Transitional Thai bureaucracy: A pave to modernization (1957-early 1980s)**

From the 1950s to 1960s, there were major changes in American public administration as the results of World War I, The Great Depression and New Deal, and World War II. These changes allow the central government to extend its administrative missions to cover larger areas of public administration. This in turn increased the numbers of civil servants tasked to perform public services delivery. There were changes in the budgeting system from line-items budget emphasizing inputs more than outputs to performance budgeting with its emphasis on managerial efficiency, and then planning programming budgeting system (PPBS) which stresses objectives, planning, and program effectiveness. (Sharfitz & Albert, 1997, pp. 167-168). PPBS was made mandatory for all federal agencies by the Johnson administration in 1965. (Sharfitz & Albert, 1997, pp. 175).

Another field of study popular in the era was ‘policy analysis’, namely policy formulation process, enabling learners to understand policy formulation politics and policy content, a consideration of alternative policy outcomes by analyzing costs, benefits, distribution of benefits, and so on. Yehezkel Dror, one of the most rigorous professors on public policy, in his 1967 article ‘Policy Analysts: A New professional Role in Government Service’ published in *Public Administration Review*, predicted a new professional role in government service called policy analysts. He also called for ‘policy science’ that would balance economic and political roles in policy analysis. (Sharfitz & Albert, 1997,

pp. 168-169, 254-261). In Thailand, public policy analysis emerged as a field of study in public administration in many universities since the late 1970s and public policy analysis became a professional career in the public sector. All these academic advancements had much influences on the development of Thai bureaucracy making it more modern and more relevant to the changing situation.

Thai bureaucratic reform in the transitional period (1950s-early 1980s) arose from an impact of Postwar or Cold War especially Vietnam War when there was a threat of communist insurgency in Thailand. According to the Domino Theory, if one country collapses by communist invasion, other countries nearby will also fall. (Office of the Royal Society, December 12, 1989). In order to prevent further communist influence from USSR (the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) and PRC (People's Republic of China), USA as the most active competitor against the communist block took action in enhancing economic prosperity of those countries, mostly poor or developing countries, at risk.

In Thailand, after a military coup d' etat by Field Marshall Sarit Thanarat in 1957, the American government and World Bank dominated by the 'developmentalist ideology' gave aids, loans, and advices to Thailand enabling Thailand's launch of its first economic development plan in 1961. Development was utilized as a strategic tool to fight against communist ideology which highlights social equity and

eradicating poverty. Many institutions vital for the development were set up in this period: Office of the National Economic Development Council (1959) later became Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board or NESDB in 1972, Bureau of the Budget (1959), Thailand Board of Investment (1966), etc. (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, n.d.), (Thailand e-Government, n.d.).

Significant changes in Thai public administration during this period included public personnel administration and budgeting system. There was a major change in Thai public personnel administration when an Act of Civil Servants was launched in 1975. This bill altered Thai civil servants' rank classification and adopted the position classification, instead. Another important change was the budgeting system from line-item to performance budgeting and program budgeting system in 1982. In 1998 the budgeting system was changed to planning and programming budgeting (PPB) after an American budgeting system widely used during President Lyndon B Johnson, the most active US President in Vietnam War. The present one is Strategic Performance Based Budgeting (SPBB) which is considered more suitable than the previous ones. SPBB focuses on planning and management and is arranged according to the strategies in the National Economic and Social Development Plan (Nanthanit Nualmanee, 2017, pp. 2-11).

During this transitional period, many American scholars, for example Ferrell Heady, Fred W. Riggs, and William J. Siffin, were granted research funds by the US government (especially Agency for International Development or AID) and private foundations such as Ford Foundation and Rockefeller Foundation to explore and compare the public administration in many developing countries in order to find appropriate models in developing the bureaucratic system of those countries, as an effective mechanism to accomplish the economic and social development goals. ‘Comparative Public Administration’ and ‘Development Administration’ were quite well-known subjects of study during this period. (Chairat Charoensin-o-larn, 1989, pp. 5-7).

In the field of comparative public administration, Fred W. Riggs had a keen interest in Thai public administration and published many books concerning Thailand including *Thailand: The Modernization of a Bureaucratic Polity* in 1966. He named Thai traditional bureaucracy ‘Sala Model’ with limited and less diffractive functions, while the transitional bureaucracy was compared to ‘Prismatic Model’. Comparable to a prism that can diversify sun-rays into many colors, Thai transitional bureaucracy was undergone the process of diversifying into more modernized bureaucracy. He specifically initiated the word ‘bureaucratic polity’ for Thai bureaucracy to describe the influence of bureaucracy in Thai politics. From the 1950s-1970s Thailand went through many coups resulting in parliament dissolution. Members of

the cabinets and the parliament members especially senators were appointed and most of them were government officials or technocrats. (Riggs, F. W., 1966, cited in Chairat Charoensin-o-larn, 1989, pp. 41-52).

University of Indiana set up a center for the studies of public administration of the developing countries. Thai students were granted scholarships to further their graduate and doctoral studies in the United States. Meanwhile, a graduate school on public administration was first established in Thailand at Thammasat University in 1955 with the help of the US government. This Faculty of Public Administration is now the 'National Institution of Development Administration' (NIDA). The purpose of this academic institution is to equip government officials with technical knowledge in carrying out the missions of developing the country and in correcting many deficiencies of the traditional bureaucracy, including its vulnerability and inefficiency to serve public needs. (National Institute of Development Administration, Graduate School of Public Ministration, n.d.). Thammasat University set up the Department of Public Administration in the Faculty of Political Science in 1968, (Thammasat University, Faculty of Political Science, n.d.) whilst Chulalongkorn University had a longer history in establishing academic institute in public administration. The Faculty of Public Administration was one of the first four faculties established in Chulalongkorn University in 1916 and changed its status to a field of study in 1931. In 1966, public administration was a division in the Faculty of Political

Science and upgraded to the Department of Public Administration in 1979. (Chulalongkorn University, The Department of Public Administration, n.d.).

Thailand during this period of time went through many political turbulences and economic crises: military coups, the student uprising in October 1973, the military strike-back in October 1976 which led to huge death toll and deteriorated splits among Thai people, threats from communist insurgency, border insecurity, oil shocks which led to economic disaster from 1973-1979, etc. All these made Thai bureaucracy expanded in terms of size and scope. These political and economic setbacks proved that Thai bureaucratic system needed a vigorous reform.

## Thai bureaucracy and the third wave revolution (1980s-2020s)

### *1. Globalization and the changes in public administration's ideology and practices toward the New Public Management (NPM)*

Globalization that was speeded up by the revolution of information and communication technology (ICT) or the Third Wave Revolution in the 1980s brought about enormous changes that the former bureaucratic system was not fitted to handle the new economic and social environment. Bennis (1967) indicated that weaknesses of the bureaucratic system that made bureaucracy unable to respond to the current problems consisted of three things: first, the conditions of

formal and strict governmental system made it impossible to solve problems in public service delivery in time as a result of the rapid and unexpected change; second, the growth in size of the bureaucratic system made it so complicated that it was unable to respond to the public needs, and became irrelevant to new environment; and finally, new technology demanded new pattern of works which required multi-skills from government officials. In other words, knowing a particular subject and skill might not be enough in these new ages. (Sharfritz & Albert, 1997, pp. 242-252).

Oil crisis, world economic recession of the 1970s, and the expansion of bureaucracy in many countries since the 1950s-1970s led to prolonged deficit budgets, high rate of inflation, and specifically stagflation in Great Britain where Labour Party's social welfare policy was functioning almost throughout the 1970s. All these economic calamities brought about a call from the standpoint of neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism for a 'cutback management'. Charles B. Levine wrote an article 'Organizational Decline and Cutback Management' and published in *Public Administration Review* (1978) urging organization to adapt and alter budget strategies: stretching the budget to get through the fiscal year, rationing demands by limiting services or charging fee, selective withdrawal by redrawing geographic divisions of the organization or terminating specific programs, and retrenchment by permanently altering the structure, programs and staffing of the

organization. The objective of cutback management was to fuse political-economic realities with management strategies. (Sharfitz & Albert, 1997, p.310, pp. 369-382).

In Great Britain, after Margaret Thatcher from Conservative Party won the general election with landslide votes in 1979, she headed on implementing her administrative reform policy announced in the political campaigns with many strategies: cutback management, downsizing bureaucracy, management by contract, privatizing state enterprises, etc. All these practices which based on 'New Right' ideology (both neoliberalism and neoconservatism) are named 'New Public Management' or NPM.

Reagan's administration during the 1980s also made a new path at the federal level based on more conservative philosophies of less government and less regulation, supply-side economics, and realigning public-sector and private-sector roles through privatization. President Ronald Reagan launched a series of tax cuts and expenditure reduction that outsourced many government functions and thus promoted privatization of the public sector. This practice was designed to place more responsibilities on state and local governments. (Sharfitz & Albert, 1997, p.311)

The Reagan administration's political agenda was coincided with the period of new thought in public administration.

*In response to economic philosophy called ‘public choice’, public administration was examining its own political values, assumptions, and limitations. Essentially public-choice theory challenged two fundamental and influential theories that had long dominated thinking about government and the economy. First it rejected the concept of welfare economics that emerged out of the Great Depression of the 1930s. This approach held that when private markets fail, the government must step in to effectively carry out the public interest. Welfare economics also posited that the governmental level best suited to do this was the federal one. Second, public choice also rebutted pluralist political science, which advocated that competition among interest groups was the most effective process for ensuring that government adapt policy solutions that were best for the public goods.*

*Public-choice theory seriously questioned whether decisions made this way really represented the wishes of the majority of citizens. But more emphatically, public choice denounced governments as being basically inefficient and completely lacking in incentives to perform well unless the expansion of their own programs and the increase of their budgets were involved. The best solution, public-choice advocates argued, was to place as much governmental action (and expenditures)*

*at the lowest possible level, that is, local government. (Sharfitz & Albert, 1997, pp. 311-312)*

Many public administration theorists such as Frederick Mosher and Graham Allison noted in the 1980s that the government was changing regarding roles and responsibilities that the distinctions between the public and private sector had become gray or blur as it was moving toward making government more businesslike, or to use the most modern business techniques and theories to run government. Allison recognized that the gap between the private and public sector had narrowed and that the interactions between public managers and private managers had increased, for example many top politically appointed executives were basically top-level private-sector managers. (Sharfitz & Albert, 1997, pp.312-313).

By the 1980s personnel management was renamed 'human resources management' to reflect its new behavioral science orientation. It emphasized equal opportunity, comparable worth, productivity (first) and (later) quality management, pay for performance and gainsharing, and development in the basic elements of personnel management: classification, selection and examination, appraisal, compensation and benefits, and training and development. This had impacts on the study of human resource management among Thai academia.

In the field of organization and management, there were more concerns on information management, organization productivity which generated new interest in measurement and motivation, reengineering, participative management, and total quality management (TQM). In Thailand by the 1980s, Quality Control Circles (QCCs) which was one among many famous Japanese management techniques was introduced and widely practiced in Japanese firms and later, but short lives, in many public agencies. Since then, interests in improving organization productivity using both Japanese and American management techniques surged in Thai public sector, for instances: management by objectives (MBO), reengineering, kaizen, best practice, etc. Thailand Productivity Institute funded by The Foundation for Thailand Productivity Institute was established as an independent agency in the Ministry of Industry in 1994. Its main purpose is to be a center in coordinating and campaigning for productivity improvement nation-wide: for instances, the setting up of the criteria for Public Sector Management Quality Award (PMQA) (Thailand Productivity Institute, n.d.).

In Thailand, there was a recovery from political and economic wounds in the 1980s when General Prem Tinnasulanont who was appointed Prime Minister in 1980 terminated a long political turmoil with Thai Communist Party and ended Vietnamese troops' invasion along the border with the help of the People's Republic of China. With

his cutback management policy and advice from IMF which provided standby arrangement loans (SALs) for Thailand to solve debt problems arose from oil shocks during the 1970s, he froze the growth number of public personnel to less than 2% a year in order to stop bureaucracy expansion. Some other significant changes were in public policy and planning when he, for the first time, appointed a joint committee of public and private sector in drawing the fifth National Economic and Social Development Plan and changed economic development strategy from import-substitution industry (ISI) to export-oriented industry (EOI) with the establishment of Eastern Seaboard, a new industrial zone for petrochemical and capital-intensive industries. After his eight years as prime minister, economic growth rate resumed while the Cold War was ended under the worldwide influence of neo-liberalist ideology. The decade of 1980s illustrated certain influences of new right ideology on Thai government reform.

## *2. Governance: an application and its implications in the case of Thailand*

Although Harlan Cleveland was the first who used the word ‘governance’ as an alternative to the phrase public administration in the mid-1970s, it was not until the 1990s that governance was a prominent subject in public administration. (Frederickson, 2005, p. 282).

*The following cluster of concepts illustrate what Cleveland meant by governance: The organizations that get things done will no longer be hierarchical pyramids with most of the real control at the top. They will be systems---interlaced webs of tension in which control is loose, power diffused, and centers of decision plural. ‘Decision-making’ will become an increasingly intricate process of multilateral brokerage both inside and outside the organization which thinks it has the responsibility for making, or at least announcing, the decision. Because organizations will be horizontal, the way they are governed is likely to be more collegial, consensual, and consultative. The bigger the problems to be tackled, the more real power is diffused and the larger the number of persons who can exercise it---if they work at it. (Cleveland, 1972, p.13, cited in Frederickson, 2005, p. 283)*

Though the ‘governance’ is far from new, with its meaning dating back several centuries in English and even further back in French, the recent revival of its usage has been most useful in those circumstances where ‘government’ is too narrow and too specific to capture all interactions. (Hughes, 2012, p. 123). Governance has become important within the public sector that it would be “only a slight exaggeration to

say governance has become the subject formerly known as public administration” (Frederickson, 2005, p. 284).

Government and governance are not the same. Government is about the exercise of authority, while governance is more about inclusion; governance can occur without government (Rosenau, 1992; Rhodes, 1996, cited in Hughes, 2012, pp. 123-124). The term ‘governance’ has come to imply changes in the public sector that minimize the role of formal governmental actors; in other words, government has lost its capacity to govern and governance is now the product of self-organizing, interorganizational networks, co-managing, co-steering, and co-guidance. (Peter, and Savoie, 2000, pp. 31-32).

Governance is not only about government, but is also about setting up mechanism to run any kind of organization. As Keohane and Nye State assert that: (2000, p. 12, cited in Hughes, 2012, p. 126)

*By governance, we mean the process and institutions, both formal and informal, that guide and restrain the collective activities of a group. Government is the subset that acts with authority and creates formal obligations. Governance need not necessarily be conducted exclusively by governments. Private firms, associations of firms nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and associations of NGOs all engage in it, often in association with governmental bodies, to create governance; sometimes without governmental authority.*

Anyway, both government and governance refer to purposive behavior, to goal-oriented activities, and to systems of rule as Rosenau argues (1992, p. 4, cited in Hughes, 2012, p. 127):

*Government suggests activities that are backed by formal authority, by police powers to insure the implementation of duly constituted policies, whereas governance refers to activities backed by shared goals that may or may not derive from legal and formally prescribed responsibilities and that do not necessarily rely on police powers to overcome defiance and attain compliance.*

‘Governance’ derives from the verb ‘to govern’ which comes from the Latin *gubernare*, meaning ‘to steer, direct, rule’ and this, in turn, derives from the Greek *kubernan*, meaning ‘to steer’. Governance is but one of many nouns deriving from ‘govern’; others include ‘government’, ‘governor’ and ‘governability’. The original, standard meanings of governance are about running organizations, and about setting up structures or institutional arrangements to enable an organization to be run (Hughes, 2012, p.124).

Governance is hard to define as Pierre and Peters (2000, p. 7) assert that ‘the concept of governance is notoriously slippery; it is frequently used among both social scientists and practitioners without

a definition which all agree on---there are many different definitions and connotations of governance’.

H. George Frederickson (2005, pp. 285) demonstrates various meaning of governance given by some scholars that:

*Governance is the structure of political institutions, governance is the shift form the bureaucratic state to the hollow state or to the third government (Milward & Provan 2000; Salamon, 2000; Rhodes 1997); governance is market-based approaches to government (Kettle, 1993; Nye & Donahue 2000); governance is the development of social capital, civil society, and high levels of citizen participation (Hirst, 2000; Kooiman 20001; Sorensen, 2004); governance is the work of empowered, muscular, risk-taking public entrepreneurs (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). n the United Kingdom governance is Tony Blair’s ‘third way,’ a political packing of the latest ideas in new public management, expanded forms of political participation, and attempts to renew civil society (Newman, 2001); governance is the new public management or managerialism (Kernaghan, Marson & Borins, 2000); governance is public sector performance (Heinrich & Lynn, 2000); governance is interjurisdictional cooperation and network management (Frederickson, 1999; O’Toole, 2003; Peters and Pierre, 1998);*

*governance is globalization and rationalization (Pierre, 2000); governance is corporate oversight, transparency and accounting standards (Monks & Minow 2004; Jensen, 2000; Blair & MacLaury, 1995).*

He makes a conclusion that there are many more applications of governance to the subject once known as public administration, but these few illustrate the capacious range of concepts, ideas, and theories associated with it. (Frederickson, 2005, p. 286).

Taking all the definitions given above into account, Rhodes (2000, pp. 55-60, cited in Frederickson, 2005, p. 286) found seven applications of governance in the field of public administration: (1) governance as corporate governance; (2) governance as the new public management or managerialism; (3) governance as good governance, as in efficiency, transparency, meritocracy, and equity; (4) governance as international and inter-jurisdictional interdependence; (5) governance as non-government driven forms of socio-cybernetic systems; (6) governance as the new political economy, including shifting from state service provision to the state as regulator; (7) governance as self-organizing networks.

In response to various definitions of governance, Stephen P. Osborne proposes the new public governance (NPG) and argues that:

*The time of the NPM has been a relatively short-lived and transient one between the statist and bureaucratic tradition of Public Administration (PA) and the embryonic plural and pluralist tradition of the NPG, and the NPM is a child of neo-classical economics and particularly of rational/public choice theory with a focus on intraorganizational processes and management toward the economy and efficiency of these processes in producing public services. (Osborne, 2010, p.2).*

*In contrast to the traditional PA and the NPM, the NPG is rooted firmly within institutional and network theory. It posits both a plural state, where multiple interdependent actors contribute to the delivery of public services, and a pluralist state, where multiple processes inform the policy-making system. As a consequence of these two forms of plurality, its focus is upon interorganizational relationships and upon the interaction of public service organizations (PSOs) with their environment. The central resource-allocation mechanism is the interorganizational network, with accountability being something to be negotiated at the interorganizational and interpersonal level within these networks. (Osborne, 2010, pp. 8-9).*

Moreover, Mark Bevir makes a remark in The Sage Handbook of Governance that “The word ‘governance’ appears in diverse academic

disciplines including development studies, economics geography, international relations, planning, political science, public administration, and sociology. Each discipline sometimes acts as if it owns the word and has no need to engage with others.” (Bevir, 2011, p.1).

Although the definitions and usages of the term ‘governance’ have become controversial, Hughes insists that its ordinary standard dictionary definition, to steer, is entirely appropriate for many current uses. “Governance is about running organizations, public and private; it is about steering, as in the original derivation; it is about solving societal problems, and it can be about structure and institutions that have nothing do with the political system.” (Hughes, 2012, p. 143) He also argues that “the governments are not going away, and the actual reduction in their power may be somewhat exaggerated. Governance does not mean any necessary decline in the power of government. In times of crisis, government returns to the fore along with its core assets of force and authority” (Hughes, 2012, pp. 142-143).

Pierre and Peters (2000, p. 49) make a similar point that:

*The creation of a more participatory style of governing does not mean that government is in reality less powerful. It does mean, however, that state and society are bonded together in the process of creating governance. If anything, that state actually may be strengthened through its interactions with*

*society. The state may have to abdicate some aspects of its nominal control over policy, especially at the formulation state of the process. On the other hand, it tends to gain substantial control at the implementation stage by having in essence co-opted social interests that might otherwise oppose its actions. The ultimate effect may be to create a government that understands better the limits of its actions and which can work effectively within those parameters.*

In conclusion, the definitions and usages of the term ‘governance’ have become controversial. Governance refers to slightly different phenomena in the United States and Western Europe; in Europe the term refers to ‘new governance’ ideas of the involvement of society in the process of governing, while in the USA the term retains much of its original steering conception. (Pierre & Peters, 2000, p. 7).

Various meaning and usages of governance were imported to Thai administrative state, after the military coup in 1991 by the Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun. A major cause of the coup claimed by the military Junta was the enormous corruption among the cabinet members. The newspaper entitled this civilian cabinet “a buffet cabinet”. Anand, a former ambassador and successful business man, was invited to run the government twice: after the coup in 1991 and after May 1992 incident with a bloodshed of people’s uprising against

the military's succession attempt to pass on political power to the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Army and the Supreme commander of the Army, General Suchinda Kraprayoon. Despite his short premiership, he made significant changes in policy formulation and implementation in many areas: economic liberalization, privatization, taxation reform, and important legislatures such as the 1991 State Administration Act, the 1992 Securities and Exchange Act, the 1992 Energy Conservation Promotion Act, the 1992 Public Health Act, etc. He brought in the concept of 'transparency' under his administration; as a result, the mass media named his government 'transparency government'. (Nujaree Singhkerd, 2012). Transparency is one of the most important attributes of good governance. It became one of famous topics discussed among Thai intellectuals.

Translated by Chai-Anan Samudavanija as 'pracharath', the concept of governance was officially introduced in the 8<sup>th</sup> National Economic and Social Development Plan (1997-2001) in Section 7. Various definitions of governance mentioned previously are incorporated in the context of this five-year plan: governance as a development of social capital, civil society, citizen participation; governance as a check and balance mechanism among the public sector, the private sector and the people sector; governance as a process and state mechanism for national participatory development; governance as the administrative system bringing conflict resolution

and equilibrium for the benefits of the community members, the nation, and mankind; governance as a holistic management that guarantees equal rights, dignity and freedom of the individuals and communities; governance as good governance aimed at effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, administrative responsibility and accountability, political legitimacy, decentralization, people participation, consensus oriented resolution, etc.; governance as a new public management aimed at bureaucratic downsizing, less rowing but more steering, decentralization of authority, motivation through incentives, mission-oriented government, restructuring, horizontal hierarchical level, performance appraisal, deregulation, etc.; and governance as the new political economy aimed at shifting from state service provision to the state as regulator. Nevertheless, it made quite clear in the plan that the public sector was an important party in the development process and the government had privileges on its own right to determine a development framework, mechanism, transaction and the interaction of the society's members. (Office of the Prime Minister, 1996, pp. 149-165).

In the 1990s the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) announced 'a decade of human development' emphasizing 'human-centered development approach'. Human development became both means and ends of development strategies which meant that people should be involved in the policy formulation and implementation, and

the outcomes of the policy should be targeted at elevating their standard of living. The Eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan was the first plan that involved people participation in the policy process from policy formation, policy formulation and policy implementation. Unfortunately, before the launching of this plan in October, Thailand faced an economic crisis, ‘Tom Yam Koong’ on July 2, 1997 causing the government’s currency devaluation, the massive bankruptcy of businesses, and huge public debts. The plan, therefore, was not so successful.

By the 1990s, financial liberalization was such a prominent criteria of neo-liberalist ideology that Thailand had to conform to the commitment with IMF in establishing BIBFs (Bangkok International Banking Facilities) in 1992 by Prime Minister Anant Panyarachun, who was regarded a neoliberalist, to facilitate the free flow of foreign investment and currency. (The government gazette, 1992, pp. 10146-10150). The purposes of BIBF are to provide the private sector with an access to low-cost money and to replace Hong Kong as a regional center of financial market, (by that time Hong Kong had unstable status for offshore market because she had to be consolidated with China in 1997). Financial liberalization brought about the influx of short-term money market and financial overextension while the economic performance was poor due to the decline in export, high public debts, deficit current account, etc. As a result, there was an economic blown-

up in 1997 from which many mistakes were made by various actors: Central Bank in losing a large sum of foreign reserves at the defense of Baht value against a foreign hedge fund managed by George Soros, a government in maintaining financial policy of inflexible exchange rate of currency as well as high rate of interest as opposite to low rate of interest in other countries (the latter policy brought about accelerated inflow of money to non-real sector that yielded in the non-performing loan or NPL), and some financial institutions in malpractice and corruption. Foreign reserves drastically dropped almost to the floor that it was unable to support Thai currency printing which later on led to steep devaluation of Thai Baht from 25 Baht to around 56 Baht per dollar. A year later after Thai currency devaluation the non-performance loan rose to 47%. This severe economic crisis forced Thai government under Prime Minister General Chavalit Yongjaiyuth to accept policy conditionality from IMF, a major lender. (Hathaikarn Treesuwan, June, 30, 2017). Among many proposals in the policy conditionality's menu, there was a call for institutional reform in accordance with the concepts and practices of new public management and governance.

As a response to IMF's policy conditionality, two five-years plans for bureaucratic reform (1997-2001, and 1998-2002) were launched under Chavalit Yongjaiyuth's administration and Chuan Leekpai's

administration respectively. Both governments had short lives; hence, the concrete outcome of bureaucratic reform was not achieved.

Under Thaksin Shinawatra's regime, he launched at least three important bills for the public sector reform: the 2002 State Administration Act, the 2002 Reorganization of Ministry, Sub-Ministry, and Department Act and the 2003 Royal Decree on Good Governance Procedures. While the first two bills concern governance as the new public management, the last one takes governance as good governance. Under the Article 3/1 of the 2002 State Administration Act, the Office of Public Sector Development Commission was established to give advices to the cabinet concerning the development of public sector agencies including organizational structure, budgeting system, human resource management, morality and ethics, compensation and administrative procedure. (Office of the Public Sector Development, July 2016).

The 2008 Civil Service Act was passed during the Prime Minister General Surayud Chulanont to comply with those new laws mentioned above. There are significant changes in Thai public personnel administration due to this law: the changing from position classification to broad-banding classification, the re-allocation of duties and authority of the Civil Service Commission, the establishment of Merit System Protection Board, etc. (Office of the Civil Service Commission, n.d.).

Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva came into power for a short period of time (December 2008-August 2011). He encountered two serious problems: a worldwide economic crisis, ‘the Subprime Crisis’ that broke out in 2008 in the United States which had severe negative impacts on Thai economic performance, and two rounds of political conflicts in 2009 and 2010 resulted in political violence and bloodshed. However, economic recovery was quickly achieved by the demand management policy. (MGR Online, April 27, 2009).

In 2012, the cabinet under Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra approved a package of four important principles of good governance proposed by the Office of Public Sector Development Commission as a guideline of practices for public executives and government official. Those principles are 1) the new public management aimed at efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness; 2) democratic values comprising accountability, transparency, rule of law and equity; 3) participatory state comprising decentralization and participation/consensus oriented; 4) administrative responsibility with the focus on morality/ethics (comprising eight core values or I AM READY: integrity, activeness, morality, relevancy, efficiency, accountability, democracy, and yield of service delivery) (Kittisak Ratprasert, 2020). However, there were conflicts of interests under this administration especially the wide range of corruption on the rice mortgage policy and an attempt to pass an amnesty law for the benefit

of Thaksin Shinawatra, her brother. These scandals brought about the longest ever protest with a large number of people on the streets, the seizure of government offices, and the loss of many lives. The military coup was then staged up on May 22, 2014 and General Prayut Chan-O Cha, the leader of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), came to power. The 2017 constitution was enforced with the general election and Prayuth was nominated as prime minister by ‘Palang Pracharath Party’. He has been in power from 2018 until now (2021).

For almost eight years under Prayut’s administration, many activities were initiated: the launching of national strategic twenty-year plan, (2018-2037) which covers all kinds of development activities: the Eastern Economic Corridor Project (EEC) under Thailand 4.0 policy which targets at new engine of growth or the new S Curve industries; agriculture 4.0 or smart farmer using digital technology or AGTECH; the grassroots economic development based on self-organizing network which is a kind of governance that incorporates five parties i.e., public sector, private sector, civil society, academia and local intellectuals to set up Pracharath Rak Sakky, Co, Ltd., a social enterprise in every province to advise and assist local community enterprises in the areas of food production, food processing and manufacturing, and eco-tourism. (The government gazette, 2018, pp.1-71).

Prayut launches ‘bureaucracy 4.0’ policy bringing digital government/governance to the public service delivery. Hereby,

necessary laws were launched and the relevant institutions were established. Two ministries emerged in the expansion of the scope of missions and responsibilities of the former ministries: the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society in 2016 (formerly known as the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, established in 2002); and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (MHESI) in 2019---the former Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment was dissolved in 2019 and the Office of Higher Education Commission was removed from the Ministry of Education to join the MHESI. (GINFO, n.d.).

In an attempt to prepare the government for the Digital Age in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the cabinet in 1997 launched a project called ‘Government Information Network or GINet’ under the ‘Government Information Technology Services (GITS)’, an agency in the Ministry of Science and Technology. In 2002, the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology was set up. In 2011 the ‘Electronic Government Agency (EGA)’ (Public Organization) was established. During Prayut’s administration there are attempts to adjust digital utilization, for instances, the launching of the ‘Digitalization of Public Administration and Service Delivery Act’ in 2019, the establishing of ‘Digital Government Development Agency (DGA)’ (Public Organization) in 2018, (transformed from EGA), the issuing of a plan for developing digital government (2020-2022). (Digital Government Development

Agency, 2021, January 15). All the attempts aimed at providing services and enhancing the operation of government agencies to develop digital government. Examples of services provided by the DGA are Database System of Government Expenditure, Government Channel Center, Open Government Data Center, and Government Application Center (Digital Government Development Agency, n.d.). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government utilizes digital channels and government applications to communicate with people concerning the watch-out of the pandemic, the economic remedial measures and the vaccination. The incident of this pandemic confirms the governance concept of cooperation among the three sectors: public, private, and people ones while the government is still a core pillar in enforcing laws and providing vaccines.

### Summary and conclusion

Using a historical approach and an open system approach, this article reviews the transformation of Thai governmentality since the ancient kingdom of Sukhothai in the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the Digital Age in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the focus on the bureaucratic reforms starting from the reign of King Rama V in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present days.

It is argued in this article that public policy implementation and public service delivery of Thailand have passed through three design and delivery regimes: the westernized bureaucratic system in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the transition to modernized bureaucracy in the early

20<sup>th</sup> century to the late 1970s/early 1980s, and the globalized new public management and governance in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century to the twenty-first century. The article examines causes of changes both internal and external as well as patterns of change in each regime.

The result of the study shows all the three designs and delivery regimes are under influences from western ideologies, theories, and practices. The first regime under the reign of King Rama V which was the westernization of bureaucratic system and the second regime which was the transition to the modernization of bureaucracy were influenced by a longer, pre-eminent traditional public administration (PA) from the late nineteenth century through the late 1970s/early 1980s. The third regime toward the new public management and governance in the era of globalization was driven by neo-liberalist ideology and the policy conditionality imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) after the economic crisis in 1997. The new public management concerns intra-organizational effectiveness, efficiency, and economy. The public sector adopts business ideologies, processes, and procedures into practices such as cutback management, market-based strategies, deregulation, devolution, decentralization, privatization, outsourcing, etc. The relationship between public and private sector is intertwined and the border between these two sectors become blurred. The government changes the role from rowing to steering which is the original standard dictionary meaning of governance. The

government also incorporates civil societies and people organizations in the concerted attempts toward democratic governance and self-organizing networks. However, this does not mean the end or decline of the state but the transformation and adaptation of the state to the society it is currently embedded in.

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