

The Policy and Politics of Influencing Interbreeding to Increase Population during the Regime of General Phibun and Its Unintended Consequence on the Status of Thai Women

Natanaree Posrithong^{1*}

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore the population policy during the regime of General Phibun and the political and social implications of government campaigns which actively sought to increase population. The policy was introduced in Thailand after the Second World War and was influenced by the theory of eugenics as well as a sense of urgency in advancing a radically different population policy. General Phibun, the Prime Minister of Thailand from both 1938 to 1944 and 1948 to 1957 carried out a number of salient social reforms that impacted women both positively and adversely in significant ways. Following the establishment of the Ministry of Health in 1942, the government implemented a policy to increase population, especially among certain sectors of society, as a primary policy agenda. With this salient aim of increasing population, the Organization for Marriage Support was founded as one of the agencies which used specific incentives to get healthy couples to marry and have children. Based largely on available official announcements and public records from the 1940s, this paper will discuss the mobility and status of middle-class women as they became subjects of the government's policy on population.

Keywords

Population policy; hyper-nationalist period; gender mobility; middle-class women

Introduction

The objective of this paper is to explore the policy objective to increase population and its political implications in policy decisions carried out in Thailand during the hyper-nationalist regime of General Phibun. Between 1938 and 1944, under the leadership of General Phibun and in the country of Thailand which, at this time, was influenced by fascism, a number of nationalist campaigns were introduced with the goal to increase the population. In order to do this, the leader began a campaign that was first for the promotion of health, particularly among civil servants, before altering to an agenda to increase the population of healthy civil servants. Inspired by the theory of eugenics, Phibun's campaign had many similarities to policies introduced in European fascist states in the 1930s. Sir Francis Galton was the first individual who used the term 'eugenics' in his lecture in 1907 at Oxford University (Oakley, 1991, p. 166). His suggestion on 'heredity' became a foundation of a "racial hygiene" policy that was introduced in Nazi Germany during the Second World War and emulated to various degrees in other countries. Although eugenics might not have been directly embraced by the Thai government in the form of racial hygiene, physical well-being became one of the criteria

¹ Social Science Division, Mahidol University International College, Thailand

*Natanaree Posrithong, corresponding author. Email: natanaree.pos@mahidol.ac.th

for the government in influencing choices of potential marriage partners. As a result, the belief in creating a generation of *luk-thai* (Thai descendants), who were to be born from a healthy father and mother started to appear in the popular narrative of the era. While government policy for encouraging marriage centered in part on healthy individuals, those with degenerative diseases or handicaps were recommended for sterilization in order to prevent unhealthy births following the Nazi model introduced in the 1930s (National Archives of Thailand, 1941, Sor. Ror. 0201.5/23, p. 10). The evidence that has been mentioned demonstrates the influence of the theory of eugenics on Phibun's political reforms that significantly affected Thai population and gender relations.

Literature Review

Both primary and secondary sources suggest that General Phibun was concerned about the decline of the Thai population ever since the advent of World War I. In the census survey of 1937, Thailand had a population of approximately 14 million citizens and the number increased only to 16 million in 1941 (National Archives of Thailand, 1941, Sor. Ror. 0201.5/23, p. 1-2). Although the population in this four-year period gradually increased at a pace faster than what was previously recorded, the government still looked for ways to increase population growth. The government report, "To increase population of Thailand" (*rueang phuem prachakon prathet-thai*), released on August 10, 1941, focused on the potential solutions for population increase (National Archives of Thailand, 1941, Sor. Ror. 0201.5/23). The ten proposed solutions from the document were:

1. *The government shall make an official announcement to encourage married couples to have at least 4 children per family*
2. *The government shall offer financial support, in the form of loans between 200 and 1,000 baht to healthy couples seeking to start a family on the condition that they successfully pass a physical medical examination*
3. *The government shall waive school tuition fees for children in families in which there are more than 5 siblings*
4. *The government shall tighten rules governing the control of venereal diseases*
5. *Divorce should be made possible for sterile couples*
6. *The government shall discourage the use of contraception and prohibit the import of contraception*
7. *The government shall restrict abortions*
8. *There shall be an introduction of a tax on those males aged 25 and older who are single*
9. *The government shall form an organization for the purpose of overseeing and encouraging marriages*
10. *The government shall encourage Thai couples to adopt children (National Archives of Thailand, 1941, Sor. Ror. 0201.5/23, p. 3-5)*

As this report caught the attention of the Prime Minister, he immediately called for cooperation of the ministries in promoting an agenda for significant increases in population. Only one year after the release of the report, the Organization for Marriage Support was formed as the Prime Minister announced the new nation's goal to increase the population to 40 million (Kawinraweekun, 2002, p. 25).

Another item that caused concern over the slow growth of the population was demonstrated in a letter written by Mr. Buri Laksonphrom, a civilian from Bangkok, to the Prime Minister. Buri addressed the issue of the population crisis with rather viable solutions. The author began

with a discussion on gender imbalance illustrated in the census record of 1937. Buri pointed out a loophole in the Thai law on monogamy, introduced in 1935. He criticized the fact that strict adherence to the law prevented the practice of polygamy when population growth was the state's primary concern, and the fact that the number of females still outnumbered that of males, (National Archives of Thailand, 1937, Sor. Ror. 0201.25/1034, p. 1-2). According to Buri, "For those women who are still unmarried, this [initiative of allowing polygamy] can help [ensure that they have families, and help] the country increase its population" (National Archives of Thailand, 1937, Sor. Ror. 0201.25/1034, p. 2). The author of this letter even went on to say that many single women had become a burden on society because they had no family members to take care of them. Buri proposed that the easiest solution would be to reintroduce polygamy and allow men to marry multiple women. As he phrased it, "We are not allowing this [initiative] with the aim to fulfill men's sexual satisfaction, but merely for the benefit of society" (National Archives of Thailand, 1937, Sor. Ror. 0201.25/1034, p. 2). Although in reality the government never reintroduced polygamy, this letter demonstrates a serious concern from a citizen who believed that the country was in a population crisis. Among the ideas that Buri raised in the letter to the Prime Minister, one had a more realistic and feasible goal. He suggested that the promotion of male civil servants should be based not only on work performance but also on family merits. The author suggested that married male civil servants who had at least one child should have a priority in getting a promotion because they served as role models for Thai citizens. While it is unknown whether Phibun ever read this letter, the Prime Minister first carried out his policy objectives on wives of civil servants. In the first celebration of Mother's Day organized by the newly established Ministry of Health in 1943, civil servants were encouraged to send their wives to compete in the Mothers' Health Contest (National Archives of Thailand, 1943a, Mor. Thor. 2.2/12/34 Mor. 265/2486). Buri's letter attests the government's awareness of the population crisis which triggered a series of campaigns introduced to promote the prime minister's agenda to hasten substantial population growth. Because of this concern about the alarming decline of the Thai population, the need to find a political approach became imperative as evidenced in official records and state policies. The Information Department (*krom khotsanakan*) was established as a tool to promote the state's nationalistic campaigns. The Prime Minister, in an announcement released by the Information Department, said that "development of the country must begin with an impetus to transform the entire population into good citizens". By that, he meant that those who came from a good culture (that being an affluent and educated background), engaged in moral conduct, maintained good health, had an attractive appearance, and had a job that was of an educated "profession" should be the ones whom the government encouraged to propagate the population (Krom Khotsanakan, 1942 cited in Kawinraweekun, 2002, p. 25). From this extract, the apparent role of biopolitics was employed to maintain a populist, nationalistic agenda. The emphasis was placed on the duties of citizens to be of a specific socioeconomic background and one that maintained specific health requirements and a vigorous deportment. Thus, to a limited degree, the objectives were imbued with a fascist preoccupation with, eugenics, and the Thai government was becoming that of a fascist regime. To say that General Phibun adopted many of his approaches from European fascist states is certainly not an exaggeration. Many of Phibun's announcements resemble what Adolf Hitler stated in *Mein Kampf*. In it he said,

"What we must fight for is to safeguard the existence and reproduction of our race and our people, the sustenance of our children, the purity of our blood, and the freedom and independence of the fatherland, so that our people may mature for the fulfillment of the mission allotted it by the creator of the universe"

(Hitler, cited in the Holocaust Museum & Education Center, 2019)

Racism was the foundation of Nazi policy on population, and it was used to exclude minority groups like that of its Jewish population in favor of its superior Aryan race. This excerpt from *Mein Kampf* expresses the motivation to exclude racial and ethnic elements in its accelerated birth policy, although this ethnic bias was not so pronounced in the Thai context. General Phibun did not intend to target the exclusion of any particular minority groups. Instead, his aim was to condition individuals by prompting them toward specific Thai standards of appearance and conduct through the regulation of the bodies and sexual practices of its citizens. In order to do this, a canard was devised which suggested that Thai people were not naturally small, and that the Thai physical frame had been historically big with strong joints (Sikrungs, 26 November 1941 cited in Kawinraweeakun, 2002, p. 34). This narrative was for the purpose of creating a common perception in which Thais were not people who were diminutive physically or intellectually. By referring to the Thai past and emphasizing the size of Thai ancestors, citizens were encouraged toward being attracted to and perpetuating this paradigm of ideal proportional body sizes and health. In a handbook written by Chutima (1956), the head of the Consumer Welfare Department during Phibun's regime, this concept of healthy lifestyles for all Thai citizens was reiterated. The author presented new information on healthy diet and charts, demonstrating the appropriate height and weight for populations of various ages. The emphasis was placed on conditioning citizens into accepting a specific sense of what constitutes physical beauty predicated on being physically fit and having a proportioned body type. This concept is explicitly stated in handbooks for young women seeking to be contestants in the national beauty contests during this era. For men, the Robust Men Contest (*kan prakuat chai-chakan*) called for muscular men aged between 20 and 30 to publicly exhibit their athletic bodies. The contest was held for the first time as part of the Thai New Year festival in 1940. As the contest encouraged physical fitness among Thai men, the female beauty contest, introduced in the same year, aimed to create an ideal role-model for Thai women (Kawinraweeakun, 2002, p. 111). Health was prioritized in this new paradigm of feminine beauty. As a result, the contestants of *Nangsao Thai* (Miss Thailand) had to meet required measurements in which height was to be at least 156 centimeters, weight needed to be between 50 and 53 kilograms, bust size had to be no less than 81 centimeters, and waist line had to be approximately 63 centimeters (Photchanalawan, 2009, p. 2). The measurements were more detailed and specific than at any earlier beauty pageants with an importance placed on the contestants' strong physique. Hence, Thai women who were submissive and delicate were no longer thought of as a paradigm of female beauty. In the government campaign, women who were physically weak were portrayed as ineffective in their roles as mothers. Women under Phibun's regime were encouraged to be physically fit and meet the 'global standard' of body size mentioned earlier (Chutima, 1956, p. 49). Through these contests, the state employed regulations of citizens' bodies as one of the ways to emulate Western standards. Apart from the beauty contests for men and women, another campaign of mass marriages was introduced in 1942 with a more direct purpose of increasing the populations of certain sectors of society. The Organization for Marriage Support (*ongkan songserm kan-somrot*), formed under the Ministry of Health, was a government agency which supervised this campaign. The ideal, according to the Phibun regime, was to adopt the monogamous western wedding ceremony. One puzzling question, however, is how emphasizing monogamy at that time would have been an effective strategy in promoting population growth. The government decided to first experiment on couples who were civil servants. By sponsoring their weddings and giving them monetary incentives for having children (i.e. tax deductions), the government hoped that population growth would increase. The ideas of Khamphiban (1987) and Kawinraweeakun (2002) on this issue are of similar arguments. But while both demonstrate extensive understanding of women in the nationalist period with respect to their proactive roles, their

discussion of the wives of middle-class civil servants is still limited. Thus, the paper intends to explore these issues.

Materials and Methods

The materials that were assessed for this study consisted of archival sources from the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Education, and the Office of Prime Minister. These primary documents were found at the National Archives in Bangkok. Among papers showing the nationalistic campaigns during Phibun's regime were also documents that were ultimately released by the Organization for Marriage Support (published under the government bodies mentioned earlier). The Organization for Marriage Support devised the campaign on government-sponsored mass marriages as a solution to a population crisis, but it also entailed removing the limitation of monogamy. The first mass marriage ceremony took place on March 29, 1943 in Bangkok with 73 couples in attendance. The description of the ceremony suggests a combination of Buddhist traditions within what was mostly a civil wedding. The couples, first undertook religious rituals of the marriage ceremony, and then they completed the civil task by signing marriage certificates, which marked their official marriage (Suklarpkrit, 2013, p. 140-141). In the same year, the Ministry of Health announced the establishment of offices of the Provincial Organization for Marriage Support in all provinces in Thailand. The objective of this announcement was "to expedite population growth" (National Archives of Thailand, 1943e, Mor. Thor. 5.9/145 Mor. 2808/2486). In this particular document, the ministry also called for mass marriage ceremonies to be organized in all provinces on January 7, 1944. Incentives for doing so were also offered to these couples. The local Organization for Marriage Support covered all the expenses, including wedding invitations, receptions, and even the wedding dresses for the brides (National Archives of Thailand, 1943d, Mor. Thor. 2.2.12/8). At this civil mass marriage, brides were expected to abandon traditional Thai dress, commonly worn at weddings, and adopt a new western dress code, which was often quite expensive. Grooms wore traditional suits, but brides were compelled to wear ankle-length white skirts or dresses, veils, white stockings, and Western shoes (Suklarpkrit, 2013, p. 147). This was not common attire for Thai citizens, and thus, allaying concerns was one of the organization's objectives when promoting these mass marriages; and to encourage the transition, the organization proposed financial assistance for any registered couple who might need help in paying for a suitable wedding costume (National Archives of Thailand, 1943d, Mor. Thor. 2.2.12/8). Although mass marriages were government-sponsored and open to all healthy Thai citizens, the couples who took part in these ceremonies were mostly civil servants.

Findings

Middle-class civil servant couples as agents of pro-birth policy

Thailand has gone through a period of significant changes starting with the rise of the middle-class in the first decade of the twentieth century. From widespread literacy to the ability to obtain more political power, the middle-class has gained a new status in society, especially in provincial urban areas around the country (i.e. Bangkok and the surrounding areas). The expansion of new ministries and administrative offices during the time of King Rama V (reigned 1868-1910) brought about urgent calls for skilled human resources. As a consequence, the first commoner boys school, Suan Kulap Witthayalai School, was founded in 1882. Once

again, the middle-class population took advantage of free educational access to obtain skills necessary to enter civil servant careers. Not only did middle-class men benefit from these circumstances, but women also availed themselves of these educational opportunities. The female literacy rate rose by the mid-1920s and official statistics show that 235,465 female students were enrolled in schools in 1925. This demonstrates an improved access to education for women (Barmé, 2002, p. 153). This was an enormous increase from a decade earlier, in which 5,396 girls were recorded to have attended schools (Barmé, 2002, p. 153). Although the statistics were national figures, the number of literate women was concentrated mostly within Bangkok and adjacent provinces in which there was a growing bourgeois class and the aristocrats maintained a predominate influence on all aspects of society. While the aristocratic class was waning by the end of the 1930s the result of a revolution in 1935 which drove most of them into exile, the lower class had not acquired the requisite literacy necessary to advance public policies. By the time World War II broke out, middle-class women were ideal targets for the state's nationalistic campaigns. The first group of women targeted in this campaign to actively condition individuals to the importance of having children were wives of middle-class civil servants. They were the first to adopt and follow the government instructions. One of the official documents released by the Ministry of Education in 1942 directly encourages government civil servants to register their partners for mass marriage ceremonies (National Archives of Thailand, 1942b, Sor. Thor. 0701.29/27). The results show that as many as 96 couples attended the mass marriage ceremonies of 1943 in Ubonratchathani Province, one of the urban regional centers in the northeast.

Figure 1: Mass marriage ceremony at Supatnaram Temple, Ubonratchathani Province



Source: National Archives of Thailand, 1943c, Por. 003 Hor. Wor. Yor. 2/1

While this was a satisfactory number for the government, it was not so beneficial to society at large as most registered couples were middle to lower ranking civil servants. Incentives were offered in order to encourage civil servants to start families. These entailed policy initiatives in which married men would have privileges of possible salary increases due in large part to wartime subsidies, and school scholarships would be offered for first-born children (Suklarpkit, 2013, p. 142).

Apart from encouraging civil servants to get married, the Prime Minister also actively sought to reshape how husbands and wives interacted with each other. A letter from General Phibun dated on August 6, 1942, entitled "Civil Servants' Families" (*khrobkhrua khong kharatchakan*), stated that as families are the foundation of a strong nation, the families of civil servants' are in a pivotal role in which it is required that they act as effective role models for the public at

large (National Archives of Thailand, 1942a, Mor. Thor. 2.2.11/13 Nor. Wor. 219/2485). In the same document, the Prime Minister gave recommendations for male heads of families entailing the following:

1. *[A good civil servant should] always respect his legal wife.*
2. *[He should] appropriately provide for his wife and children and never abandon them or leave them in despair.*
3. *[He] must live with his wife and must not leave her without a justified reason (National Archives of Thailand, 1942a, Mor. Thor. 2.2.11/13 Nor. Wor. 219/2485).*

At the end of this letter, Phibun further stated that anyone who did not follow these recommendations might be dismissed from their governmental positions. An offense of breaching these rules, according to Phibun, was “an act of destroying and humiliating the nation’s culture” (National Archives of Thailand, 1942a, Mor. Thor. 2.2.11/13 Nor. Wor. 219/2485). The letter reiterates the duties and expectations placed on civil servant couples. The real objective is apparent. Phibun wanted to praise the role of monogamous couples in order to emulate the West, especially in reference to the term ‘legal wife’. Furthermore, once he had expounded on these ideas, they were disseminated to all the provinces of the country. Phibun probably also devoted his attention to how women should interact with their husbands. The mayor of Chaiyaphum Province, Prarop Suratsawadi, delivered a speech in the training session for civil servants and families held in August of 1942 in which he explained the function of wives. Speaking to the women, he said,

1. *Be a woman who is imbued with good qualities*
2. *Be a good housewife*
3. *Be loyal to your husband*
4. *Never attempt to dishonor your husband’s virtue (National Archives of Thailand, 1942c, Mor. Thor. 2.2.11/13)*

These points further emphasize the importance of wives of civil servants in representing the ideal family image. In this way Phibun once again attempted political exhortations in official announcements in the hope of inculcating ideals on ethics espoused by the government intrusively into the function of the family. From this evidence, it can be stated incontrovertibly that middle-class civil servants became the target this policy to augment population.

Motherhood is an Honor

Women are mothers of every nation... Nowadays that men are working hard, they do not have time to take care of the children of our nation. We must then understand that our nation cannot progress towards becoming a major power without... [quality attention from the best] mothers.

(translated from Phibun’s speech on April 7, 1937 cited in Kavinraweekun, 2002, p. 48)

This speech was given on the day of the establishment of the Women’s Cultural Society (*samosorn watthatham ying*), and was accompanied with the message that women were caretakers of the nation. The significance of this message was not only that it was a call for the development of Thailand, but it was the first time that women were given roles in government. At least, as advocated by the government, specific functions and duties were to

be designated to wives. Hence, a more difficult objective of the government was then to ensure that the values of motherhood, which the government was advocating, became a reality. For government to maintain this policy objective it was imperative to provide services to women as the death rate of mothers and infants was a factor that blocked population growth. Death from complications that arose in pregnancies and in childbearing were common among rural populations which still lacked knowledge on maternity (National Archives of Thailand, 1941, Sor. Ror. 0201.5/23). To address this problem, Phibun's government focused on the promotion of the health of mothers. The first Mother's Day (*wan manda*) was held on March 10, 1943 with the general objective to enhance the role of mothers and to promote the prevention of death of both mothers and children (National Archives of Thailand, 1943b, Mor. Thor. 2.2/12/34). One of the activities held on the day was the Mother's Health Contest (*prakuad sukkhaphap manda*). Mothers with at least 5 children and as many as 11 children competed in this contest. The contestants needed to show that they exemplified the following traits and behaviors:

1. *That they [had] many children, all of whom are in good health*
2. *That they themselves [were] healthy*
3. *That they [were] able to pass an interview on baby nursing (National Archives of Thailand, 1943b, Mor. Thor. 2.2/12/34).*

The wives of civil servants were the first group of women who were encouraged to participate in this contest in the first year in order to set good examples for mothers around the country. Apart from the Mother's Health Contest, the Ministry of Health also organized other activities to honor mothers and promote motherhood. The first social meeting of mothers was also on the schedule for Mother's Day. The purpose of this event was to provide a platform for mothers to exchange knowledge to assist themselves and their infants (National Archives of Thailand, 1943b, Mor. Thor. 2.2/12/34). Without the wives of these civil servants, the government would have lacked female support to promote these events.

The Role-models: ladies of Phibunsongkhram family

Among all the wives of civil servants, the most important agent of Phibun's regime was his wife, La-ia Phibunsongkhram. She took on the dual role of wife in her household and that of an inspiring and enthusiastic nationalist in her public role as the wife of the Prime Minister, and thus one of the first female politicians (Krom Sinlapakon, 2004). In 1942, La-ia was appointed as a lieutenant colonel of the army. She took on an influential role in the female cadet academy in both recruitment and training. She also gave a speech upon the completion of the training of the first female cadet class in 1943 on behalf of her husband (Panyarachun, 1997, p. 262). This was regarded as the first time that Thailand saw the first lady actively work in the public sphere, and also within a status that had been previously reserved for men. While La-ia took the leading role in founding the academy, her daughter, Jirawat, became one of the first 28 female cadet graduates (Phuwongcharoen, Thepsongkhro & Chaiching, 2018). While she was studying the United States, Phibun requested for her return to Thailand due to the outbreak of the Second World War. Soon after her return in 1942, the female cadet academy opened enrollment for the first time. "I wanted wholeheartedly to enter the military academy as a female cadet. No one talked me into it - not even my father", said Jirawat (Phuwongcharoen, Thepsongkhro & Chaiching, 2018, p. 111). Jirawat completed her training in January of 1944 and continued to serve the female army unit until it was dissolved in August of the same year that the government was ousted from power (Phuwongcharoen, Thepsongkhro & Chaiching, 2018 p. 126-127). Nevertheless, both women were the first civil servants who had prominent roles in the public. They set examples for female family members of politicians and civil servants to follow.

Another significant contribution of the two ladies of the Phibunsongkhram family was their work as civil servants of the National Council of Culture (*sapha watthanatham*) that was founded in 1942 (Krom Sinlapakon, 2004). La-iaad was appointed as the head of the women's committee, and one of her main tasks in this council was to promote the attempts to increase population. As a consequence, La-iaad traveled to different provinces to establish the Women's Cultural Society at the provincial level throughout the country. From 1954 to 1955, La-iaad traveled to all major cities with the directive to promote the network of Women's Cultural Societies. In 1954 offices of the Women's Cultural Society were open in the central provinces of Kanchanaburi, Ayutthaya, Petchaburi, and Suphanburi (National Archives of Thailand, 1954b, Mor. Thor. 0201.2.1.18/19(2)). The working committee members of these provincial offices often included wives of civil servants, such as the wives of mayors, provincial judges, and district-chiefs. In Suphanburi Province, all 19 working committee members were wives of middle to high-ranking civil servants in the province. Bupha Phothipphan, the wife of the mayor, and Wilai Ketsakhub, the wife of the head judge, were appointed as chairwoman and vice chairwoman respectively (National Archives of Thailand, 1954c, Mor. Thor. 0201.2.1.18/19(46)). In 1955, the society targeted the southern provinces. La-iaad gave an interview to a local newspaper in the southern province regarding her traveling program. "The main objective of this visit is to attend the opening ceremony of the Women's Cultural Society and strengthen the relationships with [women in the southern provinces as sisters]", said La-iaad (National Archives of Thailand, 1954b, Mor. Thor. 0201.2.1.18/19(2)). From this document, La-iaad fulfilled not only her role as a faithful spouse but also as a patriotic agent of the state. In many of the trips, La-iaad traveled without her husband. She gave speeches and met with provincial leaders independently without being in Phibun's shadow. The tasks that La-iaad and the wives of civil servants took in the Women's Cultural Society chapters suggest the newly mobilized roles of women. Hiring female employees was no longer uncommon by the end of Phibun's regime. Statistics show that, since 1940, the government increasingly employed women in different state departments. Most of these appointments were in the Department of Public Welfare in which the number of female employees rose from 5 to 91 in 1953 (National Archives of Thailand, 1954a, Mor. Thor. 0201.2.1.18/21(3)). Jirawat was among the female civil servants who worked for the Ministry of Culture in 1952. Her title was that of assistant to the secretary of the ministry.

Conclusion

During the Phibun's era, the government's primary concern on the population crisis resulted in a number of pro-birth campaigns discussed in this paper including; the mass marriage ceremony, Mother's Day and Mother's Health Contest. These campaigns significantly transformed the society and caused the mobilization of women in particular. Following the exigency policy to increase population in Thailand, middle-class wives of civil servants stepped into the public sphere. Although their roles were limited in their scope (mostly that of fulfilling the government's campaigns to increase the population by exhorting women to pursue roles as mothers), it was an improvement of status with women in the era significantly gaining new importance in society. The policy also brought about more equality for couples. Making marriage a more secular institution granted more equity to wives and extolled the importance of monogamy. As women's status in their families improved, their positions in the public also began to be enhanced. Women's roles during this nationalistic, if not fascist, period were predominately that of mothers but those boundaries were less confining and pervasive for the policy had the inadvertent consequence of enabling women, including those from a middle-class background, into roles that were previously dominated by men. A civil service

career became an option for skilled female workers. La-iad and Jirawat Phibunsongkhram portrayed themselves as role-models for women in civil service positions by taking on roles that had never been undertaken before by women. Whether or not the prime minister actually sought the introduction of women into government positions, it occurred nonetheless and the mobilization of women in Phibun's era, as witnessed in this paper, triggered the emergence of women's voices in the following decades. By the postwar decades of the 1950s and 1960s, Thailand already saw the development of proactive roles of women in areas that were not readily imagined before such as, in politics, print media, social work, and even in literature.

References

- Barmé, S. (2002). *Woman, man, Bangkok: Love, sex, and popular culture in Thailand*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Chutima, Y. (1956). *Samut khumue chiwit anamai* [Healthy lifestyles handbook]. Cremation volume of Lamom Saelim, Bangkok: Thailand.
- Kawinraweekun, K. (2002). *Kan sang rangkai phonlamueang thai nao samai chomphon Por. Phibunsongkhram phor.sor. 2481-2487* [Constructing the body of Thai citizens during the Phibun regime of 1938-1944]. (Thesis), Sociology and Humanities. Thammasat University, Thailand.
- Khamphiban, N. (1987). *Nayobai keawkup phuying nai smai sangchat khong chomphon Por. Phibunsongkhram phor.sor. 2481-2487*. [Policies affected women during the nation-building period of Field Marshall Phibunsongkhram, 1939-1945]. (Thesis), Thammasat University, Thailand.
- Krom Sinlapakon (2004). *Satri samkhan nai prawatisat thai* [Important women in Thai history]. Bangkok: Krom Sinlapakon.
- National Archives of Thailand. (1937). *Ways to increase the population growth*. Sor. Ror. 0201.25/1034. Office of Prime Minister, Bangkok, Thailand.
- National Archives of Thailand. (1941). *To increase population of Thailand*. Sor. Ror. 0201.5/23. Office of Prime Minister, Bangkok Thailand.
- National Archives of Thailand. (1942a). *Civil servant's families*. Mor. Thor. 2.2. 11/13 Nor. Wor. 219/2485. Ministry of Interior, Bangkok, Thailand.
- National Archives of Thailand. (1942b). *Supporting civil servants to attend mass marriage ceremony*. Sor. Thor. 0701.29/27. Ministry of Education, Bangkok, Thailand.
- National Archives of Thailand. (1942c). *Training session offered to civil servants and families held on August 26th 1942*. Mor. Thor. 2.2. 11/13. Ministry of Interior, Bangkok, Thailand.
- National Archives of Thailand. (1943a). *Encouraging civil servants to nominate their wives to Mother's Health Contest*. Mor. Thor. 2.2/12/34 Mor. 265/2486. Ministry of Interior, Bangkok, Thailand.
- National Archives of Thailand. (1943b). *Mother's Health Contest*. Mor. Thor. 2.2/12/34. Ministry of Interior Bangkok, Thailand
- National Archives of Thailand. (1943c). *Photograph of mass marriage ceremony at Supatnaram Temple, Ubonratchathani Province (2)*. Por.003 Hor. Wor. Yor. 21. Bangkok, Thailand.
- National Archives of Thailand. (1943d). *Requesting to provide assistance for mass marriage ceremony*. Mor. Thor. 2.2.12/8. Ministry of Interior, Bangkok, Thailand.
- National Archives of Thailand. (1943e). *Supporting marriages of the nation*. 5.9/145 Mor. 2808/2486. Ministry of Interior, Bangkok, Thailand.
- National Archives of Thailand. (1954a). *Statistics of female civil servant of the Department of Public Welfare*. Mor. Thor. 0201.2.1.18/21(3). Ministry of Interior Bangkok, Thailand.
- National Archives of Thailand. (1954b). *The openings of Women's Cultural Societies in the provinces*. Mor. Thor. 0201.2.1.18/19(2). Ministry of Interior, Bangkok, Thailand.
- National Archives of Thailand. (1954c). *Women's Cultural Society*. Mor Thor. 0201.2.1.18/19(46). Ministry of Interior, Suphanburi, Thailand.

- Oakley, A. (1991). Eugenics, social medicine and the career of Richard Titmuss in Britain 1935-50. *British Journal of Sociology*, 165-194.
- Panyarachun, J. (1997). *Chiwaprawat phon-ngan khong than-phuying La-iad Phibunsongkhram* [The biography of the works of La-iad Phibunsongkhram] Bangkok: Dansattha Printing.
- Photchanalawan, P. (2009, August 12). *Wanmae nai totsawat 2480: sex khwamrak kup khwampen 'maephan' haengchat* [Mother's Day in 1937: Sex, Love, and Mother of the Nation]. Prachatai. Retrieved on June 3, 2019 from <https://prachatai.com/print/25415>
- Phuwongcharoen, P., Thepsongkhro, S., & Chaiching, N. (2018). *Yak luem klup cham:sarakkhadi chiwaprawat luksao chomphon Por* [Trying hard to forget: the biography of General Phibun's daughter]. []. Matichon: Bangkok.
- Suklarpkit, S. (2013). *Monogamy in modern Thai society, 1870s-1940s* (Thesis), Faculty of Arts. Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.
- The Holocaust Museum & Education Center (2019). *DNA and Eugenics in Nazi Germany*. Retrieved June 3, 2019, from <https://www.holocaustmuseumsfl.org/>.