

## LOCAL ELECTIONS AND LEADERSHIP IN THAILAND: A CASE STUDY OF NAKHON SAWAN PROVINCE

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### INTRODUCTION

SINCE the student revolution of 1973 it has become much more difficult to explain the Thai political system in terms that theorize it solely as a bureaucratic or patrimonial polity. Indeed, such theories of a patrimonial political state, which see the entire social system as under the control of the bureaucracy, or theories of a bureaucratic polity or of a patrimonial bureaucracy, which see the bureaucracy as carrying on most of the political functions in the country and which posit that political forces opposed to the bureaucracy do not exist outside of the bureaucracy, can no longer provide a totally satisfactory explanation of the Thai political system. This is because these theories fail to take into account the politicization that has taken place among Thai students, workers, and peasants and the emergence of a politicized Thai capitalist class. The latter phenomenon in particular, which has brought about the formation of political parties representing the capitalist class, has had a profound effect on changing the Thai bureaucratic system.

The 1974 and again the 1978 constitution placed most of the political authority for the nation in a directly and popularly elected assembly. This has enhanced the relative power and importance of the political parties in the National Assembly, and politicians in these political parties have begun calling for the strengthening of local self-government and the establishment of a political party system. Frequent debates have taken place in the National Assembly over the system for electing village heads, city ward aldermen, and provincial governors, and in 1981 a new political parties law was enacted setting down qualification for political party members.

Thus it can be said that local politics in Thailand and what these should stand for have become one of the political focal points in the nation. Despite this fact, however, research on local Thai politics remains extremely inadequate.<sup>1</sup> The present article is an effort to cast a little more light on this area of Thai politics, particularly regarding such areas as the characteristics of local election campaigning and of local Thai political leaders; the state of political party organization at the local level; and the relationship of local political leaders with national political parties, with the National Assembly, and with the government bureaucracy.

<sup>1</sup> Chakrit's book [1] is one of few works that has come out of research on local Thai politics.

Data for this study was gathered during the author's stay in Nakhon Sawan city at the time of the June 1980 nationwide elections for city and provincial councils. His primary sources of data were from interviews with candidates campaigning for the Nakhon Sawan city council and provincial assembly and from his own observations of these two campaigns. The city council election took place on June 8, 1980. The author worked in the city using a questionnaire to conduct interviews with all twenty-four candidates running in the election. The provincial election took place on June 29. For this election the author selected one of the electoral districts, the capital district, and using the same questionnaire interviewed all eighteen candidates campaigning in the district. Data from the above interviews was supplemented with information from interviews with city and capital-district officials and with the editors of eight local newspapers.

One final note. In the article candidates have not been identified by their names but by the numbers they were given at the time they registered as candidates.

## I. THE NAKHON SAWAN CITY COUNCIL ELECTION

### A. *Nakhon Sawan City*

Nakhon Sawan city lays 240 kilometers north of Bangkok at the confluence of the Ping and Nan rivers which then flow south as the Chao Phraya. Long known by its old name of Paknam Pho, the city has been an important center for river traffic and a major link connecting Bangkok with northern Thailand. Today the city supports numerous bus and river transport companies, and as will be seen later in this study, the operators of these companies are important local leaders.

In 1979 a large area around the city was incorporated into the city limits. This annexation expanded the municipal area from 8.85 to 27.87 square kilometers and increased the city's population from 56,539 to 86,211 people. As of the end of 1979 the city had 228 municipal workers and employed 300 laborers. City revenues for 1979 included 33,857,184 baht from city taxes, 5,781,777 baht drawn from the national tax on vehicles, 2,779,800 baht provided by the national government to support road, canal, and bridge construction, and 77,204 baht that came from the rice premium. In addition to the above, revenues were also collected from the city operated waterworks service and from the municipal pawn shops.

Nakhon Sawan city council is composed of eighteen members. Following election of the council, the city mayor together with two deputy mayors are selected from its members and the three then receive appointment from the provincial governor.

As with all Thai elections for public officials, the electorate has the right to cast votes for the full number of council members in the constituency. In other words, in the election for the Nakhon Sawan city council, each eligible voter is permitted to cast eighteen votes. As a result of this voting system, the majority

of candidates in Thai elections have tended to join together into teams, and campaigning as a team for election has become the general form. This is likewise the case in Nakhon Sawan city council elections where teams of candidates compete against each other. In the election of December 14, 1974, thirty-eight candidates ran. Thirty-six of these were fielded by two teams, one calling itself "Banmuang khong Rao" (our country), the other "Phatthana Thongthin" (home-town development), which competed against each other. The vote resulted in sixteen members from Banmuang khong Rao and two from Phatthana Thongthin being elected to the city council. During the 1980 election, these two teams joined forces to form one team with the amalgamated name of "Phatthana Banmuang" (country development).

In the 1980 election Phatthana Banmuang (hereafter abbreviated as PB) was by far the strongest team to compete and the only one to field a full team of eighteen candidates. These were registered as candidates No. 1 through No. 18. One other small team of three members also competed, calling itself "Saha Mit" (united friends). Its members were registered as candidates No. 20 through No. 22. Three other candidates, Nos. 19, 23, and 24, campaigned as independents. Thus a total of twenty-four candidates ran for election.

#### B. *Social Characteristics of the Candidates*

As can be seen from Table I, most of the candidates standing for election operated their own businesses. There were also a number of retired government officials (Nos. 1, 5, and 7) running, as well as two school principals (Nos. 11 and 17). Information concerning incomes came from interviews with the candidates themselves and cannot be accepted as totally reliable; nevertheless it can be said that all the candidates have incomes of more than 5,000 baht per month. Candidate No. 9, who was also the leader of the PB team, owned a large bus company operating scheduled bus routes connecting Bangkok with northern Thailand. In general it can be said that the candidates were more affluent than the average Nakhon Sawan city citizen, and the data also shows that their level of education was higher and that they had experienced travel overseas.

Phatthana Banmuang team leaders, candidates No. 3, No. 9, and No. 18, took much pride in their team, pointing out the high economic standing of its members and looking upon it as one of the best things associated with Nakhon Sawan city. This perception that they had of themselves and their team conforms to the data on candidate characteristics already set forth above.

Also revealed in Table I is that four of the candidates had fathers of Chinese ancestry. They could be regarded as the second generation descendants of Chinese immigrants, but even most of the other candidates running probably had Chinese ancestors. For many this was suggested by their appearance and by the fact that most were engaged in business in the city center; but for others the indication was quite clear, such as for candidate No. 10 whose father was chairman of the Paknam Pho welfare foundation (an organization composed of representatives from the city's various Chinese-dialect associations) or candidate No. 13, whose father was vice-chairman of the same foundation. The same

TABLE I  
DATA ON CANDIDATES IN THE 1980 NAKHON SAWAN CITY COUNCIL ELECTION

Candidate No.	Age	Occupation	Education	No. of Times Elected	Income Per Month (Baht)	Land Ownership (Rai)	Father's Nationality	Birth Place	Foreign Experience
No. 1	70	Former provincial governors, the incumbent city mayor	B.L. (Thammasat Univ.)	3	14,000	5	Thai	Nakhon Sawan city	Yes
No. 2	33	Lawyer, owner of gold shop and private school	B.L. (Thammasat Univ.)	1	5,000	Less than 1	China	Nakhon Sawan city	Yes
No. 3	63	Hotel owner	Secondary school (3rd year)	4	20,000	50	Thai	Bangkok	Yes
No. 4	38	Newspapers' distributing agency, bookstore owner	M.A. (Germany)	1	5,000	Less than 1	Thai	Nakhon Sawan city	Yes
No. 5	51	Former city civil servant	Secondary school (6th year)	1	4,900	2	Thai	Nakhon Sawan city	Yes
No. 6	38	Car repair shop owner	Secondary school (3rd year)	2	5,000	30	Thai	Nakhon Sawan city	—
No. 7	63	Former police officer	Secondary school (8th year)	1	4,000	Less than 1	Thai	Patthalung province	No
No. 8	53	Ice factory owner	Secondary school (6th year)	3	—	More than 30	Thai	Nakhon Sawan city	Yes
No. 9	53	Bus company owner	Secondary school	6	6,000,000	40	Thai	Nakhon Sawan city	Yes
No. 10	29	Son of a shipbuilding and river transport company owner	M.A. (U.S.A.)	1	10,000	100	Thai	Nakhon Sawan city	Yes
No. 11	52	Private school principal	B.L. (Thammasat Univ.)	1	4,750	Less than 1	China	Nakhon Sawan province	—
No. 12	44	Private school owner, the incumbent deputy city mayor	Secondary school (6th year)	2	—	4	Thai	Nakhon Sawan city	Yes
No. 13	65	Rice retailer	Secondary school (4th year)	2	—	2	Thai	Nakhon Sawan city	No

TABLE I (Continued)

Candidate	Age	Occupation	Education	No. of Times Elected	Income Per Month (Baht)	Land Ownership (Rai)	Father's Nationality	Birth Place	Foreign Experience
No. 14	61	Teacher, the incumbent deputy city mayor	High school (Philippines)	7	4,000	0	Thai	Nakhon Sawan city	Yes
No. 15	30	Son of a department store owner	Secondary school (3rd year)*	1	5,000	0	Thai	Nakhon Sawan city	Yes
No. 16	40	Fish farming and ice factory owner	B.A. (Kasetsart Univ.)	1	8,000	10	Thai	Nakhon Sawan city	Yes
No. 17	47	Private school principal	B.A. (Sri Nakariniwrot Univ.)	3	4,795	0	Thai	Chai Nat province	—
No. 18	61	Private school owner	Secondary school (8th year)	4	6,000	20	Thai	Bangkok	Yes
No. 19	40	Restaurant owner	Secondary school (6th year) and vocational school	0	20,000	Less than 1	Thai	Nakhon Sawan city	No
No. 20	43	Newspaper publisher	Secondary school (3rd year)	0	5,000	Less than 1	Thai	Nakhon Sawan city	No
No. 21	42	Former city civil servant, manager of an insurance company	Secondary school (6th year) and vocational school	0	10,000	3	China	Nakhon Sawan city	Yes
No. 22	26	Son of an agricultural supply wholesaler	Secondary school (5th year)*	0	15,000	0	China	Nakhon Sawan city	No
No. 23	48	Building contractor, fish farming	Secondary school (6th year) and vocational school	0	400,000	60	Thai	Rot Et province	Yes
No. 24	40	Insurance company office worker	B.A. (Sri Nakariniwrot Univ.)	1	5,000	Less than 1	Thai	Phichit province	No

Sources: Data from the city government of Nakhon Sawan and interviews by the author.

\* Secondary school under the new system started in 1978.

could also be said of candidates Nos. 20 and 21 who were members of the Nakhon Sawan branch of one of Chinese associations called Pholeng-tanghia-huai.

There were no large land owners among the candidates. The largest owner was candidate No. 10 who had only 100 *rai* (16 hectares). Moreover his major income came from a boat construction and river transport business operated by his father.

Examining the perception that candidates had of each other's teams and the differences they recognized in the other candidates running, eight of the twenty-four candidates said they did not see any differences between their team and the other. For those who said they perceived differences, the eighteen members of the PB team pointed to differences in team organization, in campaigning methods, in political experience, and in candidate funding. The three members of Saha Mit and the three independent candidates brought up such things as differences in candidate ages and in methods of campaigning, but they also criticized the incumbents on the city council (who made up the PB team) saying that they themselves had a better understanding of city politics and the spirit involved in these, and that they were better able to represent and benefit the people of Nakhon Sawan. None of the candidates, however, emphasized basic differences in ideology or in the people from whom they drew support. Nor were there differences in perception of the problems that each team and each candidate saw facing the city of that they said had to be dealt with and solved. They all agreed that these included such matters as the expansion of water and sewage facilities to cope with the extension of the city limits, city sanitation, and enlargement of the municipal marketplace.

Concerning candidate motives for running, except for eighteen members from the PB team, all the others said one reason for running was to prevent one team from monopolizing city government. Candidate No. 19 mentioned family honor and reputation; No. 23 said he had an innate liking for politics. Many on the PB team had long been connected with Nakhon Sawan city politics and had close relatives who were involved in local politics. In citing reasons for running, candidates No. 3, No. 4, and No. 12 said that they were asked to run by relatives already in politics. Candidates No. 17 and No. 18 gave a similar answer, saying they were called on by Sawat Khamprakob, previously a powerful figure in Nakhon Sawan city politics and who is presently a member of the National Assembly. Candidates No. 5, No. 7, No. 15, and No. 16 said they had been asked by the PB team leader to become candidates. Thus for many of the candidates, there was not an active self-generated motive for running. However another sizeable group (candidates Nos. 1, 2, 8, 10, 13, and 14) did point to such motives, such as their love for the city they were born in and a desire to contribute to its development. Candidates No. 6 and No. 9 said that their initial motivation for entering city politics was because they wanted to have a voice in these affairs and because of the need to change city laws. They also noted that it would help promote their own businesses.

It should be pointed out before moving on that the remuneration for a city council member is only 1,00 baht per month, but with their own high personal incomes, this small compensation is not their incentive for campaigning.

### C. *Election Campaigning*

#### 1. *Team formation*

As already mentioned above, in the city council election of 1974, the Banmuang khong Rao team had won sixteen seats and the Phatthana Thongthin team had gotten two. It was at the end of 1979 that candidate No. 9, leader of the PB team in the 1980 election, decided to run for the June 1980 election following consultation with "big wigs" (*phu yai*) of Banmuang khong Rao such as candidate No. 1 (the then incumbent city mayor and No. 9's relative), No. 3, and No. 8. These leaders of Banmuang khong Rao invited the two members on the city council from Phatthana Thongthin, candidates Nos. 17 and 18, to amalgamate into one team. Candidate No. 9 became the leader of the new amalgamated team, dubbed "Phatthana Banmuang."

Candidate No. 9 already had a long career in Nakhon Sawan city politics and was a prosperous local businessman. At the national political level he had frequently been sounded out by the Social Action Party, by General Pramarn Adireksarn, head of the Chart Thai Party, and by his close friend and fellow Rotarian, Bhichai Rattakul, the head of the Democratic Party, to run as a candidate for the National Assembly. However the numerous acquaintances that he had in the different political parties made him hesitate to join any of them. He also feared that to affiliate himself with any one political party would have a detrimental effect on his own business, which was another reason for not joining any national political party.

Candidate No. 9's political thought was strongly influenced by the Confucian idea of "cultivating the self, ordering the family, administering the country, and pacifying the empire,"<sup>2</sup> and now that he had become successful in business, he stated that he wanted to turn his business affairs over to his son who had returned from studying in the United States, and as team leader of PB, he wanted to devote himself solely to society. No. 9 also expressed another thought that could be called typical of Sino-Thai leaders. He commented that were the city government to be faced with a large problem and an insufficient budget, he would urge his supporters to contribute funds to overcome the situation [2, pp. 22, 117]. Because of such beliefs, candidate No. 9 felt that only persons of high economic and social standing possessed the qualifications to be political leaders, and he put great importance on these when selecting members for his team. A number of the team members were the sons of prosperous Nakhon Sawan businessmen closely acquainted with candidate No. 9. This was the case for candidates Nos. 4, 10, 15, and 16. They joined the PB team after No. 9 had sounded out their fathers and encouraged them to have their sons run as candidates. No. 10 had returned to Thailand only two months before election day, having just completed an M.A. degree in the United States. No. 2 was another young qualified candidate that No. 9 was able to acquire for his team. Thus another feature of the PB team that No. 9 felt proud of was the team's array of old, middle-aged, and young candidates, a three-generation composition so to speak.

<sup>2</sup> Skinner mentioned that the influence of this thinking is also strong among the leadership of the Chinese community in Bangkok [2, p. 115].

Turning to the Saha Mit team, composed of candidates No. 20 through No. 22, the three made their decision to run only one day before the deadline of May 5, 1980 when the names of all candidates standing for election had to be submitted. The team leader, candidate No. 21, previously had worked in the Nakhon Sawan city treasury office, and since retiring he had been working as the manager of an insurance company in the city. He was a member of the Rotary Club, of which candidate No. 9 was chairman, and was on the board of the Nakhon Sawan Co-op Store, which had candidate No. 18 as chairman and candidate No. 3 as vice-chairman. He had originally hoped to campaign as a member of PB, but candidate No. 9 had not asked him to join. The families of the three Saha Mit members, though not related, had a very close, almost kinship-like relationship, and during the election campaign they often gathered and carried on activities at the large agricultural supply wholesale outlet operated by No. 22's father.

Candidate No. 24, who ran as an independent in 1980, had, in 1974, been elected to the city council as a member of the Banmuang khong Rao team. However his relative on the team who had supported his membership withdrew from the 1980 election, and therefore he also decided to leave the team and run instead as an independent.

## 2. *Campaign methods and local functional groups*

The way the teams campaigned for the election was very much influenced by the sort of relationship that connected the teams with supporting organizations. The following section will examine the methods used in the 1980 Nakhon Sawan city council election campaign and look at the relationship of the campaigning teams with supporting functional and neighborhood groups.

Of the different elections in Thailand, those for city council stand in closest relationship to the people, and it is easy to imagine some neighborhood group taking the initiative in nominating a candidate to represent their interests, or at least putting their support behind some candidate running for election. However, in the city council elections, one sees no such relationship between candidates and local neighborhood groups. This was evident in the area of Nakhon Sawan newly incorporated in 1979. Although it contained nearly half of the city's area and eligible voters, it did not have a single candidate running in the election, a good indication that local neighborhood groups in this part of the city had not put up candidates to represent them.

Moreover, none of the candidates themselves, when deciding to run for election, had conferred with any neighborhood group or organization. Editors of the local newspapers likewise told the author that candidates usually did not confer with neighborhood groups or representatives. Candidate No. 16 reported that there was no perception at all among candidates that they represented neighborhood society, and candidates regarded it as natural that there was no support generated for them from neighborhood groups. An example was candidate No. 8. He operated a large ice factory on the outskirts of the city, well away from the town center. He had used his own capital to put in roads in the area around his factory, and these had also benefited the local villages. Despite this, during



the election there was no spontaneous support for candidate No. 8 coming from the villagers, and No. 8 himself did not give much thought to that fact.

Looking next at functional groups and their relationship with election teams, at the time of this study there were thirty-eight associations, foundations, clubs, groups (*chomrom*) and the like existing in Nakhon Sawan city. Particularly noticeable were the number of trade and occupational organizations. Private school owners, rice dealers, electric appliance traders, clothing merchants, sundry goods merchants, auto parts dealers, gold dealers, transport company owners, grain dealers, auto repair shop owners, restaurant owners, hardware shop owners, hotel operators, tailors, these and other occupations have organized groups. The various candidates, in accordance with their occupations, were members of these groups. Along with belonging to these occupational organizations, the candidates were also leaders in such groups as the Rotary Club, Lions Club, and were involved in charities and cooperatives. Thus the candidates were connected and affiliated with numerous groups and organizations. Despite this, none of the eighteen members of the PB team said that they received formal support from any of these organizations, and none sought any support.

Thus as can be seen, there was no active electoral support coming from neighborhood or functional groups, and no candidate maintained an office for the purpose of meeting and greeting members from neighborhood and functional groups. Not one candidate who ran in the two Nakhon Sawan elections herein studied set up a campaign office; and there was no change in any of the candidates' homes even after they had decided to run for election, other than that they spent more time out of the house visiting townspeople and meeting with their *hua khanaen* (vote solicitors, about whom more will be said below).

As can be seen from the above, candidates campaigning in the municipal council election had no connection with constituencies or organizations. Candidates campaigned on their own, relying principally on visits with the citizenry and on their own *hua khanaen* to gather votes.

Turning to an examination of candidate visitations with their constituency, members of the PB team declared their candidacies on April 22, but the team did not begin visiting people until a month later, on May 22. From that date until the day before the elections, about half of the candidates on the team went out each day to designated areas and spent three to four hours meeting with the people. One advantage of team campaigning is that there is no need for all the candidates on a team to go out on these visitations.

When PB team members went out on visitations, the *hua khanaen* responsible for that particular voting precinct introduced the people to the candidates as the latter moved from house to house. The candidates handed out pamphlets which set forth their political policies and which provided the people with a background and introduction to the team's members. The candidates also sought out the expectations that the citizens had for their city government, but the author observed very little response from the people. Even when candidate No. 9 and the father of candidate No. 10, both who were well-known in Nakhon Sawan, came to visit, there was no one from the local citizenry that came to meet them.

Many people, in fact, remained indoors altogether. The low 21.9 per cent voter turn out likewise reflected the lack of popular interest in the election.

The Saha Mit team and the independent candidate No. 19 had a sound truck that drove around town, something which the PB team did not make use of. Instead the latter relied mainly on a walking campaign and meeting the people directly on the streets. The PB team also used direct mail to send its political message to each home. It also made use of such members as candidates Nos. 11, 12, 17, and 18, who were principals and owners of private schools. The team's political messages were printed up on the backs of the schools' schedules and bulletins which the students took home.

The use of the *hua khanaen*, or vote solicitors, in Thai elections can be seen from the National Assembly election level right down to the city council election level, and the *hua khanaen* played a large role in the Nakhon Sawan elections. Nakhon Sawan city is divided into forty-eight electoral precincts. The team leader of PB, candidate No. 9, placed at least one *hua khanaen* in each of the precincts, and these people were assigned the task of collecting votes. Using the employees of his own bus company as a nucleus, candidate No. 9 fielded over one hundred *hua khanaen*. The coordinating center for all of these vote solicitors was also No. 9's bus company. Other ranking members of the PB team had their own *hua khanaen* as well, and the coordination and cooperation between the team's candidates was carried out very well as each candidate's *hua khanaen* worked for the team as a whole.

The duty of the *hua khanaen* placed in each electoral precinct was to pay twenty baht to the people he knew for their vote. Then on election day he had to get these people to the polling stations to vote. This he did using pick-up trucks and boats provided by the candidate he was working for. This use of candidates' vehicles to take people to vote is usual in provincial and national elections as well.

One interesting election strategy used in Thailand is gambling. Candidates used the people's desire to gamble as a way of trying to obtain votes. This strategy was employed as well in the Nakhon Sawan city council elections. The big wager in 1980 was whether all eighteen candidates of the PB team would be elected or whether the Saha Mit team would be able to get one of its candidates elected.<sup>3</sup> All voting in elections for public office in Thailand ends at three o'clock in the afternoon. All polling stations in each precinct then immediately begin counting votes. In city council elections, the results of each precinct are sent to the city hall. As the results gradually come in, these are displayed on a large scoreboard standing in the square in front of the city hall. During the Nakhon Sawan elections, it was deep into the night before all of the results were in and the winners and losers decided. During this time the square in front of the city hall was crowded with gamblers wagering on the possible outcome of the election.

### 3. *Political parties, the national assembly, and the city council elections*

An examination of teams and candidates during local elections also provides an opportunity to explore the organization and function of national political

<sup>3</sup> *Siam News*, June 1, 1980; *Nakhon sawan*, June 1, 1980. Both are local Nakhon Sawan newspapers.

parties and the role of the National Assembly members in local politics.

Of the twenty-four candidates running in the Nakhon Sawan city council election, only candidate No. 23 belonged to a political party, the Social Action Party, and had stood as a candidate for the National Assembly, having done so twice, in 1969 and again in 1975. None of the other candidates were members of political parties. But even candidate No. 23 made no mention at all in his campaign of his party affiliation. In fact, political party names were of no concern at all in this local election.

Political parties likewise made no attempt to play a role in the local elections; party leadership drew up no plans at all for such participation. Even the Democratic Party, which is by far the most organized political party in Thailand, having sixty-seven branches around the country (as of May 1980), announced at the start of 1980 in its monthly party paper that the party had decided not to put up any candidates for the upcoming local elections.<sup>4</sup> Here was the political party with the most extensive local organization in the country saying that it was not able to put up candidates for the local elections. One can imagine how much more difficult it would have been for the Social Action Party, with only two local branches (in Khong Khaen and Chiang Mai), or the Chart Thai Party, which has no local branches at all, to field local candidates for election. Among the National Assembly members from Nakhon Sawan, the most influential was the group around Sawat which dubbed itself the Kaset Sangkhom (Social Agriculturists) Party. But this "party" was little more than a local clique whose membership consisted solely of a few National Assembly members around Sawat along with some former National Assembly candidates and a few close relatives. The group had no office or political organization and was incapable of playing a party role in the local elections.

Political parties in Thailand are essentially groupings within the National Assembly which are used and maneuvered in attempts to form majority factions and thereby gain control of the government. Such "parties" have little sub-organization. Even at the national election level where political parties compete directly with each other, the majority of the voters do not vote for a party; they vote for the individuals running for assembly seats.<sup>5</sup> Given this total lack of

<sup>4</sup> *San prachathipat*, No. 7 (January 1980). The political parties law of 1981 requires all parties to notify the Ministry of Interior when they establish regional branches. As of the beginning of May 1984, according to the information supplied to the ministry, of the three largest parties, the Democratic Party had seventy-seven local branches while the Social Action Party and the Chart Thai Party each had none (survey by the Office for Election, Local Administration Department, Ministry of Interior.).

<sup>5</sup> In National Assembly electoral districts having multi-representation, voters are eligible to cast as many votes as there are representatives in the district. It is most common for parties to put up as many candidates then campaign as a team. Even so, the chances are small that an entire team will be elected. In the 1975 National Assembly elections, there were 92 multi-representative electoral districts. In all of these 92 districts single-party teams campaigned, but in only 17 of the districts were entire teams elected. In the 1976 elections, it happened in only 25 districts out of 94; in 1979 it was 16 districts out of 94; in 1983, 30 districts out of 106 (author's own calculations). This indicates that voters do not vote for political parties but for individual candidates.

involvement of national political parties in local politics, candidates campaigning in city council elections give little thought to using party names to attract votes. This was definitely true of the Nakhon Sawan city elections where political parties took no interest whatsoever.

When discussing the need for political parties, nineteen of the twenty-four candidates responded that in their opinion there was a need for parties. But this need that they saw was limited solely to national level politics. Candidates No. 8, No. 19, and No. 22 expressly stated that political parties were strictly for national politics and unnecessary at the local level. Candidates No. 9, No. 12, and No. 17 said that there were too many political parties and that two or three would be enough. None of the candidates thought that there was any need for political parties to organize at the local level.

Looking at the relationship between the local candidates and members of the National Assembly in Bangkok, sixteen members of the PB team were acquainted personally with Sawat. Candidates No. 17 and No. 18 in particular attributed their first success in getting a seat on the city council (in 1967) to the support they had received from Sawat. Eight team members had supported Sawat-group (Kaset Sangkhom) candidates during the 1979 elections for the National Assembly. Despite this relationship between the local candidates and members of the National Assembly, the role of the latter in the city council election was small. Sawat remained neutral, and only two other National Assembly members, Wasan Intrasuk and Damrongphan Asuni na Ayuthaya, became in any way involved. Wasan was a legal advisor connected with candidate No. 22's company and was on bad terms with candidate No. 9, the leader of PB team. For these reasons he backed Saha Mit, providing support largely through the promotion of electoral gambling. Damrongphan announced his support for candidate No. 23 in one of the local newspapers.<sup>6</sup> For their part, the local candidates themselves did not expect anything significant to result from National Assembly members' support. This feeling was particularly true of the PB team. Candidate No. 15 expressed this when he pointed out that (1) the primary method of campaigning even at the national level was to employ *hua khanaen* to purchase votes, (2) National Assembly members had neither their own separate political organizations nor supporting groups, and therefore (3) there was little popular interest locally for the National Assembly members.

When asked how much they thought they could look to National Assembly as a way to overcome problems that were beyond the city's ability to solve, only two of the twenty-four candidates said they would look to Sawat or others in the National Assembly in such a situation. In contrast, seventeen others answered that they would go via the provincial governor to the Ministry of Interior and seek a loan from the municipal government promotional fund. Candidates No. 5, No. 21, and No. 23, who were former city officials and knowledgeable in municipal administration, were in total agreement that in a difficult situation such a loan was the best solution. The city had already received such a loan when it

<sup>6</sup> *Phuan prachachon*, June 1, 1980.

undertook improvements of the water supply system and the municipal marketplace. Thus very few of the candidates would look to the National Assembly as a way to overcoming problems facing the city. Instead the great majority would turn to the government bureaucracy, to the provincial governor, and the Ministry of Interior, as had been done in the past.<sup>7</sup>

## II. THE NAKHON SAWAN CAPITAL-DISTRICT ELECTION FOR THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY

### A. *The Capital District*

The capital district is one of the twelve districts in Nakhon Sawan province. It encompasses the city of Nakhon Sawan and is divided into fifteen sub-districts (*tambon*) and 150 villages (*muban*). The capital district covers an area of 750 square kilometers; its population at the start of 1980 was 198,108 people, of whom 97,849 were eligible to vote. Of these, 43,341 lived within the Nakhon Sawan city limits, the remaining 54,508 lived outside of the city.<sup>8</sup>

There are thirty members on the Nakhon Sawan provincial assembly. This assembly differs from the city council in that it cannot elect any administrators from its own members and it can act only as an advisory body to the governor who is an appointee of the Ministry of Interior. Elections for the provincial assembly take place in each of the districts. Six seats in the assembly have been allotted to the capital district. This means that each voter in the district can cast up to six votes. For this reason provincial assembly elections, like those for city councils, have for the most part become team efforts. In the 1980 election, eighteen candidates ran. Two teams fielded a full six candidates. There were the "Phalang Samakkhi" (united power) team and the "Asa Phatthana Thongthin" (volunteers for hometown development) team. There was also one three-member team, one two-member team, and one individual who ran as an independent.

### B. *Social Characteristics of the Candidates*

The backgrounds of the candidates running in the provincial assembly election are shown in Table II. As can be seen, when compared with the candidates for the Nakhon Sawan city council, these candidates were quite varied; and unlike the situation in the city council election, none of the eighteen candidates for the provincial assembly were related to each other.

The incumbent capital-district members to the provincial assembly had formed themselves into the Phalang Samakkhi (hereafter abbreviated as PS) team and, compared to the other candidates running, this team was composed of the rich city people. Three of the members had graduated from university, and the remaining three had completed sixth year of secondary school. Candidate No. 1 was the team's leader and a younger brother of Damrongphan in the

<sup>7</sup> Chakrit comments on city governments looking to the Interior Ministry bureaucracy for assistance in solving local problems [1, pp. 95, 98, 172].

<sup>8</sup> The above data from sources in the capital district office.

TABLE II  
DATA ON CANDIDATES IN THE 1980 NAKHON SAWAN CAPITAL-DISTRICT ELECTION FOR THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY

Candidate No.	Age	Occupation	Education	Income per Month (Baht)	Land Ownership (Rai)	Father's Nationality	Birth Place	Foreign Experience
No. 1	40	Bus company and gasoline station owner	Secondary school (6th year)	More than 10,000	2	Thai	Capital district, N.S.	Yes
No. 2	52	Rice middleman, rice miller, hog raiser, private school owner	Secondary school (6th year)	20,000	60	Thai	Capital district, N.S.	No
No. 3	54	Lawyer, real estate broker	B.L. (Thammasat Univ.)	More than 5,000	?	Thai	Capital district, N.S.	Yes
No. 4	42	Local radio station announcer	Secondary school (6th year)	8,000	—	Thai	Bangkok	No
No. 5	42	Distillery company worker, former <i>kamnan</i>	B.A. (Ramkhamheang Univ.)	5,000	50	China	Bangkok	No
No. 6	41	Lawyer, local Bangkok Bank branch legal advisor	B.L. (Thammasat Univ.)	20,000	2	Thai	Chumsaeng district, N.S.	No
No. 7	62	Retired civil servant	Secondary school (6th year)	10,000	300	Thai	Krokwra district, N.S.	No
No. 8	66	Retired civil servant	Secondary school (6th year)	More than 2,000	1	Thai	Banphot district, N.S.	No
No. 9	44	Itinerant merchant, editor of local newspaper, <i>Phiang chon</i>	Secondary school (2nd year)	10,000	1	Thai	Chai Nat province	No
No. 10	55	Retired civil servant, automobile salesman	Secondary school (6th year)	3,000	1	Thai	Phichit province	No

TABLE II (Continued)

Candidate	Age	Occupation	Education	Income per Month (Baht)	Land Ownership (Rai)	Father's Nationality	Birth Place	Foreign Experience
No. 11	53	Retired teacher, vegetable farmer	Secondary school (6th year) and vocational school	More than 1,000	100	Thai	Capital district, N.S.	No
No. 12	60	Retired civil servant, herb seller	Secondary school (6th year)	More than 3,000	2	Thai	Capital district, N.S.	No
No. 13	39	Rice middleman, rice farmer	Secondary school (4th year)	More than 10,000	50	Thai	Capital district, N.S.	No
No. 14	51	Rice middleman, gambling house owner	Primary school (4th grade)	More than 10,000	—	Thai	Capital district, N.S.	No
No. 15	38	Mobile movie theater owner	Secondary school (4th year)	More than 10,000	—	Thai	Uttaradit province	Yes
No. 16	47	Mushroom cultivator	Primary school (4th grade)	5,000	14	Thai	Chai Nat province	No
No. 17	45	Grocery store owner	Primary school (4th grade)	More than 3,000	—	Thai	Capital district, N.S.	No
No. 18	45	Rice miller, rice farmer	Primary school (4th grade)	Almost nothing	30	Thai	Capital district, N.S.	No

Sources: Data from the capital district office and interviews by the author.

National Assembly. Candidate No. 2 was of Vietnamese ancestry and one of the small number of Christians in Thailand. He looked after the church which stood adjacent to his house. He was a rice mill owner and as such was able to purchase rice cheaply from the farmers and sell it to the government-run MOF (Market Organization for Farmers) at the much higher rice-support price. He had also acquired a government permit authorizing him to sell pork. These enterprises gave him a keen personal interest in provincial politics. Candidate No. 3 was the team's most senior politician. He had been the team leader for the 1974 election and following that election had been selected chairman of the provincial assembly. However in 1976 he ran for the National Assembly and had resigned his membership in the provincial assembly. He dealt extensively in real estate, and for this reason he had an interest in provincial politics. Candidate No. 4 was a well-known radio announcer on one of Nakhon Sawan's regional stations. He was said to be so popular that he would be voted in even without campaigning. Candidate No. 5 had a father of Chinese nationality and had been raised in Bangkok, but he had lived the past twenty years in Nakhon Sawan. He worked for a local distillery. Through the support of the president of the distillery, No. 5 had been selected for the position of sub-district chief (*kamnan*) of the sub-district where the distillery was located. But in 1979 this sub-district had been incorporated into the Nakhon Sawan city limits and the sub-district chief position abolished. Though PS members were among the wealthiest of the candidates, none of them had any large land holdings.

Of the six members of the Asa Phatthana Thongthin team, five were former local public officials. At retirement, however, none were of significantly high rank. The team leader was candidate No. 7 who was only a deputy district chief of the capital district when he retired the previous year. He had held that post for twenty-five years. Four members of the team lived in Nakhon Sawan city; the other two lived outside of the city, and the team members themselves admitted that they were all simply ordinary citizens without much money. They had only candidate No. 7's old broken-down car to use as their sound truck. Candidate No. 9 was known as something of a public-spirited servant for the local women vendors and frequently negotiated on their behalf with municipal officials in charge of vendors affairs. No. 9 made a living selling goods that he carried around in the back of his truck. He had three wives and no fix residence. Candidates No. 7 and No. 11 had inherited comparatively large pieces of farm land and were the only two candidates taking part in the surveyed elections who were large land owners.

Candidates No. 13 and No. 14 were influential people in the rural areas of the capital district. No. 13's younger brother and No. 14's father were both sub-district chiefs. Both candidates were engaged in the rice business and strongly criticized candidate No. 2 for using his assembly position to sell rice to the MOF at a high price and making excessive profits. Both were also villagers and regretted that their group did not have the funds that the PS team had, therefore they felt that rural people like themselves could not win against the townspeople. Candidate No. 18 was by far the poorest of the candidates. He had mortgaged his land and



used the proceeds to build a small rice mill. But the business had not gone well and he was largely without any income.

There were no great differences among the eighteen candidates in the class of people they represented or in their ideology. Candidate No. 9 had become involved in working for the low-income women vendors; but the scope of his activity was limited to opposing the administrative regulations of the municipal authorities, and his methods too were limited to such traditional means as petitioning the provincial governor and other officials of authority. It had nothing to do with any socialist movement led by left-wing intellectuals.

The mutual differences that the candidates were conscious of were mainly the difference of the assembly incumbents (Phalang Samakkhi) on the one hand and the non-incumbents (Asa Phatthana Thongthin) on the other; also the difference of candidates from the city and those from the rural area. The candidates opposing the PS team viewed the latter in very cynical terms. They saw its members as using their public positions to be "political brokers" working for their own personal gain. In Thailand, a member of a provincial council is generally seen as connected with graft and corruption, and the members of the Nakhon Sawan provincial assembly were no exceptions. It was said that they intervened in bidding for construction projects carried out by the province and divided up the financial benefits amongst themselves.<sup>9</sup> The biggest difference that the candidates were conscious of was that between city and village. The candidates living out in the country were Nos. 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, and 18. Their main criticism was that rich country people could not win against rich city people, therefore it was difficult for benefits to the rural sector to be reflected in provincial politics.

### C. *Election Campaigning*

#### 1. *Team formation*

Phalang Samakkhi candidates No. 1 through No. 5 had run as members of the same team in the previous election of 1974, and they were presently incumbents in the assembly.

In the 1974 election, candidates No. 2 and No. 3, who had been in the provincial assembly since 1967, persuaded No. 1, No. 4, and No. 5 to run as candidates which was the first time for all three to run for the provincial assembly. Looking towards the 1980 election, these same five members reached an agreement on the final day that the assembly met to run again as candidates. The five were in no way related to each other, quite unlike the situation in the city council election where numerous candidates were relatives or fellow students or teachers connected with their students or some such association. The whole PS team was closely connected with Sawat who had a hand in organizing the team. Sawat was also instrumental in persuading candidate No. 6 to join the team. No. 6 had been toying with the idea of organizing his own team, but Sawat was able to persuade him otherwise, and two days before the deadline, he decided to participate as a candidate on the PS team.

<sup>9</sup> Provincial assembly members receive an allowance of only 225 baht a month which is paid when the assembly is in session.

Five members of the Asa Phatthana Thongthin team were retired public officials who used to work together. Other than this connection, the team members had no other mutual relationship. In April of 1980, candidates No. 7 and No. 8 had agreed to form a team together. The two then got the other members to join the team. Candidates No. 8 and No. 10 had run together on the same team in the 1974 provincial assembly election, but both had lost. Candidate No. 11 and No. 12 were former subordinates of No. 7. Candidate No. 7 was by far the most affluent member of the team, and he defrayed the team's outlays for gasoline and printing pamphlets which were the greatest part of the team's expenses.

Candidates No. 13 and No. 14 had become acquainted through the former's younger brother, a sub-district chief. No. 14 and the younger brother knew each other from their practice sessions as members of the Thai National Defense Volunteers. No. 14 was also very active in the village scouts. Candidate No. 13 was a leader in the farmers association, an organization promoted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives. He was also friends with a number of sub-district chiefs, some of whom were also leaders in the farmers association, who had teamed up to run in the 1974 provincial assembly election. No. 13 had intended to form a new team with these other sub-district chiefs, but ultimately this could not be done, and on April 15, 1980 he along with No. 14 had decided to campaign together as a two-man team. They did not give themselves a name.

Candidates No. 15, No. 16, and No. 17 formed their team in a somewhat unusual way. Each had registered separately to run as candidates, and later, through the efforts of an owner of one of the local newspapers, they were brought together to form a team.

## 2. Campaign methods and local functional groups

The primary method of campaigning for the PS team was the purchasing of votes through the use of *hua khanaen*. Neighborhood and functional groups played a very small part. Candidate No. 5, as already noted, had worked as the chief of a sub-district until its incorporation into the city in 1979. As a candidate in the election, however, he did no conferring with the village heads who used to be under him.

The six members of the team did not go out as a group to visit the people. Rather each member made use of his *hua khanaen*. The team leader, candidate No. 1, relied totally on his *hua khanaen*, never leaving his gas station office, even as election day drew near. The *hua khanaen* came each day to report to the candidate who was employing them, and in the early morning one could see groups of *hua khanaen* waiting outside candidates' houses. According to one of candidate No. 3's *hua khanaen*, No. 3 used about forty *hua khanaen* in his campaign.

Candidates preferred to use influential people such as sub-district chiefs, village heads, merchants, or school teachers as *hua khanaen*. One example was in the sub-district of Takhian Luang where the chiefs of village No. 1 and village No. 2 were employed as *hua khanaen* for PS. The two villages form one electoral precinct, and at the time of this study had a total of 572 eligible voters. Of this

TABLE III  
NUMBER OF VOTES FOR CANDIDATES IN THE 1980  
NAKHON SAWAN ELECTIONS

City Council Election		Provincial Assembly Election	
No. 1	5,071	No. 1	7,450
No. 2	5,466	No. 2	8,365
No. 3	5,282	No. 3	7,871
No. 4	5,462	No. 4	6,961
No. 5	5,915	No. 5	6,236
No. 6	5,658	No. 6	6,381
No. 7	5,627	No. 7	2,919
No. 8	5,766	No. 8	2,275
No. 9	6,306	No. 9	1,948
No. 10	6,131	No. 10	1,531
No. 11	5,769	No. 11	1,823
No. 12	5,916	No. 12	1,521
No. 13	5,664	No. 13	3,917
No. 14	5,691	No. 14	3,597
No. 15	5,588	No. 15	5,800
No. 16	5,337	No. 16	5,084
No. 17	5,473	No. 17	4,435
No. 18	5,302	No. 18	1,898
No. 19	2,794		
No. 20	3,393		
No. 21	3,281		
No. 22	3,199		
No. 23	2,214		
No. 24	2,347		

Sources: Data from the city government of Nakhon Sawan and the capital district office.

total only 195 voted, and the PS team candidates each received 168–177 of these votes. One can see from this example that by employing people like village heads as *hua khanaen*, a candidate could get 90 per cent and more of the precinct's votes. But the low 34 per cent voter turnout (the overall average for the capital district, however, was a mere 18.1 per cent) of this example also shows that the influence of a village headman on the people in his village is also definitely limited.

A real advantage of team campaigning, as mentioned earlier, is that the work of each member, even if they go out to work individually, assists all other candidates on the team; it is also an accepted principle that the *hua khanaen* do not simply work for the candidate employing them but that they solicit for all the candidates on the team. On this last point, however, it is also true that there are those who will work only for the person employing them, something suggested by some of the figures in Table III. Candidate No. 5, the lowest vote-getter in the PS team, received 25.5 per cent fewer votes than did candidate No. 2, the team's highest vote getter.

Besides using *hua khanaen*, the PS team also did such things as donate cement and other needed materials to village temples in their electorate. Their purpose, of course, was to try and please the head priests of these temples, that they might favorably influence the villagers to vote for the team's candidates. In principle priests are expected to refrain from involvement in politics, and they are not eligible to vote; nevertheless, their role in society cannot be ignored, especially at election time.

The Asa Phatthana Thongthin team, unlike the PS people, did not campaign using *hua khanaen* and purchasing votes. They did not have the financial resources to employ such solicitors and had to depend on the human relations and personal contacts that they had developed while they were working as public officials. The team campaigned using direct mail to send its pamphlets and political messages to the voters, and every morning the members drove around in a car visiting with the people of their constituency.

Candidates No. 13 and No. 14, as already noted, were leaders in the farmers association and closely associated with a number of the sub-district chiefs. Nevertheless, the two candidates received no active support from these chiefs. Candidate No. 13 explained that this was because he lacked the wherewithal to employ these chiefs as his own *hua khanaen*. This explanation also shows that the farmers association did not cooperate or become involved as an organization in the election. And even if an influential leader in the farmers association were to become involved in the election, this leader could collect votes only from within his personal network of friends and associates in the organization. His employment as a *hua khanaen* would not give the candidate access to the farmers association as an organization.

When deciding to run for the provincial assembly, none of the eighteen candidates discussed the matter with any neighborhood groups. But it was necessary to entertain local "big wigs" and other people of influence. Entertaining for elections purposes, however, is against the law. Thus when candidate No. 13 gave a party for some thirty-five village heads and school teachers who supported him, it was held as a thanksgiving prayer gathering, and No. 13 very openly entertained his guests. Candidate No. 17, too, was observed entertaining his *hua khanaen*.

Only one candidate out of the eighteen running in the election said he received support from a group. This was No. 2 who was the head of and was supported by the local hog raisers association. None of the other candidates said that they were supported by any functional groups.

From the above it can be seen that in the provincial assembly elections, as with the city council elections, there was little evidence of spontaneous, active support for candidates coming from neighborhood and functional groups. At the same time the candidates themselves held no expectations about these groups.

Before concluding this section on local groups, something should be said about the role of the village scout organization that was constantly talked about as participating in the campaigning. Ten of the candidates in the provincial election were members of the village scouts. Leaders in the organization were

interspersed among the campaigning teams. This dispersion of membership made it impossible for the village scouts as an organization to give its support to any one team. Thus despite much talk to the contrary, organized village scout support for candidates did not exist.

### 3. *Political parties, the national assembly, and the provincial assembly elections*

The PS team, as already mentioned, was closely associated with Sawat's Kaset Sangkhom group. Candidates No. 1, No. 2, No. 3, and No. 4 said that they were members of the group. As noted earlier, this group around Sawat called itself a political party, but it was little more than a clique of local politicians centered on a member of the National Assembly and played no role at all in the provincial elections. Moreover, "PS" posters and pamphlets carried no names or references to political parties.

Each of the twelve districts in Nakhon Sawan province constitutes an electoral district, and campaigns similar to those in the capital district took place in the other districts. But teams did not move out of their home districts to campaign in other districts. There was no team named "Phalang Samakkhi" campaigning in any district other than the capital district. In other words there was no team that attempted to organize throughout the province. This situation was another reflection of the lack of political party organization at the local level.

No candidates of the Asa Phatthana Thongthin team were party members at the time of this study. Candidate No. 9 once had been a member of the Social Action Party, and No. 8 and No. 10 said they had a liking for that party. Most of the team members were also acquainted with Kaset Sangkhom group people in the National Assembly. Three had helped Sawat's group during the 1979 National Assembly elections, working as *hua khanaen*. But the three received no support from National Assembly members during the provincial election.

Candidate No. 13 said that he too had been employed as a *hua khanaen* for the Kaset Sangkhom group during the 1979 elections. He was not affiliated with any party, but he had a preference for the Democratic Party. No. 13's teammate, candidate No. 14, was a member of the Social Action Party, but during the 1979 National Assembly elections, he helped candidates of Sawat's Kaset Sangkhom group. Candidate No. 15 was a member of the Democratic Party. Both No. 14 and No. 15 said nothing in their campaigns about their party affiliations. Candidates No. 17 and No. 18 also worked as *hua khanaen* during the 1979 National Assembly elections, but those candidates whom they had solicited for in 1979 had not associated themselves with No. 17's or No. 18's campaigns in 1980.

As can be seen, the national political parties took no interest at all in the provincial assembly elections, just as had been true of the city council elections. Again this was due to the lack of party organization at the local level, and the tendency of voters to vote for individuals and not parties.

Turning to the question of what the candidates would do should the provincial assembly be faced with a problem beyond its means to solve, members of the incumbent PS team pointed out that the assembly functioned only as an advisory

body to the governor; it was in no position to draw up policies. The team used this argument to rebut criticisms from the opposing candidates who attacked them for their lack of results during their term in the assembly. Candidates No. 1 and No. 4 maintained that it was the governor alone who set the policy priorities, and that it was very difficult for the provincial assembly to exert any influence on changing these. It would seem that the PS candidates were saying that the assembly had no power to deal with problems facing the province. The assembly, however, was under the influence of the Sawat clique and was continually at odds with the centrally appointed governor. Assembly members were concerned with their own interests and benefits, and when the governor attempted to intervene in the corrupt bidding practices involved in the school construction program, the members turned to the Sawat people in the National Assembly who were able to get the governor transferred out of Nakhon Sawan. When faced with their problem, the provincial assembly had turned to the people they knew in the National Assembly. But the incumbent provincial assembly was primarily interested in maintaining its own vested interests and not in drawing up and executing policy. It did not operate to represent the interests of the public. But this was the natural end result of a campaigning style that used money and *hua khanaen* to turn the provincial campaign into a private election for the incumbents to have themselves voted back into office.

Asa Phatthana Thongthin team members said they would petition offices of the central government if faced with problems they could not handle. Candidates No. 7, No. 8, and No. 11 had already on occasions sent petitions to the Budget Bureau, to the Interior Ministry and to the government irrigation department. Candidate No. 9, too, as pointed out already, had sent petitions to the governor on behalf of the local vendors. From their actions one can see that the Asa Phatthana Thongthin people very much preferred the traditional approach of relying on people in authority for the help they needed.

### CONCLUSION

This article was written in an effort to shed more light on the little known area of local Thai politics. It is based on data collected during the June 1980 elections for the Nakhon Sawan city council and provincial assembly. The study has looked at characteristics of Thai local political leaders, at local electioneering, at the stage of political parties at the local level, and at the relationship of local political leaders with political parties, the National Assembly, and with the government bureaucracy.

Some of the conclusions of this study can be summarized as follows. The membership of local representative councils and assemblies is composed mainly of wealthy, urban merchants and businessmen; large land owners are not present. Excluding the urban/rural split between candidates for the provincial assembly, there is no clear distinction between candidates in ideology or in the class of their supporters.

The Thai electoral system which allows voters to cast votes for the full number

of council and assembly members encourages candidates to form campaign teams. One would expect this to promote the development of political parties, but in fact these parties are not involved at all in local elections. Moreover voters do not vote for political parties but for individual candidates, the end result being that parties have no meaning or purpose in local elections. There is no party organization at the local level, and what pass for political parties are in reality essentially local cliques composed of National Assembly members and candidates and their close relatives.

Local candidates running for election do not depend on political parties or on local functional and neighborhood groups. Instead they rely on visitations to their constituencies and on hired vote solicitors (*hua khanaen*). The latter in particular have a decisive effect on the outcome of elections. Because of the control candidates can have over voting and the deficiencies in the organizations and constituencies that they should represent, candidates' motives for running can easily become personal and private interests. The inevitable results are city council members who seek after status and fame in the community or provincial assembly members who become involved in graft and vested interests.

It was also seen that the great majority of the candidates, if faced with large problems that cannot be managed at the local level, would seek help from the government bureaucracy, as has long been done, and not from the National Assembly.

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