



Love, Anger and Hate of the Red Shirts: The Contestation of Meanings of Politics and Justice

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Abstract

This article focuses on the cultural emotions of the red shirt supporters after the contexts of military coup in 2006. The patterns of emotions seen within the red shirt groups can help reveal their internal differences, and also the divisions and conflicts that exist there in. I will examine this issue by focusing on an analysis of the affective emotions of love (a positive emotion), anger and hate (negative emotions) displayed by the red shirt groups from Chiang Mai and Bangkok. These emotions can reflect the contestation of meanings of politics, democracy and justice among the social sub-groups and individuals who joined the red shirt protests during the last decade of Thailand's political conflicts. This situation, containing different cultural emotions and political meanings, has led to a deeply divided Thai population in terms of the country's politics and society. To understand the diversity of social characteristics and actions that exist within the red shirt groups, one cannot see emotions as static; as emotions vary in terms of their meanings, levels and dynamics, based on the contexts and cultures within which they are experienced.

Keywords

Cultural emotions, Contestation, The red shirts, Politics, Justice

Introduction

The aftermath of May 2010 greatly divided Thailand into the yellow shirts and the red shirts. The Abhist's government (2008-2011) claimed that ex-prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra played a crucial role in escalating violence or in an alleged United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD) master plan to topple the government and anti-monarchy (Askew, 2010:310-317). Thaksin and the red shirt protestors became the new enemy of the state that threatened the security of the Thai nation-with-monarchy.

Meanwhile, the red shirts had grown more independent and separated themselves from the UDD Red Shirt group after May 2010. Many people were disappointed with the leading role of the UDD Red Shirt leaders during the protest, while the experience they gained from taking part in this prolonged protest helped them develop further ideology such as justice and equality and have a clearer vision of how to improve their organizational structure. This led to several splinter groups with somewhat different ideologies, strategies and tactics. These groups were not part of the UDD but remained under the larger umbrella of the red shirts (Nostitz, 2014, p.181).

The emergence of the red shirt movement's independent organization structures in several regions of the country led to the construction of a social relationship and community network that did not integrate well with the socio-cultural structure of the Thai state with the monarchy at its centre. The dissemination of information within this group of communities, particularly on social media, was very important for a construction of the independent social structures that deviated from the old hierarchy structure. These structures reflected changes in power relations within rural and semi-urban areas of Thai society, and ushered in a new perception of politics. Rural people realized how politics impacted their life; they knew they could negotiate and deal with state-government power. Politics can respond to their needs, and can improve their social and economic status. This is the politics of life. This was seen during and after Thaksin's government where rural subsidy policies were successfully launched. These new political and economic policies opened more opportunities and rights for rural people to access political power. They were a direct response to the capitalist demands and the aspirations of many rural people and compatible with the new contexts of rural society which was more modernized and closely linked to the global market economy.

However, their hopes and desires for these politics and capitalism were destroyed when the uprising of the yellow shirt movement occurred in Bangkok and the 2006 election was annulled and followed with a military coup. All these things happened to destroy Thaksin's political power and disregard the political voices of the rural class. Notably, the military coup of 2006 showed sodality with the ideals of moral politics and royal-nationalism of the yellow shirts, while it was seemingly to preserve and protect the political power of monarchy and elites in Thai politics. This stirred up the emotion of anger of many people who

like and love Thaksin Shinawatra, and supported the Thai Rak Thai Party (TRT) in the election. This motivated them to join the red shirt protests.

Meanwhile, the ambiguous and unspeakable truth behind the military coup of 2006 and the military's violent suppression of the red shirt protests in 2010, accompanied by further suppression through the use of the Article 112 of Thai Criminal Code, led to a rapid loss of faith in the monarchy and to more questions arising within the hidden transcript of the *ta sawanng* (knowing the truth) community of the red shirts. Thongchai Winichakul (2014) stated that *ta sawanng* communities were widespread across the country, especially among those from the lower income classes. These communities have continued to use anti-monarchy rhetoric, but using metaphors, codes, metonymical insinuation and a large number of allusions, those only understood by the communities themselves, and which do not cross into illegality under the lèse-majesté law (Winichakul, 2014, pp.90-98). The red shirt protests defended political society's direct transactions with power in all its regular and irregular forms, rejecting the view that economic development and other matters of state should be guided by the elite – members of which believe they are the embodiment of virtuous power – located in the nation's capital (Walker, 2012, pp.210-213). According to them, their calls for justice and social equality were simply reflecting the word of democracy (Sopranzetti, 2012).

Hence, the state violent suppression and control of public opinion eventually led to anti-monarchy radical movements as well as progressive movements in Thai society. It is possible to say that the red shirt protestors developed their political ideologies, consciousness and groups from their experiences and perceptions after the military coup of 2006 and the violent military suppressions on April and May 2010. This can be seen in the complexity of Thai socio-political conflicts especially in the contestation of meanings of politics and justice among the red shirt groups in Thailand. As one can see, the radical red shirts are closely linked to the Red Siam group of Surachai Sae Dan, the political activist and former member of the Communist Party of Thailand. Their political ideologies and desires for democracy, justice and equality were derived from feelings of loss, hurt and disappointment, experienced through red shirt protests. Ultimately, they desire for social and political reforms aligned with a radical left-wing ideal. Meanwhile, the progressive red shirts struggle for justice, equality and liberal democracy as well as a social recognition in truth and righteousness of the red shirt protestors. They hoped and demanded political legitimacy and justice based on the rule of law.

In my view, the development of red shirt groups manifests issues of violent state suppression and injustice in Thailand. Different backgrounds and experiences brought a diversity of thoughts, perceptions, emotions and political meanings to red shirt groups. Hence, not all red shirts were pro-Thaksin and they did not share common ideology, desires and demands.

Thai political conflicts cannot be fully comprehended simply by contrasting between two political ideologies: conservative royal-nationalism and liberal democracy. On the contrary, the conflicts show the struggle for new meanings in politics and justice among several social sub-groups. All this took place within the seemingly binary conflict between the yellow and red shirt protests.

Therefore, this article aims to reflect the diversity of thought, belief and values shaped by the cultural emotions of those who had joined the red shirt protests during the last decade from Chiang Mai and Bangkok. These cultural emotions such as love, anger and hate, are derived from the specific cultural contexts and subjective position of the social actors as well as the background of experiences of subjectivity. It means an emotion is culturally constructed and it varies from culture to culture (Solomon, 1984). This focuses more on the interrelationship between cultural emotions and Thai political conflicts, examining contestation in the meanings of politics, democracy and justice.

Recent Understanding of Thai Political Conflicts

Over the past decade, social scientists have attempted to understand the conflict between yellow and red shirt movements, and how it expanded throughout the country. Much research has concentrated on the emergence of inequality between urban and rural areas. Anek Laothamathat (2009) proposes that insufficient rural development has resulted in inequality between urban and rural areas in Thailand. This inequality can be seen in income, education and infrastructure services. Thaksin's economic policies promoted themselves as a means to fill this gap and respond to the economic demands of many rural inhabitants. That is why he gained tremendous support from rural-voters, leading to a strong majority in national elections. Consequentially, a feeling of dissatisfaction was created among the urban middle-class due to Thaksin's development policies seeming to favor grassroots economic development. This situation contributed to the divergence of ideologies concerning democracy, between the urban and rural classes. Accordingly, the red shirts represent a rural democracy movement, who struggle for equality and fight against the military dictatorship, as well as opposing capitalist groups whom have monopolized Thai resources for a long time. On the contrary, the yellow shirts represent the moral democracy movement of an urban class who oppose what they perceive as the immoral or crony capitalism of the Thaksin regime (Laothamathat et al., 2009).

Several academics took issue with Anek's study. For example, Naruemon Thabchumpon and Duncan McCargo (2011) noted that the distinction between urban and rural was too simplistic. In actuality, urban and rural dwellers cannot be classified based solely on whether or not they live in a municipality, since municipal boundaries bear little relation to current patterns of urbanization of any stratification of class, income and

occupation (Thabchumpon & McCargo, 2011, p.1007). Similarly, the research of Apichat Satitniramai et al. (2013) claimed that most red shirt protestors were lower-middle class, and were not poor in terms of finance or other assets. They were from strong contributors to an informal economy, and looking for economic stability. However, even if not poor, but still have a lower socio-economic status than yellow shirt protestors who most commonly consisted of the established middle-class. Economic inequality was not the key factor of Thai political conflicts that emerged after the military coup on 19 September 2006. Rather it was issues of ideology and psychology, with red shirt protestors feeling disenfranchised by the military coup and suffering from many injustices at the hands of mainstream Thai society.

Many scholars argue that Thai political conflicts did not arise out of an economic structure. Rather they are the products of a political and cultural system (Crispin, 2012; Fullbrock, 2012; Phongpaichid & Baker, 2012). That is to say, the lower middle-class joined and supported the red shirt protests to fight for their political rights and greater participation in the political process. As a catalyst, the military coup of 2006 witnessed a partial withdrawal from a democratic system, violating rights, an ability to participate in politics. A Bangkok-centric media mocked red shirt protestors as country bumpkins and stupid uneducated buffaloes, who were easily manipulated by the millionaire politician Thaksin Shinawatra (Keyes, 2012; Phongpaichid & Baker, 2012; Satitniramai et al., 2013). They were dehumanized and alienated by the yellow shirts and the PDRC (the People's Democratic Reform Committee) movement, portrayed as non-Thai, immoral and disgusting people (Kongkirati, 2016). As a result, conflict emerged through issues of inequality in political rights, power, opportunity and prestige. Also included is the inequality of emotions such as feeling of unfairness among Thai people within the political and socio-cultural system. These inequalities can be linked to issues of double-standards, violent suppression and injustice within Thai society (Eoseewong, 2010a). Subsequently, Thai political conflicts emerged within political and cultural structures rather than an economic structure. The conflicts encouraged the desire of red shirt protestors for democracy, justice and equality within Thai society (Hewison, 2012). Concurrently, such struggles and issues in inequality have led to a division between Bangkok/upcountry and urban/rural groups in Thai politics (Glassman, 2010).

Some scholars have argued that the class conflict highlighted in an analysis of yellow and red shirt groups does not reflect the complexity of Thai political and social conflict. They propose that we should understand the political networks and multiple class relations inside each group. According to Naruemon Thabchumpon (2016), yellow shirt networks are associated with the monarchy, military, judiciary, and bureaucracy. They are also supported by a variety of professional organizations, state enterprise unions, the Santi-Asoke Buddhism and its Dharma Army group, communitarian NGOs, networks of small-scale farmer

organizations, and urban middle-class individuals. On the contrary, the red shirt group comprises a loose set of networks in a horizontal organizational structure, bringing together pro-Thaksin groups, anti-military coup groups, autonomous rural small-scale organizations, the UDD (the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship) red shirts and various sub-networks such as People's Television Network members, provincial leaders, and the members of opposition parties. Red shirt networks were also joined by some 1970s activists and old members of the Communist Party (Thabchumpon, 2016).

It is difficult to support the notion that Thai political conflict is the pure class war as argued by Ungpakorn (2009) and others. It rather represents the conflict of interests among groups and networks within Thai society. As we shall see, both groups actually comprised a variety of social classes, social groups, and network connections. Pinkeaw Laungaramsri (2013) asserts that red shirt networks in Chiang Mai comprised multiple social classes and networks from several rural sites. In this sense, the red shirt protests reflected the development of rural democratization in Thai society (Laungaramsri, 2013), while scholars such as Kevin Hewison (2010) viewed the red shirt movements as a subaltern rebellion. Other commentators viewed many rural villagers joining red shirt protests because they wanted to fight for their own ideology, desires, rights and identity rather than in pure support for the UDD red shirt movement in Bangkok (Ganjanapan, 2011; Walker, 2012).

At the same time, these two political groups were never really internally unified, as they comprised a wide range of sub-groups who shared different desires, demands, values and ideologies. This is apparent in the development of several small red shirts groups with different ideologies, demands, strategies and hopes, after the prolonged protests of two principal protest groups (the yellow shirts and the red shirts). As Nidhi Eoseewong (2010b) mentioned the red shirt movements were not united and constantly organized, but they were comprised of groups of people who have diverse political desires, demands, goals and backgrounds. Most of them were lower middle-class people who have a new political consciousness in demanding for their rights and equality in politics especially after the military coup of 2006 (Eoseewong, 2010b). Hence, the red shirt protestors were not a rural poor people. Simultaneously, some scholars found that the background of many UDD red shirts leaders did not conform to the image of a grassroots class or rural poor in Northern and Northeastern regions. Frequently, they were former politicians, vote-canvasser and members of rural elites. Most of them came from the Southern region and Bangkok (Crispin, 2012; McCargo, 2012).

In sum, there were several social sub-groups with different demands, desires and thoughts who joined the yellow and red shirt protests. However, previous studies have not described the difference backgrounds among them, and the diversity of thoughts, values, emotions, and perceptions especially for the red shirt groups. Many scholars, who have

studied Thai political conflicts, have focused on emotions as potentially key variables for their explanations. For instance, they have tried to chart the feelings which motivated the yellow and red shirt protesters during the last decade, such as hate, fear and anxiety by many yellow shirt supporters (Lasuka, 2015; Tejapira, 2010), or anger, dissatisfaction, fear, sadness, anxiety, frustration and vengeance of red shirt protestors (Satitniramai et al., 2013; Sopranzetti, 2012; Walker, 2012). However, they viewed the state of emotions in totality, and did not mention differences in the cultural emotion, which link to the individual experiences, and specific cultural learning and positionality of those people who joined the protests. Thus, several studies have an oversimplified understanding of the diversity of thoughts and meanings that are implied in the emotions and actions of the yellow and red shirt protestors. This is the reason why they see political conflicts in Thai society as binary conflicts, with political groups as singular entities.

This article attempts to demonstrate how cultural emotion could reflect the complexity of contemporary Thai political conflicts. In particular, it focuses on the different backgrounds, positions and contexts among those who had joined the red shirt protests. The aims are to reflect the diversity of thoughts and meanings of different cultural emotions, and also trace the contestation of political meanings and justice among several social sub-groups, within the seemingly binary political conflict. This can fill knowledge gaps left by previous studies on Thailand's inequality issues. Seksan Prasertkul (2017) asserted that the complexity of Thai socio-political conflicts was beyond economic conflict. The conflict between the yellow shirts and red shirts was rather implied with the class conflicts and inequality issues seen within the political and cultural arenas, with the economic sector exacerbating this division. Indeed, it reflects the struggles for power in determining for politics among social classes especially between the elite establishment and new rural middle-class (Isranews, 2017).

Research Methodology

To study cultural emotions, the research method concentrates on perceptions that social actors share. These perceptions may include previous experiences and the way that an individual or group understands social and political reality within their particular context or position (Bernstein, 1976, pp. 146-147). In short, the research method involves an interpretation of experiential meaning and perception, which contributes to the constitution of meaning in the social and political realities of social actors (Taylor, 1979, pp.45-57). It most emphasizes the cultural emotions of social actors, which are derived from individually positioned cultural learning and socialization. This affects dispositions, intense feelings, values and meanings that actors give to their lives, and these cultural emotions are transformed from beliefs and perceptions into social realities or truths. By focusing on

differences between cultural emotions, we can reflect upon the diversity of social backgrounds in experiences, social classes, thoughts, beliefs, and values of social actors. However, it is also important to consider the way that social actors share their understandings, thoughts, emotions, and experiences within social groups and to other individuals.

As a result, this article interprets the cultural emotions for those who supported the red shirt protests. Most of them are between 60 to 70 years old and came from various professions such as university lecturer, businessman, agriculturalist, vendor, social and community service workers, etc. These groups of people are the key informants for this study. They live in cities, semi-urban and rural sites in Chiang Mai and Bangkok. Geographically these cities represent centers of red shirt protests in each region of Thailand. This data is drawn from data collection and fieldwork, which included in-depth interviews, during May 2015 to March 2017. Additionally, documentary research is used to support the interpretation method and contribute to the argument and analysis of this research. This includes publications and newspapers of the red shirt groups from the military coup of 2006 to the military coup of 2014. Also, a literature review is provided.

The Cultural Emotions of the Red Shirts: the Contestation of Meanings of Politics, Democracy and Justice

Members of the red shirt groups represented people (mostly lower middle-class or the grassroots class) who professed to love and support Thaksin Shinawatra and his sister Yingluck Shinawatra. Several scholars have noted that during the red shirt protests, most participants were lower middle-class people (Laungaramsri, 2013; Satitniramai et. al., 2013; Walker, 2012). The red shirt movement contained a wide variety of characteristics in terms of its members, groups and networks (Eoseewong, 2010b; Nostitz, 2014; Thabchumpon, 2016). As a result, it cannot be said for certain that all red shirt members were people who loved and admired Thaksin. In fact, love among the red shirts emanated from several sources. For instance, the red shirt members loved their communities and their companionship; they empathized with each other, felt appreciated and also wished to find truth, righteousness, justice and democracy. This love emanated from the stories, experiences, feelings and actions they shared, and especially those combative experiences gained as part of the protest movement. All this made many of the members love being part of the red shirt community.

Nevertheless, the feeling of love among the red shirt supporters involved their common sense of experiences and socio-cultural backgrounds that formed their emotions, perceptions and identity, including the influence of the media and political learning which affected their social cognitions. Hence, the red shirt sub-groups who joined the red shirt

movements, especially during the political conflicts from 2008 to 2014, were from different backgrounds and had different social and political agendas. Accordingly, this research measured the cultural emotions such as love, hate and anger, of the red shirt protestors through the interpretative understanding of the common-sense of experiences and perceptions that the social actors shared. It also included their beliefs, expectations, thoughts and the ways that they understood the social and political realities within their contexts and positions. Those are meaningful to their ideas and values and became the cultural forces to their emotions, social actions and the way that they connected to others in society.

In this sense, I would like to demonstrate the emotions of love, anger and hate of the red shirt groups in Chiang Mai and Bangkok. In Chiang Mai, I went to interview several red shirt groups such as the Rak Chiang Mai 51 (Love Chiang Mai 51); the UDD Red Shirts Chiang Mai; the red shirts group in San Kamphaeng district (San Kamphaeng Love Democracy group); and Chom Rom Khon Rak Fang- Mae Ai- Chai Prakarn 93.00 MHz (the Red Shirt Lover Fang-Mae Ai-Chai Prakan group) in Fang district. Even though the red shirts in Chiang Mai stopped their political movement, a number of independent red shirt groups and individuals in Chiang Mai still existed. They were divided by different political opinions and conflicts inside their groups. I chose these red shirt groups because they had different desires, strategies and goals in joining the red shirt protests.

According to Pinkeaw Laungaramsri (2013), the red shirts group in Chiang Mai was formed during the 2006 military coup. It was initiated by a political activity at Tha Pae Gate in the city of Chiang Mai on 17 June 2007. The political movement at Tha Pae Gate was the first movement of the red shirts in Chiang Mai. It expanded across several districts of Chiang Mai under the name of “ The Federation of Northern People who Love Democracy” (Samaphan Khon Nuea Rak Prachathipatai). The group believed in an elected democracy, where they have an equal right and opportunity to participate in the democratic system. It is not a democracy controlled by the military junta. Most of them were middle-class, from Chiang Mai, who came from various occupations such as university lecturers and businessmen from 12 business networks. The group disagreed with the military coup in 2006. They were also driven by the economic instability after the coup. On the other hand, the Chiang Mai 51 group was formed on 26 August 2008. It was led by Petchawat Watthanaphongsirikul, who was the owner of Warorot Grand Palace and Head of the local radio station 92.5 MHz. The group aimed to counterattack the yellow shirt movements in Bangkok. The political activities of the Chiang Mai 51 group inspired a development of the red shirt groups in several districts and an establishment of many local radio stations. After that, the UDD red shirt Chiang Mai was organized in 2009 and played an active role during 2009 and 2010. This group separated themselves from the Chiang Mai 51 group and connected

with many red shirt groups in several districts of Chiang Mai and coordinated with the UDD red shirts in Bangkok (Laungaramsri, 2013, pp.33-43).

However, after the violent crackdown in Bangkok on May 2010, the red shirts in Chiang Mai disintegrated and many of them stopped their political movement. They felt disappointed and defeated in the protest at Ratchaprasong in Bangkok. Nevertheless, they insisted in fighting for democracy and justice. They especially wanted a fair legal system. They did not focus or talk about Thaksin for a long time after the military violently suppressed the red shirt protests on May 2010. So, the red shirts in Chiang Mai developed their own political ideology and consciousness after they experienced long term political protests. These experiences changed their perceptions of the political system. All they wanted was democracy and justice which was not under the rule of military and the elite. This was because many red shirt protestors were unfairly treated in the legal process and threatened by the military actions. For instance, the military visited the houses of local red shirt leaders and their main supporters, and the reshaped the red shirt rural landscapes through sufficiency economy projects launched by the state bureaucratic officials, royalist elites and military especially in the North and Northeastern regions of Thailand. It showed state suppression and domination with fear and bias towards the red shirt people as if they were a threat to the country and national security.

Nevertheless, many red shirt supporters did not aim to oppose the military power and monarchy, but they believed that the monarchy and the elite should not involve in politics. Thaksin became an example of the social injustice in which the villagers could identify with as they themselves had the same experience. Therefore, gaining justice for Thaksin meant they would gain justice for themselves too (Pit (pseudonym), personal communication, March 30, 2015). It means if Thaksin could gain fairness during legal procedures, real justice and righteousness in Thai society would prevail. This is a justice which is meaningful to the lives of many red shirt supporters because they desire and demand for equality in Thai society. They want to see everyone treated fairly in society especially within the political system. Indeed, it reflected a desire for equality of many Thai people within the structured hierarchy of Thailand. This was expressed in their cultural emotions and actions during the red shirt protests.

As one can see, the red shirt supporters in San Kamphaeng district consisted of mostly female vendors in the San Kamphaeng market, and began assembling in 2008. Some of the members were former members of the "Love Thaksin Club" (Chomrom Khon Rak Thaksin) in Chiang Mai in 2005 and worked with the "Love Chiang Mai 51 Group" (Krum Khon Rak Chiang Mai 51) in the city of Chiang Mai in 2008. The group members were vendors in San Kamphaeng market, local intellectuals, local businessmen, and retirees. They developed their activities and expanded their connection with the "UDD Red Shirts Chiang

Mai” and other red shirt groups in several districts of Chiang Mai such as Mae On and Doi Saket in 2009 and 2010. They also attended the red shirt protests in Bangkok (Ashamas, 2013, p.86). The intense feelings that forced them into the political protests were the feelings of love and anger. The red shirts in San Kamphaeng loved and admired Thaksin because they sympathized with Thaksin. They saw Thaksin as one of their own (khon khong lao). People were tearful as they saw Thaksin or Yingluck (Thaksin’s younger sister) suffering political repression. As a result, they went to Bangkok with anger and wanted to protect Thaksin, one of their own. People in San Kamphaeng community, in particular, had a very strong relationship with Thaksin Shinawatra and his family. This strong feeling of love to Thaksin and his family was not only because Thaksin was born and lived in San Kamphaeng, but it was also because of the good relationship with local people that Thaksin and the Shinawatra family had forged for a long time. As Pa Care (pseudonym) explained: “Yingluck is very lovely. I have seen her since she was young and when she was a prime minister, she was still as lovely as she had ever been” (personal communication, October 13, 2015). Pa Care talked with me with a smile on her face. Some of the Shinawatra family frequented the San Kamphaeng market and often chatted with the vendors. Thaksin’s family home was near the market and one of their family members was a major shareholder of the market.

Therefore, love has causes and consequences within a range of relationships and social memories, including at the social relations level, and tends to be comprised of a number of emotions and feelings mixed together, some of which may even cause anger and hate. One consequence of this love is a feeling of protection; of offering protection to a person they love. This feeling is powerful enough to force people into action. Many red shirt supporters felt deeply frustrated when their beloved Thaksin and Yingluck were treated unfairly by the military government and during legal procedures. This perception and emotion were shared with the other red shirt groups. They saw the justice system as having double-standards (song martathan), especially unfair prejudgment in the cases of Thaksin, Yingluck and the red shirt protests. This clearly indicates inequalities of wealth, power, and opportunities in Thai politics and society (Phongpaichid & Baker, 2012). This double-standard created the resentment towards the government as the red shirts felt they suffered inequalities in Thai society. Notably, the red shirts felt they were affected by the issues of social and political inequalities as they perceived themselves as the grassroots class who were frequently exploited while their opportunities and rights were oppressed within the economic and social structure of Thai society. Thus, since Thaksin had been overthrown by the military coup in 2006 and ousted by the People Alliance for Democracy (the yellow shirts), which were mainly supported by the middle-class and the elite class, they viewed this action as an oppression of social classes. This political repression brought an end to their

hope for a better quality of life with the “edible democracy” that Thaksin promised. The injustice made them feel extremely angry.

Furthermore, the red shirt supporters felt and believed that Thaksin did not do anything wrong prior to being overthrown by the military coup in 2006; the economy was doing well and their lives had hugely improved from his policies such as the 30 Baht universal health care program, One Tambon One Product (OTOP) program, and the village fund initiatives. Thaksin’s global economy and government policies did not only improve the lives of the poor, but they also benefit the wider community (Ashamas, 2013). Thus, without Thaksin as the country’s leader, they felt their lives and their future were facing uncertainty. They wanted a democratic system which ensured that people were provided with enough food (The edible democracy or Prachatippatai Kindai), eradicate poverty and improve people’s quality of lives.

They wanted a democratic system that could respond to their demands and desires in capitalism as well as providing the opportunities for people to access the capitalist markets. Thus, the “edible democracy” is related to the rural transformation within Thai society during the past few decades. It was also encouraged by the rural economy development policies during Thaksin’s government. As one can see, many of the rural red shirt protesters had never been interested in politics prior to this event, but they had joined the red shirt protests in Bangkok several times. This was because they felt and recognized the impact politics had to their life. In particular, the “edible democracy” reflected the political desire in capitalism of many rural people. In this view, democracy is not only a political ideology, but it also defined the hopes, lives and new values of Thai society. Democracy should come with equality and justice in the society while morality of Thai society should be based on fairness in the legal system. However, since the military coup in 2006 took place, their hopes, desires and opportunities were destroyed as they were separated from their beloved leaders like Thaksin and Yingluck Shinawatra (Sopranzetti, 2012). This made them angry and dissatisfied with the military coup and they wanted to protect the person that they loved.

In addition, the vendors in San Kamphaeng market learned and developed their new political ideas from their experiences in political protests. As their lifestyles and world-views had been connected with capitalism in the past few decades, they had more understanding how their life, economy and politics were related, especially during Thaksin’s government. Thaksin’s economic and political policies improved their lives and allowed them to develop new political ideas. They understood more how their voices were valued in the national election and how government policies should serve the needs of people from all backgrounds. Modern technology and media also played an important role in shaping a new political perception among this group of people while an opportunity to travel abroad also

exposed them to wider experiences. These experiences changed their perceptions and ideas about the Thai political and social system.

Hence, the cultural emotion of many red shirt people in Chiang Mai was derived from the experiences of inequality and injustice with the feeling of love and angry. This can be seen from their passion to protect their beloved Thaksin of San Khampheang, as it forced them to take part in the red shirt protests and form the independent red shirt groups in Chiang Mai. Meanwhile, their hope for an “edible democracy” responded to their capitalist desires and enhanced equality and justice within Thai society, which motivated them to struggle for the politics of life. In addition, the desire for justice in the legal and political procedures, and hope for changes in the political and social system in Thailand also stimulated political actions and consciousness of some radical red shirt groups.

For instance, the red shirt group in Fang District, felt that the monarchy was not fit for their political purpose. The red shirt in Fang was seen as a radical red shirts group. This was because they developed their political consciousness against the power of the monarchy and they lost faith in the monarchy after the military coup in 2006 and the violent crackdown in Bangkok on April and May 2010. Many of them believed that the monarchy was behind the military coup in 2006 and several violent incidents especially after they saw the news of the Queen attending the funeral of Angkhana Radappanyawut (Nong Bo), one of the two PAD protestors who died on 7th October 2008 during the yellow shirt protests (Nostitz, 2014, p.181). This formed a feeling of hate for the monarchy. Many questions were also raised regarding the role of the monarchy in Thai politics. The red shirts also felt that they were “*ta sawanng*” (awakening or knowing the truth) after they were exposed to the anti-monarchy rhetoric and gossip about the King and the royal family (Winichakul, 2008 and 2014). This excessive and exaggerated ultra-royal-nationalism was displayed during protests and events, and was integrated into people’s everyday lives which might have counteracted the feeling of the red shirt groups. It led to the emergence of an anti-monarchy sense of several red shirt groups. In particular, they felt that the royal projects and government projects in sufficiency economy which adopted the King’s philosophy were in contrast to the “edible democracy” ideal of many rural people. This manifested into the discrepancies between the royalist elite’s ideals and the rural ideals and aspires in economic development and politics (Rossi, 2012).

Lung Term (pseudonym), the former Communist member and the key red shirts leader in Fang district explained:

The sufficiency economy is the slave theory. It cannot be applied to the real life of rural villagers. It needs a large amount of funds and lands as well as technology to achieve the outcomes. Rural villagers don't have enough money and land. In fact, it is not like what they showed us in the television. On the other hand, Thaksin's economic policy provides the funds for the villages. Thus, the villagers can access it and use it to improve their lives. This is the edible democracy. It is real for us and we can access it."

(personal communication, September 21, 2016)

Hence, the sufficiency economy is considered an elite fantasy for many rural villagers. The sense of anti-monarchy also increased when Article 112 of the Criminal Code—also known as the Lèse-Majesté law was introduced to suppress and control public discourse on the monarchy. Concurrently, a political desire in struggle for democracy and justice of the red shirt supporters also matched with the leftist ideal of Communism, which was felt by many of those who had joined the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT). Lung Term insisted to me that he believed in the Communist ideal of a people's revolution as it could change Thai society to become more just and equal. Nevertheless, he found it difficult to inspire the political consciousness of many Thais during the Communist insurgency. It was only after the military coup of 2006 that many rural villagers gained more awareness of politics. This was because Thaksin's policies affected their lives and they felt angry and that it was unfair that his government was overthrown. Lung Term found this to be a good opportunity to communicate with villagers about the ideal of revolution and organized a red shirt group in Fang district, Chiang Mai (Lung Term, personal communication, September 21, 2015).

Red shirt groups saw an interaction of political ideals between revolutionary Communist ideology and a new rural ideology of democracy and justice. Hence, this supported my argument that not all red shirts were pro-Thaksin and they did not share an identical common ideology, desires and demands. Different backgrounds and experiences brought a diversity of thoughts, perceptions and political meanings to red shirt groups.

This resulted in an increase in political resistance of the rural class to the power of the state which attempted to dominate and oppress them in forms of knowledge, ideology, government projects and policies. For example, they refused to watch the daily royal news broadcasts on Thai television at 8.00 pm. Also, they removed royal portraits from the walls in their homes to express their resentment and anti-monarchy sentiment. This is the constant struggle for power of the rural class in their everyday lives. It implied an angry sense of injustice from the socially devastating loss of political and social position as it is loss of opportunities and rights to express their opinions and demands in socio-politics and economic structure. Red shirt protestors expressed their anger during the military violent suppressions on the red shirt protests in Bangkok through throwing several yellow royal flags into the Ping river of Chiang Mai (Prachathai, 2014). These reactions showed the resistance

of red shirt supporters to ask for justice as well as the anti- monarchy. It is what James C. Scott (1985) called “the everyday resistant in form of the hidden transcripts” because it showed the hidden forms of communication which did not directly attack or confronting the monarchy using gossip, parody, alias, metaphor, or sarcastic actions related to the King and the royal family (Scott, 1985, pp.282,317). Apparently, they talked and gossiped about the monarchy within only their communities because they feared being charged with article 112. In this sense, it showed a concealed attack on the monarchy from the red shirt protestors in the form of the hidden transcripts. The “ta sawanng” term was not used to explain an attempt to overthrow the monarchy. In fact, they wanted to communicate with the state that they did not accept the ideological domination where everything was centered around the monarchy and that they were opposed to the overuse of article 112 and military rule in Thailand. Ultimately, they wanted to see a change in Thai social structure to provide more opportunities to the rural class and they wanted to see Thailand becoming a more equal society.

On the other hand, many red shirt protesters felt they were part of a brotherhood. This developed during the protests; they shared food, stories and feelings, and carried out activities together. They felt a level of friendship and sincerity with the other members, with no hidden agendas or interests. These are the reasons why they stayed at the protest sites for several days or even months, even after it became uncomfortable and dangerous. Some even chose to stay permanently or return after finishing work. This is the second form of love which constituted from the feelings of sympathy among red shirt members. This love was clearly expressed in the red shirt groups in Bangkok.

The red shirts in Bangkok were comprised of a wide diversity of independently social sub-groups and networks. They were in a set of loose networks and horizontal organizational structures (Thabchumpon, 2016). They also expressed their social relations through multi-social class relations (Laungaramsri, 2013). In Bangkok, the red shirts protestors came from various professions such as teachers, university lecturers, businessmen, street vendors, and taxi drivers. It is difficult to say that most of them were lower middle-class. Hence, we should understand the red shirts in Bangkok from the diversification of their backgrounds in experience and perception rather than their economic class. Moreover, the red shirts in Bangkok were not all pro-Thaksin groups. Several groups and individuals joined the red shirts with their own will and different desires, but they had the common ideal of justice and democracy while several groups developed their own ideologies after fighting for Thaksin and depending on the UDD.

Additionally, I found that the feeling of love in their community and their companionship motivated them to attend the protests. This feeling of love has been rarely mentioned by the scholars who studied the red shirts. Scholars have tried to explain the feelings and motivations held by red shirt protesters during the Bangkok protests and the

violent crackdown that followed, such as anger (Walker, 2012), dissatisfaction, fear, sadness and anxiety (Sopranzetti, 2012), frustration, and vengeance (Satitniramai et al., 2013). However, there has been little discussion about feelings of love. This kind of feeling came from empathy, appreciation, and the wish to find truth, righteousness, justice and democracy. The feelings became a cultural emotion that made the red shirt community like a brotherhood and a family. After the violent crackdown event on May 2010, the UDD Red Shirts in Bangkok were disintegrated because of the conflicts inside the red shirt groups and the development of different political ideas, strategies and goals of several progressive sub-red shirt groups. The structure of the red shirt network had become a horizontal organization and different networks rather than a united organization.

The expansion and development of the sub-red shirt groups in Bangkok demonstrated the difference of desires, identities, interests and socio-political ideas of the groups's members. For instance, the members of red shirt group TV24 hours organized a public cremation service association, volunteer networks and a career support group to support their economy and promote a connection among the sub-red shirt groups and individuals. While they still focused on fighting for truth and justice in Thai society, they did not aim to oppose the government and the state power. They wanted the government to provide a reliable justice system and equality for all people. Significantly, the red shirt supporters in Bangkok fought for recognition of their identity, prestige and truth as well as righteousness (based on the legal system not morality) in Thai society. This reflected the struggle for the symbolic power of the red shirts in Thai society which also defined their social value. It showed the struggle for power in the politics of their everyday life. For instance, 94 deaths of the red shirt protestors in Bangkok were unrecognized by many Thais. This is the reason why the red shirts tried to engage the stories of red shirt protests with the significant political events in Thailand, such as the 14th October 1973 and 6th October 1976. This has been illustrated in the pictures of red shirt demonstrations in significant locations of Bangkok. This reflected the redefining of politics and political history by people, and expressed a desire and hope for social recognition and acceptance in the red shirt's identity and prestige. It was because their identity and image was displayed as a threat to the monarchy that they were regarded as barbarian and stupid protestors.



Figure 1 These pictures show the stories of red shirt movements along with the significant political events in Thailand. They were displayed on the walls of the red shirt station on the 5th floor of Imperial World Ladprao, Bangkok. (Source: Photo by the author taken in 2017.)

Moreover, some progressive red shirt groups which developed their political ideals and consciousness after they experienced the long combative protests and were educated by academics and activists, also moved to struggle for justice, righteousness and identity of the red shirt protests through the symbolic movement. For instance, the movement of the Red Sunday group led by Sombat Boonngamanong on 19th September 2010. They released red balloons with the words “jod mai thung bon fa” (the letter to the sky) written on them, shouted “hia sang kha” (the monitor lizard ordered the killings), and drew graffiti on the walls and roads (Red Power, 2010). Their actions reflected the feelings of anger, grief, hurt and loss of the red shirt protestors toward the state violent suppressions on April and May 2010. They wanted to communicate with the monarchy and royalist elites (they compared them as the sky or fa) by using symbols because they believed that the monarchy and elites were behind the scenes of this violent military suppression.

Meanwhile, love was also reflected in the social capital of the red shirts. The red shirts were alienated and oppressed by the socio-political and economic structure of Thai society. It had been exacerbated by the double-standards practice of Thai society that was considered as the cause of injustice issues perceived by many red shirt supporters such as unfairly treated in the legal process and discriminated against the red shirt groups in society. Tum (pseudonym) who was the key red shirt leader metaphorically described, “We received

an unequal love from this Thai family. In fact, we love our family and we are their children, but our father and mother do not come out to protect us." (personal communication, May 10, 2016). The red shirt supporters felt the monarchy did not come out to protect their lives during the military violent suppressions. Actually, many red shirt protestors did not want to overthrow the monarchy and they believed that the monarchy was the main pillar of Thai society and they regarded the monarchy as the protector of the society. However, the monarchy, as well, exercised the legitimate power of double-standards practice in Thai society. They exercised injustice and inequality. As a result, they were disappointed with the persons they loved. Love had also become a new social capital for them and it also created economic capital among the sub-red shirt groups such as the career support association.

Conclusion

In sum, the perception shared by the red shirt communities and groups was that injustice in Thai society which was heavily based on inequality and unfairness in the justice procedure and socio-cultural, economic and political system of Thailand. The diverse meanings of politics, democracy and justice shaped by the cultural emotions of the red shirt groups reflected the complexity of Thai political conflicts, as it demonstrated the conflicts and struggles for power among social sub-groups and classes in Thai society. Besides, the diverse meaning of politics also reflected the social disintegration and contestation of Thai political meaning which centered on the monarchy for a long time. This supported my argument that the conflicts between the yellow shirts and red shirts cannot simply be understood as contrasting political ideologies. Meanwhile, it fills the gap of knowledge in the previous research on politics and emotions in Thailand.

As we can see, the diverse meanings of politics, democracy and justice defined by the red shirt supporters were derived from their cultural emotions and background of experiences. The edible democracy represented the capitalist desires and hope for a better life for the rural and new middle-classes who supported the red shirt protests. They defined politics as it is closely linked to their everyday lives. The consequences of political learning, shared experiences and emotions among the red shirt protestors had resulted in development of the independent red shirt groups and defining the meaning of politics in liberal democracy based on the rule of law, equality, justice and freedom. For the progressive red shirts, the government and state should be governed by the rule of law and act according to law. Notably, they fought for the social recognition of the red shirt protestors within Thai society. It is significant for them because it can bring justice and equality as well as harmony into Thai society. Meanwhile, the radical red shirts desired for democracy and politics through the people's revolution, as it could totally change Thai political and social order which was dominated by the elites and monarchy.

In the meantime, the red shirts defined justice in different ways: the first being justice and equality within the economic, socio-cultural and political structure of Thailand; the second being justice in the legal process based on the rule of law and truth; and third being justice in terms of all human beings are equal in dignity and rights. The several meanings of justice have been defined differently by the cultural forces of emotions, ideologies and the conflict issues within the contexts and positions of the red shirt supporters. For instance, the experiences with hurt and loss from being defeated during the combative protests in April and May 2010 in Bangkok, led to the struggles for justice in legal process and social recognition in truths of the progressive and radical red shirt groups without support from the UDD red shirts, Thaksin, and the Pheu Thai party.

In addition, the state suppressions on rights among its political opponents through its use of Article 112 of the Thai Criminal Code, has led to an escalation of anti-monarchy sentiment among the red shirt groups. This situation has also adversely affected people's belief in the authority and legitimacy of the Thai government, and also the charismatic legitimacy of Thai politics and society, which has seen the Thai King as the centre of moral righteousness, the sources of legitimacy and the highest revered person above politics for a long time. The development of red shirt groups reflected a changing of people's perceptions toward the Thai political system and political legitimacy centered on the monarchy. In particular, the state violent suppression and injustice issues were what most motivated many red shirt protestors to become and support the progressive and radical red shirts. Their political actions and ideals were shaped by the emotions of hurt, loss, hate, fear and anger with their specific experiences and positions in the contexts of politics, society, economics and culture.

Consequently, Thai politics faced problems of social disintegration in the meaning of politics and political legitimacy, as it could no longer create the common belief, emotion and ideology in legitimacy of a Thai political and social order centered on the monarchy. The crucial problem is this gap in understanding and the diverse political meanings, emotions and actions that the red shirt demonstrators applied during the political conflicts.

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