



KPI Thai Politics Up-date

No. 5 (February 20, 2009)

Thailand's Election of December 23, 2007:

Observations from Chachoengsao Province

Michael H. Nelson¹

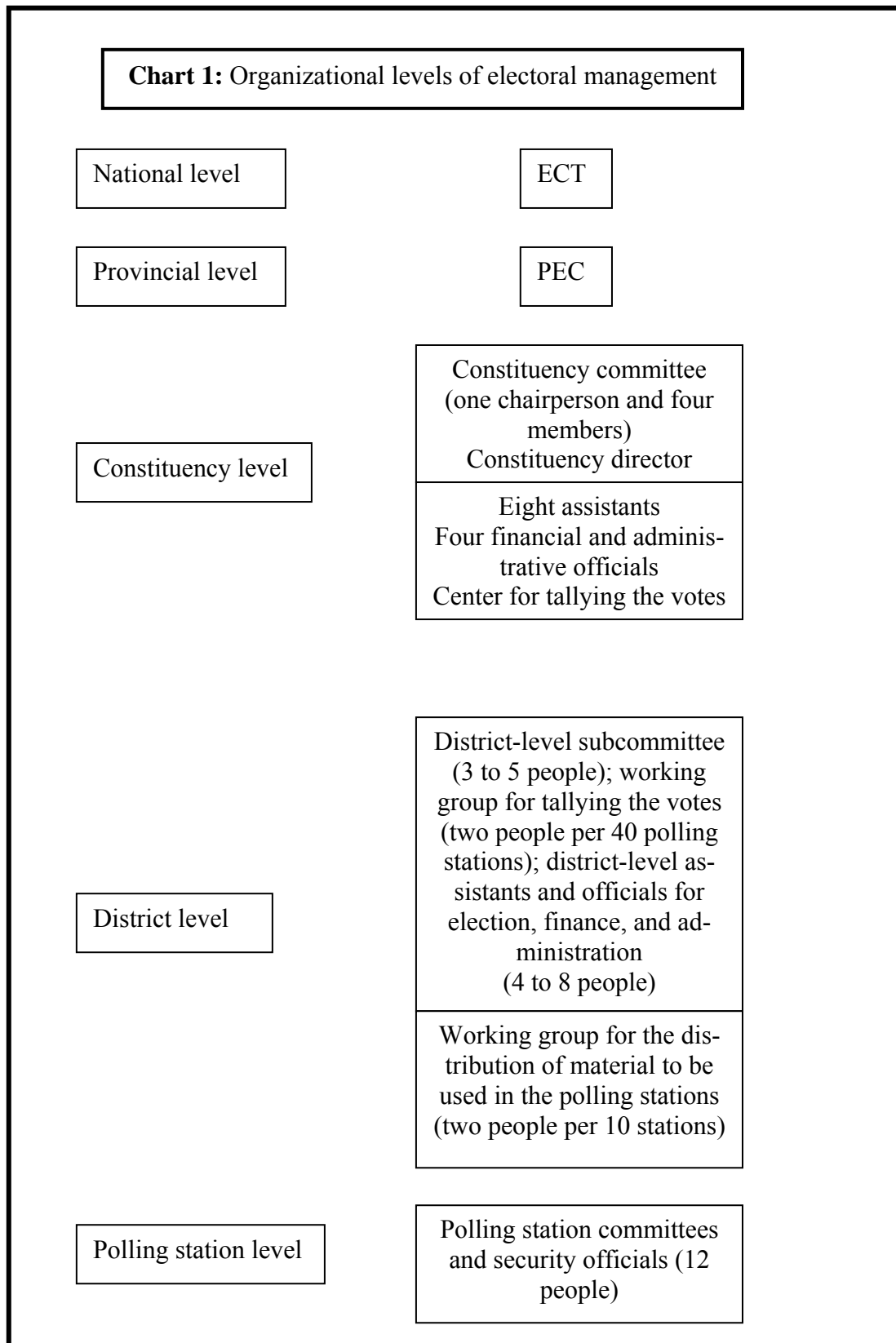
On September 19, 2006, Army Commander-in-Chief Sonthi Boonyaratglin led a group of soldiers in overthrowing the Thaksin government. The drafting of a new constitution, a referendum on it, and a general election followed. Small groups of people-in-power in Bangkok invariably made the decisions. However, they necessitated a large range of follow-up actions and much discussion at Thailand's provincial level. The present report is the third in a small series that deals with what happened in Chachoengsao province during this latest instance of military intervention in Thai politics. The first report described public hearings on the draft constitution (*KPI Thai Politics Up-date*, No. 3, August 14, 2007), while the second was about the referendum on the constitution (*KPI Thai Politics Up-date*, No. 4, February 6, 2008). As with the first two reports, the present one is based on field data collection in Chachoengsao, conducted between October 1 and December 30, 2007.² This report will deal with the basic electoral organization, the redrawing of constituency boundaries, the electoral calendar, the process of becoming a candidate, issues concerning the political structure and the election candidates, the roles of the Election Commission of Thailand (ECT) and Chachoengsao's Provincial Election Commission (PEC) in election advertising, advance voting, and the election results.³ Finally, the conclusion will expand the horizon beyond the province of Chachoengsao.

Basic electoral organization

The ECT's organizational division into a board consisting of a chairperson and four members appointed for a single term of seven years (the commission proper)⁴ and a permanent office headed by a secretary general was mirrored at the provincial level. The PEC consisted of five members appointed for a single term of four years. Depending on the size of a province, the number of officials making up the PEC offices varied, though each had only one director. At the time of the election, the PEC office in Chachoengsao comprised 17 officials: one director; four officials in the general administration section; two in the political party section; three in the election section; three in the public participation section; and four in the investigation section. The PEC's main and most time-consuming work seemed to be to consider case files concerning electoral fraud in local elections, make preliminary decisions, and then refer such cases for final decisions to the ECT. Other tasks were very limited and more formal in nature. These included determining the ceilings of expenses for local election candidates, confirming the composition of local election commissions, confirming the time it should take to send ballot boxes in a municipal election from the polling stations to the counting station, or confirming the appointment of the Ministry of Interior's chief district officers (*nai amphoe*) or their deputies (*palat amphoe*) as "electoral assistants" (*phuchuaileua kanlueaktang*) in local elections.⁵

The immediate management of electoral details in the constituencies did not rest with the PEC and its office. Rather, PEC-proposed and ECT-appointed constituency committees and their directors handled electoral details, supervised by the PEC and its office.⁶ They belonged to what the election law in articles 15-22 called "election officials" (*chaophanakngan phutamnoenkanlueaktang*). Their roles were further regulated in chapter two of the ECT's main election regulation.⁷ Another regulation⁸ determined the details, such as the qualifications of these directors, their duties, and the method of their recruitment. It also contained equivalent stipulations regarding the constituency committees. Yet another regulation⁹ fixed the remuneration of a variety of election officials. According to this regulation, the constituency directors were to be paid 9,000 baht per month for a period of two months. The same amount was to be paid to the chairperson of the constituency committee, while its members were to be given 7,500 baht per month for a two-month period. As usual, the ECT office had prepared a manual for the constituency directors and the constituency committee

members that explained their many duties.¹⁰ Chart 1 represents a simplified version of a chart on the electoral structure found on page 31 of that manual.



Although neither the constituency directors (*phuamnuaikan kanlueaktang pracham khet lueaktang*) nor the constituency committee (*khanakammakan kanlueaktang pracham khet lueaktang*) members needed to be civil servants, most of them had such a background. After all, managing an election is an administrative affair that requires some familiarity with official procedures and the use of laws and regulations. Legally, they merely needed to be of Thai nationality by birth, at least 35 years old, and have their housing register in the constituency. Both constituency directors in Chachoengsao were also directors of secondary schools. This had the distinct advantage of providing an existing office infrastructure, meeting rooms, and large halls, for example, for counting the advance ballots. During the election, then, the schools housed the *sun prasanngan lueaktang pracham khet* (election coordination center of the constituency). The ECT appointed Chachoengsao's constituency directors and committee members, together with a large number of such positions in other provinces, by order no. 286/2550, dated November 1, 2007. The chairperson of the ECT, Apichart Sukkhanon, signed this order.¹¹

Similar to the two schools at the constituency level, the regional administration's district offices established *sun prasanngan kanluektang pracham amphoe* (election coordination center of the district). Thus, the ECT turned parts of the *amphoe* offices into temporary sub-constituency levels in its overall structure of election management. The three to five people involved were appointed as "district-level sub-committees" (*anukammakan pracham amphoe*) by orders issued by the chairpersons of the constituency committees.¹² They would be responsible for training the polling station committees, distributing the ballot boxes and electoral equipment to the polling station committees, receiving the ballot boxes etc. from the polling station committees after they had finished counting the votes, and collating the results of the counting. Afterwards, they would send these results on to the constituency center. Both the constituency and the district-level coordination centers were helped in their work by a number of assistants (*phuchuai pattipatngan*), who were also formally appointed by orders signed by the chairpersons of the constituency committees.¹³ While the compensation for the sub-committee members was 4,000 baht per month, their assistants received 3,000 baht, supposedly for a two-month period.

On November 21, 2007, five days after candidacy registration, the PEC conducted its central coordination meeting with 42 members of the constituency committees and their district-level sub-committees. It was presided over by the PEC chairper-

son. However, his role was limited to calling out the items on the agenda, while most of the practical responsibility rested with the director of the PEC office and the representatives from the constituencies. Due to the large number of management issues concerning the elections, the agenda comprised 22 items.¹⁴ They included things such as the announcement of polling precincts, the appointment and training of polling station committees, the announcement of the voter rolls, the withdrawal of voting rights, the preparation of the candidacy announcements and their distribution to designated public places, asking the districts to check the availability of polling booths and ballot boxes, the provision of forms and manuals to the polling station committees, the vote-counting sheets for constituency and proportional candidates, the counting at the polling stations and the sending of the results (including the return of the ballot boxes and used election equipment), the sending of electoral information to all households, the provision of ballot papers and electoral equipment to the polling stations, the organization of campaign stages for the candidates by the constituency committees (two per district), and the compensation to be paid to various officials.

The final and lowest level in the electoral organization were the polling precincts (*nuai lueaktang*), each of which had one polling station (*thi lueaktang*), and the polling station committees (*khanakammakan pracham nuailueaktang*). According to article 12 of the election law, the constituency committees determined polling precincts “by having regard for the convenience of the voters.” In rural areas, villages were supposed to be the basic polling precincts, while communities or roads might serve to demarcate polling precincts in urban areas. Normally, a polling precinct was to cover about 800 voters. In this context, one will have to keep in mind that voting lasted from 0800 hours until 1500 hours, or 420 minutes. If all 800 voters turned up, then the polling station committee would have had to process two voters per minute, which is nearly impossible. In practical terms, the constituency committees were in no position to identify suitable polling precincts and polling stations. Rather, the same places that had been used in previous elections, including the referendum, were simply confirmed. Chachoengsao’s constituency 1 had 427 polling precincts/stations, while constituency 2 had 393. They were often located in schools, temples, mosques, village multi-purpose halls, tents temporarily erected for the voting, or on private premises.¹⁵

Similar to the polling precincts and stations, the power to appoint polling station committees held by the constituency committees was merely formal. They were

not equipped independently to recruit village level personnel. Rather, this was done by the Ministry of the Interior's officials at the district level, in conjunction with the village headmen under their supervision. One could imagine that many polling station officials had had some experience from serving in these positions in previous elections. Moreover, one might assume that many members of polling stations were in one way or another part of the villages' power structures, and perhaps even canvassing networks of election candidates.

In formal terms, polling station committees—also known by their acronym *KoPoNo*.—consisted of eight members and one chairperson (*Prathan kammakan pracham nuailueaktang*), appointed from among the voters in the constituency. Due to a new policy of the ECT, which had joined hands with educational institutions countrywide, one member was to be a student from the Rajaphat University. The duties of polling station committees included receiving and returning the ballot boxes and election equipment, the management of the voting process, the reporting of any unusual incidents and complaints, the vote counting, and the announcement of the result in their respective stations. The constituency and district-level committees organized the physical infrastructure of their polling stations—such as announcement boards, tables, chairs, and tents. Since the PEC had no budget for the boards needed to attach the counting sheets, the districts and local governments were asked to help. For providing administrative advice to the polling station committee and help with all the forms to be filled in at various stages of the voting process,¹⁶ including all the steps of making the ballot boxes secure before voting and after counting, the constituency committees also appointed one polling area director (*phuamnuaikan pracham nuailueaktang*) per station. Given his or her task, most of them were supposed to be teachers familiar with bureaucratic procedures. They were also asked to accompany the polling station committees to receive and return the ballot boxes, mostly at the district offices. Finally, the constituency committees appointed at least one security official, generally a police officer, to each polling station. All officials were supposed to undergo a brief orientation concerning their work; conditions for this training were often unfavorable, such as having too many participants and being held in a noisy, open-space venue. As usual, participants received the polling committee manual¹⁷ and a VCD¹⁸ that they could watch at home, if they had video players. All officials serving in polling stations received 250 baht on the day of their training, 150 baht on the day that they received

the ballot box and election equipment and 250 baht on election day. On election day, they received an additional 50 baht for transportation costs.



Picture 1: After the counting, polling station committee members and the director (wearing civil service uniform) tend to the paper work. The women in the foreground count the number of voters who, according to the voter rolls, have shown up. This number must be the same as the number of ballots counted. Moreover, the number of unused ballot papers must correspond to the difference between the ballots received by the committee and the number of voters.

Let us now turn to one of the major tasks many PECs had to perform as a result of the electoral reforms introduced by the constitution of 2007—the redrawing of the constituencies in their provinces.

The re-drawing of constituency boundaries

In the last election before the 1997 constitution changed the election system, Chachoengsao consisted of two constituencies, each with two members of parliament (MP). The 1997 constitution introduced the single-member constituency (SMC) system, which led Chachoengsao to be divided into four SMCs. In July and August 1998, I observed a PEC meeting in Chachoengsao on the division of constituency boundaries and a public hearing on this issue. With the constitution of 2007, Thailand re-adopted the previous multi-member constituency (MMC) system, and Chachoengsao returned to having two constituencies with two MPs each.¹⁹ As a result, the PEC of 2007 had to go through a process similar to that of their predecessors almost ten years

earlier.²⁰ In legal terms, article 19 (no. 2) of the ECT Act empowered the ECT to assign the PEC to make suggestions concerning the demarcation of constituencies (*kan-baeng khetlueaktang*) to the ECT.

The basic rules for this task were laid down in the constitution.²¹ In Section 94, no. 5, it stipulated that a province with four MPs had to be divided into two constituencies with two MPs each (not into one constituency with three MPs and one with a single MP). No. 6 of the same section said that the area of a constituency had to be connected. In other words, the PEC could not let one constituency cut through the area of another one, thereby making that constituency consist of two separate or unconnected parts. Moreover, the population of each constituency had to be similar. Article 10 of the election law repeated these two criteria, and added three more conditions.²² First, administrative districts (*amphoe*) had to be used as building blocks for putting together constituencies. Second, there had to be convenient means of transportation within a constituency. Third, constituencies should comprise of districts that used to be part of one constituency already. If following these rules still left a constituency with too few inhabitants, then it was permissible to cut off some sub-districts (*tambon*) from a district in one constituency to add to another constituency until the required population number was reached. Therefore, in some cases, different *tambon* of a district might belong to different electoral constituencies. However, *tambon* had to be taken as a whole; they could not be divided further into villages.

In Chachoengsao, the ECT's instruction concerning the re-drawing of the constituency boundaries arrived at the PEC office by email on October 3, 2007. This prompted the director of the PEC office to call an urgent meeting of the PEC for October 4. Neither the director nor the PEC had sufficient time to study the ECT instruction carefully before the meeting took place. However, the PEC office already had prepared three models regarding how the constituencies could be divided.²³ The director explained these models, and another official detailed the criteria to be used in dividing constituencies. She also mentioned that, after the PEC had made its decision, the three models had to be announced and publicized in order to give people an opportunity to voice their opinions. The period allotted for this was seven days. Moreover, the PEC could also conduct a public hearing. The PEC of Chachoengsao did so in 1998, and many other provinces held public hearings in 2007. However, the current PEC of Chachoengsao limited public participation to written statements.

After the director had given some explanations, one PEC member asked him to make proposals as to how the province should be divided into constituencies. After all, he was the one who was most familiar with the area of the province.²⁴ The director responded by saying that, in putting the new constituencies together, they should give priority to those areas that used to form one constituency. This would have meant to merge the SMC 1 and 4 into the first MMC, and the SMC 2 and 3 into the second MMC. In the last MMC-based election, in 1996, Chachoengsao had the following two constituencies:

Constituency 1:

Amphoe Mueang, Bang Pakong, Ban Pho, Plaeng Yao

Constituency 2:

Bang Nam Prieow, Bang Khla, Phanom Sarakham, Sanam Chai Khet, Ratchasan, Thatakiap, semi-district Khlong Khuean

On September 1, 1998, the ECT announced that Chachoengsao would be divided into the following four SMCs.

Constituency 1:

Amphoe Mueang, Bang Khla (four of nine sub-districts)

Constituency 2:

Bang Nam Prieow, Khlong Khuean, Bang Khla (five of nine sub-districts), Ratchasan, Phanom Sarakham (three of eight sub-districts)

Constituency 3:

Thatakiap, Sanam Chai Khet, Phanom Sarakham (five of eight sub-districts)

Constituency 4: Pang Pakong, Ban Pho, Plaeng Yao

Therefore, under the criterion that the component districts of the new MMC should earlier have been together in one constituency already suggested a simple return to the demarcation that existed in 1996—joining 1 with 4, and 2 with 3. However, in 1996, constituency 1 had 197,016 voters, while constituency 2 had 214,925 voters. Obviously, at that time, this difference was not seen as being too big. In 2007, based on the population figures as of December 31, 2006, this difference had become too large. A return to the situation in 1996 would have resulted in a difference in population of

35,354 people, thus violating the condition that constituencies should have similar populations. Consequently, the PEC had to redraw the constituencies, and almost everybody in the above-mentioned PEC meeting was equipped with a calculator in order to check the population figures of the various proposed models. In this, not all PEC members seemed to be entirely unprepared and reliant on the PEC office. Rather, as a source pointed out to me, one member had “done his homework” based on maps of Chachoengsao provided by the military. While others might merely have had in mind to fulfill the legal requirements in redrawing the constituency boundaries, the PEC’s military member stated that he wanted to use the redrawing to affect political change in the province and reduce vote buying.

Reportedly, the soldier on the PEC proposed the first model (for maps of all three models, see appendix 1). The major difference from the pre-1998 constituency 1 was that it cut off five *tambons* from Amphoe Mueang and added Thatakiap. Thatakiap had never been part of this constituency but had always joined Sanam Chai Khet. After all, the two sub-districts Thatakiap is divided into used to be part of Sanam Chai Khet district. Thus, this model violated the criterion that districts should previously have been part of the newly devised constituencies. However, this way, the population figures of constituency 1 and 2 differed by only 3,822 people. Yet, it was doubtful whether Thatakiap was actually physically connected with the rest of the constituency. Most previously used maps of the administrative division of Chachoengsao showed that Thatakiap did not border Plaeng Yao, because one *tambon* of Sanam Chai Khet district cut in between. The maps that the PEC had used in its earlier demarcation of the SMC showed that there was no connection. Even when the director of the PEC office explained the SMC situation with the office’s big map, it also showed that part of Sanam Chai Khet was located between Thatakiap and Plaeng Yao. However, suddenly, these maps seemed to have been declared outdated or faulty, and the map of model 1 showed that Thatakiap and Plaeng Yao indeed were connected (see the comparative pictures on the next page).²⁵

In any case, as one provincial election commissioner recognized, the means of communication between Thatakiap and the rest of the constituency were difficult. On my question whether there really was a connection, he said that it was tiny and actually existed only in a formal sense. Other people I spoke to confirmed that candidates on the campaign trail in this constituency would have to leave it and drive on the highways of the adjacent constituency in order to reach the voters in Thatakiap.



Picture 2: Map showing that Thatakiap and Plaeng Yao districts were not connected.



Picture 3: Map showing that Thatakiap and Plaeng Yao districts were connected.

Therefore, this model did not only have a problem with Thatakiap never having been part of this constituency, but also with the condition that there had to be convenient means of transportation *within* the constituency. Finally, a connection in a merely formal sense certainly does not fulfill the criterion that the components of constituencies should be connected to each other, meaning that they represent a clear unit.

In political terms, this envisaged demarcation of constituency 2 meant that both Suchart Tancharoen and the Chaisaengs would lose tens of thousands of members of their voter bases. Thatakiap district belonged to the voter base of Suchart,

while Thitima Chaisaeng would lose supporters in the five districts of Amphoe Mueang as well as those in the four sub-districts of Bang Khla. At the same time, she and her brother Wuthipong would have to campaign in Thatakiap, an area that had never belonged to their area of political work. Even five days before election day, Thitima still complained about these issues. She and her brother visited the all-girl Dat Darunee School²⁶ and campaigned with the students who had assembled for the daily pre-class ritual of singing the national anthem and watching the national flag being raised. On this occasion, she strongly attacked this constituency design, which the ECT had indeed approved.



Picture 4: Thitima Chaisaeng criticizing the composition of Chachoengsao's constituencies at an electioneering event at Dat Darunee School (December 18, 2007).

In her presentation to the students, Thitima said that the People's Power party (PPP) was the only political party that was against dictatorship and for democracy. This was unlike many other parties that had the military in the background. The new demarcation of the constituencies had been done based on a dictatorial constitution, which was the worst that Thailand had ever had. Never mind, one could change it.²⁷ Now that there were bigger constituencies, she was disadvantaged. First, some areas of her previous constituency, which she had always visited, had been given to another constituency. Second, the new constituency included areas that were far away [from their base in Chachoengsao municipality and their stronghold in Amphoe Mueang, referring to Thatakiap]. However, at the end, this was a problem for the people, because MPs

would have problems serving far-flung constituents. The numbers 1 and 2 (in red color) on Thitima's display show areas that she had lost, totaling 42,781 people. Number 3 shows Thatakiap district, where they "gained" 43,170 people.

The second model devised by the PEC followed the pre-1998 division of constituencies. However, as mentioned above, it had to be revised because the original version would have violated the criterion that the populations of constituencies had to be similar. In order to achieve this, the model simply retained the division of Bang Khla district that had been introduced with the use of SMC and applied in the elections of 2001, 2005 and 2006. Thus, both voters and election candidates in those areas were accustomed to belonging to different constituencies. While the population difference in model one stood at 3,822 people, this difference was slightly higher in the second model, at 4,600 people. Therefore, this difference could not lead to preferring the first model. Moreover, the second model fulfilled the legal criteria of connectedness, ease of transportation, and closeness to previous constituency divisions considerably better than model one. In model one, constituency 2 looked as if it was pieced together in a rather arbitrary way, while it looks natural in model two. For these reasons, model two should have been the logical choice of preference for the PEC to suggest to the ECT.

The third and final model very substantially deviated from any previous constituency demarcations. It also had the biggest difference in population numbers, with 20,334 people. According to one member of the PEC, this model was the strangest and merely served the ECT's requirement that the PECs had to consider and submit at least three models.

All three models were formally announced by the PEC to the public on October 5, 2007. At the same time, the PEC sent the models to district and municipal offices and had the provincial public relations office publicize them through the local mass media. Interested parties were asked to submit their opinions in writing to the PEC in the short period between October 6 and October 10, 2007.²⁸ Unlike in 1998, the PEC did not conduct any public hearing.²⁹ Initial responses, especially on model one, seemed to have been critical. On October 8, 2007, three days after it had announced the models, the PEC held its weekly meeting. Before it formally started, the PEC chairperson held up the map of model one showing it to the soldier and said that he had turned off his mobile telephone, because many people had called him to inquire about this model. However, he had not really been able to explain exactly why it

should be like this. On the same day, the first of altogether 18 written statements arrived at the PEC office. Three more were received on August 9, nine were stamped October 10, and four more arrived on October 11.

Given the subject of constituency demarcation, most respondents belonged to the political-administrative circles of Chachoengsao. This included three election candidates and the brother of another. What follows is a summary of the opinions, following the numbering of the statements by the PEC. They provide an interesting perspective on the issues involved.

1. Director of the office of education zone 2, Phanom Sarakham district: He suggested two new models neither of which, however, seemed to fulfill the condition that the area of a constituency must be connected.

2. Director of the office of education zone 1, Amphoe Mueang: He said that they had conducted a meeting with education personnel in order to consult on the PEC's three models. In giving their statement, they asserted their right to voice their opinions according to the constitution. Based on academic hypothesis building, he strongly rejected the first model, because it would not allow an efficient administration of the election, especially with regard to the lack of major roads in parts of the constituencies. In particular, he was strictly opposed to including Thatakiap in one constituency with Plaeng Yao district, "because they had no connection whatsoever," and there was no major road connecting these two districts. By contrast, models two and three looked acceptable. He also suggested that the division of electoral constituencies might well follow the division of the province into two education zones. This would facilitate the electoral work of civil servants, especially teachers in the polling stations. However, from the population figures the director gave in this statement, there would have been a large gap of about 53,000 people.³⁰

3. A prospective candidate of the Democrats declared his agreement with model two, because people were familiar with this division of constituencies. It was also convenient and economical for the candidates' campaigns. Whether he would be elected or not, model two would enable him to continue his political work. However, he could also accept model one, though it was not convenient for doing political work because some districts were far away and thus rather more appropriate for those candidates who were close to those areas. This candidate pointed to the fact that the constituencies had been enlarged already, and that there was little time left for the elec-

tion campaign. Thus, the model most convenient and economical should be chosen, rather than trying to advantage or disadvantage certain election candidates.

4. President of the Rajaphat University:³¹ He had received suggestions and opinions from lecturers and students and thus wanted to contribute his opinion. He criticized the PEC for having violated the criteria of the election law for dividing constituencies. “This can clearly be seen in constituency 2 where Plaeng Yao and Thatakiap districts are not at all connected,” because one *tambon* of Sanam Chai Khet district was in between. To support his view, he had attached the same map of the Town and Country Planning Department that the PEC had used in 1998. The president also attached data on Thatakiap taken from the web site of the Department of Local Administration, Ministry of the Interior. Moreover, in their everyday lives, people in those areas used roads in Sanam Chai Khet district—which is located in the adjacent electoral constituency—for traveling, because there was only one asphalted road and one more covered by red gravel. Finally, Plaeng Yao and Thatakiap districts had never previously been part of one constituency. For all these reasons, model one should not be adopted. He agreed with models two and three, though the latter would have to be adjusted to make their populations figures more similar, for which the president made a suggestion. He also sent his opinion both to the PEC and directly to the ECT.

5. The chief district officer (*nai amphoe*) of Sanam Chai Khet district had listened to the opinions of sub-district headmen, village headmen, and mass groups³² in his area. In their majority, they were in favor of model two.

6. A lawyer known for his close relationship with Anand Chaisaeng expressed his opinion that models two and three were best, because the components of both constituencies were connected and convenient. If one made adjustments to model three by switching some *tambons* in Phanom Sarakham (this was also suggested by the president above) so that the population figures would be similar, this might be the best model. By comparison, model one looked rather strange to him. First, the main district of Chachoengsao—Amphoe Mueang—would be divided. Second, the distance between Amphoe Mueang and Thatakiap was more than 100 km. Bang Pakong was even farther away from Thatakiap. Thus, traveling was not convenient. Third, Plaeng Yao district and Thatakiap district were not connected with each other. This violated the election law that had just come into effect. He respectfully suggested his opinion with the hope that politics would be honest and fair.

7. A “retired civil servant” rejected model one, because it was not appropriate to divide the main district of the province. Moreover, Plaeng Yao and Thatakiap had never before been in one constituency together. Thatakiap was rather far away, and the means of communication were inconvenient. This respondent claimed that he had checked with the web site *thaitambon.com* and found that the two districts were not connected “at all.” This was against the criteria laid down in the election law. By contrast, models two and three were all right. However, in the latter case, the population difference between the constituencies was too big. As did two other respondents, he suggested that this problem could be solved by rearranging the *tambon* of Phanom Sarakham district.

8. This was a set of statements from three or four *tambon* administrative organizations in Plaeng Yao, Phanom Sarakham, and Amphoe Mueang. The documents mainly comprised the names and signatures of people supporting model one. This was a new way of dividing constituencies. It did not advantage nor disadvantage any candidate. Model two followed the old way of dividing the constituencies.

9. An election candidate sent his opinion on paper with the Democrat Party’s letterhead, declaring, “The people must come first – Abhisit Vejjajiva.”³³ He ranked model one as his second choice. Contrary to other respondents, he maintained that the areas making up both constituencies were connected. However, Suchart Tancharoen would lose Thatakiap district with 43,170 people, while [the voter base of] his competitor, Somchai Atsawachaisophon, remained the same. This candidate of the Democrats disagreed with model two because it followed the constituency division used before the 1997 constitution came into effect, and thus would politically advantage Wuthipong and Thitima Chaisaeng in constituency 1. His remark, however, did not result from his competition with them, because he would run in constituency 2. This constituency, he said, was geographically too big. Therefore, candidates had to waste much time with traveling, and they would not be able to take care of all people in this large area. His favorite was model three. Most importantly, this model was the fairest in political terms. Thitima and Wuthipong Chaisaeng, Suchart Tancharoen, and Somchai Atsawachaisophon all would have to campaign for the votes of 150,000 more people, compared to their previous SMC. The gap in population figures could be reduced by moving one *tambon* of Phanom Sarakham district from constituency 2 to constituency 1.

10. Next was the news editor of one of the local cable TV stations, SRN, who was also the chairperson of the Journalist Association of Chachoengsao. In the past, he had served on committees administering both national and local elections. In many provinces, groups of politicians had monopolized power for long periods. This included the transfer of elected positions within the family, from father and mother to their children. Previously, when constituencies had to be divided, civil servants and politicians would gang up in order to preserve the latter's stock of *hua khanaen* (vote canvassers) and their *than siang* (voter base). This led to political influence (*itthiphon thangkanmueang*)³⁴ that has been extended to local governments. For this reason, it was very difficult for the great number of good and capable people living in one constituency to be election candidates. Model one represented a new constructive approach to the division of constituencies. To an extent, it could solve the problems of political monopolization by some groups of politicians and of influence. This model might even be considered a "red-card" achievement by the new Election Commission, which dared reorganizing the politics of Chachoengsao province so that it can be clean and just regarding all the people who had the right to be election candidates. However, some groups of people might oppose this model. Any reasons they might come up with were only excuses and based on their own biased interests, for example concerning the need to look for new vote canvassers. Nevertheless, these were not problems of the people who were the real owners of sovereignty. Model two did not change the area of the constituencies at all. In the past, this division served the continuous monopolization of politics. Thus, he strongly disagreed with this model. Regarding model three, this respondent merely copied and pasted what he had said about model two.

11. This letter followed formal bureaucratic form. It was signed in handwriting, without providing information on the position of the respondent. He said that model one was very faulty and strange, and claimed that it violated article 16, paragraph 2, of the election law that stipulated that the components of a constituency must be connected. However, in constituency 2, Thatakiap district had no connection "at all" with the other districts of the constituency. This respondent then referred to the map of the Town and Country Planning Department, which the PEC had used in 1998, and which two other respondents had also attached. Moreover, people could not travel directly between the rest of constituency two and Thatakiap, but had to pass through districts in constituency 1. This violated the legal condition of article 10, no.

1, of the election law that traveling *within* a constituency had to be convenient. The area also lacked any means of public transportation. Finally, this model also violated no. 2 of article 10, which stipulated that consideration must be given to the question of whether the components of a constituency used to be together in one constituency. This was not the case, because Thatakiap used to be part of Sanam Chai Khet district. In everyday life, Thatakiap was not part of everyday community life in constituency 2 (meaning Plaeng Yao). In all, with model one, the PEC had not performed its task according to the organic election law. It was very wrong to use this model in the upcoming parliamentary election.

12) The director of a school in Amphoe Mueang supported model two, because it was convenient with respect to the electoral administration, such as receiving and retuning the ballot boxes. He cared for the teachers who would serve on the polling station committees.

13) This letter was also sent by a school director, this time from Pang Pakong district. It looked like a copy of letter no. 12.

14) The chairperson of the sub-district and village headmen association of Sanam Chai Khet district claimed that the members of this association had a meeting to consider the three models. They unanimously supported model two, because Sanam Chai Khet used to be in the same group of administrative areas that this model represented. He also referred to similarities in geography, environmental conditions, and the ways of life, customs, and culture of the people.

15) The mayor of Phanom Sarakham municipality supported model one, because it was convenient concerning traveling. Obviously, this was a reference to constituency 1. This mayor was the younger brother of former TRT MP Somchai Atsawachaisophon. To him, seeing the voter base of his major competitor in the 2007 election cut by removing Thatakiap district from the constituency certainly was a welcome change.³⁵

16) Coincidentally, the next expression of opinion came from Somchai's main competitor, Phichet Tancharoen, the elder brother of Suchart, who had been disqualified as one of the 111 former members of TRT's executive board. In his letter, Phichet said that, in preparation of his candidacy, he had talked with many voters and officials. They had also talked about the division of constituencies. Most people agreed that model two was highly appropriate. It best fulfilled all the legal criteria. He did not

mention that model one would make him lose one of his family's traditional voter strongholds.³⁶

17) An unidentified respondent thought that model one was “totally bad.” It assigned Amphoe Mueang to two constituencies. In constituency 2, Plaeng Yao and Thatakiap were very far away, and the road connections were poor. Model two was all right. Model three could be improved if one more *tambon* from Phanom Sarakham was moved to constituency one.

18) The final statement came from the chairperson of the Lawyers Council of Chachoengsao. Since, in model one, Thatakiap did not share any boundaries with the rest of constituency 2, this model did not conform to the criteria for constituency divisions as laid down in article 10 of the election law. He asked the PEC to check the correctness of this model.

Obviously, we cannot draw any valid conclusion from these 18 opinions as to what the general population of Chachoengsao thought about these models, or even if information about the models had reached the general population at all. However, as these submissions indicate, I was certainly not the only one who was puzzled about the question of how model one conformed to the legal conditions stipulated for the division of constituencies. As mentioned above, the PEC's chairperson got so many inquiries, which even he could not answer, that he had turned off his mobile phone. In the first PEC meeting that dealt with developing the three models, on October 8, 2007, I did not hear anything substantial said about the issue of whether, in constituency 2 of model one, Plaeng Yao and Thatakiap districts were actually connected. One could have expected that the public was confused, because even the official maps that the PEC had used since 1998 showed that there was no connection between the two districts.

One day after the deadline for submitting opinions, on October 11, 2007, the PEC held its weekly meeting. When it came to the issue of making a decision about the constituency divisions, there was surprisingly no further discussion nor any reference to the 18 opinions that had been sent to the PEC, most only one day earlier.³⁷ In terms of public participation, this seemed to have been merely a token exercise. Instead, the members right away were asked about their respective decisions.³⁸ One Ratchaphat lecturer agreed with model two, because the population figures in both constituencies were close, and the components of the constituency—referring to the

problem with Plaeng Yao and Thatakiap in model one—were *really* connected. Another lecturer from Ratchaphat supported model one. The transportation situation was all right, and there were few advantages or disadvantages concerning the voter bases of the established political groups. Model one was most just in this respect. The chairperson mentioned the transportation conditions within the constituencies and supported the first and the third models. Finally, the soldier on the PEC wanted to see political change and a reduction of vote buying. Therefore, he supported model one.³⁹

I cannot say whether all those who had sent in their opinions, especially those who had raised doubts concerning the connectedness of Plaeng Yao and Thatakiap districts, subsequently received additional information with supporting evidence from the PEC. The office sent the three models, together with all the opinions, to the ECT for the final decision. Given that there seemed to be relatively serious problems regarding model one, I did have some doubt whether the ECT would chose it even though it was the first preference of the PEC. The ECT's secretary general had been quoted in a newspaper saying that people did not need to worry about the constituency divisions, because the ECT was thorough and careful (*robkhob*) in its decision-making. Since they indeed approved of model one, this quality of the ECT's decision-making, in the case of Chachoengsao, might well be doubted. However, I do not have any information about the ECT's discussion of the models submitted by the PEC of Chachoengsao. Following from this entire process, the constituencies for the election of December 2007 consisted of the following components.

Constituency 1:

Bang Nam Prieow, Khlong Khuean, Bang Khla, Ratchasan, Phanom Sarakham, Sanam Chai Khet, and Amphoe Mueang (five of 17 sub-districts)

Constituency 2:

Bang Pakong, Ban Pho, Plaeng Yao, Thatakiap, and Amphoe Mueang (12 of 17 sub-districts)

PEC electoral calendar

In all kinds of elections, both national and local, the ECT and PECs produce electoral calendars. They provide some basic data on the management of the election by the PECs, or rather their offices. Since the PEC of Chachoengsao works in a centralized structure, its electoral calendar could be found in other provinces as well. Often, the

calendars are produced as big signboards and prominently displayed in the PEC offices. The electoral calendar for the election of December 23, 2007, covered the period from 59 days before the election to eight days after it. Its purpose is expressed in the Thai-language headline: “Control table for the time period of the election of MPs in Chachoengsao province.”⁴⁰ However, it does not cover all administrative steps necessary for managing the election. What follows is a translation of this “control table,” with some additional remarks. At this point, I do not distinguish between the PEC and the constituency committees. In fact, many of the tasks mentioned below had to be performed by the latter.

October 25

The Royal Decree (*phraratchakritsadika*) on the MP election came into effect. The decree, signed by Prime Minister Surayud Chulanond, was issued on October 18, 2007. In article 2, it stipulated that it would come into effect one day after it had been announced in the *Government Gazette* (*ratchakitchanubeksa*). Since this announcement of the decree took place on October 24, it became effective on October 25.⁴¹

November 12-16

Registration of constituency candidates. The registration of candidates running in the proportional system, though it comprised eight provincial clusters, was held centrally in Bangkok one week earlier.

November 22

Last day for voters to register their intention to use their right in advance voting outside of their province of formal residence. If voters had their housing register in a province different from that where they actually resided, but did not want to travel home for the election, they could vote at the advance polling station in their province of residence. However, they had to register with the PEC office in their province of residence in order to be included in special voter rolls concerning their home provinces. Accordingly, their names were deleted from the voter rolls of their home polling stations. Therefore, even if they later decided to return to their home provinces for voting, they were not allowed to cast ballots because their names had been crossed out on the voter rolls. Article 97 of the election law stated that voters wanting to vote at the advance polling station had to register within 30 days before the election. Based on experiences with advance voting in previous elections, most people anticipated that relatively few people would make use of this opportunity. Thus, the government declared December 24 a public holiday in order to facilitate the voters’ traveling needs.

November 23

- Last day for checking the qualifications of constituency MP candidates. According to article 37 of the election law, this had to be finished within seven days after registration closed.

- Announcement of approval of constituency MP candidates. With this act, the candidacies became official. Afterwards, according to article 38 of the election law, candidates could not withdraw their candidacies.

November 30

Last day for candidates to submit petitions to the Supreme Court. According to article 39 of the election law, in case candidates did not find their names in the candidate announcement, they could petition the court within seven days.

December 2

- Last day for the announcement of the voter rolls. To enable voters to check the correctness of the rolls, they had to be displayed at places such as the provincial hall, the district administrations, municipal offices, the offices of *tambon* administrative organizations, the work places of village headmen, and near the designated polling stations (article 29 of the election law).
- Last day for the announcement of polling precincts (*nuai lueaktang*) and polling stations (*thi lueaktang*).

December 7

- Last day to notify household heads about who had the right to vote in his or her household. The ECT sent lists with the voters in any given household, based on the housing register, to every household in the country. Information material on the election, constituency candidates, and the political parties' proportional lists in the respective zones was also sent.
- Last day for the political parties to nominate representatives to observe the voting and vote counting in the polling stations. According to article 18 of the election law, parties who fielded candidates in any given constituency had the right to nominate one observer per polling station. He or she had to be assigned a seat within the polling station from which he or she could observe the proceedings.⁴² This nomination had to be done by formal letter not later than 15 days before election day.

December 12

- Last day for the constituency committees to announce changes concerning the areas of polling precincts or the locations of polling stations. Last day for voters or household heads to ask for the addition or withdrawal of names on the voter rolls.

December 15 and 16

Advance voting at the district-level central polling stations of the constituencies (*thilueaktang klang nai khet lueaktang*), and voting at the provincial-level central polling station for people who had registered to cast their ballots outside of their provinces (this station was called *thilueaktang klang nok khet changwat*). The first opportunity was designed for voters who had valid reasons preventing them from going to their polling station on election day, be it that they had to serve on a polling station committee, had to travel due to their jobs, or that they had to report on the election in their capacity as journalists. These voters did not have to register in advance, but simply turned up at the advance polling stations with a document confirming the necessity of their absence. After the approval of their requests, they proceeded to the section where

the voter rolls from all polling stations in the constituency were kept. Their names were then crossed out of the original list.

December 16

First day that voters could inform the Election Commission that they would not be able to cast their ballots on election day (seven days before the election). Voters who did not submit this information, or whose reasons were deemed insufficient, lost a number of rights.

December 23

Election day. Polling stations were open from 0800 to 1500 hours. In the election of 2005, this limited time, coupled with a high turnout, had put a number of polling stations into trouble.

December 30

Last day that voters could inform the Election Commission why they could not cast their ballot on election day (seven days after the election).

Becoming an official election candidate

Politicians who want to stand in elections, be they local or national, must pass through the procedure of candidacy registration, which is managed by the PEC in conjunction with its respective lower-level election commissions. Furthermore, the ECT had introduced oath-taking ceremonies in local elections and also implemented them in the MP elections. Finally, after the constituency committees had verified the correctness of the candidates' applications, the PEC invited the candidates to a meeting in order to facilitate an orderly election campaign. I will deal with these events in turn.

Candidacy registration

Prospective MP election candidates had to register their candidacies with the respective constituency director.⁴³ Since there were two constituencies in Chachoengsao, one might have expected that one venue in each of them would be used for the registration. As usual, however, there was only one place for the registration, namely the *sala prachakhom chaloem phrakiat*, a multi-purpose building behind the provincial hall. The task was also not left to the constituency personnel alone. Rather, the director of the PEC office and some of his staff helped the much-less-experienced temporary election officials from the constituencies. An ECT-prepared manual concerning the registration process also supported them.⁴⁴ Three members of the PEC observed

the proceedings. A *sofa kharatchakan chan phuyai/kokoto.chowo.chocho*. (sofa for high-ranking civil servants/PEC of Chachoengsao) had been arranged for them.

For the registration procedure, the main hall of the building was divided into two areas, one each for the two constituencies, while the stage was used for drawing the candidates' numbers after the paperwork had been completed. Each area had a number of rows of desks and chairs for the candidates to fill in their forms, to submit their documents, and to pay their registration fees.⁴⁵ In receiving the applications, officials were helped by a checklist form that accounted for the following items: application form; confirmation letter from the chairperson of the candidate's political party; citizen identification card or any other official card with picture and ID number; copy of the housing register; medical certificate; ten pictures of size 8.5 to 13.5 centimeters; registration fee of 5,000 baht (cash, money order, or cashier check; previously, the fee was 10,000 baht); additional documents to be submitted (proof that they had their housing register in the province uninterrupted for one year before registration day, or that they had studied in an educational institution of the province uninterrupted for at least two years, or that they used to be civil servants or used to live in the province uninterrupted for two years, or proof that they were born in the province in which they applied to be election candidates); other documents, for example, letter of resignation from government service,⁴⁶ certificate regarding any name change, and others. Absent from this list is proof that the applicants had completed at least a bachelor's degree or equivalent. The 2007 constitution did away with this controversial requirement that had been introduced in the 1997 constitution.

After the procedure of submitting the application documents, both the candidate and the constituency director had to sign the checklist form. This was followed by an interview of the candidate by the constituency director, as prescribed in the form "MP 17" (*so.so. 17*). Each candidate had to truthfully answer prescribed verbal questions. The form determined the questions and answers in the following way.⁴⁷

Question: What sort of evidence have you included in your application for candidacy?

Answer: I have brought the following confirmed evidence to be part of my candidacy application

.....

Question: Do you confirm the correctness of the application evidence or not?

Answer: I would like to confirm that all submitted evidence is correct.

Question: Do you have the right to be an election candidate to the House of Representatives and have the qualifications and none of the prohibitions of being an election candidate according to what the election law of 2007 stipulates – yes or no?

Answer: Yes.

Question: Are you a member of only one political party or not?

Answer: I am member of only one political party, namely

The above text has been read to me already. I would like to confirm its correctness and that I can also confirm it in court. Therefore, I will give my signature as proof.

After the paperwork for all candidates had been done, the director of constituency 1 had them lined up on a row of chairs to agree on the method of lot drawing for the candidates' numbers. Sensibly, all agreed to use the same numbers in both constituencies for the candidates running under one party label (unlike in a number of other provinces). After lots had been drawn by the director of constituency 1 in order to determine in which order the parties would draw their numbers, all four candidates of a party were invited on stage in the determined sequence, and one member would draw the number from a gold-colored tray, while the other three watched more or less eagerly. A crowd of news people, along with myself, had gathered in front of the stage with their cameras. As soon as the numbers were known, the candidates' teams, who had brought election advertising pick-up trucks with them, added the numbers in the respective fields either in handwriting or, more professionally, using stickers that had been prepared in advance.

Although the candidacy registration period ran from November 12-16, 2007 (0830 to 1630 hours), the first day was the most important. Almost all candidates registered on this day, starting from even before 0830 hours. Of the 20 candidates in constituency 1, 16 registered on the first day, while 14 of the 16 candidates in constituency 2 registered. One important factor of this situation is that candidates would like to get a good number that voters could easily remember. Colorful groups of supporters holding posters or banners of their favorites or playing drums have long been part

of the first day of registration. Compared to the same event on January 9, 2005, an important difference is illustrated in the following two pictures showing the Chaisaeng candidates after their registration for the elections in February 2005 and December 2007.



Picture 5: The Chaisaeng candidates after candidacy registration on January 9, 2005. From left to right: Wuthipong, family patriarch Anand, Thitima.



Picture 6: The Chaisaeng candidates after candidacy registration on November 12, 2007. From left to right: Chaturon Chaisaeng (one of the 111 disqualified members of TRT's executive board), Anand, Thitima, and Wuthipong

In 2005, the Chaisaengs did not only run under the TRT label, they also had one very powerful patron in their election campaign—hugely popular Prime Minister Thaksin

Shinawatra. The election at that time was as much about him as it was about the Chaisaengs. The jingle played by the many TRT advertising trucks roaming the streets in urban and rural Chachoengsao listed TRT's policies and self-confidently boasted, "*nayok thaksin tham dai!*" (Prime Minister Thaksin can do it!). In their election speeches, both Chaturon and Wuthipong emphasized that Thaksin needed a big parliamentary majority to be able to govern effectively and with stability for the next four years. Thaksin and TRT's policies also figured prominently both in TRT's and the candidates' election brochures. In 2007, all this had changed dramatically. Thai Rak Thai had become Phalang Prachachon. Chaturon had been disqualified and could not be openly involved in the family's election campaign (but see below for how he tried to get around this limitation). Moreover, the family did not have any overbearing political patron as it had in 2005 in Thaksin. Rather, it had to fight on its own. The big pictures of Thaksin on registration day were gone. Instead, a small handwritten sign was held up in front of the group. It said, "*rao rak chaisaeng*" (we love Chaisaeng).

After the candidates had given post-registration interviews and taken pictures like the above, most of them proceeded to pay respect to the statue of King Chulalongkorn in front of the old provincial hall. From there, they went to Wat Sothorn to pay respect to the province's famous Buddha statue, Luang Pho Sothorn. Thus having asked for protection from both a past worldly ruler and from the province's main spiritual power, they could confidently enter into the hot phase of their election campaigns.

As said above, almost all candidates came to register early on the first day. That left the election officials—reduced to a small number—with four more very boring days to go. When I dropped by on the third day of candidacy registrations, three women, one of them with a Muslim headscarf, from Bang Nam Prioew district arrived at 1520 hours to register their candidacies for *Phak Thai Ramruay* (Rich Thai party). This was a new outfit that reportedly had been registered by the ECT on the last possible day before the election period. The party was said to be part of a direct sales network. Unfortunately, one candidate from one constituency was missing, although candidates from one party were required to register together. Moreover, the director of constituency 2 was absent. While the director of constituency 1 tried to reach his colleague by mobile telephone, the women candidates tried the same with their fellow male candidate. After all, there was still some time left until the closure of registration at 1630 hours. In the end, there was no candidacy registration on that day, because the

missing candidate arrived only five minutes before closing time—not enough to go through the multi-step procedure. Furthermore, the correctness of the documents submitted by one of the women was unclear. This had to be resolved first. On one of the next two days, all of them successfully registered their candidacies, receiving the numbers 17 and 18 in constituency 1, and 15 and 16 in constituency 2.

Altogether, there were the following candidates running in constituencies 1 and 2. The basic information presented here is mostly taken from the constituency-based brochures that the ECT sent to each household of the province. It was headlined, “พี่น้องชาวจังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา เขตเลือกตั้งที่ 1 [2] 23 ธันวาคม 2550 อย่าลืมไปเลือกตั้ง ส.ส. เวลา 08.00–15.00 น.” (Fellow citizens of Chachoengsao province, constituency 1 [2], do not forget to vote in the MP election on 23 December 2007, from 0800–1500 hours).⁴⁸

Constituency 1:

Phichet Tancharoen, Phuea Phaendin party, no. 1 (52 years, BA, businessman, brother of disqualified former TRT MP Suchart)

Kamonnet Inbaen, Phuea Phaendin party, no. 2 (41 years, BA, businesswoman)

Phatcharakriengchai Singhanat, Democrat party, no. 3 (60 years, MA, retired police officer, former election candidate)

Chalee Charoensuk, Democrat party, no. 4 (45 years, BA, businessman, former Democrat election candidate)

Anek Koetsawang, Ruam Chai Thai Chart Phattana party, no. 5 (63 years, MA, businessman)

Chaiwat Srikhacha, Ruam Chai Thai Chart Phattana party, no. 6 (40 years, BA, lawyer)

Somsong Wongpradit, Matchimathipattai party, no. 7 (48 years, senior secondary school, no occupation given)

Thira Thattiyakunchai, Matchimathipattai party, no. 8 (49 years, MA, no occupation given)

Somphon Wanlanond, Farmer's Network of Thailand party, no. 9 (44 years, third year of secondary school, farmer)

Thiang Thuamprasoet, Farmer's Network of Thailand party, no. 10 (57 years, fourth year of primary school, farmer)⁴⁹

Somchai Atsawachaisophon, Phalang Prachachon party, no. 11 (59 years, MA, businessman, former TRT MP)

Itthi Sirilatthayakon, Phalang Prachachon party, no. 12 (53 years, BA, politician, former MP on TRT's party list)

Thanaphong Sewewanlop, Chart Thai party, no. 13 (45 years, junior secondary school, farmer)

Karakot Kaewkham, Chart Thai party, no. 14 (47 years, vocational certificate, farmer)

Thonchai Srisuk, Prachakorn Thai party, no. 15 (35 years, BA, businessman)

Phairot Malai, Prachakorn Thai party, no. 16 (40 years, vocational certificate, employee)

Kanchana Withayanon, Thai Ramruay party, no. 17 (48 years, MA, businesswoman)

Seri Mattohet, Thai Ramruay party, no. 18 (38 years, senior secondary school, businessman)

Sathit Yuensuk, Tai Pen Tai party, no. 19 (47 years, senior secondary school, farmer)

Aphiwat Ketuwattha, Tai Pen Tai party, no. 20 (47 years, seven years of primary school, farmer)

Constituency 2:

Phanee Jarusombat, Phuea Phaendin party, no. 1 (50 years, BA, businesswoman, elected to the 2006 Senate, sister of disqualified TRT-board member Phinit)

Sunthorn Chirathawong, Phuea Phaendin party, no 2 (42 years, BA, lawyer)

Chaovalit Charoenphon, Democrat party, no. 3 (47 years, medical doctor, came third in the 2006 Senate election)

Chakrawan Thuamcharoen, Democrat party, no. 4 (39 years, MA, former lecturer at the faculty of information technology, Rangsit University, former Democrat election candidate)

Bunlert Phairin, Ruam Chai Thai Chart Phattana party, no. 5 (66 years, PhD, formerly an elected senator and high-level civil servant)

Inthira Thapananon, Ruam Chai Thai Chart Phattana party, no. 6 (52 years, BA in law from Ramkhamhaeng University, occupation: "politician")

Chadet Thongwilai, Matchimathipattai party, no. 7 (41 years, grade six of secondary school, no occupation given)

Wichan Buntham, Matchimathipattai party, no. 8 (69 years, grade four of primary school, employee)

Saneh Kaewmaniwong, Farmer's Network of Thailand party, no. 9 (52 years, grade four of secondary school, farmer)

Pha Soithong, Farmer's Network of Thailand party, no. 10 (51 years, no education given, farmer)

Wuthipong Chaisaeng, Phalang Prachachon party, no. 11 (48 years, BA in law from Ramkhamhaeng University, occupation: "politician")⁵⁰

Thitima Chaisaeng, Phalang Prachachon party, no. 12 (47 years, MBA and MPA from Southeastern University, USA, occupation: "politician")

Suchat Iamthongkham, Chart Thai party, no. 13 (54 years, senior secondary school, farmer)

Worakit Saowarot, Chart Thai party, no. 14 (44 years, grade seven of secondary school, farmer)

Amara Piyasakunwong, Thai Ramruay party, no. 15 (48 years, BA, personal business)

Suwannaporn Mattohet, Thai Ramruay party, no. 16 (44 years, vocational certificate, personal business)

In the elections between 1995 and 2007, the numbers of political parties and candidates in Chachoengsao reflected national trends (table 1).

Table 1: Number of political parties and candidates (1995-2005)

Elections	Thailand		Chachoengsao	
	Parties	Candidates	Parties	Candidates
1995	20	2,372	6	16
1996	15	2,310	5	16
2001	39	2,782	8	22
2005	24	1,707	4	11
2007	39	3,894	10	36

Sources: MoI and ECT election reports; for 2007, see also Christian Schafferer. 2008. "Parliamentary Election in Thailand, 23 December 2007," *Electoral Studies*.

One might cautiously assume that the changes made to the election system by the 1997 constitution had led to the perception of electoral leeway, thus increasing the number of political parties and candidates. Following the four years in power by Thaksin Shinawatra's TRT, their predominance seemed to have dampened the electoral enthusiasm of potential parties and candidates, thereby leading to a reduction in the number of both. The disappearance of Thaksin and TRT from the electoral scene, combined with the perceived leeway produced by the reform of the election system by the 2007 constitution, led to a substantial increase of the number of political parties and candidates.

Regarding Chachoengsao, however, the number of serious competitors for the four MP seats remained limited over these five elections.⁵¹ The numbers were seven (1995), six (1996), eight (2001), seven (2005), and 10 (2007). The increase in 2007 resulted from Itthi Sirilatthayakon's return from TRT's party list to the constituency contest under the banner of PPP, Phanee Jarusombat's entry under Phuea Phaendin after the coup-induced abolition of the Senate elected in 2006, and from Chavalit Charoenpon's (Democrats) decision to try his luck in a House election after achieving a good result in the preceding Senate election.

Taking an oath for a clean and fair election

On Thursday, November 15, 2007, the ECT led representatives of political parties to the Temple of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok in order to pledge that they would conduct their election campaigns honestly and fairly. In an editorial, *The Nation* (November 17, 2007) strongly criticized this event as an appeal by the ECT to "supernatural powers," instead of using its legal means to make the election clean and fair. The editorial stated, "Organizing the oath-taking ceremony made the EC look unprofessional and desperate, and it does not inspire public confidence."

In fact, this ceremony was not a stand-alone event. Rather, the ECT had devised the *khroṅkan lueaktang choeng samanachan* (project for elections with one opinion) many months earlier as an attempt to reduce illegal practices and complaints in the hundreds of local elections the PECs had to organize that year. The project was thus implemented countrywide. In July 2007, I had participated in such an event held at the Buddhist temple of *tambon* municipality Ko Khanun in Phanom Sarakham district, Chachoengsao province. This was an elaborate religious ritual. After the monks had finished chanting, all the candidates joined in swearing their oaths. Afterwards, each candidate drank oath water, was sprinkled with holy water by the temple's head monk, and signed his name on a big banner that had the text of the oath printed on it. This banner was kept as proof. Finally, the candidates individually paid respect to the temple's main Buddha image. The entire ceremony lasted for about two hours. This event was important enough for the ECT to send an inspector and his assistant in a van with driver all the way from Bangkok to observe the ritual's implementation.

Obviously, it could be asked what religion had to do with local government elections, and whether it was appropriate for a state agency such as the ECT to use

religious beliefs, infrastructure, and personnel merely as tools to achieve its own administrative purposes. In any case, the project was also implemented countrywide one day after the period of registration of MP candidates had ended.

I observed this ceremony on Saturday, November 17, 2007. In Chachoengsao, it started at 0800 hours and was performed under white tents erected in front of the new building of Wat Sothorn,⁵² which houses the original of the famous Buddha statue Luang Pho Sothorn. According to an official of the PEC office, this location was better than inside the hall, as was originally planned, because the temple was open to the public with a constant stream of visitors. Unlike in the case of Ko Khanun, monks played no role in this ritual. The Muslim candidates were excused from this mainly Buddhist ceremony. After it had ended, the officials of the PEC office went to a mosque where the Muslim candidates took their oaths with a different text.

At the entrance to the tents, the candidates registered and also signed documents showing their pictures and the logos of their political parties. The PEC later printed and sent them to all households in the respective constituencies, as an attachment to the notification of household heads about who had the right to vote in their houses. The participants also received the ceremony schedule and the text of the oath. After the procedure had already started, and people might have thought that the Cha-isaengs were boycotting the event, first Wuthipong and then Thitima finally showed up. An official from the PEC had also noticed their absence and remarked, “We have invited all candidates. But we cannot force them to participate.” The candidates were seated according to their constituencies.

Almost all of the officials, including the constituency committee members, and even most of the candidates, were dressed in yellow, thus placing themselves within the bureaucratic-royalist model of Thai politics prevalent at that time. One might ask why the candidates, as supposedly independent citizens in a genuinely democratic role, would adopt the bureaucrats’ paternalistic prescriptions. In fact, according to the schedule of the event, the candidates were not required to wear yellow dress. Only the dress code for officials was expressly given as “yellow dress,” though one might well ask why the civil servants and state employees taking part in the ceremony were not allowed to wear ordinary outfits. As for the candidates, they were merely asked to dress “politely,” or wear their parties’ colors.⁵³ The journalists attending the event certainly did not identify themselves as belonging to the bureaucratic

sphere and as part of the ritual. None of them, as far as I remember, were dressed in yellow.



Picture 7: The masters of the oath-taking ceremony, sitting in the VIP arrangement commonly found in bureaucratic settings. In black jackets, from right to left, the PEC chairperson, the provincial governor, a PEC member. Behind him, in yellow jacket, is another PEC member. On the right, in yellow polo shirt, is the director of constituency one.

The formal part of the event started with the provincial governor briefly addressing the candidates. The main content of his address was given in the schedule of the ritual as follows. “Give advice to the candidates in the election to the House of Representatives of Chachoengsao province in order to create agreement about knowing how to lose, how to win, know forgiveness, and know and love unity. They should maintain being friends before and after the elections so that the election campaign would proceed transparently, without breaking the election law, without vote buying, and without slandering each other. Finally, they should join in developing the province of Chachoengsao.” The section from accepting defeat to remaining friends was obviously taken from article 5, nos. 4 and 5, of the ECT’s regulation governing *samanachan*-style elections.⁵⁴ Though brief, the text and the event of which it was part still expressed some of the bureaucracy’s patronizing attitude towards politicians. In fact, one wonders why any self-respecting candidate would bother turning up at all at such a ritualistic event imposed upon them by the state bureaucracy. What would happen, for example, if the MPs and local government politicians of a province invited the provincial governor, the section chiefs, and the chief district officers to a similar event

for them to take an oath not to be corrupt, to serve the people of the province, and to work with efficiency and effectiveness?

After the governor, it was the turn of PEC member Prawat Chinotom, a retired lecturer from the Rajaphat University, to give another brief speech. Here is a rough translation, which is based on the prepared text.

Chairperson of the Election Commission, provincial governor, prospective members of parliament, honorable guests. The Election Commission [ECT] has ordered us [the PEC] to perform a *samanachan* [be of one opinion] ceremony today, expecting that those who will compete in this election will have the feeling that they are like brothers and sisters towards each other, like fellow citizens, and not like enemies. They should therefore not use violent means or excessive amounts of money, which would lead to an electoral culture that is not beneficial to the country. It would also not set a good example for the next generation. Therefore, the Election Commission has invited all of you to join our *samanachan* ceremony in order to create confidence that the up-coming election of Sunday, December 23, will have a warm and harmonious atmosphere. This is the electoral culture everybody hopes for.

I have been assigned by the Election Commission of Chachoengsao province to perform the duty of reading the oath to Luang Pho Putthasothorn and to the sacred things of the candidates, who compete to be members of parliament for Chachoengsao province. This will be done today simultaneously in the entire country. Regarding Chachoengsao province, we have organized the ceremony in front of the Uposatha hall of Wat Sothorn, in front of the sacred Luang Pho.

The Election Commission and the people of Chachoengsao are very pleased that all of you have come here today in order to pay respect, ask for blessing, and make your pledge. This shows your sincerity, that you are ready to volunteer to serve the nation with willingness and determination; that you are ready to be an honorable member of the House, based on knowledge, thoughts, morality, virtue, ethics, and honesty. This will make the people of the province proud. It will also bring honor to your families.

The Election Commission is confident that the majority of people feel that votes should be gained by clean means, without using various ways of vote buying and vote selling by some groups or some *phuak* [cliques].

Now the appropriate time has come to ask all of you to resolve to speak your oath together after me as follows.

The reasons for which the ECT thought that such ceremonies could alter the established political relationships in the provinces, change the necessities of hard-fought election campaigns, and make candidates consider their oaths when making campaign decisions between November 17 and December 22 remain its secret. Maybe, *The Na-*

tion, quoted at the beginning of this section, was right when it called the ECT's program "unprofessional and desperate."

After the PEC member had finished, the candidates (and all others) got up from their seats and read the oath, holding a set of flowers and joss sticks between the palms of their hands. This is shown in picture 8. Somehow, Khun Phanee of Phuae Phaendin party did not have the text with her, so she glanced over to her competitor Khun Chatchawal of the Democrats to read the oath. Again, here is a rough translation. As for the ritual at the Emerald Buddha, *The Nation's* editorial mentioned above said, "Conspicuously absent was the part that says calamity will befall those who fail to make good on their promises, which has always been part of such ritual oath-taking in this country." This part was certainly present in the oath as spoken in Chachoengsao.



Picture 8: The subjects of the oath-taking ceremony. In yellow jackets from right to left are Phanee Jarusombat (Phuea Phaendin), Chatchawal Thuamcharoen, and Chavalit Charoenpon (both Democrat party).

"My Oath

on entering the electoral competition for Members of Parliament, province of Chachoengsao, Sunday, December 23, 2007.

I Political party
election candidate for member of the House of Representatives, Chachoengsao province, want to pledge to Luang Pho Sothorn, all sacred things, the guardian angels, both above and below, the ruler of the world of the dead, and the guardian angel of Siam (*phra sayam thewathirat*),

who protects our country, that I will take part in the electoral competition and volunteer to serve the country with honesty, without using money to buy votes, without using illegal means, thereby making the competition proceed with honesty and fairness, and getting good people for the country.

If I do not act according to my oath, directly or indirectly, I and my family should meet with misery and disaster. We should not find happiness in our lives. If I do good and act according to my oath, then all the sacred things mentioned will bless me and my family for happiness, prosperity, being free from illness and all catastrophes, and for having a long life.”⁵⁵

One might well ask how the oath could be binding as it was an essentially forced and ritualistic statement, probably without inner conviction by the speakers. One might also ask why the candidates’ spouses and even their children should suffer from their actions. In any case, after the candidates had finished their oaths, they proceeded to a table with two gold-colored trays to place their flowers (red lotus) and a gold-colored pot filled with sand for the joss sticks. Most candidates rushed to the table, while the Chaisaengs waited in the background to be alone when paying respect. Normally, a full set of ritualistic symbols includes a candle. However, this offering was omitted from the ceremony, very probably for practical purposes, although the schedule still mentioned that candles would be provided along with flowers and joss sticks.

As the last step of the ritual, the candidates of each of the two constituencies put their signatures to the right of their printed names on a billboard that also had the oath printed on it. This was similar to what had been done at the ceremony in Ko Khanun briefly described above. Later, these billboards were taken away and erected on the right-hand side of the old building of the provincial hall, I assume as some sort of reminder to the people and the candidates of what the latter had “promised.”

While the ceremony was still being performed, a group of protestors against an expansion of the coal-fired Bang Pakong power plant appeared and put up a number of banners and protest signs. Protesters stationed themselves at both sides of the exit, so candidates had to pass through them. At the end of the official proceedings, protestors distributed brown envelopes with documents to each candidate. While Wuthipong Chaisaeng listlessly and without a word passed through the protestors, one of the Democrat party’s candidates, Phatcharakriengchai Singhanat, raised his fist and exclaimed that they should not worry, because the Democrats would solve their problems. He had angered the officials on registration day by paying his fee with 250 20-

baht notes, which slightly slowed down the procedure. Phatcharakriengchai had also added some handwritten lines to the oath which he read in a very loud voice after all the others had finished the prepared text, at the end raising up his right hand with the joss sticks. *Phuchatkan* (Manager) newspaper reported this incident (November 19, 2007). The article said, “at the end of the oath, while some former MPs looked on sternly, [he] shouted without fear of the former MPs and the other candidates, who were standing around him, an additional curse on candidates and their families who bought votes.” Later, Phatcharakriengchai proudly distributed photocopies of this article to people waiting to be served in the provincial hall, where I also got my copy while he was passing me on his way to a meeting called by the PEC.

The roles of ECT and PEC in election advertising

The ECT has two roles in election advertising. The first concerns the regulation of what election candidates and their parties can or cannot do in their campaigns. The second is about actively advertising the election to the voters, be it via the distribution of printed material, advertisements in newspapers, spots on radio and television, or the organization of election rallies for candidates, the erection of billboards, and the organization of walk rallies. In both roles, the ECT in Bangkok acts as policymaker and funds-provider, while the PECs carry out the directives issued and projects devised by the ECT. In this sense, the provincial election commissions and their staff are in the same position as any other subordinate unit in the centralized Thai state structure that gives local units little room for maneuver, even if they have good reasons to believe that a measure or project is nonsensical and the concomitant use of taxpayers’ money wasteful. I will first deal with the regulatory role and then turn to describe some advertising activities at the provincial level.

Regulating the election campaign

On October 24, 2007, the ECT issued both a regulation on electioneering and an announcement concerning principles of state support for the election.⁵⁶ They caused an uproar, with the *Bangkok Post* (October 29, 2007) stating in an editorial, “The EC want to limit political campaigning by a dictatorship of the bureaucracy ... the EC’s list of rules for the media would be appalling under martial law, let alone for a democ-

atic election campaign.” Observers got the impression that the ECT, instead of facilitating a democratic election campaign, wanted to implement a state-centered approach to advertising and thus take over the campaigns from the political parties and their candidates. However, the ECT had issued the regulation and announcement based on the 2007 constitution and the new election act.

Article 145 of the 1997 constitution said that the ECT “shall have the following powers and duties,” continuing in number 1 with the general stipulation, “to issue notifications determining all activities necessary for the execution” of the election act, etc. While article 236 of the 2007 constitution repeated the phrase “shall have the following powers and duties,” its number 1 was much more concrete and thus mandated the ECT to issue a number of regulations. It read,

(1) to issue notifications [announcements, *prakat*] or regulations [*rapiap*] determining all acts necessary for the execution of the laws referred to in section 235 paragraph two [election act, etc.] including regulations relating to a launching of election campaigns and any act of political parties, candidates and persons having the right to vote to proceed in an honest and fair manner and determining rules to be complied by [the] state in giving support of fair [equal] election and equal opportunity in campaigning⁵⁷

This passage reflected the widespread view held by many members of the Bangkok elite that elections, especially in the provinces, were dominated by “money politics.” Thus, the drafters aimed to create a level playing field for all candidates. Moreover, the CDA and NLA also changed article 50 of the pre-coup version of the election law. That article had merely prohibited candidates, parties, or any other person from placing election posters or cutouts “at public places owned by the state” (without permission according to article 49, no. 1). Article 60 of the new election act added, “or at private places.” This effectively banned any billboards at intersections, banners hanging from the ceilings of houses, or posters in shop houses and on walls, even if the owners would have agreed to post them there by using their constitutional democratic right as citizens to express their political opinions and their electoral support for a particular candidate or political party. The article also prohibited the placing of posters and cutouts larger and in greater numbers than the ECT had determined.

Therefore, the ECT certainly had to act in order to follow the constitution and the election law. However, in its bureaucratic zeal, it went a somewhat too far. Candi-

dates could no longer hold the customary colorful parades on registration day. Their posters (*prakat*)⁵⁸ could not exceed 30x42 centimeters, while cutouts (*phaenpai*)⁵⁹ were not allowed to be bigger than 130x235 centimeters. Both had to be placed at public places that belonged to or were especially arranged for by state agencies. The number of posters was limited to ten times the number of polling stations in a given constituency, cutouts to five times the number. Candidates and political parties were not allowed to hold any election rallies, though they could participate in PEC-organized electioneering events (twice in each district), in which all candidates and parties were supposed to take part. Pick-up trucks could be used as campaign vehicles, but the number of sign boards attached to them was limited to two and to a size not exceeding that determined by the ECT. Moreover, candidates were not permitted to “modify these trucks to serve as stages for electioneering.”⁶⁰ Candidates and parties could not rent advertising time on radio or television. Instead, they had to submit 30-second (candidates) and 10-minute (party) spots to the ECT for broadcast a number of times on the state’s mass media. Television and radio stations were not allowed to broadcast programs with only certain selected candidates, nor were candidates allowed to accept any invitations from such stations that did not include all other candidates.⁶¹

It took the ECT only six days to react on the unified public rejection⁶² of its newly introduced restrictions and, on October 30, 2007, issue amendments to both the regulation and the announcement.⁶³ From then on, radio and television stations were allowed to use their professional discretion and ethics in deciding whom they should invite to their programs. Candidates no longer had to worry that they would be red-carded by the ECT when they appeared alone or with only a few other candidates on radio or TV programs, or at any other events organized to promote the election and provide voters with information for their electoral decision making.⁶⁴ The ECT now graciously allowed candidates and political parties to organize their own election rallies, and make speeches from advertising pick-up trucks. Finally, registration day was not deprived of one of its core cultural traditions—parades, music, dances, and voters cheering their favorites.

All these restrictions introduced by the ECT seemed to reflect an overwhelming degree of narrow-mindedness, rather than a reasonable approach to regulating the election campaign in the interest of fairness, honesty, and equality. The ECT also seemed to have lost sight of the fact that elections were an activity amongst the citi-

zens, including the politicians, to determine who of them should govern the country. In this context, the ECT merely had the role of a custodian and facilitator of the citizens' genuine and constitutional political rights. It was decidedly not in the position of a superior of the citizens, a role the ECT probably assigned to itself, which was partly based on the prevailing political climate but also had legal, personal, organizational, and cultural roots.

The other restrictions mentioned remained in place. For example, when the PEC, on November 23, 2007, held its meeting to confirm the candidacies and provide campaign information to the candidates (Wuthipong and Thitima Chaisaeng and Pichet Tancharoen did not turn up),⁶⁵ Democrat candidate Chatchawal Thuamcharoen asked whether he could have 35 seconds for his audio clip to be broadcast on local radio stations. When the PEC's election director approved the 35 seconds, the provincial public relations officer (*prachasamphan changwat*) intervened by saying that the ECT regulation specifically limited the spots to 30 seconds, not longer. Moreover, the PEC had to check the content of the spots before they were to be aired.⁶⁶ This would be done in a meeting on November 30. Therefore, the candidates were obliged to submit their tapes no later than November 28, 1600 hours (extended from the previous deadline of November 26, which would have been only three days after this meeting).

A local cable TV station had invited all candidates to interviews. Apparently, not all candidates were enthusiastic about this opportunity. One day, I watched the channel showing the clueless host sitting there alone, looking at his watch, saying something like, "Well, yes, it seems that Khun Somchai Atsawachaisophon might not turn up in time for the interview." It had been scheduled, but he had phoned the station to say that he might not make it due to commitments to meet local leaders and voters. This is understandable since most subscribers of that TV station probably resided outside his constituency.

The ECT's new restrictions were most noticeable in Chachoengsao municipality.⁶⁷ In previous elections, posters, cutouts, and banners had been liberally placed around town. This time around, people traveling in the municipality could hardly get the impression that there was to be a general election because the town's appearance was no different than usual. According to the ECT announcement, candidates could put up cutouts only at spots determined by the respective authority, in practice the municipalities and the sub-district administrative organizations. Posters could only be put up at notice boards that had been arranged by local government authorities and

state units, such as police stations. Chachoengsao municipality had determined about eight spots where cutouts were allowed, while there were also notice boards at the municipal office and the provincial police headquarters, for example.



Picture 9: Cutouts erected at a public place designated by the TAO in *tambon* Bang Khwan, just outside Chachoengsao municipality, along the road leading to Bang Nam Prieow district. The small white sign with red writing, placed on the tree with the Pepsi ad, says that this was a place where candidates and political parties could place their cutouts. Second from left is a cutout showing Sanoh Thienthong advertising Pracharaj's party list. To his left is Chettha Thanajaro, leader of Ruam Jai Thai Chart Pattana. In center is Phichet (Phuea Phaendin), to his right are Somchai and Itthi (PPP). Rightmost are Thira and his party leader Prachai Leopairatana of Matchimathipattai.

There was no cutout of the Democrat candidates.



Picture 10: Notice boards for constituency (left) and party list (right) candidates provided by the TAO of Bang Khwan sub-district along the road leading to Bang Nam Prieow district. The board shown here has comparatively many posters put up on it. Whether many motorists would see them while passing at high speed is another question. The office of constituency 1 was located nearby in Benjamas 5 School.

In rural areas, the restrictions seemed to have been handled in a manner somewhat less strict than in the municipality.⁶⁸ Driving with the constituency director along endless rural roads, we could not help but wonder whether all the cutouts erected by Itthi and Somchai really were at places designated for that purpose, or whether the permission of the appropriate authorities had been sought, and whether the number of cutouts was within the limits set by the ECT's announcement. Itthi and Somchai also operated 33 advertising pick-up trucks roaming the streets of constituency 1 (according to the organizer of this fleet). Thus, another question was whether all this would exceed the total amount of 1.5 million baht one candidate was allowed to spend. On the other hand, Itthi and Somchai campaigned as a team, and therefore could spend a total of three million baht on their joint campaign.⁶⁹ This included only the official expenses. Any payments to vote canvassers or voters had to be done secretly.

Organizing election rallies

According to article 11 of the ECT's announcement concerning state support of the election, the PEC (in practice the constituency committees) had to organize campaign events (*wethi klang*, literally "central stage") for all candidates and political parties at least twice in every district. In the election of 2005, such *wethi klang* had to be held only once, for which 10,000 baht per time was available. In 2007, though there had to be two events, the budget remained the same, so that 5,000 baht could be spent on hiring a company to set up the stages, loudspeaker systems, and lighting. Each constituency committee had one pick-up truck that would drive around the district advertising the events. They were also supposed to be announced at the monthly meetings of village and sub-district headmen at the district offices.

In constituency 1, the first round of *wethi klang* was held in front of the district offices, while the second round took place mostly at schools. One event was organized on the premises of the Chinese association of traders at the market along canal no. 16 (*chomrom phokha talat khlong 16*) in Bang Nam Prioew district.⁷⁰ This had the advantage that the traders and their customers at the evening market were forced to hear what the candidates had to say. In constituency 2, the committee adopted a similar approach.⁷¹

These officially organized campaign events seem to have been introduced with the first Senate elections of 2000. Since candidates were not allowed to campaign, the

ECT thought it would be a good idea to organize events where candidates could introduce themselves to the voters. In theory, this might have been good idea, though it represented a bureaucratic approach and lacked an understanding of local political realities. In practice, then, the voters simply ignored these events.⁷² When this measure was also applied to the MP elections of 2005, the result was the same. On one occasion, in Ban Pho district, Wuthipong Chaisaeng was the only candidate who turned up, because his sole competitor, Chakrawan Thuamcharoen, did not want to waste his valuable campaign time. The audience consisted of about 20 people, most of them PEC staff, three cable TV people who taped the event, two or three supporters of Wuthipong who had traveled from Amphoe Mueang, with the remainder being Wuthipong's office staff. Wuthipong began his speech with the sarcastic remark that this was a strange event in that he had come to give a speech on a stage in Ban Pho to his staff who he met every day in the office.

In 2007, the situation was much the same. Just opposite the event of 2005, the constituency committee had arranged a stage for the candidates at an evening market. This time, as at almost all other events, Wuthipong and Thitima did not show up. The first speakers were the Democrat candidates, followed by Phanee Jarusombat. All of them faced an audience as is shown in picture 11 below.



Picture 11: The audience when Phanee Jarusombat, Phuea Phaendin party, was speaking on the *wethi klang* organized by the constituency committee at the weekly market near the office of Ban Pho district on December 7, 2007. The man in yellow polo shirt and dark jacket is a party-list candidate of the Farmer's Network of Thailand party. After a while, a layer of dust covered the chairs, because the venue was right next to the main road that was under repair. Cars and trucks passed all the time, thereby raising a lot of dust that settled on the chairs.

At other *wethi klang*, the situation was much the same. If there were 30 or 40 listeners, most of them would be followers of one or more candidates. A listener might only stay to hear his or her favorite candidate and then leave. At the event at the evening market near canal 16 of Bang Nam Prioew district, on December 6, the empty chairs suddenly filled when it was time for Itthi and Somchai to get on stage. In fact, on November 23, at a meeting for the candidates at the PEC, Itthi had already remarked that the villagers had never given these *wethis* any attention. He did not know why not. After he had ended his speech, the audience got up and left, leaving the subsequent speakers to face rows of empty chairs while talking about their policies.

On November 28, at the *wethi klang* on the field in front of the Khlong Khuean district office, the 36 chairs provided (indicating the modest expectations of the organizers) were still largely unoccupied when the constituency director assembled the speakers on stage to talk about the procedure. Phatcharakriengchai Singhanat, a candidate of the Democrat party, complained with an angry face that they would only speak to the other candidates and the cars parked on the field. This was a waste of both time and the ECT's money. The constituency committee had done far too little public relations. The director promised that, next time, they would also use the community radio stations. Similar to what would happen at canal 16, as soon as Itthi and Somchai went on stage, 20 people who had waited in the back of the field moved forward to sit on the chairs. As is customary at such events, they had prepared yellow flower garlands to hang around the candidates' necks.

Things got worse on November 29 at the *wethi klang* in front of the district office of Ratchasan. The chairperson of the constituency committee, its director, and four members attended. All the while as we were waiting to start, the loudspeaker system played the ECT tape warning against vote buying and praising the ECT for being "*sucharit prongsai lae thiangtham*" (honest, transparent, and impartial).⁷³ The district office had arranged for 35 chairs on the asphalted sports ground in front of the permanent stage. At 1730 hours, only three candidates had registered, specifically one from Ruam Jai Thai Chart Pattana, one from Farmer's Network of Thailand, and the Democrats' Phatcharakriengchai. The latter then left in his car, and the Ruam Jai Thai candidate was nowhere to be seen. At 1745 hours, the PPP's Somchai and Itthi arrived. Chalee Charoensuk of the Democrats also showed up. Still missing was an audience. Eventually, the constituency director called the candidates on stage to consult

with them about the situation (see picture 16), and they agreed to cancel this *wethi klang* because nobody had come to listen to the candidates' speeches. A sole PAO assembly member from this district sat on a chair. After this non-event had already been closed, two investigators from the PEC office arrived in their car, because all events were supposed not only to be taped by the police but also to be observed by one or two members of the PEC office. While driving up to the venue, they had wondered what was happening and thought the stage was being prepared. In fact, the loud-speaker and lighting systems were being dismantled. Thus, they had come all the way from the provincial hall only to find that there was nothing to observe.

Something similar almost happened when the committee of constituency 2 conducted its final *wethi klang* on December 19. They had arranged for 170 chairs in front of *sala thai*, opposite the provincial hall. At 1700 hours, neither a single candidate nor a single listener were there. One hour later (1800 hours was the planned starting time for these events) still nobody had shown up. Meanwhile, in *sala thai*, around 120 women exercised aerobics. Many people used the surroundings fields for jogging and playing football. There even was a remote-controlled airplane. At 1820 hours, there were still only the officials waiting for the candidates and an audience (according to procedure, the committee would close the stage if nobody had turned up at 1900 hours). At this point, I saw three women from the Democrats distribute election material to the women who had just finished their aerobics exercise. Fifteen minutes later, Chavalit arrived, and five minutes later, a Farmer's Network candidate appeared. Chavalit started his speech at 1850, while there were 22 listeners, some of whom were his campaign workers. Chavalit told the "audience" that Chatchawal was still on his way to this place.

While Chakrawan and Chavalit made an effort to attend most events, and Phanee often turned up also, Wuthipong and Thitima seemed to have boycotted these *wethi klang* (I heard that they had attended one in Bang Pakong district). In constituency 2, Phichet Tancharoen attended the first event but did not dare go on stage. For the second event, the constituency director had encouraged him to say a few words about his personal history. Afterwards, Phichet disappeared from this official activity,⁷⁴ leaving the field to Somchai, Itthi, Chalee, and the Farmer's Network candidates.

In sum, these *wethi klang* were rather pathetic events. Importantly, it is altogether unreasonable to assume that they had any even remotely detectable effect on forming voters' preferences and thus influencing their behavior at the ballot boxes.

Many experienced PEC staff and the constituency personnel certainly realized that all this was a bureaucratically determined exercise in the waste of time and money. Considering that Thailand had around 800 districts, each of which received 10,000 baht, the total budget was around 80 million baht. Given the experience over the years, the ECT should certainly have considered whether it would like to be held responsible for this obvious waste of taxpayers' money.

Urging the voters to cast their ballots

On December 14, 2007, the PEC organized two events that aimed at urging people to cast their votes on election day. In the morning, around 600 students gathered on the square between the provincial hall and *sala thai* for the opening ceremony of two election campaign walks (*toen ronnarong kanlueaktang*). The PEC had invited the provincial governor to open the event from 0900 to 0909 hours.⁷⁵ As usual in such bureaucratic settings, the chairperson of the PEC first formally reported to the governor about the activity that he was presiding over. Afterwards, the provincial governor gave his remarks, which remained in the confines of formal clichés. As the formal act of opening the campaign walk, he banged a gong three times.

Obviously, one might ask why the PEC had thought that it was necessary to invite the governor to open its event. After all, the ECT (and thus its PECs) is an independent constitutional organization outside the central state's executive, including its provincial branches, which are headed by governors residing in the provincial halls. Nevertheless, the PEC's offices are located in the old provincial hall, and the commissioners and the office staff are all well embedded in the provincial-level civil service culture. From this perspective, the governor is the highest state representative in a province, for which reason it is an honor to have him preside over one's function, and one must also give him honor. As a result, a big part of all provincial governors' work is presiding over all sorts of ceremonies, including ones in the private sector. Even nowadays, newspapers often refer to governors as "*pho mueang*" (the father of the province). In practical terms, since the governor is the head of the provincial bureaucracy, it is advantageous for the PEC to cultivate its relationship with him because it needs the local state's cooperation and active help for fulfilling its tasks.

For the campaign walk, the students were divided into two groups, walking different routes. Both groups were led by brass bands to make people come out of

their shops to see what was going on. The students carried banners provided by their schools and by the PEC. At the end of the walk, a PEC official waited with a car to collect its banners. While the second route somehow lacked a potential audience, the first passed along the town's old center, which was more populated.

It was surprising to note that the walks were not accompanied by an advertising truck, nor by teachers using megaphones to get the electoral message across (the teachers only tried to keep the students going in an orderly fashion). Moreover, the students did not distribute any information material on the election to the people, who probably could hardly read the banners carried by the students passing their shops. Therefore, the entire undertaking was a lot less effective than it could have been. As a friend noted, "This is merely ceremonial." She also produced one of the yellow caps given to her by one of the participating students. The ECT members and governor also wore the caps that sported the coup-government's logo against selling one's vote (the yellow color, then, suggested that, somehow, not selling one's vote expressed loyalty to the King). It certainly is improbable that all these tax-financed caps—supposedly also used in similar events in all other provinces—were ever worn again after these brief campaign walks.

In fact, the PEC did have information material for distribution. For example, there had been stacks of leaflets in the office informing people about the election procedure. Moreover, there were the "election manuals" that provided some more detail. If the people along the routes of the campaign walks were not the intended target voters, who were? The Pictures 12 and 13 below show these two types of information material.

In the evening, a huge stage was erected at the same place where Chaturon Chaisaeng had made his speech on December 12 (see below). The PEC's version was billed as a *luk thung* (country music) show with award-winning students from Benjamas 1 School (similar events were held at the same time all over the country).⁷⁶ However, it turned out to be more like a deafening big band show with girls and boys doing Las-Vegas style dancing in fancy costumes. This contrasted nicely with what one election commissioner complained about in his speech on stage, namely the danger western influences on Thai school children posed for Thai culture. Maybe, this was the reason why he (a retired lecturer from the local teacher's college, now called Ratchaphat University) had left the scene shortly after his speech.



Picture 12: Cover page of the election manual for voters, issued by the ECT.



Picture 13: ECT-issued leaflet with information on the election

In terms of social composition, the PEC's audience was rather similar, or perhaps of slightly lower class than that at the Chaisaeng event. About 200 people (most of whom were probably related to the students) attended the show, compared to about 400 who listened to Chaturon. The PEC had neither done any public relations for its event nor provided any chairs, for which reason the big space in front of the stage remained empty. According to a reliable source, the PEC lacked budget to organize chairs.⁷⁷ It also thought that the stone floor was suitable for sitting. The audience, though, obviously thought otherwise, thus remaining far away from the stage.

The PEC chairperson opened the show with a brief address. The program of the event referred to this part as "the PEC chairperson meets the people." His colleague mentioned above said in his speech, amongst other things, that all candidates were good, but not to the same extent. Citizens should elect MPs who were *leow noi thisut* (the least evil). Foreigners dominated the entire country, because the politicians had given it to them. Thai youngsters had adopted western habits so that Thai culture was in danger.⁷⁸ Vote buying was bad, and they should not elect those who distributed money.

While the students performed their first acts of singing and dancing, the PEC's staff and candidates from three political parties, who had responded to the PEC's invitation to briefly address the audience (all to be among the electoral losers), figured out how to arrange the scheduled five-minute statements. The Rajaphat University's public administration department had put up a banner—far from the stage and thus seen by few people—asking voters not to elect cheating and vote-buying candidates. Curiously, the headline of the text was "*prot fang ik khrang*" (please listen again). This was the infamous phrase used by the announcers on TV before they repeated the coup plotters' announcements for a second time.

According to the program, the event was to last until 2330 hours. However, I could neither stand the noise nor the silly dancing. Thus, shortly after the candidates of the Farmer Network of Thailand party, Chart Thai party, and the Democrats had made their brief empty statements, I returned home. One really had to wonder what causal hypothesis⁷⁹ had led the ECT to assume that organizing such events—and spending taxpayers money on them—could in any way reach a substantial number of voters who had not yet decided whether they would cast their ballot on election day or who were still in the process of forming their preferences.

Election candidates

The general political situation in Chachoengsao

Perhaps the single most noteworthy characteristic of national electoral politics in Chachoengsao over the past quarter century is its domination by merely four informal local political groups (*phuak*), centered on families or individuals.⁸⁰ Between 1983 and 2007, ten elections to the House (excluding the annulled contest in 2006) and three elections to the Senate were held. Altogether, 44 electoral positions were at stake (39 House seats and 5 Senate seats). Of these, the four groups managed to win 41 positions (37 House seats and 4 Senate seats). This was what Rüland, in his article on the 1988 election, referred to as “a disturbing trend toward oligarchization” and a “reduced elite circulation” in parliament.⁸¹

While these four local *phuak* (presently reduced to three) have been relatively stable over time, their affiliations with political parties (or lack of affiliation during times that this was constitutionally allowed) have been much more changeable. Members of the four groups have run under the labels of 14 political parties, including as independents in the election of 1983.⁸² Labels of political parties thus might have had comparatively little additional informational value when voters had to make their decisions, with the exception of the 2001 and 2005 elections, when Thaksin and his TRT provided highly visible data for the formation of electoral preferences (against the backdrop of the Democrat-managed fallout of the 1997 financial crisis). Party labels were certainly also important in the election of 2007, especially with regard to the differences in the constituency and the party-list votes (see tables 3 and 4 below), when the visibility of political parties was high due to the preceding political crisis. Appendix 2 provides details of the election results in Chachoengsao from 1983 to 2007.

The most durable of these four groups has certainly been that started by *nak-leng*-style Anand Chaisaeng.⁸³ Born in 1927, he was a police officer before he started his political career as a member of the municipal assembly of Chachoengsao City at the age of 31. His political career has thus spanned 50 years, in which he was appointed deputy minister of communications, of public health, and of industry.⁸⁴ From 1959 to 1967, he was a member of the municipality’s executives (*thesamontri*). He was first elected an MP in 1969 as an independent.⁸⁵ Anand was re-elected in 1975, running under the label of the Santichon party, though he did not make it in the elec-

tion of 1979. Since he made his comeback in 1983 as a candidate of the Kaona party, the Chaisaeng family has almost always been in parliament with one to three of its members. In 1986, Anand introduced his son Chaturon, who had spent some years in the jungle after October 1976, to the voters. On his first run for the House, under the banner of the Democrat party, Chaturon edged out his father by 178 votes, and so denied him reelection to parliament. Two years later, then with the Prachachon party, Chaturon received 17,336 more votes than Anand, again denying him a seat in parliament.⁸⁶



Picture 14: Anand Chaisaeng, framed by the wife of his mayor-son (right) and her sister (left). The man to the left used to be a provincial councilor and was the family's failed candidate in the Senate elections of 2000 and 2006. On December 21, 2007, they attended an election rally in support of Wuthipong and Thitima, organized by disqualified TRT board members. Chaturon was one of the main speakers.

Chaturon, running for Chavalit Yongchaiyudh's New Aspiration Party, prevailed over his father again in March 1992, but by a much narrower margin of 747 votes. In the election of September 1992, Anand tried to return to parliament by taking over Chaturon's secure candidacy in constituency 1, while moving Chaturon to constituency 2, where he was not that well known and faced tougher competition. As a result of this approach, both Anand and Chaturon failed. Three years later, Anand stayed out of the race in order to have another son, Wuthipong, get his first taste of electoral politics. While Chaturon was comfortably elected, his brother failed by a large margin. In 1996, however, this margin was already much narrower, although he still received

more than 20,000 fewer votes than Chaturon. In the same year, the Chaisaeng family managed to have Wuthipong selected as Chachoengsao's member of the Constitution Drafting Assembly, mostly using teachers from private schools as his voter base.⁸⁷ With the introduction of single member constituencies and a party-list system, Chaturon moved up to the latter, thus giving Anand his last opportunity to become an MP. He was as successful in constituency 1 as was Wuthipong in constituency 4, both running for Thaksin Shinawatra's Thai Rak Thai party.⁸⁸ Four years later, at age 78, Anand ended his active electoral career and instead fielded another of his children, daughter Thitima, in his place. She had hardly any previous political exposure or experience, but relied on the family's voter base, mainly local politicians in *tambon* administrative organizations and PAO councilors.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, Thitima easily secured victory, as did Wuthipong, and Chaturon on the party list. After the constitution of 2007 switched the electoral system back to a multi-member system, Wuthipong and Thitima ran on the same ticket in constituency 2. Both won, although Thitima received 6,761 fewer votes than her brother did. The coup-appointed Constitution Tribunal had disqualified Chaturon from this election since he had been a member of TRT's executive board before its dissolution.



Picture 15: On December 5, 2007, celebrating the King's 80th birthday, Anand was seated next to the provincial governor, indicating his social rank in Chachoengsao. To his left is Chaturon.

The Chaisaengs' political role is not limited to contesting national elections. One more of Anand's three sons, Konlayudh, has been a member of the municipal executive from 1985 to 1995. Since 1995, Konlayudh has been the mayor of Chachoengsao city.⁹⁰ He was reelected in March 2008, which means that he cannot run in the next election, because the law only allows two consecutive terms for directly elected mayors. Since that election, the municipal council includes one single opposition member belonging to the Democrat party. Moreover, the chief executive of the Provincial Administrative Organization, as well as the majority of members of the PAO council, also belongs to the Chaisaeng *phuak*. Many *tambon* and village headmen, and even civil servants, count among its members, enabling it at times to penetrate committees that are supposed to neutrally oversee national and local elections.

For about 20 years, the main competitor of the Chaisaeng family used to be the group led by *kamnan* Kraisorn Nanthamanop. He was born on July 2, 1931, four years after Anand, and received a junior secondary school education. Kraisorn used to be a *kamnan* (sub-district headman) in Phanom Sarakham district, where he was in the timber business and operated a sawmill.⁹¹ His first attempt to gain a seat in the House, as an independent in 1979, was successful. The elections of 1983 and 1986 saw him reelected as an independent and under the banner of Kao Na party, respectively. Afterwards, he apparently made way for Dr. Arthit Urairat, a wealthy businessman from Bangkok, and was instrumental in getting him elected in 1988 (Kitprachakhom party), March 1992 (Samakhitham party), September 1992 (Seritham party), and 1995 (Seritham party).

In 1983, Kraisorn came third after Anand and *nai amphoe* Thiwa Phunsombat, narrowly prevailing against Arthit Urairat. Three years later, Kraisorn beat Chaturon Chaisaeng. In 1988, Chaturon came first against Arthit, while the result of the 1992 election (March) was the other way round. This election turned somewhat nasty with a key canvasser, and municipal councilor, of Arthit being assassinated in his car in broad daylight near the municipal office and near Arthit's office. They just had a talk, in which the victim had reportedly informed Arthit of a threatening phone call, in which somebody said, "Watch out you bastard, don't ever try to penetrate [another political faction's] stronghold" (*The Nation*, February 7, 1992). This incident was briefly used by Arthit in his campaign. At a rally, Anand Chaisaeng countered accusations that he had had his hand in this killing with the words, "I haven't done it at all. I'm not as mad as this. Don't make this a campaign issue."⁹²

The May events of 1992 preceded the second election of that year. Arthit, as Speaker of the House, refused to propose another Samakhitham politician as the prime minister to succeed disgraced Suchinda Kraprayoon. Instead, he put the name of Anand Panyarachun to the King for appointment. Not only was Arthit reelected in the September contest, but even his running mate, an unknown former female subordinate of his, was able to surpass mighty Anand Chaisaeng by 2,083 votes. After the election of 1995, in which Arthit came second to Chaturon, he withdrew from politics in Chachoengsao, reportedly because elections had become too expensive. This opened the way for a return of *kamnan* Kraisorn in 1996 with the Democrat party (in that election, Arthit won a seat in Bangkok for the Democrats), which was immediately successful, although he came only second to Chaturon.

For the first SMC elections, in January 2001, Kraisorn moved to the Democrats' party list. He was placed in position 47, which left him empty-handed because the party got only 31 party list seats. Even worse was what happened with his son, Ekawit Nanthamanop. His father obviously had fielded him, a former mayor of a small municipality in Phanom Sarakham district, as his heir (*thayat*). However, a few days after the pictures were taken at the candidacy registration, complete with yellow garlands and raised hands indicating impending victory, Ekawit was disqualified from the race by the constituency director. In June, the Chachoengsao Provincial Court found him guilty, "of having worn the gown and insignia of Ramkhamhaeng University without having the right to do so in order to produce pictures to be attached to his graduation certificate. Ekawit forged this BA diploma in law, including the signature of the university's registrar. He then submitted these forged documents to the director of the constituency election commission in order to make them believe that he fulfilled the educational conditions of registering as a candidate in the House elections."⁹³ This incident left Wuthipong Chaisaeng—who Arthit and Kraisorn had beaten in the 1995 and 1996 elections, respectively—without any serious contender in constituency 4 and ended the Nanthamanops' open role in Chachoengsao's electoral politics.

Younger-generation politicians Suchart Tancharoen (born 1958) and Itthi Sirilatthayakon (born 1954) have built two more groups. Both have followed their Chinese fathers' example and have become businessmen. They have been competitors since both of them have their base in Phanom Sarakham district, though Suchart's

stronghold extends to the districts of Sanam Chai Khet and Thatakiap. Reportedly, little love is lost between them.

Suchart entered national-level politics directly by contesting the elections of 1986. He won under the label of the Democrat party. The following seven elections saw him running under as many different parties. Due to his controversial dealings as a member of the political-cum-business “Group of 16,” he had great difficulty being accepted by any party for the 1996 elections. Suchart was saved at the last moment by the little-known “Thai” party, and became its only MP. In the year 2000, he managed to have his brother-in-law, Ros Malipon, elected as one of Chachoengsao’s two senators. Both had graduated from the College of Notre Dame in the USA. One of Suchart’s brothers, Chalermchai, was elected senator in 2006, but could not work in this position after the September 2006 coup abrogated the 1997 Constitution. The first post-coup senatorial election saw yet another Tancharoen-connected candidate elected as the province’s sole senator, Nikhom Wairatpanijj. He used to be a deputy permanent secretary of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration with very little connection to Chachoengsao. Nikhom is an uncle of Suchart Tancharoen and admitted, “that relatives in Chachoengsao [were] responsible for his late entry into politics ... Having left the province almost 40 years ago, Nikhom accepts that he owes a lot to the family’s reputation for doing business in the province.” (*Bangkok Post*, April 6, 2008).⁹⁴

At the time of this Senate election, Suchart had already been disqualified from politics for five years for having been on the board of TRT. Of course, this could not prevent the Tancharoen family from also capturing one MP seat. Phichet, another of Suchart’s brothers, achieved this feat. He is a businessperson who, until then, had not been openly involved in politics.⁹⁵ In the by-election of January 11, 2009, made necessary by the dissolution of the PPP, Chart Thai, and Matchimathipattai parties, Phichet’s 26-year old son Natchaphon, who has an MA degree from the USA, won another seat for the Tancharoen family. Since his status as a member of the Phuea Phaendin party had been unclear until shortly before the candidacy registration closed, his mother had registered her candidacy as a precaution under the Pracharaj party label. Asked whether the different party affiliations of Phichet and his wife might not confuse voters, Natchaphon said that this would not affect campaigning because people would consider the individual candidate more than his or her party (*Matichon*, December 26, 2008).

When the Democrat-led government was formed in December 2008, Phichet Tancharoen was portrayed in newspapers as a probable deputy finance minister, a position he had held briefly in an earlier government. In the end, he did not get the appointment. Instead, Suchart had his wife, who had never before appeared on the political scene, appointed as a deputy minister of education. Thus, the Tancharoen family with its informal political network in a small area of Chachoengsao has two MPs, one senator, and one deputy minister. Suchart, although formally disqualified from politics, thus remains an influential political figure in Thailand's factionalized political landscape. When the newly formed Phumchai Thai party made its public debut, Suchart shared the VIP-guest seats with other disqualified former TRT heavyweights, namely Newin Chidchob (Thaksin Shinawatra's former right-hand man, who had been instrumental in making Abhisit Vejjajiva prime minister), Suriya Jungrungkit (former secretary-general of TRT), Somsak Thepsuthin (the power behind Matchimathipattai party, which was formally led by his wife), and Sora-at Klinpra-toom.

Itthi Sirilatthayakon did not enter national politics directly. Rather, he started as a provincial councilor. When I began the field research for my dissertation in Chachoengsao in 1989, he was the chairperson of the provincial council.⁹⁶ Three years later, he won an MP seat on a ticket with Suchart, both running under the Chart Pattana (CPP) label. In the run-up to the election of 2007, my landlord, a retired civil servant in his eighties and firmly in the Chaisaeng camp, spoke very positively of Itthi, describing him as capable and knowledgeable. He had successfully studied at the faculty of political science of Chulalongkorn University when very few people in Chachoengsao would dream of doing so. In fact, my landlord said, Itthi did not want to "play politics." Many years ago, he had asked him about this, because he thought that having a degree in political science well qualified him for entering provincial politics. At that time, Itthi had only laughed for an answer. However, his father was a major trader in Phanom Sarakham district, and thus had a huge network of connections. In addition, Itthi's father had always helped people in need, thus creating a substantial *baramee*. Backed by this huge amount of "socio-political capital," as it might be called in modern academic jargon, he had pushed his son into politics. "When he started his political work," my landlord said, "Itthi had to rely on the *baramee* of his father. But not any longer, since over the years he has built up his own achievements."⁹⁷



Picture 16: Itthi Sirilatthayakon signing the attendance list on the stage at the Ratchasan district office. To his left is running mate Somchai Atsawachaisophon. The man in the yellow polo shirt is the constituency election director, Sawat Robru,⁹⁸ with Democrat candidate Chalee Charoensuk to his left. On the right hand side are the two candidates of the Farmer Network of Thailand party.

Starting as an ordinary MP, he moved up to become the secretary to the communications ministers, and later a deputy communications minister in the Chuan government. Itthi stayed with this party in his successful defenses in 1995, 1996, and 2001. For the 2005 election, he moved to TRT's party list (since CPP had merged with TRT), and thus made way for the controversial executive chairperson of the Provincial Administrative Organization (PAO), Somchai Atsawachaisophon, to take his place as constituency MP.

The reintroduction of MMC by the 2007 Constitution made Itthi return to the constituency race, running with Somchai on a PPP ticket. He lost to Phichet Tancha-roen by 9,827 votes, but came 26,054 votes ahead of Somchai. This situation indicated that Itthi had a much better standing than Somchai. Itthi is decidedly not a great orator. He comes across as an alert professional provincial politician with a down-to-earth approach to electoral politics. When I observed Itthi deliver an election speech on December 19, 2000, he stressed that he had never abandoned the people of his constituency, and never sought any benefit for himself. He also listed many of the road projects that had been completed in the district of Bang Khla due to his initiative. His conclusion was, "I do not 'play politics' (*len kanmuang*), I 'work politics' (*thamngan kanmuang*). And I don't play dirty tricks." This statement drew loud cheers from his

followers.⁹⁹ Almost seven years later, on November 26, 2007, after a PEC-organized election rally at the Ratchasan district office had to be called off due to the lack of an audience, Itthi told me on the stage that he had worked in this area for 15 years. He then grasped my hand and said in English, “Rome was not built in one day” (see picture 16). On December 2, 2008, the Constitutional Court dissolved the PPP, Chart Thai, and Matchimathipattai. Since Itthi was a member of PPP’s executive board, he was disqualified from politics for five years.

Somchai Atsawachaisophon did not run in the by-election mentioned above, probably due to the fact that he had not been able to move from PPP to its successor, Phuea Thai party (PT), in time to fulfill the condition that candidates had to be members of a party for 90 days before election day. Instead, PT fielded a person whose name I had never heard before. His number of votes (42,013) was quite respectable, but he could not beat Natchaphon Tancharoen, who received 52,192 votes (*Matichon*, January 13, 2009). The Democrats did not field any candidate in this election, probably in order not to compete with a promising candidate from a coalition party, thus depriving the voters of an important electoral option.

It seems that changes in the electoral system have had very little impact on these groups’ chances of succeeding in elections. Whether under MMC before the constitution of 1997, the 1997 constitution’s SMC and national party list system, the return to MMC complemented with regional party lists in 2007, or the move of vote counting from the polling stations to central vote-counting venues in 1997 (reversed again in 2007)—the Chaisaengs (39 years), Tancharoens (22 years), and Itthi (16 years) have remained unaffected. Since they have been in provincial politics for such a long time, building networks and bonds of patronage and mutual interests with fellow politicians, bureaucrats, and the people, it is an uphill task for any newcomer to break into these rather solid bastions of local political dominance.¹⁰⁰ Anand Chaisaeng seems to have succeeded in transferring his *baramée* to his children, or probably having them build recognition in their own right, so that they might continue their political careers after he is no longer around. Regarding Suchart, there had been some speculation that his political success largely depended on the *baramée* of his father, Vichien. However, Suchart’s career did not end with Vichien’s death a few years ago. On the contrary, his influence was sufficient to make one of his brothers, Phichet (and then even Phichet’s son), come first in the election, even beating well-embedded Itthi. As for the latter, he built his own voter base on the respect that his father had earned.

It remains to be seen how he will react on his disqualification from politics for five years, mentioned above.

It has been a while since other candidates got through to the House of Representatives, such as Thiwa Phunsombat in 1983 (independent) and 1988 (Muanchon party), and Chakkraphan Thattiyakun in 1986 (Kaona party) and 1992 (Samakhitham party). *Nai amphoe* Thiwa, as a former chief district officer in the area, had his own group of supporters. His final and unsuccessful run for the House, at age 71, was in 1992 for the New Aspiration party. I met him after that election in front of his campaign office while he was climbing into his van. Before he closed the sliding door, he said to me, “You can’t fight money.” In 2001 and 2005, his son Chaivasith tried his luck by running as the “son of *nai amphoe* Thiwa,” but was badly beaten, taking only 8,685 votes for the Democrats in 2001 and 10,777 votes for Mahachon four years later. After that second election, I asked a soldier who had worked for Chaivasith as a bodyguard what he would recommend his boss do; his answer was, “Stop it.” That was what Chaivasith did. Chakkraphan, the owner of a noodle factory and a lawyer (with a BA from Thammasat University), was a provincial councilor before he became an MP. Reportedly, he had been supported by *kamnan* Kraisorn.¹⁰¹ His party affiliations reflected this. Thus, in 1995, he ran under the same party as Arthit (Seri-tham), while in 1996 he followed Kraisorn to the Democrats. However, in his final failed attempt in 2001, his party of choice was TRT. Itthi, running under the Chart Pattana label, soundly beat Chakkraphan with 34,879 to 18,107 votes.

Since 2001 and 2005, Chakrawan Thuamcharoen (previously a lecturer at the private Rangsit University, which is owned by Arthit Urairat) and Chalee Charoensuk (a businessperson and member of the Chachoengsao Chamber of Commerce), respectively, have competed against the established office holders. While Chalee has always been with the Democrat party, once heading its Chachoengsao branch, Chakrawan Thuamcharoen started as a member of the Ratsadorn party. With the election of 2005, he moved in with the Democrats. Chakrawan’s first result against Wuthipong Chaisaeng in constituency 4 was 18,207 votes, that is, 23,600 less than Wuthipong. Even though Chakrawan increased his vote total to 30,439 in the 2005 election, the difference persisted, because Wuthipong benefited from “Thaksin-fever” and increased his vote take from 41,807 to 52,671 votes. In 2007, with the MMC system in place, the gap favoring Wuthipong remained the same, although the voters preferred the Democrat party to PPP on the party-list ballot (70,143 to 60,420). Chalee’s results show a

similar trend.¹⁰² His running mate, Phatcharakriengchai Singhanat, received many fewer votes than Chalee did, and might not run again in future elections. Chakrawan was paired with Chavalit Charoenpon, a medical doctor, who had had a reasonable result in the 2006 Senate election and joined the Democrats just in time for the House contest. Though he received almost as many votes as Chakrawan, it remains to be seen whether he will stay in electoral politics, or continue to affiliate himself with the Democrats.

In sum, the Democrat party's candidates Chakrawan, Chalee, and Chavalit—who do not represent a collective party-oriented approach to provincial and national politics but rather use the party's label for their individual political ambitions—have received very respectable responses from the voters in Chachoengsao over the years.¹⁰³ However, there is probably little chance that they will be in a position to vie for constituency seats anytime soon. The results certainly show that there is a considerable and stable pool of voters who are not included in the established candidates' networks and are thus willing to cast their votes for alternative candidates, especially ones who have made themselves known over some years and run under the banner of a well-known political party, such as the Democrats.¹⁰⁴ Yet, this voter pool might not be sufficient to put these candidates in a position to overtake the dominant candidates, who rely on long-term networking with local government officials and vote canvassers (*hua khanaen*), and who probably engage in vote buying in order to tie voters to their camps.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, since the parties of the latter kind of candidates are normally in power, they can channel resources to Chachoengsao and thereby solidify their advantages, while the Democrats usually have little to offer.¹⁰⁶ It will thus be interesting to see whether having the Democrat party's leader, Abhisit Vejjajiva, as the prime minister of a coalition government (that includes the Tancharoens but excludes the Chaisaengs) will benefit the party's candidates in Chachoengsao.

Phanee Jarusombat, a new face in Chachoengsao's electoral politics, received more votes than did the Democrats' candidates. She ran as an ad-hoc MP candidate after winning election to the Senate that was abolished by the military coup group. She is the sister of Phinit Jarusombat, a leader of the Phuea Phaendin party, who unsuccessfully ran for a House seat in Chachoengsao in the 1986 and 1988 elections. Relying on more traditional and short-term means of generating votes than the Democrat candidates, she still failed to make an inroad into the Chaisaengs' stronghold of Amphoe Mueang and was thus beaten by both Wuthipong and Thitima. It remains

to be seen whether she will want to put in the hard work, as well as the money, to create a better starting position for the next election, whenever it will come. Phanee might well be serious judging from the fact that she was appointed the secretary to the minister of industry (which is a paid political position) in the Democrat-led coalition government (*Post Today*, January 7, 2009).

In sum, politics in Chachoengsao, as in most of Thailand's other provinces, remains particularistic, personal, secretive, and exclusive rather than being generalized, democratic, and public with inclusive structures. Voters might well receive political information via the mass media and other means, process that information in communications amongst themselves, form political opinions, and express their preferences, to a lesser or greater extent, freely in elections. Yet, this will not provide them access to the processes of politics and political recruitment—and thus to the formation of the options that are presented to voters at election time—in their immediate geographical environments. This situation in the provinces will continue to be one major factor in holding back the development of democracy at the national level. It will also continue to provide academic and other critics, mainly in Bangkok, with continued food for political criticism and despair.

The situation in the election of December 2007

The “hottest” new-face candidate in the 2007 MP election certainly was Phanee Jaru-sombat, running in constituency 2. As a political newcomer, she had managed the remarkable feat of collecting the rather incredible number of 120,586 votes in the 2006 Senate election. The second-ranked winner, Chaloemchai Tancharoen, received a mere 51,199 votes. Phanee won by large margins in all districts, except in the Tancharoen strongholds of Thatakiap and Sanam Chai Khet districts, where Chaloemchai came first.¹⁰⁷ Given the strict limits of what candidates officially and openly could do in their introductory activities, it was not obvious why such a huge number of voters in all districts of the province should have decided to vote for Phanee, solely based on the very few pieces of information candidates were allowed to provide to the voters for their decision-making. Her election victory seemed like overkill—in the first Senate election of 2000, the winning candidates received 75,080 and 64,848 votes,¹⁰⁸ respectively (25.2 and 21.7 percent of the total number of votes, while Phanee raked up a whopping 48.0 percent of the total).

According to a competitor from the Democrats, Phanee had started her campaign for the Senate about one year before the election by building up a network of *hua khanaen* (vote canvassers). A day earlier, I had talked with a member of a constituency committee who had attributed her success plainly to a lot of vote buying. When I then made this suggestion to the competitor, he only smiled and said that he could not answer this question. However, he admitted that vote canvassers would cost money. He also accepted that she was a hard-working person. To show that he had no bad feelings towards her, he said that she could even be his relative. The Democrats' campaign, he added, would be honest. He expected Phanee to take one of the two seats in constituency 2. Again, one day later, a reporter sounded me out concerning my assessment of the electoral situation in constituency 2. I took that occasion to ask this reporter about Phanee's result in the Senate election. He confirmed that Phanee had used a lot of money—"like the other candidates," he added—in the Senate campaign, and that she had not previously been involved in politics. In fact, he himself, when he was still the deputy executive of a TAO, had helped Phanee in her campaign. Previously, he had also helped Thitima Chaisaeng, because she was *run diawkun* (in the same class in school). Even earlier, he had campaigned for Arthit Urairat, whose network, he said, was the same as that of *kamnan* Kraisorn.

Stories of the use of money by Phanee persisted. On November 29, 2007, *Siam Rath* printed an article that said that it was important to note that a large number of vote canvassers (from a different camp) had defected to Phanee. Therefore, Thitima Chaisaeng had to carry a heavy burden in trying to keep her seat. When I asked a Democrat candidate from constituency 1 about these movements, he said, "She *dulae di kwa ngoen pen phra chao* (looked after her vote canvassers better; money is god.)." At a *wethi klang* in Ban Pho district, a local political observer was of the opinion that Phanee was *phrom thisut* (best prepared) in three respects, "First, personally [she has a good personality and works hard], second *hua khanaen* [local-level vote canvassers], and third *sapsin* [money]." On my incentive, he confirmed the phrase "*dulae di*."

One day, on my way back from the market in the municipality, I talked to an old acquaintance, a Chinese grocery store owner. He also saw Phanee as being the most promising candidate for one of the two seats in constituency 2. When asked the reasons for her success, he smiled and said, "I can't answer that." After a brief pause, he added, "*Ko me patchai* [Well, there are causes, or factors.]," to which I said, "*Pat-chai ko sap[sin]*." On this, he responded with a recognizing smile that expressed

something like “That’s it.” As for the reason for Phanee’s candidacy to the Senate and then the House, he did not see them in Phanee herself, but rather in the wishes of Phinit Jarusombat, her brother. He might just wanted to take revenge on the Chaisaengs for his two losses many years ago [1986, 1988], before he moved to the Northeast. Now that Phinit was rich, he could try again.¹⁰⁹

Obviously, political observers would not stray as far from the path of reality to assume that the policies of Phanee’s Phuea Phaendin party would give her a decisive electoral advantage. After all, that party was new and thus unknown. Moreover, Phanee personally was also new with no local or national political track record. Therefore, neither her party label nor her identity were supposed to provide voters with the information needed to make an electoral decision. The factors that remained as explanations for political observers were the traditional ones—*hua khanaen* and vote buying. Since Phanee’s electoral success in the Senate elections was so phenomenal, and the rumors about her election methods so persistent, most observers could not help but think that she was assured to win one of the seats in constituency 2. A few weeks before the election, the assessment by *Krungthep Thurakit* (November 15, 2007) saw Phanee leading Wuthipong. On December 11, a close friend told me that people in the coffee shops thought that Phanee should get elected, followed by Wuthipong, and Chavalit. On the same day, *Matichon* published an assessment that saw Phanee and Thitima as winners. Thus, Phanee really was a sure bet, while there was some disagreement as to who would come behind her. She certainly had brought more life to this election than otherwise would have been possible.

However, this brought a considerable degree of uncertainty to the Chaisaeng family. After all, without Phanee, Wuthipong and Thitima would have had an easy ride into the new House. A reliable rumor had it that the family was so impressed by Phanee’s work, that they had actually wanted to field only Wuthipong as a serious candidate. However, Thitima had not yielded, and so they competed against Phanee with the aim of winning both seats—and were successful (see below).

The situation in constituency 1 was less exciting, although Suchart Tancharoen had to field his brother, and Itthi returned from TRT’s party list, and thus had to run with ex-TRT MP Somchai against Phichet. Only two could get through, and the weakest link clearly appeared to be Somchai. On December 11, the director of constituency 1 told me that, according to villagers he had spoken to, Phichet had been working hard to make inroads and might probably even be the front-runner. Amongst

Itthi and Somchai, he said, “Itthi has more *phasi*” (upper hand, advantage). On the same day, *Matichon*’s assessment saw Itthi and Somchai as winners. One day later, the chairperson of the advance voting committee in that constituency opined that Itthi and Phichet would probably win constituency 1. The latter could not *tok* (fail) because of Suchart. Suchart Tancharoen had lost little power with the death of his father because he had his own achievements and a lot of money. Electoral success was dependent on money for *hua khanaen* and vote buying. On December 15, 2007, only eight days before the election, the assessment of *Krungthep Thurakit* newspaper saw Phichet leading Itthi.¹¹⁰ As it turned out, *Krungthep Thurakit* was right in its prediction (see below).

Up to this point, the election campaign for national political office might look remarkably apolitical. It all seemed to be about the local personal networks and money of provincial-level politicians, rather than about questions such as which party had the better policies or a leader who was more suitable to occupy the position of prime minister. The candidates’ basic electoral organization confirmed this impression. Their offices, even their campaign offices, were almost invariably not in public spaces but rather in their private houses. This was the case with Chakrawan, Phanee, Itthi, Somchai, Thitima and Wuthipong, Phichet, Chalee and Phatcharakriengchai. Even the so-called Democrat branch office was located in the private house of Chalee. In other words, at the provincial level, politics largely was a private matter of the politicians. Their position as politicians and candidates was not really separate from their private households, but instead was part of their households’ activities. These offices thus did not have anything to do with the political parties under which the candidates ran. Rather, the parties made use of their candidates’ private resources—offices, support networks, canvassers, money—to gain representatives in parliament (it is difficult to assess how much of the candidates’ expenses were advanced or refunded by their parties and/or factions). Moreover, the candidates running under certain political parties often did not campaign together, or even under a unified strategy. Even the four Democrat candidates ran their own personal campaigns. Itthi and Somchai campaigned together because they were in the same clique. Thitima and Wuthipong could campaign together because they were siblings. However, one must also keep in mind that the MMC were much larger than the SMC, and that the run-up to the election was rather short. Thus, a certain amount of division of labor was necessary.

The political parties certainly came into play with the printed election material. For example, the Democrats' candidates had their party's popular leader, Abhisit Vejjajiva, figure prominently in their election brochure (see picture 17 below) and small introductory cards (*bat lek*).¹¹¹ Abhisit also appeared on Chakrawan's and Chavalit's advertising pick-up trucks. Finally, they distributed an eight-page special edition of the Democrat's newspaper, featuring Abhisit, his achievements, and ideas.¹¹² Phanee had attached the party's leaflet to her personal one. The Chaisaengs' separate brochures for Thitima and Wuthipong did not hide the PPP at all (though they did not show Samak Sundaravej), and even listed the party's main policies. However, the brochures' main content was pictures and statements about the candidates' individual achievements. Itthi and Somchai's joint leaflet listed PPP's policies in its centerfold.

Some more political content was presented at the *wethi klang* described above, although it only reached a tiny faction of the voters. Here are some admittedly rough notes of the candidates' speeches, jotted down at the events.

Chalee Charoensuk (Democrats, constituency 1) On November 26, 2007, Chalee went on stage in Khlong Khuean district. He mentioned the good achievements of Kraisaak Choonhavan, the child of Chartchai Choonhavan, who stood on the party list, and added that the party also had Somkiat Phongpaiboon, who was knowledgeable and capable.¹¹³ Chalee talked for quite some time about the party list, in the context of which he mentioned Abhisit and the formation of government. If Abhisit were to lead the government, then the Democrats' policies, free education for example, would be implemented. The Democrats would also tackle rising oil prices and the problems in the South. In this respect, he had to congratulate the Surayud government, because there had been fewer incidents in the South and many insurgents had been arrested. Chalee was a rather unstructured speaker who seemed to form his statements ad hoc at the events. His style was very soft-spoken and lame.

Phatcharakriengchai Singhanat (Democrats, constituency 1) On December 6, 2007, Phatcharakriengchai went on stage in Bang Nam Prioew's market at canal no. 16. He pointed out that before he joined the police he had been in army, navy, and air force. He claimed he wanted to tell people what he would do for them when in parliament—but then he said little about this. Phatcharakriengchai also mentioned Cha-

lee, who he called “*nong Chalee*” (younger brother Chalee), and that voters should elect numbers three and four. The Democrats had policies that were *naeona* (front line) and *mankhong* (stable, firm), for example the 99-day program in case they were elected. Nevertheless, he did not mention any details about that action program, which was the Democrat’s main policy-oriented selling point (besides having Abhisit as the leadership alternative to PPP’s Samak). Phatcharakriengchai said that he had been in the People’s Alliance for Democracy (PAD) in order to topple the *thorarat* (the tyrant, meaning TRT’s Thaksin Shinawatra). He had done everything together with Alongkorn [Polabutr] and Thavorn [Seniam] (two Democrat MPs who had persistently attacked Thaksin on many fronts).



Picture 17: Election brochure of Chavalit Charoenpon and Chakrawan Thuamcharoen, with Abhisit Vejjajiva, the chairperson of the Democrat party.

In 2005, he had given the ECT 24 tapes that showed election violations in Chachoengsao. Although the provincial police had told him that this was sufficient for issuing red cards (supposedly to Wuthipong, Thitima, Suchart, and Somchai), Wassana [Phoemlarp, the ECT’s chairperson at that time] had rejected everything.¹¹⁴ In the pre-

sent election, he asserted, *hua khanaen* had received 10,000 baht per head, while voters were being paid between 500 and 1,000 baht. Already in the PEC's meeting with the MP candidates on November 23, this candidate had claimed that money had been distributed like *hima tok* (falling snow) at the rate of 500 baht per head. There had been meetings of local governments as well as *kamnan* and village headmen [with the candidates in order to organize canvassing activities, including vote buying]. He wanted *khwamchua* (badness, evil) to disappear from Chachoengsao.

It was not easy to take this candidate seriously. He cultivated a breathless, barking, and incoherent style of speech that sometimes amused the audience. Even the chairperson of the Democrats' branch committee in Chachoengsao said that Phatcharakriengchai would receive more votes if he just kept his mouth shut.

Itthi Sirilatthayakon (PPP, constituency 1) In Khlong Khuean district, almost all of Itthi's talk was about road construction and his achievements in this area. When he had started his work as a politician, he pointed out, there had been many red *lukrang* (gravel) roads and people were all red when they had traveled on them. He had taken care that these gravel roads were replaced with asphalted ones. Moreover, he had also pushed for the improvement of water provision, and he had 20 bridges improved. This had been possible because the people in Khlong Khuen had cooperated with him. There had been no parliament for one year [after the coup]. Still, he had talked with the people, although he had no longer been their formal representative, but as *phak phuak talot* (their everlasting clique). He had been with them for 15 years, and he and Somchai had helped them as if they were relatives. Moreover, if they had a sad event in their families, then he and Somchai were also sad. When they were in trouble, he was in trouble, and when they were happy, he was happy too. Itthi repeated this in Bang Nam Prioew, where he also said that going there was like visiting relatives in their homes. Such statements tried to emphasize how close he was to the people in the area.

Itthi observed that although the constituencies were now bigger, Khlong Khuen was still in the same as before, so he and Somchai could continue *rapchai* (serve) the people of the area.¹¹⁵ Nowadays, many people were interested in political parties; they would ask him under which party he would run. The People's Power party still supported the 30-baht health care program, but they would improve it. There would no longer be a "gold card"; an ID card would be sufficient. Even heart opera-

tions would be covered in the future. PPP would re-introduce the anti-drug policy, because drugs were such a big problem. The village health volunteers would get 1,000 baht per month. There would be a *phak ni* (debt moratorium) for farmers. OTOP and SML would continue, as would be the village bank program.¹¹⁶ Had he ever broken his word? He did not talk much, but he talked sincerely and acted sincerely. He confirmed that nos. 11 and 12 could start working immediately if they were elected to parliament again. People should elect both candidates so that they could again be *pak siang khong prachachon* (the voice of the people).¹¹⁷

Itthi told me that he did not always deliver the same speech at the *wethis*, except for the policies, because his achievements in the various districts were different. In Bang Nam Prioew, he did not fail to mention that he had helped people when the old wooden market had burnt down some years ago. People at *talat khlong 16*, Itthi said, remembered that he had cared for them. He had also helped build a 10-km asphalt road. Indeed, he mostly talked about what he had done in the given areas, while the PPP's policies would only cover the final five minutes of his 20-minute talks. Since Somchai was a poor speaker, he was relegated to merely making some introductory remarks before Itthi would take the microphone. Itthi at times referred to Somchai and himself as "*phuak rao*," which translates as "our clique."¹¹⁸ In sum, Itthi and Somchai's approach relied heavily on local achievements, personal reliability proven over many years of service, and closeness to the voters in local areas. National-level events and policies played a subordinate role.

Chavalit Charoenpon (Democrats, constituency 2) On December 7, 2007, at the *talat nat* near the district office of Ban Pho (see picture 11), Chavalit talked at length about medicine and health, but also a little about oil and agriculture. His was a rather policy-oriented speech, connected to the Democrats. Though Chavalit mentioned that he had a degree in law, he mostly referred to his experience as a medical doctor when talking about himself. In a comment obviously aimed at Thaksin and against the public perception that the Democrats were so slow in everything they did, Chavalit insisted that it was important not to act too fast, but slower, so that one could avoid doing harm. At another *wethi*, his running mate Chatchawal turned the argument in a different direction. According to him, the Democrats were now also faster, since new-generation politicians led them. Moreover, the party had devised a policy agenda that

it would implement within 99 days after having formed the core of the next government.

Chavalit explained that he was *manchai* (confident) in his candidacy regarding four *dan* (aspects): the Democrats as an established political party; Abhisit as its candidate for the position of prime minister; the Democrats' policies; and about himself. The fourth issue was "*manchai nai tua eng*" (confident in himself). He admitted that he had no experience in politics, but asserted this could be learned, and he would learn quickly. After all, he had already mastered medicine and law. December 23 was an important day; the nation would leave the crisis behind. Voters should use their discretion and elect a new generation for this work, that is, numbers 3 and 4. At the end, he also briefly mentioned Chatchawal.

On December 13, Chavalit was at another *wethi klang*, the second in Ban Pho district, at a *talat nat* at the district police station. This time, he stressed that he was a "child of Ban Pho *doei kamnoet* (by birth)." Unfortunately, since he had worked at Bang Pakong hospital, he had not been able to take full care of people in Ban Pho. Some might probably wonder why he wanted to leave his air-conditioned room and wanted power. No, he did not want money, since he had that already. Nor did he need power. He merely wanted to work on solutions for problems. His approach was not about populist policies, but about *borikan prachachon* (service for the people). Rather than giving out money for this or that (a core criticism of Thaksin's "populism"), the Democrats would show the people how they could earn money.

The final *wethi klang* of constituency 2, on December 19 at the square between *sala thai* and the provincial hall, Chavalit mentioned that he had been approached (*thabtham*) by the Democrats to run as one of their MP candidates. He had registered with the party only on November 11, 2007. Yesterday, Chuan had been here in Chachoengsao with a *khabuan* (procession) at the market.¹¹⁹ He emphasized that the Democrats would not abolish any of the good policies; rather, they would improve them and solve the people's problems. There was no need to worry. Chachoengsao could be like Suphanburi. The Democrats would build *samakkhi* (unity) and bring MPs and local governments together. When they had achieved *samakkhi*, everything would proceed automatically.

Chakrawan Thuamcharoen (Democrats, constituency 2) On December 7, Chakrawan stressed that the Democrats wanted free education. This did not only mean not

having to pay tuition fees, but also not having to pay for books, uniforms, or class activities. Moreover, education should be free for 15 years, not only for 12, as the constitution stipulated. This was not *prachaniyom* (populism: bad), but *rat sawatikan* (welfare state: good). There should be a maternity leave for women, and there should be care for the elderly. Now, the Democrats and PPP competed with each other for the post of prime minister. The Democrats stressed the importance of sufficiency economy, that is, sustainable development.¹²⁰ The King had given the concept of sufficiency economy to the people. The party did not support the continuous distribution of money (like under Thaksin). Chakrawan mentioned tap water and touched on problems in Ban Pho. He had long fought for a solution to this problem. He twice said that he had asked the *nai amphoe* (chief district officer), who was in the audience, to help deal with this issue. There should also be support for bio diesel and gasohol. Fifty years from now, there would no longer be any oil. There should be a *kongthun tambon* (sub-district development fund) of two million baht for sustainable development for every *tambon*. However, this should not be done like the (Thaksin-initiated) village fund. Rather, all people in a *tambon* would come together to decide what should be done with the money. This included the sub-district headmen (*kamnan*), the village headmen, teachers, and others. (Chakrawan did not mention the relevant local government authority in this context, the *tambon* administrative organization.)

If the people could overcome *kong chart* (the cheating of the nation, supposedly the main activity of the Thaksin government), many things would become possible. Neither Chuan nor Abhisit were corrupt. Chatchawal said that Chuan Leekpai had taught him *udomkan* (ideals, goals, aspirations, principles). The Democrats did not have much money, but they had *udomkan* in their hearts. The Democrats would not distribute money. Chuan told him about *udomkan*, and had taught it to Abhisit.¹²¹ According to Chakrawan, the Democrats had *jariyatham* (ethics), *khunnatham* (virtue, goodness), and they were *suesat* (honest).

Obviously, this entire set of virtuous characteristics made sense only if they were thought to positively distinguish the Democrats and its candidates from their main competitor, first Thaksin's TRT, and then the PPP. The message to the voters was thus clear: the TRT/PPP and its candidates had no ideals, lacked ethics and virtue, and they were dishonest. This message was made even stronger by Chakrawan's reference to the King's idea of "sufficiency economy."¹²² The message seemed to suggest that voters opting for the Democrats were particularly loyal to the monarch. The

Democrats' candidates also played the monarchy card by preferring to wear yellow polo shirts and jackets at the *wethi klang*.

The Democrat candidates in constituency 2 were two well-educated and relatively young people who presented decidedly "modern" or "new-generation" political images to the voters: clean, policy-oriented, aboveground election campaigns, nationally oriented, and with no significant local *phuak*. Since the candidates' otherwise modern image was so pronounced, the tension with a very conservative royalist outlook was only more obvious. Since the two candidates had never been in political positions, they could not refer to any important personal achievements in the locality or on the national stage. Yet, the Democrat candidates did not run a unified election campaign. Rather, they went about their campaigns individually. Moreover, neither the Democrat party's local branch committee nor the party's members in Chachoengsao seemed to have an active role in the election campaign. At least, this was not visible to me.

Phanee Jarusombat (Phuea Phaendin, constituency 2) On December 7, Phanee arrived at the venue with a member of the PAO council representing Ban Pho. In her speech, she stressed that she was a true daughter of Ban Pho district. She had already been a senator. They even had done some seminars already in order to get to know each other. However, then an *upattihet* (accident) had happened that had made the people *jepjai* (suffer mental pain). Phanee then talked about the poverty of the farmers and their debts outside the system. Suwit Khunkitti, the leader of her political party, knew these problems well. He had been a minister many times and a deputy prime minister twice. Farmers were the *huajai khong chart* (the heart of the nation). For this reason, irrigation was very important; it would lead to high income and happiness (*khwamsuk*). Sometimes, there was much water, sometimes little, and then people hoped for *thewada* (angels). Next in Phanee's speech were land problems. How could one ensure that everybody had sufficient land to sustain his or her living? Her Phuea Phaendin party had a policy to issue land title deeds. The expenses for the health insurance scheme should be increased from 1,000 to 3,000 baht per head. Education would make children escape from their addiction to video games. In times of globalization, the Internet and computers played big roles. However, one could not allow western technology to control Thai culture.¹²³ Children must not get addicted to Internet gaming, or to *ya ba* (methamphetamine drugs). People should follow the King's

sufficiency economy. Suddenly, Phanee jumped to the issue of local government. Then, equally suddenly, she touched on Phuea Phaendin's economic team. Phanee's party aimed to *sang chart* (construct the nation); it supported all religions, and *ratch-abalang* (the throne, the crown). A few days later, Phanee suggested that the first thing that her party emphasized was *samakkhi* (unity). As the King had said, there were divisions and quarrels in the country, so there had to be *prongton* (compromise). There were problems that had been caused by this quarreling. For this reason, one had to emphasize unity.

Phanee's policy-oriented speeches were fluent, without using a script (in fact, no speaker ever used this means). However, her speeches sounded rehearsed rather than spontaneous. Sometimes, she came across as somewhat formal in her verbal expressions. Her running mate was present at the *wethi* but kept to the background. He did not get on stage, not even to be briefly introduced, as in the case of Somchai and Itthi. It seemed that there was only one real candidate, namely Phanee.

For the reasons already given, I cannot provide summaries of campaign speeches for Phichet, Wuthipong, and Thitima—all of them winning candidates. Rallies are not normally an important part of election campaigns of the prevailing kind, although the occasional small rally might well be organized. The most important campaign activities are hidden from the public, and activities that are public are often not recorded or documented. For example, when I entered Wuthipong and Thitima's office one day, the daily campaign schedules for a few days fixed to the wall showed many weddings, ordinations, and funerals. From this perspective, *wethi klang* merely waste the time of busy candidates, who have to attend many such functions, talk to local leaders, visit villagers, walk through markets, etc. However, as far as the Chaisaengs are concerned, it had been customary for them to organize at least one big rally in each election campaign. The next section describes how this was done under unusually restrictive conditions in 2007.

Chaturon Chaisaeng's non-party election rallies

On December 10, 2007, advertising pick-up trucks drove around some areas of Chachoengsao inviting people to listen to speeches by Chaturon Chaisaeng and Adisorn Piangket on December 12. Under their new label of "House Number 111" (*ban lek thi*

111), they were to set up a stage behind the vocational college of Chachoengsao, along the Bang Pakong River. One day later, I found that many shops around the area of the old market had received leaflets from the group declaring the main theme of the event, “Fair elections are the solution for Thailand.” At the bottom of the leaflet, people were asked, “Listen to the dissection of the NSC [National Security Council, the coup group], the ECT [Election Commission of Thailand], and the AEC [Asset Examination Committee]-Don’t miss it!!!” Why could Chaturon and Adisorn not simply join a PPP election rally, going on stage together with Wuthipong and Thitima Chaisaeng? After all, Chaturon was their brother. This was not determined locally but was necessitated by national-level politics.



Picture 18: Leaflet announcing a non-party election rally organized by the Chaturon Chaisaeng in the name of “House Number 111” (*ban lek thi 111*).

The number 111 refers to the 111 former members of the executive board of the Thai Rak Thai party. When TRT was dissolved, these members lost certain political rights.¹²⁴ According to article 69 of the Political Party Act of 1998 (article 97 in the 2007 version)

a person who used to be a member of the Executive Committee of the dissolved political party shall not form a new political party, be a member of an Executive Committee of political party nor be a promoter of a new political party under section 8; provided that within the period of five years as from the date of the dissolution.¹²⁵

This stipulation had the curious effect that the leaders of a party dissolved for being a dire threat to democracy and national security could run in subsequent elections, become MPs, ministers, and even prime minister.

The coup group had blocked this possibility with the “Announcement by the Council for Democratic Reform No. 27.” It stiffened the penalty described in the political party act by stipulating that executive members of dissolved parties would also lose their “electoral rights” (*phoekthon sitthi lueaktang*), meaning their rights to vote in elections. Disenfranchised citizens, however, cannot run in elections or be members of the cabinet. When the coup-group-appointed Constitution Drafting Assembly and National Legislative Assembly (NLA) deliberated the new version of the political party act, there were groups of hardliners who wanted to introduce nothing less than a five-year total loss of political rights for the executives whose party had been dissolved by the Constitution Court. This was deemed “too harsh,” and thus the hardliners had to be satisfied with a newly drafted article 98, which transferred the coup-plotters’ announcement into the political party act (via the equivalent section 237 of the 2007 constitution, in combination with its section 68 IV).¹²⁶ This measure was applied retroactively.

Yet, this change still left space for the 111 previous executive members of TRT, mainly in their reincarnation as the People’s Power party, to play an active role in the party’s election campaign by using their continuing personal popularity in election constituencies to increase PPP’s number of votes and MPs. The coup plotters and their auxiliary bodies certainly dreaded this opportunity. Since executives of PPP had some doubts as to what was actually allowed, they asked the ECT for its opinion. The ECT did not waste this opportunity to reintroduce the hard-line stance through the backdoor. In its formal opinion, it pretended that the above-mentioned article 98 of the political party act included a stipulation that prohibited the former 111 TRT executives from speaking at election campaign rallies. Thus, the ECT partially annulled the people’s constitutional right to express their political opinions. The ECT also barred the group from being pictured with election candidates,¹²⁷ and it went far be-

yond its mandate by prohibiting them from even being members of any political party altogether.¹²⁸ No legal measures could be taken against this interpretation of the political party act, because it did not constitute an administrative act. The ECT maintained that this was merely its opinion and did not have any legally binding force. However, it added that if anybody complained about “violations” later, those who had acted against its opinion might have to face legal consequences.

This situation led Chaturon and about five other former TRT executives, including Adisorn Piangket, his long-time political pal, and Pongpol Adireksan, to found the group “House Number 111.” Under this label, they organized a rally in Nonthaburi. The event in Chachoengsao was another attempt at challenging the ECT by setting up a stage, speaking about politics, even attacking the above-mentioned bodies, without saying anything that could be construed as campaigning for a political party. Former TRT board members in other parties and most of those connected to PPP, however, probably felt too intimidated by the ECT’s threat, and thus kept quiet. Even Thailand’s National Human Rights Commission decided that the ECT’s opinion did not violate the human rights of the former 111 board members of TRT.

So how did the event in Chachoengsao proceed? I arrived at the venue at 1750 hours. The organizers had arranged for 180 chairs, 40 of which were occupied when I arrived. In the end, altogether about 400 people listened to the speeches of Pongpol Adireksan and Chaturon Chaisaeng. Adisorn could not come because his father had died. As usual at Chaisaeng family rallies, the audience comprised non-elite people. Behind the stage, Chaturon was sitting at a table waiting for his turn. Mostly, he sat alone or with one or two other people (Chaturon is not a very sociable person). Staff members and friends served food and drinks. From time to time people delivered gift baskets. There were about 30 members from their inner group, including Chaturon’s wife and staff from the family’s MP office, which is located in the original family home. Anand Chaisaeng sat in the audience, for some time joined by the executive chairperson of a *tambon* administrative organization. In their vicinity sat a *kamnan* (sub-district headman) who had been a very well known *hua khanaen* (vote canvasser) for the Chaisaengs in Amphoe Mueang for many years.¹²⁹ At the beginning, he called me to sit with him and we had a brief talk. Later, when I passed him again, I overheard him telling his neighbor on the bench who I was and that I was “*pen phak phuak diewkun*” (that I belonged to their, that is, the Chaisaeng’s political clique).¹³⁰ Konlayudh Chaisaeng (the municipal mayor or *nayok thesamontri*) and Kitt Pao-

piamsap (the executive chairperson of the provincial administrative organization, or *nayok oopocho*), sat together with some other local politicians of the Chaisaeng camp farther away from the stage on a bench along the river. A few meters away from them, a member of the provincial election commission observed the event.

Pongpol was the first to give a speech. He complained about the long list of political restrictions the former TRT executives were subjected to. The ECT's decision ("opinion") was too harsh a sentence and violated their rights. He was not even allowed to be photographed with his son, who was standing for election in a central province. All this violated article 45 of the constitution (the right to express one's opinions).¹³¹ Pongpol wondered why those commissioners could not understand these points since all of them were legal experts (former judges, to be precise).

When Chaturon got on stage, he received many garlands, as usual. At the beginning of his speech, which was interrupted by applause only once,¹³² he said that he was on stage as he had always been at election time for many years. However, he continued, this time, the situation was rather strange, because there was no logo of any political party nor an election number. The ECT had expanded the penalties (imposed with the TRT's dissolution based on the political party act). The newspapers always wrote that they had "lost their political rights" (with the verdict of the NSC-appointed Constitutional Tribunal). This was wrong. They could still talk and write. Where did the ECT get the right to prohibit him to talk—where was the regulation? There was no legal basis for its decision whatsoever. However, the political parties running in the elections were afraid because they feared dissolution. For this reason, he could not give campaign speeches and Pongpol could not even be photographed with his son.

Were they, the audience, Chaturon asked, really those who would decide about the future of the country in the election? In fact, there was only a small group of people with power, namely those who had seized it. They were not ready to return the power to the people, and so the people's votes had little significance. This group had been trying to interfere with politics, as could be seen from the secret military documents that described projects aimed at obstructing the People's Power party. One overall purpose had been to *krajai* (disperse) the 111 former executive members of TRT. Only after some of those members—such as Somsak Thepsuthin (Matchimathipattai), Suwat Liptapanlop (Ruam Jai Thai Chart Pattana), and Surakiat Sathienthai (Phuea Phaendin)—had successfully established a number of new political parties did the ECT act to prohibit all involvement. This showed that, from the beginning, they

had had the intention to harm only one single political party (PPP). The procedure to destroy Thaksin and TRT had been devised by the CNS.

Chaturon then spoke for some time about the secret documents, including the decision of the ECT to reject the PPP's complaint on this matter. The whole point was "lack of neutrality" of the CNS. According to Chaturon, the rejection showed that, nowadays, anything could be done by referring to national security as an excuse.¹³³ If they had found the documents had been faked, they would have had to dissolve PPP (because PPP had made them public). Thus, they had figured out a different way of rejecting the complaint. The 111 former members of TRT's executive board had lost many of their rights, but not the one to express their opinions. Actually, he could talk about his (party-political) opinions, but he did not want to cause any problems to candidates and political parties. Nowadays, it was very easy to dissolve political parties, although they were in fact important organizations of the people for coming together and pursuing political ends, including governing the country. Even when US president Nixon had to resign, the Republican Party was not dissolved. Why was only one party threatened, although Somsak, Suwat, and Surakiat had had vital roles in establishing new political parties?

Voters, Chaturon continued, should not vote in a way that benefited all political parties evenly (*susi*) since this would limit the voters' impact even further. The people were constantly intimidated. The country had already suffered tremendous harm to the count of hundreds of thousands of million baht. This did not even include the question of how many hundreds of millions of baht were corrupted (by the coup-group and its organizations). He was not talking for himself, but for the country. If listeners were in favor of the coup plotters, they should vote one way, but if they opposed them, they should vote another way. If they voted in a *susi* way, then they would not be the ones who determined politics. What they would get was the ECT as the government. Thus, "*chuai tatsinchai hai dee*" (make good decisions).

Chaturon added that only a few months earlier, the newspapers had compared him with Abhisit and asked who would be the better prime minister. Today, he could not even vote in the election, although he had done absolutely nothing wrong. This was *pralat* (odd, strange), but it had to be this way under *phadetkan* (dictatorship). The people's struggle for democracy had to continue for many more decades. In doing so, they must not fear anybody. The future was in the hands of the people—first in the election of December 23.

During Chaturon's speech, which ended at around 2030 hours, there had been a few references to Thaksin Shinawatra, to Sonthi Limthongkul, and the PAD. Chaturon did not forget to mention that many of those who had directed the protests had been on the CDA, in the NLA, and the AEC. For all his somewhat academic eloquence, Chaturon did not include even the slightest suggestion that Thaksin and the TRT had done anything problematic while in government. Would Chaturon have had to tell people of their continuing struggle for democracy if Thaksin had made democratic values his guiding inspiration when he was prime minister? Chaturon might have done "absolutely nothing wrong" as far as the election law was concerned. But did he not have to bear his share of responsibility for the direction of the Thaksin government, of which he had been a member in a number of ministerial positions from its beginning?

It turned out that the rally described here was only something like a test-run for a fully-fledged non-partisan election rally. On December 19, 2007, advertising trucks announced yet another campaign event by members of the "House number 111." This time, it was under the slogan of "From the heart of Chaturon to the people of Chachoengsao," which also provided the headline for a four-page leaflet.¹³⁴ Its text reflected what Chaturon had said at the earlier event. This time, the Chaisaengs meant business. The square between *sala thai* (an open multi-purpose hall opposite the provincial hall) and *sala klang* was full of occupied chairs. I counted 2,000 of them (50 rows of 40 chairs), but two people involved with the Chaisaengs' election campaign independently told me that they had arranged for 3,000 chairs. It is possible that I had somehow miscounted. In addition, there were many people in the back and on both sides of the square. Thus, the audience was probably around 4,000 people.¹³⁵

To all appearances, this was a fully-fledged campaign rally, though without direct references to the relevant political party (PPP) and the candidates. Of course, neither Wuthipong nor Thitima were at the scene. The organizers had provided a number of flat screens around the venue as well as two big screens on the left and right sides of the stage. This rally was like a slap in the face of the ECT/PEC, because only a day earlier, the campaign rally organized on the same square by the PEC's constituency committee had attracted only around 20 people. Moreover, the Chaisaeng's election campaign event took place right under the PEC's nose, as its office was in the old *sala klang* facing the square.

The local stringer for a number of national newspapers told me that 200 baht of “gasoline money” had been paid to many of the participants. This is quite possible as well as usual.¹³⁶ Of course, there was no evidence. When I again sat next to the *kamnan* mentioned above, I took the opportunity to suggest that such a large number of people required some mobilization (one would not organize 3,000 chairs without being sure that they would be filled, after all). His somewhat unexpectedly matter-of-fact-style answer was, “We have phoned each other in our *phakphuak*.” In other words, members of the Chaisaeng *phuak* had committed themselves to mobilizing certain numbers of participants for the event. Indeed, this is what realistically had to be done before the rally. When it was over, one could see many pick-up trucks leaving the area loaded with groups of people returning to their villages. An acquaintance of mine thought that most of the audience had come from Amphoe Mueang. This is quite possible given that this is the stronghold of the Chaisaeng *phakphuak*, where it can most easily mobilize people to form a huge audience.

Adisorn Piangket was the first major speaker. He displayed his colorful and combative style, and was thus quite entertaining for the audience, which responded with applause many times (that many in the audience had been mobilized does not necessarily mean that their presence was forced contrary to their political attitudes). Adisorn praised Thaksin Shinawatra and Thai Rak Thai’s great policies; he thanked the people in the audience for having elected TRT. He emphasized that he could not talk about another party (a reference to PPP), because this might lead to it being dissolved by the Election Commission. In fact, it was the ECT that should be dissolved—a remark that prompted laughter and applause. Adisorn urged the audience not to harm Chaturon and take good care of his younger siblings (a reference to Wuthipong and Thitima). If at least one of them did not make it to the House, this would be rather bad. He was missing Thaksin, who was not an evil person but a good one. Adisorn asked listeners to applaud Thaksin’s anti-drug campaign, which prompted a big round of applause (after he had left the stage, the moderator said that the drug problem was worse than before).¹³⁷ At the end, Adisorn narrowed down the election of December 23 to a choice between democracy and dictatorship.

Chaturon’s speech resembled what he had said at the earlier event. This time, however, he also attacked the redrawing of the constituencies by the Election Commission. In particular, Chaturon attacked the inclusion of Thatakiap district in constituency 2. He said that one could not even travel from the supposedly connected

Plaeng Yao district to Thatakiap but had to travel through Sanam Chai Khet district, which was part of constituency 1. Importantly, he also attacked “the opposition” in the election campaign for having resorted to heavy vote buying. Obviously, he could not mention any names in this context. However, it was clear enough to observers and the audience that this had to be a reference to Phanee Jarusombat, the main competitor of Wuthipong and Thitima.



Picture 19: Chaturon making a point “From the heart of Chaturon to the people of Chachoengsao” (the banner in the background repeats this slogan from the leaflet mentioned in the text).

Since Chaturon’s speech was rather long and not as entertaining as Adisorn’s, some people left before he had finished at around 2015 hours. The event ended with the playing of the royal anthem.

Advance voting

On December 15 and 16, 2007, advance voting took place. This concerned two groups of people. One group was voters who lived in Chachoengsao but had their residence registered in a different province. They could vote in Chachoengsao for candidates running in their home provinces. However, they had to apply with the PEC in Chachoengsao in order to be included in a special advance voter roll. Accordingly, their names were deleted from the rolls in their home provinces. That meant that even if they did not turn up during advance voting, they still could not vote in their home

provinces on December 23. Rather, they would not have performed compulsory voting and thus had to inform the PEC after the election of their reasons for not doing so. Failing to provide such a reason, or giving a reason deemed invalid by the PEC, resulted in the loss of certain rights, such as being able to run in all sorts of elections (House, Senate, local governments, *kamnan*, village headmen). These lost rights would be reinstated after the next election in which they voted.

Every province had one central polling station for the purpose of advance voting. In the election of February 2005, *sala thai*, the open multi-purpose hall opposite the provincial hall, was sufficient to do the job of advance voting for all provinces except Chachoengsao. At that time, only 348,739 people had registered countrywide, and only 143,153 (41.1%) of them actually voted. In 2007, the countrywide figure had jumped to 2,095,410, of whom 1,838,889 (87.8%) really cast their ballots. In Chachoengsao, 24,838 voters had registered, of whom 20,612 (83%) turned up in equal numbers on both days. As a result, a large number of tents had to be erected on the square between *sala thai* and the provincial hall, housing 24 separate polling units for the various provinces in the outer columns. The corresponding inner columns of tents were organized on the basis of the eight groups of party-list provinces. Each group had at least three boards voters could consult if they needed information—after they had wandered around all the tents to look for their group of provinces since there was no information at the entrance of the area about which tents served voters of which provinces.¹³⁸

As the first step of voting, voters had to find their names on the voter rolls. Afterwards, voters had to note down the number of their group of provinces in the party-list system, the name of their province, the number of their constituency, and their rank on the voter rolls so that the officials at the polling unit would not have to waste time in locating the names on their print-outs of the rolls.¹³⁹ Since the voters' names were alphabetically ordered only within the constituencies, and since their numbers had changed over the last three elections due to the reintroduction of multi-member constituencies, this step often caused some problems. When I was talking with an election official near one such board, we observed a factory worker going for some time through the thick list, while people were waiting behind him to have their turns. Finally, he turned away with an angry face saying, "I can't find it." This prompted the election official to approach him and offer help.

Generally, the PEC had tried to facilitate the voters by placing officials and school students near the boards so that they could help voters identify their constituency number.¹⁴⁰ A young woman who had been helping my landlord for many years had her first ever attempt to vote in an election delayed for one day. As she told me, she went to *sala thai* on the morning of the first day, at the same time as factory buses were bringing workers to the polling station. She found her polling unit and the board with the voter roll. However, there was such a great number of people in front of her that she could not even get close to it to look for her name. Thus, she returned home. The next day everything went smoothly. A student was on hand to look for her name; she said that the procedure was “*saduak*” (convenient).

The young woman’s voting behavior was interesting because she split her vote, choosing the Democrats on the party-list system and Chart Thai for the two seats in her constituency back in Ubon Ratchathani. She said that she had voted for the party that she liked, especially for Abhisit Vejjajiva, based on the “*khomun*” (data, information) that she had gained through her daily reading of the newspapers. In addition, she disliked TRT and Samak because he was the nominee of Thaksin. She added, however, that many of her friends from the Northeast, even the one who accompanied her to the polling station, still liked Thaksin and thus voted for the People’s Power party. Regarding the constituency vote, she pointed to the fact that she had been living in Chachoengsao for so many years already that she had no idea who to vote for. Therefore, she had called her mother in Ubon and was advised to vote for the Chart Thai candidates, because they had done many good things for the area where the family lived, and they had always been helpful when help was needed. Since this young woman had no better idea of who to vote for in her home constituency, she followed her mom’s suggestion. In sum, she had observed national politics through the modern mass media leading to the formation of nationally oriented political preferences. Yet, these media did not provide her with information on events in her home constituency. However, she did not just transfer her national preference to the local electoral options; nor would she simply vote “no vote.” Rather, she searched for additional information from her mother and then applied a more traditional means of reducing the complexity of her electoral choice by using locally important criteria for her decision. This young woman could express her national political preferences only because the proportional ballot existed. The CDA’s initial intention of abolishing the party list

would have destroyed this opportunity, even though the Bangkok-based elite often sees local political preferences in a negative light.¹⁴¹

As for the high number of voters who registered and turned out, some commentators interpreted this as a sign of heightened political awareness and as an indicator of a 70%-plus turnout on December 23 (in the event, turnout was 74.5 percent nationwide¹⁴²). It was noteworthy, however, that election day and the new year holidays were unusually close together, in fact separated by only three or four days, and that election day preceded the new-year break. Voters might have thought it just too time-consuming and costly to do travel home twice in such a short period. A police officer distributing the small forms to the voters for noting down their group of provinces etc. at the crowded polling station for Surin province suggested that time and cost-saving considerations were the most important explanations for the high number of people making use of advance voting this time. Another police officer, originally from Buri-ram province, suggested that there were two possible reasons, namely political awareness and the aforementioned pragmatic considerations. When I started a follow-up question with “And the second reason...” he completed it with a smile by saying “...has more weight.”

Unlike voters in ordinary polling stations, those who used the cross-provincial voting procedure received an envelope (the ECT’s form for it was “So.So. 39”) with their two ballot papers. Voters had to mark the ballots and then place them into the envelop addressed to the director of the relevant constituency committee in their home provinces. Voters had to fill in the name of the province, the constituency number, and the postal code. Finally, they had to seal the envelope and put it into one single ballot box. After advance voting had closed, the envelopes were sorted by province, put into bags, and handed over to the Thai Postal Company to send them to the respective provinces for counting after the polling stations had closed on December 23.

The second group of people who were allowed to vote in advance was those who had their house registrations in Chachoengsao but could not vote on December 23. These voters did not have to register in advance. Rather, they simply had to go to their dedicated district-level advance polling stations, mostly the district administrations’ meeting halls, and cast their ballots. Before they could do so, however, they had to fill in an application form.¹⁴³ Voters were required to fill in their names, provide their ID-card numbers, rank numbers on the voter roll, the number of their original

polling stations, and the name of their *tambon*, districts, and provinces, as well as the number of their constituencies.



Picture 20: A voter presents his application form for advance voting in the meeting hall of the Amphoe Mueang district office to the chairperson of the committee of the advance polling station for approval.¹⁴⁴

ด้านในบัตรเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎรแบบสัดส่วน

เล่มที่..... เลขที่..... ลำดับที่.....

(จ.ชื่อ).....

(.....)

(ป.ชื่อ)..... กรรมการประจำหน่วยเลือกตั้ง.....

ลายมือชื่อ หรือลายพิมพ์นิ้วมือของผู้มีสิทธิเลือกตั้ง..... (ป.ชื่อ)

บัตรเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎรแบบสัดส่วน

ให้ทำเครื่องหมายกากบาท X ภายใน "ช่องทำเครื่องหมาย" เพื่อลงพรรคการเมืองเดียว

พรรคการเมือง	ชื่อพรรคการเมือง	พรรคการเมือง	ชื่อพรรคการเมือง
0	พรรค ก	00	พรรค ตม
0	พรรค ข	00	พรรค ฅน
0	พรรค ค	00	พรรค ด
0	พรรค ค	00	พรรค ต
0	พรรค ช	00	พรรค ถ
0	พรรค ง	00	พรรค ท
0	พรรค จ	00	พรรค ฐ
0	พรรค ฉ	00	พรรค น
0	พรรค ช	00	พรรค บ
00	พรรค ช	00	พรรค ป
00	พรรค ฅน	00	พรรค ผ
00	พรรค ญ	00	พรรค ฝ
00	พรรค ฎ	00	พรรค พ
00	พรรค ฏ	00	พรรค ฟ
00	พรรค ฐ	00	พรรค ภ
00	พรรค ท		

ถ้าไม่ประสงค์ลงคะแนนให้ตน/พรรคการเมืองใดเลย ให้ทำเครื่องหมายกากบาท X ในช่องนี้

Picture 21: A sample copy of the ballot paper for the party-list vote. The white part on the top remained as proof in the book, which contained 50 ballot papers. At the right-hand side of the bottom is the box for the “no vote” vote. Constituency and party-list ballots were different colors.

They then did what is shown in picture 20, namely present their application form to the officials who decided about the application. In this case, the voter had not filled in the reason for his inability to vote on December 23. The officials therefore asked him to add it. The form offered boxes to tick for three pre-typed reasons. First was the need to travel outside the constituency on election day. Second was having an order from state authorities to perform duties outside his or her constituency. Third was being assigned to work in a polling station other than his or her own. Finally, there was the category “others specify...” Regarding the voter in the picture, none of the pre-formulated options applied. Since he was a reporter, he put in that he would have to report on the election on December 23. For official use, the chairperson of the committee had to tick “permit” or “not permit.” Of course, almost all requests were approved.



Picture 22: Voter signing the voter rolls of his original polling station at the advance voting in the meeting hall of the Amphoe Mueang district office (the woman to the left is an unrelated voter).

Only a few steps away from the scene shown in picture 20, there was table with a set of original polling-station voter roll files. An official would draw the appropriate file, look up the name, cross it out, and fill in the number of the identification card presented to him or her by the voter. Afterwards, the polling station official would turn the file around for the voter to sign his or her name (picture 22). At the end of the table, another official had the voter fill in their ID-card numbers and rank numbers according to the voter rolls, and then sign their names (or stamp their thumbprints) on

the slips at the top of the form. The slip remained in the booklet as proof, while the official would tear off the ballot paper, fold it, and hand it to the voter. The last step, after the voter had made his or her mark on the ballots in the polling booth, obviously was to put his or her two ballots in the two ballot boxes, one dedicated for the constituency vote, and the other for the proportional vote.

At the end of this two-day advance voting exercise, the ballot boxes had to be stored in a secure place, to be opened and counted only after polling stations had closed on December 23. I also observed a number of polling stations in the municipal area and Bang Nam Prioew district on election day, without observing anything unusual.

The elections results

In the following, I will provide some information on general electoral statistics, and then deal with the results in the two constituencies in turn. With regard to the latter, I might say at this point that the elections were competitive at all levels—constituency, district, sub-district, municipality, and the polling station. There did not seem to be a significant monopolization of the electoral contest in the sense that certain candidates were able to systematically exclude potential competitors from a district, sub-district, or from village-level polling stations.¹⁴⁵ In both constituencies, voters had the choice between five serious candidates and their three political parties. Moreover, a number of lesser-known candidates and parties also joined the race. However, as explained above, the access to electoral competitions in Chachoengsao has been highly restrictive during the past few decades. This section will end with two general remarks.

General electoral statistics

Table 2 on the next page gives an overview of the general electoral statistics in constituencies 1 and 2. For details, see tables 6 and 7 in the appendix 3.

Voter turnout corresponded to the national average of 74.5 percent. The low turnout in constituency 2 occurred in Thatakiap, one of the poorest and least-educated areas of Chachoengsao (unfortunately, the figures for a similar district, Sanam Chai Khet, are missing). Interestingly, the same district posted the highest invalid vote (constituency and PL) figures—as compared to the lowest in rich Amphoe Mueang—

while it posted the lowest in the categories of no votes (constituency and PL)—as compared with the highest in Amphoe Mueang (8.28 and 7.11 percent). Thatakiap had also the highest figure for “missing votes” (voters who cast only one of their two constituency votes). That the average of this figure was significantly higher in constituency 1 than in constituency 2 might be because there were three pairs of candidates with rather unequal standing in this constituency. Voters might thus have tended to merely vote for their favorite and then “waste” their second vote rather than giving it to a competing candidate from a different party.

Table 2: General electoral statistics as percentage by constituency

	Constituency 1	Average of const. total	Constituency 2	Average of const. total ^a
Turnout	73.21—79.96	75.16	67.84—76.36	73.87
Good votes constit.	89.65—94.05	93.23	90.63—94.54	92.15
Invalid votes constit.	2.07—3.04	2.40	2.26—2.77	2.43
No vote constit.	3.43—8.28	4.37	2.69—7.11	5.43
Good votes PL	89.01—90.84	90.15	90.09—91.00	90.55
Invalid votes PL	5.69—7.91	6.57	4.80—7.40	5.51
No vote PL	2.72—4.85	3.27	2.21—4.83	3.94
Missing constit. votes	10.54—12.72	11.75	6.67—10.38	8.28

Source: Statistics CD provided by the PEC ^a Without Sanam Chai Khet district

In a reversal of the elections of 2001 and 2005, in 2007 the incidence of invalid party list votes was significantly higher than that of invalid constituency votes. This needs some additional investigation, although one might initially assume that the difference was a function of the changed election system, in conjunction with the design of the ballots. The drop in the invalid constituency votes was quite remarkable, given that the range was 8.78 to 18.18 percent in 2001, and 6.57 to 9.28 percent in 2005. By comparison, the increase in invalid party list votes was more limited (ranges were 2.03 to 3.64 percent in 2001 and 3.38 to 3.91 percent in 2005).

Election results

Turning to the results of the candidates, constituency 1 saw Phichet Tancharoen and Itthi Sirilatthayakon win the two seats (see table 3 on the next page). Thus, the voters cast their ballots—for whatever reasons—as had widely been expected.

Table 3: Election results in constituency 1

Candidate	Political Party	Const.	Party List
Phichet Tancharoen	Phuea Phaendin	85,821	25,194
Kamonnet Inbaen		9,395	
Itthi Sirilatthayakon	People's Power	75,994	60,747
Somchai Atsawachaisophon		49,940	
Chalee Charoensuk	Democrat	33,556	61,514
Phatcharakriengchai Singhanat		18,930	
Thira Thattiyakunchai	Matchimathipattai	6,628	1,180
Somsong Wongpradit		639	
Thanaphong Sewewanlop	Chart Thai	3,193	2,697
Karakot Kaewkham		1,167	
Anek Koetsawang	Ruam Chai Thai Chart Pattana	1,742	3,945
Chaiwat Srikhacha		1,338	
Thiang Thuamprasoet	Farmer's Network of Thailand	1,195	2,067
Somphon Wanlanond		1,140	
Thonchai Srisuk	Prachakorn Thai	631	549
Phairot Malai		418	
Seri Mattohet	Thai Ramruay	489	661
Kanchana Withayanon		446	
Aphiwat Ketuwattha	Tai Pen Tai	203	507
Sathit Yuensuk		195	

Source: Election results for MPs in Chachoengsao province, and Election results for proportional MPs of group 5 (PEC-prepared leaflets).¹⁴⁶ See also the official ECT election results in ข้อมูลสถิติ และผลการเลือกตั้ง สมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎร พ.ศ. 2550. กรุงเทพฯ: สำนักงานคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง, 2551.

Note: Six political parties on the party list in group 5 did not field constituency candidates in Chachoengsao. Their results were as follows: Pracharaj (1,479), New Aspiration (939), Phalang Kasetrakorn (798), Kasetrakorn Thai (767), Khunnatham (307), and Prachamati (189).

Phichet's running mate, Kamonnet Inbaen, the daughter of a local politician, received only 11 percent of the votes that Phichet collected. This disproportion is a sure indicator that she was not a real candidate but merely served the purpose of fulfilling the legal requirement that parties had to field the full number of candidates in every constituency they wanted to contest. Phichet's campaign efforts thus did not include his

running mate. His main mission was not to get seats or votes for his party, but to place a member of the Tancharoen family in the House of Representatives. As shown in pictures 9 and 10, cutouts only showed Phichet, while posters (and advertising pick-up trucks) showed both candidates. Regarding the PPP and Democrat pairs, both candidates certainly were genuine; they tried to maximize their votes (the former as a team, the latter separately). In these cases, the substantially different number of votes indicates that the voters had made a clear distinction between Itthi and Somchai, and Chalee and Phatcharakriengchai. One would probably not be mistaken in concluding that the personalities and images of the second-placed candidates were judged as lacking. If we assume that Itthi and Somchai mostly used the same network of *hua khanaen*, we would have to conclude that neither all canvassers nor all voters could be convinced that Somchai was as good as Itthi. This perspective should preclude a mechanistic application of the *hua khanaen*/vote-buying explanation of electoral success. However, the great success of “new-face” candidate Phichet (and subsequently that of his son in the by-election of January 11, 2009) should lead one to be cautious in declaring that the up-country Thai voter cast his or her ballot individually and independently.

In all of the six districts, and five of the 17 *tambon* of Amphoe Mueang, the election turned out to be a two-horse race between Phichet and Itthi. Each of them won three districts, with Itthi narrowly prevailing over Phichet in Amphoe Mueang. Usually, Somchai Atsawachaisophon came third, with Chalee finishing fourth and Phatcharakriengchai fifth. However, Chalee was able narrowly to beat Somchai in Khlong Khuean and Bang Khla, where he went to primary school. In the municipalities of Bang Khla and Pak Nam, Chalee even came first, ahead of both Itthi and Phichet (clearly in the first municipality, narrowly in the second).¹⁴⁷ Thira Thattiyakunchai’s 6,628 votes show that he had some firm support. Looking into the district-level results, this was clearly localized in the districts of Bang Khla and Bang Nam Prioew.

Regarding the party-list results, one might expect that voters would cast their ballots for the political party of their preferred candidate. However, this was not the case. Phichet got 60,627 fewer votes on his party list than for himself. In Itthi’s case, the difference was much smaller at 15,247 votes. Obviously, the Phichet—Phuea Phaendin gap is remarkably large. On the other hand, Phichet had probably pushed his own candidacy rather than that of his party. First, it was important that he personally

won election. Second, Phuea Phaendin was a new party with a very uncertain public image, leaving voters and *hua khanaen* with too little information to support the party. As for Itthi, he ran under the PPP banner, the heir of TRT. Therefore, the voters could make use of their established party preferences, leading to a solid PPP result on its party list.¹⁴⁸ Still, in the 2005 election, Suchart Tancharoen had raked in 61,282 party-list votes for TRT, while Somchai had 53,714—in smaller (SMC) constituencies. In that same election, the Democrats with Chalee as their candidate received 19,801 votes on the party list, while their candidate in Suchart's constituency got 11,398 votes; the level of votes was about the same as for the candidates themselves.

These figures for the Democrats remarkably increased in December 2007. Assuming that voters would vote for the Democrat candidates as a ticket rather than mix their votes with Suchart or Itthi, the party list should have received about the same number of votes as Chalee did, that is, 33,556 votes.¹⁴⁹ Instead, the Democrat party was given 61,514 votes, slightly more than the PPP. This result was very similar to the national level, where PPP received only slightly more votes on the party list than the Democrats (12,338,903 to 12,148,504), while TRT in 2005 had led the Democrats with 18,993,073 to 7,210,742 votes. Chachoengsao's constituency 1 was thus one area that contributed to the national-level reversal of the results of 2005. Many voters must have split their votes, opting for Phichet or Itthi as the constituency candidate, but for the Democrats on the party list. One is probably not mistaken that this change reflected the information that voters in Chachoengsao had collected since the beginning of 2006 about what had happened politically in Bangkok. This information had led to a change in political-party preferences. At the election in December 2007, this change translated into the substantial change in votes on the party lists described here.

In constituency 2, Wuthipong and Thitima Chaisaeng both made it to the House, while Phanee Jarusombat, the hot favorite, lost out (see table 4). As in the case of Phichet, Phanee's running mate was there mainly for legal reasons, not as a serious candidate. Therefore, the big gap in their number of votes is unsurprising. The Democrat candidates achieved a respectable result, without being able to challenge the winners. All other candidates were irrelevant. Even one of Chachoengsao's former senators, Bunlert Phairin, received only a meager 3,895 votes.

Table 4: Election results in constituency 2

Candidate	Political Party	Const.	Party List
Wuthipong Chaisaeng	People's Power	69,092	60,420
Thitima Chaisaeng		62,331	
Phanee Jarusombat	Phuea Phaendin	54,029	16,965
Sunthorn Chirathawong		13,406	
Chakrawan Thuamcharoen	Democrat	46,086	70,143
Chavalit Charoenpon		42,803	
Bunlert Phairin	Ruam Chai Thai Chart Pattana	3,895	4,310
Inthira Thapananon		2,386	
Saneh Kaewmaniwong	Farmer's Network of Thailand	1,858	2,527
Pha Soithong		1,357	
Suchat Iamthongkham	Chart Thai	1,764	2,141
Worakit Saowarot		1,098	
Wichan Buntham	Matchimathipattai	1,147	891
Chadet Thongwilai		714	
Amara Piyasakunwong	Thai Ramruay	598	643
Suwannaporn Mattohet		385	

Source: Election results for MPs in Chachoengsao province, and Election results for proportional MPs of group 5 (PEC-prepared leaflets).¹⁵⁰ See also the official ECT election results in ข้อมูลสถิติ และผลการเลือกตั้ง สมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎร พ.ศ. 2550.

กรุงเทพฯ: สำนักงานคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง, 2551.

Note: Eight political parties on the party list in group 5 did not field constituency candidates in Chachoengsao. Their results were as follows: Pracharaj (1,357), New Aspiration (771), Phalang Kasetrakorn (731), Prachakorn Thai (481), Kasetrakorn Thai (494), Tai Pen Tai (455), Khunnatham (248), and Prachamati (216).

Phanee won in two districts, Plaeng Yao and Thatakiap, while Wuthipong prevailed in Bang Pakong and Ban Pho. In all of these districts, Thitima came third. Indeed, with the votes in Amphoe Mueang not yet counted, Phanee seemed to be on her way to winning a seat in the House. She narrowly led Wuthipong, and was ahead of Thitima with what seemed to be a comfortable 9,139 votes. However, everyone knew that Amphoe Mueang was the core stronghold of the Chaisaeng family, where Anand and Thitima had won seats in 2001 and 2005. After all, this was one reason why the re-drawing of the constituencies by the PEC had cut off five of the 17 sub-districts and

given them to constituency 1. In the end, this measure was not enough to help Phanee win. She suffered a crushing defeat in Amphoe Mueang, coming last of the major candidates, even behind the Democrat candidates. Thitima beat Wuthipong with 27,297 to 25,602 votes, both Democrats got slightly more than 17,000 votes, and Phanee trailed hopelessly at 10,680 votes (she had received 18,940 votes in the Senate election).

I observed the vote counting at a polling station in Chachoengsao municipality. Here, one could see what was to come. Phanee got merely 49 votes, while Thitima received 203 and Wuthipong 224 votes. The Democrat candidates had 174 and 168 votes. In the end, Phanee's advantage of 9,139 votes over Thitima turned into an advantage for Thitima of 7,478 votes. One can assume that the vote canvassing networks of the Chaisaeng family—and the loyalty of the voters—in Amphoe Mueang were largely impenetrable for Phanee. Moreover, the “free” voters in favor of the Democrat candidates did not strategically switch over to Phanee in order to prevent at least one Chaisaeng from winning. Finally, Phanee's assumed advantage in Thatakiap materialized to a lesser extent than would have been necessary. She did win the district, but Thitima was relatively close (6,983 to 10,528).

Turning to the party-list result, the picture was similar to what was seen in constituency 1. Phanee's result for Phuea Phaendin was far less than that for herself, the gap being 37,064. The reasons for this difference probably were the same as in the case of Phichet.¹⁵¹ Wuthipong lost 8,672 votes on the PPP party list, which is rather modest. Unlike in the case of Itthi, however, who drew as many party list votes for PPP as the Democrats received, Wuthipong and Thitima were clearly—and remarkably—beaten by the Democrats' 70,143 votes to their 60,420 votes. In 2005, Thitima and Wuthipong together had gained 103,688 votes for the TRT party list, far more than the Democrats' combined 52,099 votes (note, though, the different constituency boundaries and the absence of Phanee). At the above-mentioned polling station, it was obvious that many people had split their votes. While Wuthipong and Chakrawan received 224 and 174 votes, respectively, the results for their parties were 135 and 276. This represents quite a change in electoral fortunes. It contributed to the national-level result of almost equal party-list results for the PPP and the Democrats.

Finally, I would like to make two general points. First, it is sometimes held that the existence of MMC generates intra-party competition in elections, with bad effects on

the stability of the party system. Voters cannot use the party label for their electoral decision-making between (two to three) competing candidates because they all run under the same label. Consequently, the candidates will rely on personal electoral networks for vote-getting. Furthermore, conflict generated between the party's candidates in the election will make a unified party stance afterwards more difficult. However, Hicken has pointed out that, "Thailand's system [of MMC] did not generate the degree of intra-party competition that occurs in systems where there are fewer seats than co-partisan candidates in a given district."¹⁵² In addition, the present author has stated that there might not be any intra-party competition in most cases, because many of the fellow-candidates might have been "hired" simply to fulfill the legal requirement that a party field the full number of candidates in any constituency it wished to contest.¹⁵³

As has been said above, the latter clearly was the case with Phanee Jarusombat and Phichet Tancharoen of Phuea Phaendin party. Neither of their running mates were "real" candidates who competed with them for the two seats available. Rather, they were there mainly because of the legal requirements of the election law. Without this requirement, Phanee and Phichet might well have run in the election alone. In constituency 1, the PPP candidates belonged to the same *phuak* that had for a long time worked jointly in politics. Thus, they approached the election not as competitors but as a team (although there had been some rumors about unspecified conflicts amongst them). In constituency 2, the two PPP candidates were brother and sister, who did not run independently against each other but as a team in order to protect the family's grip on politics in their stronghold. As for the candidates of the Democrat party, they had little reason to compete with each other, simply because they started the race knowing fully well that they would never make it to parliament anyway. Rather, they individually tried their best to achieve the maximum results for themselves and the Democrat party.

In sum, although the MMC system applied in this election, intra-party competition in Chachoengsao's two constituencies appeared to have been minimal, if it existed at all. I assume that something similar holds true for most other provinces. However, one would need reliable data from those provinces before making a definitive judgment.

The second point concerns *hua khanaen* (vote canvasser) and vote buying. One might imagine that these means of campaigning affect village-level polling sta-

tions in a way that village voters in individual polling stations overwhelmingly cast their ballots for one specific candidate. In reality, however, villages in Chachoengsao's two constituencies seem to have generally been accessible to a variety of candidates and information about candidates and political parties. Consequently, the constituency results were mirrored to varying degrees at the sub-district and municipal levels (for an example, see table 8 in appendix 3, concerning Bang Pakong district), including these units' polling stations. Thus, villagers in polling stations voted for competing candidates who one might assume to have used local leaders as vote canvassers. That would mean that these competing candidates had to secure their own canvassers in the same villages as their competitors, perhaps relying on the existence of different *phuak* in the target villages (village-level power structures might figure two or three groups). Yet, there was also room for the "free" vote for the Democrats' and other parties' candidates (assuming that they employed hardly any canvassers; of course, voters could also vote for the winners without having been asked to do so by a canvasser), for no votes, and for voting for only one candidate. In addition, the party-list vote seemed largely to have followed its own rules. Thus, the picture of electoral decision-making by voters in any given village was rather varied. It would be interesting to see what changes might occur if candidates merely relied on their and their parties' public images and open campaign techniques rather than making substantial use of private canvassing networks and money.

There were certainly results that were difficult to explain. Why, for example, would voters in *tambon* Thatakiap of Thatakiap district prefer Wuthipong over Thitima by 3,755 to 2,652 votes (still less than Phanee at 4,396), while their fellow voters in Khlong Takrao of the same district preferred Thitima over Wuthipong by 4,221 to 3,119 votes (Phanee being the winner at 6,020)? Why did voters in polling station 5 of *tambon* Thatakiap voted 286 to 63 in favor of Thitima, while their neighbors in polling station 7 voted 208 to 46 in favor of Wuthipong? Voters in polling station 12 gave Wuthipong 223 votes, but Thitima only 17, while she beat him at polling station 17 by 115 to 29 votes. In sum, there were intricacies of campaigning and decision-making that are not easy to explain without getting hold of detailed local data, which is extremely difficult if one deals with an entire province. Nevertheless, if a researcher really wants to understand the outcome of general elections in any province, it is advisable to not only use generalizations and higher-level aggregations but

also have an eye for detail and the socio-political specifics of the component localities in one's province of choice.

Conclusion

The preceding remark points to the fact that Thailand's electorate is not directed towards "nationally available categories,"¹⁵⁴ such as Conservative, Labor, and Liberal Democrat (United Kingdom); Democrats and Republicans (United States); or Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, Free Democrats, Greens, and Socialists (Germany). Almost 200 years ago, such categories had become available in England, enabling local election candidates increasingly to align themselves with such national-level categories, while their voters remained loyal to the local candidates.¹⁵⁵ It took them many decades "to vote for parties rather than men."¹⁵⁶ Similarly, an important question of German electoral history during the 19th century has concerned the "politicization of the citizens," meaning that people turned away from the traditional vote for local notables to the vote for nationally available political parties.¹⁵⁷ In this context, Rohe noted that, "Especially in rural areas, the politicization of society encountered the perseverance of parochial conditions."¹⁵⁸ The systematic developmental issue of "nationalization" regarding Europe's political systems is expressed in the following quote.

Through nationalization processes, the highly localized and territorialized politics that characterized the early phases of electoral competition in the nineteenth century is replaced by national electoral alignments and oppositions... These processes of political integration translate in the *territorial homogenization of electoral behavior*... the formation of national electorates and party systems is not only a crucial aspect of the construction of national political spaces and of the structuring of party systems, but also of the development of a *political democratic citizenship*. The nationalization of electoral alignments and political parties has meant the transition from a fragmented and clientelistic type of politics dominated by local political personalities to *national representation*. National party organizations structured along nationwide cleavages replaced an atomized type of political representation.¹⁵⁹

While most Western countries followed comparable patterns of developing relatively stable national political party systems, and indeed have since experienced both "party dealignment" and a change in the structure of political parties in the past few decades

(see appendix 4),¹⁶⁰ such parties are not the mainstay of Thai election contests (with the partial exception of the Democrat party).¹⁶¹ There are certainly socio-economic cleavages in Thailand. However, these socio-structural conditions have not been translated into political parties.¹⁶² For this reason, most voters cannot translate their group identity (provided they have it) into corresponding electoral choices. Moreover, since the Thai party system is characterized by its fluidity, most voters have been prevented from developing long-term affective bonds with such units, and then using them to reduce the complexity of their electoral decisions.¹⁶³ Young people in some of Thailand's southern provinces (and in Bangkok) find the Democrat party as a relatively stable political object in their environment, and thus can identify with it during the period of primary political socialization as well as in a range of subsequent elections. Young people in the North, the Northeast, the East, and Central Thailand do not have this opportunity.

In the absence of nationwide categories for political orientation (including the ideological continuum of Left-Right/Labor-Conservatives),¹⁶⁴ electoral decisions by individual voters mostly remain determined by local conditions,¹⁶⁵ certainly as far as the constituency candidates are concerned. Chachoengsao is a good example for this situation, which will probably be found in the great majority of Thai provinces. However, in some areas, such as Suphanburi and perhaps Sa Kaew, people in entire provinces seem to have developed relatively strong identifications with two local notables and their families, Banharn Silapa-archa and Sanoh Thienthong.¹⁶⁶ This is not necessarily the case with the more limited scope of constituency-level *phuak* in Chachoengsao and other provinces. Here, the main locus of identification might be the *phuak* themselves, and perhaps include some of their extended support personnel at lower levels.¹⁶⁷ In turn, these personnel might use their influence in *tambon* and village-level socio-political networks to induce the voters' decisions in favor of their preferred candidates.¹⁶⁸

This kind of interpersonal communication more generally involves the flow and discussion of political information between an individual voter and his family members, relatives,¹⁶⁹ neighbors, colleagues, friends, and groups he or she might be a member of (for example, community groups, temple committees, fellow local politicians). As such, it contributes to opinion formation, which in turn will influence the voter's decision. A socially more direct impact on voting behavior might stem from social bonds and obligations, seniority, *barami*, patronage, elements of collective de-

cision-making in families, among relatives, and village-level groupings, and vote buying. This does not mean that, for example, *hua khanaen*-voter communications¹⁷⁰ are entirely one-way (except in relationships of a coercive or otherwise very asymmetrical nature),¹⁷¹ and that the former will not fare better if they can present voters with good reasons (beyond money and patronage) for the suggested choice. Moreover, as has been pointed out above about Chachoengsao, voters in any village do not seem to be entirely covered by relational voting, leaving space for the Democrat and other candidates to make inroads. Finally, some features of village-level socio-political culture (the voters' value predispositions) may play a role in facilitating certain voter choices, both for constituency candidates and nationally visible party leaders.¹⁷²

This situation is quite different from what we observe in a number of provinces in southern Thailand (excluding the Muslim-dominated provinces), where the Democrat party rules supreme. In those areas, as Marc Askew tells us, we do not only find the usual pragmatic engineering of power prevalent in other provinces. Rather, there is also a "widespread popular identification with the party as a 'party of the south'" (indicating a regional cleavage). However, while voters in other provinces might well discount the Democrats as a merely regionalist party (and while this fact might well hinder the party's expansion to other regions), Askew emphasizes that the southern party supporters combine their regional identity with a claim to normative exemplarity as to the national-level political system.¹⁷³ In any case, the Democrats' strong foundation in the southern provinces allowed the party to defend its turf against the "intruding" Thaksin/TRT juggernaut in the elections of 2001 and 2005 by determining how voters cast their ballots. It also allowed it to enforce its election boycott in 2006, leading to the state crisis that ended the Thaksin government with a military coup.

Finally, Bangkok voters, compared with their fellows in most other provinces, are more rational in their electoral decision-making. "Rational" here refers to the starkly diminished significance of localized interpersonal (and often informal) political communications and of affective bonds to a specific political party in national elections. Thus, voter choices are more strongly based on the voters' policy preferences, their evaluations of the situation before the election, the performance of the incumbent government and especially its leader, and expectations regarding future performance.¹⁷⁴ As a result, during the past three decades, the majority of Bangkokians chose the Democrats (the sole long-established and relatively stable political party

available to the voters) only when they felt that there was no other more promising option. This is the reason why the party was defeated between 1979 and 2005 by Samak Sundaravej's Thai Citizen party, Chamlong Srimueang's Palang Dharma party, and Thaksin's TRT.¹⁷⁵ It was only the political turmoil since the beginning of 2006, the dissolution of TRT by the Constitutional Court, and Thaksin's self-exile that turned a disadvantage of 4 to 32 MPs in February 2005 into an advantage of 27 to 9 (for the People's Power party) in the election of December 2007. At the same time, the TRT (PPP) party-list share dropped from 57.6 percent to 40.5 percent, while that of the Democrats jumped from 33.6 percent to 53.1 percent.¹⁷⁶

Across all the four settings of voting behavior briefly described above, at least two more factors influence opinion-building and thus electoral choice. First, modern mass communication has enormously expanded the information available even to rural voters, supplying them with ideas about policy issues and political personnel, both during election campaigns and outside of them. At the same time, it has also tremendously increased the government's means to influence opinion formation in its favor (though the use of the Internet has increased, it is not yet, and might never be, in a position to compete with TV). Most important in this respect is television since newspapers reach a much more limited audience, though their impact is probably significant in Bangkok and other urban centers. Nearly all TV stations remain under state control. It was probably not accidental that, even before the 2001 election, Thaksin had bought the country's only independent TV station, iTV, and soon had it toe the government line. An example from the opposite end is ASTV, which broadcasts via satellite from Hong Kong. This is Sondhi Limthongkul's propaganda tool used to spread the message of the so-called People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD).¹⁷⁷ Without it, the PAD would hardly have been able to establish a relatively solid following in many provinces outside of Bangkok. However, it remains to be seen what the effects of this influence on opinion building and electoral decision-making will be in coming elections.¹⁷⁸ The same can be said for the news show "The Truth Today" (*khwamching wann*), which was organized by members of the Democratic Alliance Against Dictatorship (DAAD) to counter the PAD's veritable propaganda machine (this show was taken off the air as soon as it became clear that Abhisit Vejjajiva would become prime minister).¹⁷⁹ However, the DAAD and the government are seriously challenged to compete with the PAD on the front of political communication.

In any case, the past four years, starting with the election of February 2005, have tremendously expanded the flow of political communication to the voters at all levels, due to the intensity, length, and frequency of highly visible political events and processes (the implementation of “populist” policies since 2001 must have had a similar effect). There have been three elections (2005, 2006, and 2007), one military coup (2006), one referendum (2007), the renewed protests by the PAD (since early 2008), the spectacular government take-over by a Democrat-led coalition (December 2008), and the continued protest activities of the DAAD. Thus, the interplay of mass communication, election and referendum campaigns, and localized communication must have had a substantial impact on the level of the citizens’ political information. Consequently, it will be difficult to insist on the idea that the great majority of Thai voters living outside of Bangkok are politically ignorant, and for this reason reject their electoral choices.

Second, although the 1997 constitution replaced the multi-member constituency system with a single-member constituency system, this change did nothing to de-localize voting behavior in Thailand. Having only MMC or SMC made it difficult for voters to express their national-level political preferences clearly, because they could only cast their ballots for local-level candidates who were members of political parties. Observers thus could not tell whether a vote for a local candidate also reflected a preference for the candidate’s party and/or its leader. A voter might have had no interest in the preferred candidate’s party. He might have had a strong interest in both the candidate and the party. He might have liked the party leader, and thought that the party’s candidate had a good chance of winning. Alternatively, the voter might have liked a candidate but also preferred the high-profile leader of a different party that, however, did not field any promising candidate in his constituency. This situation had led many observers to reduce the vote to what could be seen clearly—the vote for local candidates—and thus believe that up-country voters were uninterested in national-level politics, when this might in fact not had been the case, especially given the expansion of the mass media. The 1997 constitution fundamentally changed this situation by introducing proportional voting for 100 MPs based on national-level lists drawn up by the political parties. Voters were then able irrefutably to express their political opinions as to which party or party leader they thought deserved to be supported at the *national* level. At the same time, the party lists also created an additional incentive for the voters to observe national politics, before and especially during elec-

tion campaigns. Moreover, political parties were provided with a strong incentive not to limit their electioneering to constituency contests, but to systematically tap the party-list vote by making attractive policies and leaders substantial parts of their campaigns (whether and to what extent parties reacted on the incentive is, of course, a different question).

The party list as a new means of political expression was so successful that, during the drafting of the 2007 constitution, some hardliners wanted to abolish it. They were more comfortable with a fragmented constituency vote in which national preferences remained invisible, and could thus be denied access to the decision-making process by the Bangkok-based establishment.¹⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the 2007 constitution retained 80 party-list MPs elected from eight regional party lists. Although regional, these are still party lists from which voters have to make their choices, and the total party list votes are tallied up nationally. Voters, parties, and the public can thus easily see how the aggregated electoral preferences played out. This cannot but strengthen the importance of this means of expressing one's national political preferences, and of campaigning on this pool of votes.

In conclusion, voting at a polling station in Chachoengsao, or anywhere else in Thailand, might seem to be a simple act.¹⁸¹ However, it is preceded by an intricate set of factors that serve to reduce the complexity of the voter's choice to two specific marks he or she decides to make on the ballot papers.

Camboja
22 จังหวัด

จังหวัดสีน้ำเงิน (10 จังหวัด)

- 1. จังหวัดบanteay meanchey
- 2. จังหวัดbanteay sri
- 3. จังหวัดbattambang
- 4. จังหวัดborey
- 5. จังหวัดborey
- 6. จังหวัดborey
- 7. จังหวัดborey
- 8. จังหวัดborey
- 9. จังหวัดborey
- 10. จังหวัดborey

จังหวัดสีเหลือง (12 จังหวัด)

- 11. จังหวัดborey
- 12. จังหวัดborey
- 13. จังหวัดborey
- 14. จังหวัดborey
- 15. จังหวัดborey
- 16. จังหวัดborey
- 17. จังหวัดborey
- 18. จังหวัดborey
- 19. จังหวัดborey
- 20. จังหวัดborey
- 21. จังหวัดborey
- 22. จังหวัดborey

[illegible][illegible]

Appendix 2

Table 5: Election results in Chachoengsao from 1983-2007

Election	Main Candidates	Party Affiliation	Votes	MPs
1983^a	Anand Chaisaeng	Kao Na	50,532	X
3 MP	Thiwa Phunsombat	no party	46,690	X
1 Const.	Kraison Nanthamanop	no party	38,860	X
	Arthit Urairat	no party	37,495	
	Chumphon Maninet	no party	33,231	
	Kasem Sorasakkasem	Prachakorn Thai	24,789	
	Wanchai Komon	Puangchon Chao Thai	19,754	
1986^b	Kraison Nanthamanop	Kao Na	36,556	X
4 MP	Chaturon Chaisaeng	Democrats	30,830	X
2 Const.	Anand Chaisaeng	Democrats	30,652	
	Phinit Jarusombat	Ratsadorn	29,017	
	Suchart Tancharoen	Democrats	53,952	X
	Chakraphan Thattiyakun	Kao Na	39,306	X
	Thiwa Phunsombat	Democrats	36,988	
1988^c	Chaturon Chaisaeng	Prachachon	54,308	X
4 MP	Arthit Urairat	Kitprachakhom	46,116	X
2 Const.	Anand Chaisaeng	Prachachon	36,972	
	Phinit Jarusombat	Ratsadorn	36,367	
	Suchart Tancharoen	Chart Thai	51,364	X
	Thiwa Phunsombat	Muanchon	46,689	X
	Chakraphan Thattiyakun	Kao Na	44,576	
1992^d	Arthit Urairat	Samakhitham	57,749	X
March	Chaturon Chaisaeng	New Aspiration	54,445	X
4 MP	Anand Chaisaeng	New Aspiration	53,698	
2 Const.	Suchart Tancharoen	Samakhitham	60,078	X
	Chakraphan Thattiyakun	Samakhitham	41,240	X
	Thiwa Phunsombat	New Aspiration	34,841	
1992^e	Arthit Urairat	Seritham	60,579	X
Sept.	Phanida Kasemmongkhon	Seritham	40,976	X
4 MP	Anand Chaisaeng	New Aspiration	38,893	
2 Const.	Suchart Tancharoen	Chart Pattana	61,700	X
	Itthi Sirilatthayakon	Chart Pattana	53,347	X
	Chaturon Chaisaeng	New Aspiration	46,579	

	Chakraphan Thattiyakun	Seritham	38,435	
1995^f	Chaturon Chaisaeng	New Aspiration	89,192	X
4 MP	Arthit Urairat	Seritham	74,198	X
2 Const.	Wuthipong Chaisaeng	New Aspiration	37,649	
	Phanida Kasemmongkhon	Chart Thai	19,365	
	Nokon Watthanaphanom	Seritham	17,606	
	Itthi Sirilatthayakon	Chart Pattana	89,704	X
	Suchart Tancharoen	Chart Thai	82,528	X
	Chakraphan Thattiyakun	Seritham	35,189	
1996^g	Chaturon Chaisaeng	New Aspiration	88,667	X
4 MP	Kraison Nanthamanop	Democrats	71,079	X
2 Const.	Wuthipong Chaisaeng	New Aspiration	67,583	
	Itthi Sirilatthayakon	Chart Pattana	86,491	X
	Suchart Tancharoen	Thai	68,061	X
	Chakraphan Thattiyakun	Democrats	45,903	
2001^h	Anand Chaisaeng	Thai Rak Thai	39,531	X
4 MP	Ekachai Thabbananon	Democrats	19,336	
4 Const.	Itthi Sirilatthayakon	Chart Pattana	34,879	X
	Chakraphan Thattiyakun	Thai Rak Thai	18,107	
	Suchart Tancharoen	New Aspiration	24,324	X
	Somsak Suwannawong	Thai Rak Thai	19,462	
	Wuthipong Chaisaeng	Thai Rak Thai	41,807	X
	Chakrawan Thuamcharoen	Ratsadorn	18,207	
2005ⁱ	Thitima Chaisaeng	Thai Rak Thai	51,726	X
4 MP	Phatcharakriengchai Singhanat	Democrats	24,898	
4 Const.	Somchai Atsawachaisophon	Thai Rak Thai	50,410	X
	Chalee Charoensuk	Democrats	19,587	
	Suchart Tancharoen	Thai Rak Thai	61,571	X
	Wuthipong Chaisaeng	Thai Rak Thai	52,671	X
	Chakrawan Thuamcharoen	Democrats	30,439	
2006	Thitima Chaisaeng	Thai Rak Thai No votes Invalid votes	38,372 33,879 9,727	X
Annulled	Somchai Atsawachaisophon	Thai Rak Thai No votes Invalid votes	40,953 27,632 12,456	X
4 MP	Suchart Tancharoen	Thai Rak Thai No votes Invalid votes	51,255 15,725 12,102	X

4 Const.	Wuthipong Chaisaeng	Thai Rak Thai No votes Invalid votes	40,606 31,327 11,289	X
2007^j	Phichet Tancharoen	Phuea Phaendin	85,821	X
4 MP	Itthi Sirilatthayakon	People's Power	75,994	X
2 Const.	Somchai Atsawachaisophon	People's Power	49,940	
	Chalee Charoensuk	Democrats	33,556	
	Phatcharakriengchai Singhanat	Democrats	18,930	
	Wuthipong Chaisaeng	People's Power	69,092	X
	Thitima Chaisaeng	People's Power	62,331	X
	Phanee Jarusombat	Phuea Phaendin	54,029	
	Chakrawan Thuamcharoen	Democrats	46,086	
	Chavalit Charoenpon	Democrats	42,803	

Sources: Official election reports.

^a Total number of candidates: 11 (Chachoengsao comprised one constituency)

^b Total number of candidates: 46 (24 in constituency 1, 22 in constituency 2)

^c Total number of candidates: 40 (20 in each constituency)

^d Total number of candidates: 16 (eight in each constituency)

^e Total number of candidates: 16 (eight in each constituency)

^f Total number of candidates: 16 (10 in constituency 1, six in constituency 2)

^g Total number of candidates: 16 (eight in each constituency)

^h Total number of candidates: 22 (six each in constituencies 1-3, four in constituency 4)

ⁱ Total number of candidates: 11 (three each in constituencies 1-3, two in constituency 4)

^j Total number of candidates: 36 (20 in constituency 1, 16 in constituency 2)

Appendix 3

Basic electoral statistics

Table 6: Basic electoral data of constituency 1 by district

	Mueang	Bang Nam Prioew	Khlong Khuean	Bang Khla	Ratchasan	Phanom Sarakham	Sanam Chai Khet ^a	Total ^b
Eligible voters	20,507	58,880	10,263	33,906	9,252	57,145		189,953
Turnout	15,394	43,809	7,822	26,517	7,398	41,834		142,774
%	75.07	74.40	76.22	78.21	79.96	73.21		75.16
Good Const.	13,800	41,203	7,287	24,770	6,941	39,109		133,110
%	89.65	94.05	93.16	93.41	93.82	93.49		93.23
Good PL	13,772	39,795	7,017	23,781	6,585	37,756		128,706
%	89.46	90.84	89.71	89.68	89.01	90.25		90.15
Invalid Const.	319	1,063	238	637	203	971		3,431
%	2.07	2.43	3.04	2.40	2.74	2.32		2.40
Invalid PL	876	2,822	562	1,834	585	2,723		9,402
%	5.69	6.44	7.18	6.92	7.91	6.51		6.59
No vote Const.	1,275	1,543	297	1,110	254	1,754		6,233
%	8.28	3.52	3.80	4.19	3.43	4.19		4.37
No vote PL	746	1,192	243	902	228	1,355		4,666
%	4.85	2.72	3.11	3.40	3.08	3.24		3.27
Max. votes Const.	27,600	82,406	14,574	49,540	13,882	78,218		266,220
Actual votes	24,648	71,926	13,038	43,537	12,146	69,641		234,936
Missing	2,952	10,480	1,536	6,003	1,736	8,577		31,284
%	10.70	12.72	10.54	12.12	12.51	10.97		11.75

Source: A CD with the election data provided by the PEC.¹⁸²

^a The statistics for Sanam Chai Khet are missing from the PEC-CD containing the election data.

^b Without Sanam Chai Khet.

Table 7: Basic electoral data of constituency 2 by district

	Mueang	Bang Pakong	Ban Pho	Plaeng Yao	Thatakiap	Total
Eligible voters	84,732	60,524	36,452	27,442	29,207	238,357
Turnout	63,162 ^a	44,596	27,540 ^a	20,956	19,814	176,068
%	74.54	73.64	75.55	76.36	67.84	73.87
Good Const.	57,244	41,142	25,607	19,515	18,732	162,240
%	90.63	92.25	92.98	93.12	94.54	92.15
Good PL	57,079	40,578	24,982	18,879	17,911	159,429
%	90.440	91.00	90.71	90.09	90.40	90.55
Invalid Const.	1,427	1,049	669	580	549	4,274
%	2.26	2.355	2.43	2.77	2.77	2.43
Invalid PL	3,032	2,226	1,603	1,381	1,466	9,708
%	4.80	4.99	5.82	6.59	7.40	5.51
No vote Const.	4,491	2,405	1,264	861	533	9,554
%	7.11	5.39	4.59	4.11	2.69	5.43
No vote PL	3,050	1,792	954	696	437	6,929
%	4.83	4.02	3.46	3.32	2.21	3.94
Max. votes Const.	114,488	82,284	51,214	39,030	37,464	324,480
Actual votes	106,856	75,379	46,465	35,328	33,574	297,602 ^b
Missing	7,632	6,905	4,749	3,702	3,890	26,878
%	6.67	8.39	9.27	9.49	10.38	8.28

Source: A CD with the election data provided by the PEC.

^a For some reason, one voter is missing in the party-list turnout.

^b The results given for all candidates given in table 4 above amount to a total of 302,949 votes. Both the constituency and the party-list votes are lower in the present table, because they are based on the returns at the district level, including the central polling station, but excluding the votes cast in other provinces and abroad.

Table 8: Election results in Bang Pakong district, by sub-district and municipality

	Total	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Mun1	Mun2	Mun3	Mun4	Mun5
1 Phanee	13,181 (17.5)	948 (23.8)	1,027 (15.0)	368 (18.7)	2,050 (19.5)	1,271 (15.4)	847 (27.3)	1,825 (22.6)	422 (12.6)	829 (23.5)	409 (19.3)	576 (20.7)	659 (9.5)	637 (20.2)	749 (13.0)	244 (10.0)	226 (15.8)
2 Sunthorn	2,586 (3.4)	128 (3.2)	209 (3.1)	143 (7.2)	300 (2.8)	214 (2.6)	77 (2.5)	286 (3.5)	87 (2.6)	118 (3.4)	49 (2.3)	68 (2.4)	200 (2.9)	350 (11.1)	224 (3.9)	48 (1.9)	59 (4.1)
PL PP	3,449 (8.5)	226 (10.8)	270 (7.3)	125 (11.8)	656 (11.6)	280 (6.3)	213 (12.5)	417 (9.7)	132 (7.4)	129 (7.0)	118 (9.9)	155 (10.2)	187 (5.0)	221 (13.3)	203 (6.4)	69 (5.0)	29 (3.9)
Const. PP	20.9%	27.0	18.1	25.9	22.3	18.0	29.8	26.1	15.2	26.9	21.6	23.1	12.4	31.3	16.9	15.0	19.9
3 Chaovalit	12,570 (16.7)	605 (15.2)	1,426 (20.8)	212 (10.7)	1,081 (10.3)	1,233 (14.9)	441 (14.2)	918 (11.4)	623 (18.6)	626 (17.8)	361 (17.0)	575 (20.6)	1,612 (23.1)	603 (19.1)	1,392 (24.1)	445 (17.8)	199 (13.9)
4 Chakrawan	13,006 (17.3)	632 (15.9)	1,185 (17.3)	272 (13.8)	1,589 (15.1)	1,415 (17.1)	348 (11.2)	962 (11.9)	578 (17.2)	735 (20.9)	353 (16.6)	489 (17.6)	1,600 (23.0)	529 (16.7)	1,288 (22.3)	530 (21.2)	296 (20.7)
PL DEM	19,202 (47.3)	930 (44.6)	1,978 (53.3)	444 (41.9)	2,041 (36.2)	1,967 (44.0)	626 (36.7)	1,831 (42.5)	753 (41.9)	1,087 (59.1)	568 (47.9)	781 (51.2)	2,113 (56.4)	861 (51.7)	1,927 (60.4)	634 (46.4)	370 (50.3)
Const. DEM	34.0%	31.1	38.1	24.5	25.4	32.0	25.4	23.3	35.8	38.7	33.6	38.2	46.1	35.8	46.4	39.0	34.6
11 Wuthipong	17,284 (22.9)	918 (23.0)	1,364 (19.9)	472 (23.9)	2,893 (27.5)	2,076 (25.1)	745 (24.0)	2,218 (27.5)	794 (23.7)	612 (17.4)	526 (24.8)	566 (20.3)	1,422 (20.4)	530 (16.8)	963 (16.7)	640 (25.7)	324 (22.6)
12 Thitima	13,162 (17.5)	609 (15.3)	1,043 (15.2)	382 (19.4)	2,263 (21.5)	1,713 (20.7)	515 (16.6)	1,501 (18.6)	676 (20.2)	466 (13.2)	360 (16.9)	412 (14.8)	1,078 (15.5)	401 (12.7)	768 (13.3)	516 (20.7)	272 (19.0)
PL PPP	14,660 (36.1)	733 (35.1)	1,154 (31.1)	351 (33.1)	2,586 (45.9)	1,868 (41.8)	719 (42.1)	1,750 (40.6)	673 (37.5)	473 (25.7)	404 (34.0)	467 (30.6)	1,157 (30.7)	436 (26.2)	825 (25.9)	565 (41.3)	294 (40.0)
Const. PPP	40.4%	38.3	35.1	43.3	49.0	45.8	40.6	46.1	43.9	30.6	41.7	35.1	35.9	29.5	30.0	46.4	41.6
1-12 in %	95.3%	96.4	91.4	93.7	96.6	95.9	95.8	95.5	94.9	96.2	96.9	96.4	90.0	96.5	93.1	97.1	96.0
PL in %	91.9%	90.5	91.6	86.8	93.8	92.1	91.3	92.8	86.8	91.8	91.8	92.0	92.2	91.2	92.6	92.8	94.3

Source: A CD with the election data provided by the PEC; author's calculations.

Appendix 4

Stages of political party development in Europe

Table 9: Stages of political party development in Europe

Type of party	Elite or cadre party (19th century)	Mass party (1918/1880-1960)	Catch-all party (1945-end of 70ties)	Professional electoral party or Cartel party (1970-onwards)
Social basis	The old political class based on the propertied classes (until about 1918)	Based on class conflict	Dissolution of class-based membership; expansion to potentially include all groups of voters	Based on social change, mainly the creation of many new social milieus; tendency to create a new political class
Degree of inclusion	Restricted suffrage	Enfranchisement and mass suffrage	Mass suffrage	Mass suffrage
Distribution of political resources	Highly restricted	Relatively concentrated	Less concentrated	Relatively diffused
Basis for claims to support	Ascribed social status; notables	Representation of group; ideologically based program charisma	Policy effectiveness in limited policy areas	Managerial skills, efficiency; political entrepreneur
Idea of representation	“Trustee” without binding mandate	Delegate	Free representative	Relatively isolated; partly compensated by increased responsiveness
Basic goal of the political party	Safeguarding of privileges; attack on the privileges of others	Struggle to push through alternative concepts of society	Pushing through fragmented policies	Pushing through fragmented policies, which tend to become more similar
Relations between members and party elite	Elite are the ordinary members	Bottom up; elite accountable to members	Top down; members are organized cheerleaders for elite	Stratarchy; mutual autonomy

Character of membership	Small and elitist; clique parties	Large and homogeneous; actively recruited and encapsulated; membership a logical consequence of identity; emphasis on rights and obligations; mobilized mass parties	Membership open to all (heterogeneous) and encouraged; rights emphasized but not obligations; membership marginal to individual's identity	Neither rights nor obligations important (distinction between members and nonmembers blurred); emphasis on members as individuals rather than as organization; members valued for contribution to legitimizing myth
Election campaigns	Managed; marginal importance, without great demands on time and money	Mobilization; very labor and material intensive; big role for party activists	Competitive; labor and money intensive; use of mass media; big role for party activists	Contained; professional campaigns; capital intensive; party activists or party workers lose their functions
Party channels of communications	Inter-personal networks	Party provides its own channels of communications	Party competes for access to nonparty channels of communication	Party gains privileged access to state-regulated channels of communication
Party finance	Personal contacts; elite's own funds plus patronage by interested people	Members' fees and contributions	Contribution from a wide variety of sources, including members fees, state subventions, and donations	Increased state subventions plus active fund-raising; increased corruption in state projects

Sources: Richard S. Katz. 1996. "Party Organization and Finance." In *Comparing Democracies: Elections and Voting in Global Perspective*, eds. Lawrence LeDuc, Richard G. Niemi, and Pippa Norris, pp. 107-133. Thousand Oakes, London, New Delhi: Sage, and Klaus von Beyme. 2000. *Parteien im Wandel: Von den Volksparteien zu den professionalisierten Wählerparteien*. Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag.

Appendix 5

Tribute to my long-time landlord, Khun Wuthisak Sowana

Royally sponsored cremation on November 2, 2008, presided over by Wuthipong Chaisaeng, minister of science and technology



Endnotes

¹ Visiting scholar, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand; senior researcher, Southeast Asian Studies, University of Passau, Germany.

² As with my field research on the referendum, I used this new round of elections to post contributions on the blog *New Mandala: New Perspectives on Mainland South-east Asia*. It is located at the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University (<http://rspas.anu.edu.au/rmap/newmandala/>). Its bloggers are Andrew Walker and Nicholas Farrelly. I thank Nich for editing and arranging the following ten posts, including 101 pictures. 1) Candidacy Registration in Chachoengsao (November 14). 2) PEC Electoral Calendar (November 19). 3) Taking an oath for a clean and fair election (November 27). 4) Chachoengsao: Celebrating the King (November 28). 5) Chachoengsao: Candidacies Confirmed (December 9). 6) Chachoengsao: Celebrating the King's 80th Birthday Anniversary (December 16). 7) Chachoengsao: Chaturon Chaisaeng speaks (December 17). 8) Chachoengsao: Provincial election commission advertises the election (December 20). 9) Chachoengsao: Advance voting (December 23). 10) Chachoengsao: Chaturon Chaisaeng speaks again (December 23). One purpose of writing these posts was to prepare the current report.

³ For the national-level context of this election, see Michael H. Nelson. 2008. "Thaksin's 2005 Electoral Triumph: Looking Back from the Election in 2007." Hong Kong: Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong (Working Paper Series No. 98), and a forthcoming paper, tentatively entitled "Thailand's Democracy Restored? The Constitution Referendum and the Election of 2007."

⁴ The constitution dealt with the ECT in Sections 229 to 241. In addition, there was an organic law on the ECT, which stipulated the details. This act, พระราชบัญญัติ ประกอบรัฐธรรมนูญว่าด้วย คณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง พ.ศ. ๒๕๕๐, was announced in *ราชกิจจานุเบกษา เล่ม ๑๒๔ ตอนที่ ๖๔ ก ๗ ตุลาคม ๒๕๕๐* หน้า ๑-๒๑. The International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) had prepared an English translation of the ECT Act. It could be downloaded from the IFES web site ("The Organic Act on the Election Commission B.E. 2550 – Unofficial Translation."). As with all of IFES's translations, they are best used in conjunction with the Thai-language original versions.

⁵ The previous PEC had allowed me to listen in to their consideration of cases of electoral fraud. This PEC, however, asked me to leave the room every time cases had to be considered. Thus, there was very little of interest any longer to be gained by observing the PEC meetings. Maybe this reflected an ECT policy. An academic colleague of mine had approached the ECT to analyze anonymous case files in order to learn more about electoral fraud and the PECs' and ECT's handling of this phenomenon. He was repeatedly refused and even warned not to pursue the matter. Contrary to the ECT's own slogan, transparency clearly is not its strength.

⁶ In local elections, there will be election commissions located in the offices of the municipalities, *tambon* administrative organizations, and provincial administrative organizations, with the respective *palat* (head of the local governments' employees) as director.

⁷ See ระเบียบคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง ว่าด้วยการเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎร พ.ศ. ๒๕๕๐. This core election-governing ECT regulation was available in an English translation pre-

pared by IFES, and could be downloaded from its web site (“Regulation of the Election Commission (EC) on Election of the Members of House of Representatives B.E. 2550 (2007) – Unofficial Translation”).

⁸ ระเบียบคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง ว่าด้วยผู้อำนวยการการเลือกตั้งประจำเขตเลือกตั้ง และคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้งประจำเขตเลือกตั้ง พ.ศ. ๒๕๕๐. For the source, see endnote 10.

⁹ ระเบียบคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง ว่าด้วยค่าตอบแทนผู้อำนวยการการเลือกตั้งประจำเขตเลือกตั้ง และคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้งประจำเขตเลือกตั้ง อนุกรรมการประจำอำเภอ กรรมการประจำหน่วยเลือกตั้ง และผู้ที่ได้รับแต่งตั้งให้ช่วยเหลือการปฏิบัติงานในการเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎรและการได้มาซึ่งสมาชิกวุฒิสภา พ.ศ. ๒๕๕๐. For the source, see endnote 10.

¹⁰ คู่มือ ผู้อำนวยการการเลือกตั้งประจำเขตเลือกตั้ง และคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้งประจำเขตเลือกตั้ง ในการเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎร. กรุงเทพฯ: สำนักงานคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง, 2550.

¹¹ คำสั่งคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง ที่ ๒๘๖/๒๕๕๐ เรื่อง แต่งตั้งผู้อำนวยการการเลือกตั้งประจำเขตเลือกตั้ง และคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้งประจำเขตเลือกตั้ง สำหรับการเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎร เป็นการเลือกตั้งทั่วไป พ.ศ. ๒๕๕๐. Attached to this order was the list of directors and committee members of Chachoengsao. The order and the list were printed on page 31 and 32 of a PEC-produced book containing information on the election, which was distributed to all candidates. The document is สรุปข้อมูลการเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎรแบบแบ่งเขตเลือกตั้ง จังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา พ.ศ. 2550 (เลือกตั้งวันที่ 12 ธันวาคม 2550). สำนักงานคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง ประจำจังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา 19 พฤศจิกายน 2550.

¹² An example is คำสั่งคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้งประจำเขตเลือกตั้งที่ ๑ จังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา ที่ ๖/๒๕๕๐ เรื่อง แต่งตั้งคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้งประจำอำเภอสนามชัยเขต จังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา. This order, dated November 5, 2007, can be found on page 37 of the source mentioned in endnote 10.

¹³ These orders, also dated November 5, 2007 can be found on pages 52-63 of the source mentioned in endnote 10.

¹⁴ See ระเบียบวาระการประชุม กกต.เขต ผอ.กกต.เขต (ทั้ง ๒ เขต) ร่วมกับอนุประจำอำเภอ ๑๑ อำเภอ และ สนง.กกต.จว.ฉช. เพื่อเตรียมความพร้อมการเลือกตั้ง ส.ส. วันพุธที่ ๒๐ พฤศจิกายน ๒๕๕๐ เวลา ๑๓.๐๐ น. ณ ห้องประชุม ๒ ชั้น ๔ ศาลากลางจังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา.

¹⁵ The full list of polling stations can be found on pages 86-146 of the source mentioned in endnote 10.

¹⁶ As part of the election utensils, polling station committees received a booklet containing 14 forms of different colors, including a list of all the forms and one concerning all the items of election utensils to be checked upon receiving the ballot boxes. This booklet was headlined สมุดรายงานเหตุการณ์ประจำหน่วยการเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎร เขตเลือกตั้ง เอกสารแบบพิมพ์และประกาศ. At the top, there were fields for filling in the number of the polling stations and their locations.

¹⁷ คู่มือปฏิบัติงาน ของเจ้าพนักงานผู้ดำเนินการเลือกตั้งประจำหน่วยเลือกตั้ง ในการเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎร. กรุงเทพฯ: ด้านกิจการบริหารงานเลือกตั้ง สำนักงานคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง.

¹⁸ วิถีทัศน์ “การปฏิบัติหน้าที่ของคณะกรรมการประจำหน่วยเลือกตั้ง” ในการเลือกตั้ง ส.ส. พ.ศ. ๒๕๕๐. กรุงเทพฯ: สำนักพัฒนาบุคลากร สำนักงานคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง.

¹⁹ On October 17, 2007, the ECT officially announced the population figures, the number of MPs, and the number of constituencies for all 76 provinces (ประกาศคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง เรื่อง จำนวนสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎรและเขตเลือกตั้งของแต่ละจังหวัด สำหรับการเลือกตั้งแบบแบ่งเขตเลือกตั้ง).

²⁰ Not all PECs had to perform this task, because there were 31 provinces that had only up to three MPs. The 400 constituency MPs were elected in 157 constituencies, divided into four SMCs, 63 two-member and 90 three-member constituencies. The ECT officially announced the names of the provinces with up to three MPs on October 19, 2007 (ประกาศคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง เรื่อง การกำหนดเขตเลือกตั้งแบบแบ่งเขตเลือกตั้งสำหรับจังหวัดที่มีสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎรได้ไม่เกินสามคน). After the ECT had decided upon the PECs’ suggestions as how to divide their provinces into electoral constituencies, it officially announced the result in the Government Gazette (ประกาศคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง เรื่อง การแบ่งเขตเลือกตั้งสำหรับการเลือกตั้งแบบแบ่งเขตเลือกตั้ง ในจังหวัดที่มีสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎรได้เกินสามคน, dated October 19, 2007).

²¹ รัฐธรรมนูญแห่งราชอาณาจักรไทย พ.ศ. ๒๕๕๐. The foreign law bureau of the Thai Council of State has prepared an English translation of the new 2007 constitution. It can be downloaded from the web site of the Asian Legal Information Institute. An unofficial translation had also been prepared by IFES in cooperation with the Political Section and the Public Diplomacy Office of the US Embassy, Bangkok. There is also a commercial translation; see รัฐธรรมนูญแห่งราชอาณาจักรไทย ๒๕๕๐. *Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand 2007*. Translated by Preecha Kanetnong. กรุงเทพฯ: ฝ่ายวิชาการสุทรไพศาล, 2008.

²² พระราชบัญญัติ ประกอบรัฐธรรมนูญว่าด้วยการเลือกตั้ง สมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎรและการได้มาซึ่งสมาชิกวุฒิสภา พ.ศ. ๒๕๕๐. IFES has prepared an English translation of the election act. It can be downloaded from its web site (“Organic Act on Election of Members of the House of Representatives and Installation of Senators B.E. 2550 – Unofficial Translation.”).

²³ The ECT’s election regulation, in article 6 (II), stipulated that “at least” three models had to be devised. The PEC of Nakorn Ratchasima took the phrase “at least” seriously and devised five models of how to divide the province into six constituencies; see its Power Point presentation ประชุมรับฟังความเห็น เกี่ยวกับการแบ่งเขตเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎร วันจันทร์ที่ 8 ตุลาคม 2550 ณ หอประชุมเปรมติณสูลานนท์ จัดโดย สำนักงานคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง ประจำจังหวัดนครราชสีมา.

²⁴ The PEC members were relatively new in their jobs, having been appointed only about three months earlier (คำสั่งคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง ที่ ๑๑๒/๒๕๕๐ เรื่อง แต่งตั้งคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้งประจำจังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา [ECT Order No. 112/2007 concerning the appointment of the election commission of Chachoengsao province, dated July 3, 2007]).

²⁵ On the provincial administration’s official web site, the map on the administrative boundaries within the province also showed that Plaeng Yao and Thatakiap were not connected. However, the tourist map on the same web site showed a tiny connection

between both districts. The products map on www.thaitambon.com/Maps mirrored the first map on the provincial web site. The set of documents with the public responses on the three models also contained two announcements of the Ministry of the Interior from 1997 regarding the *tambon* areas in Plaeng Yao and Thatakiap districts. Both maps attached to these announcements show that there is a tiny connection between them. On page 10, the announcement on Thatakiap said that, in the east, *tambon* Khlong Takrao of this district bordered with “*tambon* Nong Mai Kaen Amphoe Plaeng Yao Chachoengsao province.” Someone had underlined this quote with a red pen. Thus, one had to expect that the equivalent text on Plaeng Yao would have an underlined quote saying that, in the east, its *tambon* Nong Mai Kaen shared a boundary with Thatakiap district, just as the attached map showed. However, there was no such sentence. Rather, it was only said that, in the east, the district bordered on *tambon* Lat Krathing of Sanam Chai Khet district. The documents did not include the equivalent announcement on Sanam Chai Khet district. The announcements on Plaeng Yao and Thatakiap are ประกาศกระทรวงมหาดไทย เรื่อง การกำหนดเขตตำบลในท้องที่อำเภอท่าตะเกียบ จังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา, dated January 9, 1998, and ประกาศกระทรวงมหาดไทย เรื่อง การกำหนดเขตตำบลในท้องที่อำเภอแปลงยาว จังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา, dated April 3, 1998.

²⁶ Since 2003, Thitima had been chairperson of the alumni association of this school. In her election campaign brochure (จิตติมา ฉายแสง เป็นผู้แทนของท่านในสภา), she claimed that she had “started the coordination for the construction of the five-story multi-purpose building” of this school. This building was a very substantial addition to the school’s infrastructure.

²⁷ At the time of writing, in mid-April 2008, the PPP was in full swing to replace the 2007 constitution with a revised version of the 1997 constitution. Thitima was supposed to be able to speak with some authority on constitutional questions, because she had graduated from class 5 of the course on state sector management and public law of the King Prajadhipok’s Institute (KPI). In fact, her brother was even more qualified, because he not only had a B.A. degree in law from Ramkhamhaeng University but had also served on the Constitution Drafting Assembly that produced the “people’s constitution” in 1997.

²⁸ The announcement was ประกาศคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้งประจำจังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา เรื่อง รูปแบบการแบ่งเขตเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎรแบบแบ่งเขตเลือกตั้ง ของจังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา, dated October 5, 2007. The letter was สำนักงานคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง ประจำจังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา ที่ ลต (ฉช) ๐๗๐๐/ ว ๒๑๘๖, dated October 5, 2007.

²⁹ In 1998, the PEC announced the three models concerning the SMC divisions on August 4, 1998. People were invited for a public hearing on August 17, 2008. Thus, there was considerably more time for making the models known and for members of the public to study the proposals and make suggestions. People could also submit written opinions by August 19, 1998. The announcement was ประกาศคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้งประจำจังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา เรื่อง ผลการพิจารณาเสนอความเห็นการแบ่งเขตเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎร.

³⁰ It might be mentioned here that this education zone director has long been rumored to be in the Chaisaeng’s political camp. Thitima used to be the chairperson of the committee of this education zone.

³¹ This is the new label of the teachers colleges. The main change was in name, while the educational quality has remained the same.

³² “Mass groups” are not groups self-organized by the people. Rather, this expression refers to groups initiated, organized, supervised, and funded by district-level state agencies.

³³ This was a quasi-copy of the Thai Rak Thai slogan in the election of 2005, “*thai rak thai huachai khue prachachon*” (the people are at the heart of Thai Rak Thai).

³⁴ “Political influence” might sound innocent enough to western readers, but it has a very negative connotation in the dominant normative Thai political discourse. The expression is close to “political corruption.”

³⁵ It did not help him, since he was soundly beaten; see below.

³⁶ He more than compensated for the loss of Thatakiap in the other areas of the constituency and won convincingly, although he had never before been involved in politics in Chachoengsao; see below.

³⁷ Regarding the entire process of the redrawing of the constituencies, it needs to be noted that I had access only to a number of formal meetings, some documents, and some information from informal talks. Any informal communication and coordination amongst the actors involved remained largely invisible to me, and I did not think it would be worth trying to reconstruct such information by conducting additional interviews.

³⁸ There were only four votes, although the PEC normally consisted of five members. However, the fifth member, the provincial police commander, had been transferred to the position of deputy regional police commander in Khon Kaen province. Initially he had tried to keep his position on the PEC of Chachoengsao. However, this turned out not to be feasible. The ECT refilled his position only after the election. The fifth member now is a near-retirement female teacher of English in a state school.

³⁹ The soldier must have been disappointed with the election result, because the political situation in Chachoengsao did not change at all, notwithstanding his attempt at using the re-drawing of the constituency boundaries for the purpose of political re-engineering.

⁴⁰ ตารางควบคุมระยะเวลาการเลือกตั้ง ส.ส. จังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา วันเลือกตั้ง วันอาทิตย์ที่ 23 ธันวาคม 2550.

⁴¹ พระราชกฤษฎีกา ให้มีการเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎรเป็นการทั่วไป พ.ศ. ๒๕๕๐. Announced in *ราชกิจจานุเบกษา* เล่ม ๑๒๔ ตอนที่ ๗๓ ก ๒๔ ตุลาคม ๒๕๕๐ หน้า ๑-๓.

⁴² Another group of polling station observers was the “private-sector organization volunteers in the process of inspecting the elections” (*asasamak ongkanekachon nai krabuankan truatsop kanlueaktang*). In Chachoengsao, there were election observers from a teachers association in constituency 2, and the association for the constitution (*samakhom phuea ratthathamnun*) in constituency 1, covering all polling stations (unlike the observers from political parties). The ECT had produced a handbook for these volunteers, คู่มือ อาสาสมัครองค์กรเอกชน ในกระบวนการตรวจสอบการเลือกตั้ง. กรุงเทพฯ: ฝ่ายองค์การเอกชนและประชาคมจังหวัด สำนักงานมีส่วนร่วมในกระบวนการเลือกตั้ง สำนักงานคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง, ๒๕๕๐. The PollWatch organization did not observe the polling because of a conflict with the ECT over money before the election. In any case, one can well doubt

their effectiveness—and even more, that of the poorly trained and motivated “volunteers”—in contributing to free and fair elections.

⁴³ When I arrived at the venue on the first day of the registration period (November 12-16, 2007) shortly after eight o’clock, the room was already full of officials and candidates, and registration was well under way, although it formally was only to start at 0830 hours.

⁴⁴ คู่มือการสมัครรับเลือกตั้ง สมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎร พ.ศ. ๒๕๕๐. กรุงเทพฯ: สำนักงานคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง, ๒๕๕๐.

⁴⁵ There was a chart showing the organization of the venue, ผังสถานที่รับสมัคร ส.ส. แบบแบ่งเขตเลือกตั้ง จังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา ณ ศาลาประชาคมเฉลิมพระเกียรติฯ บริเวณหน้าศาลากลางจังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา (หลังใหม่) ระหว่างวันที่ 12-16 พฤศจิกายน 2550 เวลา 08.30 – 16.30 น. This chart was printed on page 30 of สรุปข้อมูลการเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎรแบบแบ่งเขตเลือกตั้ง จังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา พ.ศ. 2550 (เลือกตั้งวันที่ 12 ธันวาคม 2550). สำนักงานคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง ประจำจังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา 19 พฤศจิกายน 2550. The handling of the registration fees was determined in section 4, articles 12-15, of an ECT regulation, namely ระเบียบคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง ว่าด้วยการใช้จ่ายเงินในการเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎร และการได้มาซึ่งสมาชิกวุฒิสภา พ.ศ. ๒๕๕๐ (dated November 9, 2007).

⁴⁶ Civil servants are not permitted to run in elections. In the 2007 constitution, this is stipulated in section 102, no. 8. As a result, civil servants must resign even before they can stand as candidates. One wonders if it would not be sufficient if civil servants had to suspend their positions for the time of the campaign, and of being MPs, so that they might more easily return to their jobs in case they lost in an election. Under present circumstances, a big segment of Thailand’s educated population is effectively banned from using a very basic political right of each citizen—to stand in local or national elections.

⁴⁷ บันทึกการให้ถ้อยคำของผู้สมัครรับเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎร (ส.ส. ๑๗), printed in คู่มือการสมัครรับเลือกตั้ง สมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎร พ.ศ. ๒๕๕๐. กรุงเทพฯ: สำนักงานคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง, ๒๕๕๐, p. 24.

⁴⁸ Similar brochures were printed for and distributed in all constituencies nationwide. The PEC of Chachoengsao also received these brochures from other provinces in order to use them in the advance extra-provincial voting.

⁴⁹ Under the constitution of 1997, which required that MP candidates had to have at least a BA degree, neither of them, and some other candidates, could have run for election.

⁵⁰ Wuthipong used to give his occupation as “farmer,” probably because he once farmed trees. “Politician” seems to be quite a lucrative occupation, judging from the 100 million baht he declared as his assets to the National Counter Corruption Commission after he took the position as minister of science and technology.

⁵¹ Serious candidates are those who have a good chance of winning a seat and their closest competitors. On this count, one might cut Phatcharakriengchai Singhanat (Dem) from the list, because it was clear that he was too far behind. In the 2005 elec-

tion, he had received 24,898 votes (to the 51,726 Thitima Chaisaeng got). In 2007, however, his number of votes shrunk to 18,930, although the size of the constituency, and thus the number of available votes, had roughly doubled. His result was far lower than that of his Democrat partner in constituency 1, Chalee Charoensuk (33,556; 2005: 19,587).

⁵² The very luxurious building took many years to complete and swallowed up about 2.4 billion baht. The old building looked a lot more in accordance with the “sufficiency economy.”

⁵³ See กำหนดการพิธีสาบานตน ผู้สมัครรับเลือกตั้งเป็นสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎรจังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา แบบแบ่งเขตเลือกตั้ง วันเสาร์ที่ ๑๗ พฤศจิกายน ๒๕๕๐ ณ บริเวณด้านข้างพระอุโบสถหลวงพ่อพุทธโสธร หลังใหม่.

⁵⁴ ระเบียบคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง ว่าด้วยการเลือกตั้งเชิงสมานฉันท์ พ.ศ. ๒๕๕๐, dated February 5, 2007. I found this regulation printed in a booklet prepared by the PEC for an annual training about political parties, elections, and the referendum, conducted on July 19, 2007. The booklet was, การอบรมเผยแพร่ความรู้ เรื่องพรรคการเมืองกับการเลือกตั้งและการออกเสียงประชามติ ประจำปี 2550 วันพฤหัสบดีที่ 19 กรกฎาคม 2550 ณ ห้องเพทาย โรงแรมแกรนด์รอยัล อำเภอเมืองฉะเชิงเทรา จังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา.

⁵⁵ This oath seemed to be modeled on the oath of allegiance former kings required of their officials, both regarding the mix of Buddhist and animistic elements and the combination of punishment of those who violated the oath, and happiness for those who followed its words. Part of the oath of allegiance was the drinking of the water of allegiance. This was included in the ritual performed in Ko Khanun for local election candidates, but left out in the oath taken by the parliamentary candidates. For brief information on the oath of allegiance, see H. G. Quaritch Wales, *Siamese State Ceremonies: Their History and Function, with Supplementary Notes*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1992 (reprint; originally published in 1931, with supplementary notes in 1971), pp. 193-198.

⁵⁶ The regulation was ระเบียบคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง ว่าด้วยการหาเสียง ข้อควรปฏิบัติ และข้อห้ามมิให้ปฏิบัติในส่วนที่เกี่ยวกับการเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎร และการดำเนินการใด ๆ ของพรรคการเมือง ผู้สมัครรับเลือกตั้ง และผู้มีสิทธิเลือกตั้ง พ.ศ. ๒๕๕๐. The International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) had prepared an unofficial translation that could be downloaded from its web site, “The Regulation of the Election Commission on Election Campaigns, Practices and Prohibitions Relating to the Election of Members of the House of Representatives and Any Other Actions by Political Parties, Candidates and Voters B.E. 2550. The announcement was ประกาศคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง เรื่อง หลักเกณฑ์การดำเนินการของ รัฐในการสนับสนุนการเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎร พ.ศ. ๒๕๕๐.

⁵⁷ The quote was taken from the translation prepared by the foreign law bureau of the Thai Council of State. The Thai language text is as follows, “มาตรา ๒๓๖ คณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้งมีอำนาจหน้าที่ ดังต่อไปนี้ (๑) ออกประกาศหรือวางระเบียบกำหนดการทั้งหลายอันจำเป็นแก่การปฏิบัติตามกฎหมายตามมาตรา ๒๓๕ วรรคสอง รวมทั้งวางระเบียบเกี่ยวกับการหาเสียงเลือกตั้งและการดำเนินการใด ๆ ของพรรคการเมือง ผู้สมัครรับเลือกตั้ง และผู้มีสิทธิเลือกตั้ง เพื่อให้เป็นไปโดยสุจริตและเที่ยงธรรม และกำหนดหลักเกณฑ์การดำเนินการของรัฐในการสนับสนุนให้การเลือกตั้งมีความเสมอภาคและมีโอกาสทัดเทียมกันในการหาเสียงเลือกตั้ง.”

⁵⁸ In Thai, “ประกาศ (โปสเตอร์).”

⁵⁹ In Thai, “แผ่นป้าย (คัตเอาต์).”

⁶⁰ This quote is from a 4-page summary of all the new electioneering conditions produced by the director of the ECT’s public relations office, Ruengrot Chomsueb; แนวทางใหม่ในการหาเสียงเลือกตั้ง ส.ส. 50, p. 2. The document is called a “draft” (*rang*), dated October 24, 2007.

⁶¹ Shortly before these stipulations were made public, the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA) had placed half-page advertisements in newspapers announcing a discussion with a small number of important party leaders. After October 24, a smaller advertisement told readers that the event had to be cancelled because of the ECT’s prohibitions.

⁶² The headline of an article on the restriction in the *Bangkok Post* (October 26, 2007) read, “Poll regulations spark outrage.” *The Nation* of the same day printed an article with the headline, “New EC campaign rules spark outcry.” An article in *Post Today* (October 25, 2007) was headlined, “ECT monopolizes democracy.”

⁶³ ระเบียบคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง ว่าด้วยการหาเสียง ข้อควรปฏิบัติ และข้อห้ามมิให้ปฏิบัติในส่วนที่เกี่ยวกับการเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎร และการดำเนินการใดๆ ของพรรคการเมือง ผู้สมัครรับเลือกตั้ง และผู้มีสิทธิเลือกตั้ง (ฉบับที่ ๒) พ.ศ. ๒๕๕๐ (IFES also produced a translation of this amendment, “Number 2,” or *chabap thi 2*, ฉบับที่ ๒) and ประกาศคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง เรื่อง หลักเกณฑ์การดำเนินการของรัฐในการสนับสนุนการเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎร (ฉบับที่ ๒) พ.ศ. ๒๕๕๐.

⁶⁴ The NIDA event mentioned in footnote 57 could have taken place according to the amended regulation. One important criticism of the ECT regulations indeed was that they unduly restricted the voters’ access to political-electoral information.

⁶⁵ This was in marked contrast to the election of 2005, when both attended, relaxed and in confident anticipation of certain victory.

⁶⁶ Apparently, the ECT and PEC reserved the right to an advance censorship of the spots submitted by the election candidates, rather than letting them put their spots on air and have the courts settle any issues afterwards if anybody felt that the content of certain spots infringed on their rights or violated regulations.

⁶⁷ The Chaisaeng family had already placed a number of cutouts and at least one billboard before the ECT’s announcement was issued. They had to be removed.

⁶⁸ The public campaign picture in Bangkok or Nonthaburi, where I lived, seemed to be little different from previous elections—cutouts everywhere.

⁶⁹ After the election, candidates were required to submit reports showing that they had not spent more than the permitted limit. Of course, their reports would never exceed the amount they were allowed to spend. Even PEC members, in recognizing expenditure limits for House candidates, or in setting campaign limits for candidates running in local elections, sometimes joked about it, realizing that the limits were unrealistically low. In each of the eight groups of provinces designated for the regional party lists, political parties were allowed to spend no more than 15 million baht. Furthermore, the amount spent in each group of provinces could not exceed 20 percent of to-

tal party list expenditure. The announcements of the ECT concerning campaign expenses were ประกาศคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง เรื่อง หลักเกณฑ์และวิธีการกำหนดจำนวนเงินค่าใช้จ่ายในการเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎร พ.ศ. ๒๕๕๐ (dated October 25, 2007), and ประกาศคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง เรื่อง กำหนดจำนวนเงินค่าใช้จ่ายในการเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎร พ.ศ. ๒๕๕๐ (dated October 25, 2007). IFES had provided translations of both announcements, “The Announcement of the Election Commission on The Criteria and the Methods of Determining Expenditures for the Election of Members of the House of Representatives B.E. 2550,” and “The Announcement of the Election Commission on The Limit of Expenditures for the Election of Members of the House of Representatives B.E. 2550.”

⁷⁰ See the schedule issued by the constituency committee, ตารางจัดเวทีปราศรัยกลางของผู้สมัคร ส.ส. เขต ๑ ฉะเชิงเทรา.

⁷¹ See the schedule issued by the constituency committee, ตารางนัดหมายเวทีกลางโฆษณาหาเสียง เขต ๒ จังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา.

⁷² This author had attended a number of such introductory events as part of his research on the Senate election in Chachoengsao. Unfortunately, due to time constraints while working at KPI, I never got around to writing a report on that election.

⁷³ Many observers do not think that the ECT and the PEC are transparent. Rather, they perceive this organization as opaque. Getting election results can require great effort. Even academics are not allowed to systematically analyze the ECT and PEC case files on which decisions about yellow and red cards were based.

⁷⁴ Despite being a political novice, Phichet was appointed a deputy commerce minister in the Samak 4 government. However, he was left out when Somchai Wongsawat formed his first cabinet.

⁷⁵ See the program, กำหนดการเดินรณรงค์การเลือกตั้งสมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎรของนักเรียน นักศึกษา และประชาชน วันที่ 14 ธันวาคม 2550 ณ บริเวณศาลาไทย หน้าศาลากลางจังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา.

⁷⁶ See the program, กำหนดการเวทีลูกทุ่ง วันที่ ๑๔ ธันวาคม ๒๕๕๐ ณ สวนสาธารณะริมแม่น้ำบางปะกง หน้าโรงพยาบาลเมืองฉะเชิงเทรา. The program says that the event will take place at the public park along the river Bang Pakong, opposite the provincial hospital. However, the venue was changed.

⁷⁷ It should not have been too difficult to organize these chairs for free from the nearby district office or schools.

⁷⁸ Given the cliché of electing the least evil politicians, it would probably have made more sense to say that all of them were bad, but not to the same extent, rather than saying that all of them were good. Alternatively, he could have said that they should elect the best of all the good candidates standing in the election. But this would have contradicted the speaker’s true feelings, including the aggressive nationalist accusation that the politicians-in-power had sold out the nation to foreigners, while they also had done nothing to prevent evil western influences from reaching the vulnerable Thai youngsters who, as a result, would forget all the time-honored Thai traditions that are so relevant in a globalized world. On the other hand, this PEC member was quite pleased when I used my digital camera, in combination with a computer and a color

laser printer, to provide him with a picture of a billboard showing Thitima and Wuthipong Chaisaeng.

⁷⁹ Policy analysis assumes that state authorities that implement projects must have such a causal hypothesis concerning the problem to be solved and the envisaged impact of their measures.

⁸⁰ On the political importance of this kind of group for provincial-level politics, including local-national linkages, see Michael H. Nelson. 2005. "Analyzing Provincial Political Structures in Thailand: *phuak*, *trakun*, and *hua khanaen*." Hong Kong: Southeast Asia Research Centre, City University of Hong Kong. (SEARC Working Paper Series, No. 79); Michael H. Nelson. 2007. "Institutional Incentives and Informal Local Political Groups (*Phuak*) in Thailand: Comments on Allen Hicken and Paul Chambers." *Journal of East Asian Studies* 7 (1):125-147. Data on Chachoengsao were reported in Ananya Buchongkul. 1985. "From Chaonaa to Khonngaen: The Growing Divide in a Central Thai Village." Ph.D. dissertation, University of London (this thesis does not seem to be available in Thailand, and thus could not be consulted); Michael H. Nelson. 1998. *Central Authority and Local Democratization in Thailand: A Case Study from Chachoengsao Province*. Bangkok: White Lotus; Michael H. Nelson. 2002. "Thailand's House Elections of 6 January 2001: Thaksin's Landslide Victory and Subsequent Narrow Escape" In *Thailand's New Politics: KPI Yearbook 2001*, ed. Michael H. Nelson, pp. 283-441. Nonthaburi and Bangkok: King Prajadhipok's Institute and White Lotus Press; Michael H. Nelson. 2003. "Chachoengsao: Democratizing Local Government?" In *Thailand's Rice Bowl: Perspectives on Agricultural and Social Change in the Chao Phraya Delta*, ed. by François Molle and Thippawal Srijantr, pp. 345-372. Bangkok: White Lotus. For a Thai-language source on politics in Chachoengsao, see ศรุตฯ สมพอง. 2550 [2007]. *นักการเมืองถิ่น จังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา*. กรุงเทพฯ: สถาบันพระปกเกล้า. The latter source is volume 10 in a series of the King Prajadhipok's Institute on provincial-level politics. Regrettably, it suffers from the author's ignorance of the existing literature and only rudimentary data collection. For case studies on the politics in other provinces, see Daniel Arghiros. 2001. *Democracy, Development and Decentralization in Provincial Thailand*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press (Ayutthaya); Marc Askew. 2008. *Performing Political Identity: The Democrat Party in Southern Thailand*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books (Songkhla); Thamora Virginia Fishel. 2001. "Reciprocity and Democracy: Power, Gender, and the Provincial Middle Class in Thai Political Culture." Ph.D. thesis, Cornell University (Phetburi); Yoshinori Nishizaki. 2006. "The Domination of a Fussy Strongman in Provincial Thailand: The Case of Banharn Silpa-archa in Suphanburi." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 37 (2):267-291; Duncan McCargo. 2008. *Tearing Apart the Land: Islam and Legitimacy in Southern Thailand*. Cornell University Press (Pattani); Viengrat Nethipo. Forthcoming. "Master of the Provinces: A Province Influential Network" (Ubon Ratchathani), and Somrudee Nicrowattanayingyong. 1991. "Development Planning, Politics, and Paradox: A Study of Khon Kaen, a Regional City in Northeast Thailand." Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University.

⁸¹ Jürgen Rüland. 1989. "The 17th General Election in Thailand." *Asien*, pp. 1-39. This was one of the major concerns of the "political reform" process, which started some time after the "bloody May 1992," but has roots back with the Chartchai government that assumed office in 1988, and even included pre-Chartchai elections, especially the behavior of election candidates. Thus, when one of the main proponents of

political reform, Prawase Wasi, explained the eight core issues that needed to be reformed, he listed “money politics” (vote buying) as the first and the “monopolization of politics by a small group of people” as the second problem (ประเวศ วะสี [1994]. *การปฏิรูปทางการเมือง: ทางออกของประเทศไทย*. กรุงเทพฯ: สำนักพิมพ์หมอชาวบ้าน, p. 3). Fourteen years later, the lauded “people’s constitution” of 1997 has already been replaced by the coup-initiated 2007 document. The proposals for “new politics” made by the People’s Alliance for Democracy (PAD), which started a “people’s coup” in August 2008 by invading the compound of Government House, still have money politics and the monopolization of political positions by (evil rural) politicians at their core.

⁸² Regarding the type of representation in elected bodies, Pippa Norris (“Legislative Recruitment,” in *Comparing Democracies: Elections and Voting in Global Perspective*, eds. Lawrence LeDuc, Richard G. Niemi, and Pippa Norris, pp. 184-215. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1996; quotes are from page 184f.; italics in the original) distinguished the “party government model” and the “district delegate model.” In the first, candidates are considered members of a political party so that the vote is not for an individual candidate but for his or her political party. In the second model, candidates “are seen primarily as agents of the geographic areas from which they are elected.” While the first model applies to much of continental Europe, the second one mostly refers to the UK and the US. Obviously, Thai constituency candidates are not elected by virtue of being members of certain political parties. However, they are also not really district delegates. Political parties in the UK and the US are still rather strong when compared with their Thai equivalents. Hardly any reference to elected British MPs goes without saying whether Labor, the Conservatives, or the Liberal Democrats had beaten the other outfits in this or that constituency. Regarding Thailand, one might perhaps introduce the “clique delegate model,” in which elected MPs mainly represent their local *phuak* in parliament. As far as their constituencies are concerned, Thai PM are largely “agents” not of the parties under the banner of which they run or the geographical areas where they stand. Rather, they are mainly agents of their own informal local groups. This view used to be expressed in the possibility of running as independent candidates, that is, without an affiliation to any political party. However, two additional (upper) levels of aggregation also have to be kept in mind, namely faction and party.

⁸³ *Nakleng* is a bold, tough, and daring man. David B. Johnston (“Bandit, *Nakleng*, and Peasant in Rural Thailand,” *Contribution to Asian Studies* 15:90-101, 1980) traces their origin in rural Thai society to the need of villages to use some of their stronger young males for their protection. Thus the element of loyalty to one’s friends and antagonism to one’s foes. Of Anand’s children, Wuthipong is the most similar to him. Some years ago, he told me that sometimes he had to act like a *nakleng*, because provincial politics would make this necessary.

⁸⁴ In 1996, Anand was selected as a National Model Father. On this occasion, his children published a book introducing the family members. It contains a large number of interesting photos and is titled “To our parents with love” (แต่...พ่อแม่วัยด้วยดวงใจ. กรุงเทพฯ: บริษัท สเตทนิวส์ พับลิชซิง จำกัด.).

⁸⁵ One important members of this group of independents was Lert Shinawatra, the father of Thaksin. According to Anand, they “loved each other like relatives,” and Lert looked after Chaturon when he studied at Chiang Mai University (*Matichon*, April 22,

2002:13). When Wuthipong had a serious car crash in 1997, causing to require intensive face surgery, it was rumored that Thaksin covered the high hospital bills.

⁸⁶ Prachachon was the result of a group that, in the wake of factional rivalries following the 1986 election, broke away from the Democrat party on May 2, 1988. It was known as the “January 10 group.” This name derived from the day of its defeat in a special party caucus, where members had tried to unseat party leader Bhichai Rattakul. Important members of the group included Chalermbhand Srivikorn, Den Tohmena, and Veera Musigapong (see Jürgen Rüland. 1989. “The 17th General Election in Thailand.” *Asien*, pp. 1-39). Veera now plays an important role in the anti-PAD “Democratic Alliance against Dictatorship” (DAAD), together with Chaturon Chaisaeng. They are both featured in the group’s bi-weekly journal, *นิตยสารข่าวรายปักษ์ ประชาทรรศน์ ความจริงวันนี้* (November 15-30, 2008). Like Chaturon, Veera also lost his political rights after the coup-appointed “Constitutional Tribunal” dissolved TRT. According to แต่...พ่อแม่ด้วยดวงใจ. กรุงเทพฯ: บริษัท สเตทนิวส์ พับลิชซิง จำกัด, p. 55, Chaturon ran for Chart Thai party in the 1988 elections. This will have to be checked.

⁸⁷ These teachers were obviously hired by the Chaisaengs to pose as candidates for the position of provincial CDA delegates, while their actual purpose merely was to vote for Wuthipong so that he would come first on the provincial shortlist. On the CDA, Wuthipong was one of the provincial delegates who successfully pushed for the introduction of an elected Senate (until then, the prime minister selected senators, who the King would subsequently appoint). However, in the first Senate election in 2000, the candidate of the Chaisaengs, Suchen Thuathip (see picture 14), came only third with 49,224 votes. He was soundly beaten by Suchart Tancharoen’s candidate, Ros Maliphon (75,080 votes), and a Bangkok-based PhD-level senior civil servant, presumably supported by the camp of *kamnan* Kraisorn, Boonlert Phairin, who received 64,848 votes (quite an improbable result for a person unknown to the voters in the province). In the 2006 Senate election, the Chaisaengs did not seem to be very serious about Suchen’s second candidacy. He came only fourth with 25,651 votes. For the results, see the PEC documents, ผลการเลือกตั้งสมาชิกวุฒิสภา ประจำปี 2543 จังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา (no date given; 2000), and ผลรวมคะแนนการเลือกตั้งสมาชิกวุฒิสภา จังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา (no date given; 2006).

⁸⁸ As early as June 6, 1999, *The Nation* reported that Chaturon would run on the party list, Anand in constituency one, and another son in another constituency. At that time, they were still with the New Aspiration party. Later, they switched to Thaksin’s Thai Rak Thai, although the NAP still stood in the 2001 election. In an article that appeared in *Matichon* a long time ago (January 30, 1991), Anand featured as one of four “champs in changing parties.” At that time, he had already done so six times. Thus, from the perspective of the voters, the fixtures were Anand and Chaturon, not the party they chose to be affiliated with in individual elections.

⁸⁹ Apparently based on an interview, she confirmed this in ศรีดา สมพอง. 2550 [2007]. *นักการเมืองถิ่น จังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา*. กรุงเทพฯ: สถาบันพระปกเกล้า, p. 101. In my first brief encounter with Chaturon Chaisaeng in the living room of the Chaisaeng’s house, probably in the year 1990, he said that their campaign outside the municipal area mainly rested on the work of *hua khanaen*. Moreover, “On May 8, 2004, Chaisaeng staff, under the banner of TRT, organized a seminar for about 400 members of local government

councils and administrators, mainly from *tambon* administrative organizations (TAO) in Muang district, in order to inform them about the legal framework of local elections. The seminar was financed by the ECT's political party development fund. The PEC's chairman and a staff member were the main lecturers. ... His [Anand's] daughter Thitima was introduced [by Anand] as the family's MP candidate in constituency 1. A similar seminar held on May 15 in Bang Pakong district was also attended by Anand's son Wuthipong, the MP in that constituency" (Michael H. Nelson. 2005. "Provincial Administrative Organization: Election of *nayok* PAO and Council Members on 14 March 2004. Pictorial impressions from Chachoengsao province." Bangkok, Thailand: Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University. PowerPoint presentation with 101 slides, slide 28). Thus, Anand had started many months before the election of 2005 to introduce Thitima to local politicians.

⁹⁰ Longstanding corruption rumors concerning Konlayudh intensified when a huge public works project coincided with him building a new luxurious residence, without observers being able to see any other great source of private business income that could have paid for that hugely expensive house. Even ardent followers of the Chaisaengs recognized that there was a problem of explanation. They did not deny that Konlayudh had probably received money from the contractors of the public works program to build his house. However, they argued that this was within the limits of the general practice of paying "commissions" to the holders of public office. Opponents of the family were less willing to put a positive spin on things and accused the mayor of corruption.

⁹¹ See ศรุตา สมพอง. 2550 [2007], p. 79.

⁹² I have reported on some aspects of that election in Michael H. Nelson. 1998. *Central Authority and Local Democratization in Thailand: A Case Study from Chachoengsao Province*. Bangkok: White Lotus, chapter 7; the quotes are from p. 168.

⁹³ For details, see Michael H. Nelson. 2002. "Thailand's House Elections of 6 January 2001: Thaksin's Landslide Victory and Subsequent Narrow Escape" In *Thailand's New Politics: KPI Yearbook 2001*, ed. Michael H. Nelson, pp. 283-441. Nonthaburi and Bangkok: King Prajadhipok's Institute and White Lotus Press, slightly altered quote from p. 332. Plate 10 in this article shows Kraisorn and Ekawit after they registered the latter's candidacy. Also in the picture are Thiwa Phunsombat and his son Chaiyasith, who are mentioned in the text below.

⁹⁴ In an interview with *Post Today* (November 7, 2008), he said that he was the only person left in the family who could legally run in the Senate election. Thus, he had been asked to do so. Moreover, Suchart had assured him that success would be certain. There was no sign in the interview that Nikhom had wondered why a public electoral office should be treated like the private property of an individual family. In yet another interview (*Matichon*, November 16, 2008), he admitted that he would attend constituency-level social functions as a family member if his politician-relatives were not available. Moreover, he took pride in the fact that he had led a mobile health care unit from the Bangkok-based Vipawadee Hospital to provide services in Chachoengsao on a number of occasions. One wonders how even the first deputy speaker of the Senate could manage to see the role of senators as that of a service-providing local politician. Moreover, he must certainly have been aware that such acts of patronage

would be seen by the people as belonging to the normal political activities of the Tancharoen family, and thus as strengthening their voter base for House elections, rather than attribute them to his individual capacity as a senator.

⁹⁵ When Phichet was about to be appointed to the position of deputy minister of commerce in the Samak cabinet, *Krungthep Thurakit* (July 31, 2008:2) wrote that he fought against the Chaisaeng family in the 2007 election. Obviously this is wrong because no member of the Chaisaeng family even ran in constituency 1. When the Constitution Court dissolved PPP on December 2, 2008, it included the name of Phichet in its list of PPP's executive board members to be disqualified from politics for five years. Indeed, he had earlier joined PPP, and was made a board member on August 24, 2007. However, he had left the party on October 18, 2007, ten days before Yongyudh Thiyapairat committed the offense that led to the party's dissolution (*Matichon*, December 5, 2008). The ECT's secretary general stated that Phichet's resignation from PPP was effective on October 26, 2007, while Yongyudh committed his offense on October 28, 2007 (*Matichon*, December 6, 2008). It seemed that the ECT, the Attorney General, and the Constitution Court had all used outdated membership data in their documents. However, a lead commentator in *Matichon* (December 7, 2008) suggested that, according to the case file, Yongyudh's offense was agreed upon in advance, on October 25, 2007. At that time, Phichet was still formally a member of PPP's executive board. Therefore, he had to be disqualified from politics for five years. The ECT did not share this view, and so Phichet remained an MP. For the Thai-language texts of the Constitution Court verdicts dissolving PPP, Chart Thai, and Matchimathipattai parties, see the book *ระบอบอภิสิทธิ์* [The Abhisit Regime]. กรุงเทพฯ: โลกวันนี้รายวัน, 2551 [2008]. This book also prints an article, written by a member of KPI's research and development office, that sees Thailand's current practice of party dissolutions as a danger to democracy; see เข้มทอง ต้นสกุลรุ่งเรือง. 2008. "การยุบพรรคการเมือง เนื่องจากการกระทำผิดกฎหมายเลือกตั้ง ของผู้บริหารพรรคการเมือง เป็นอันตรายต่อประชาธิปไตย" (pp. 54-93).

⁹⁶ At that time, my idea was that recruitment would be based on political performance, such as having policy ideas or speaking eloquently in the council meetings. Based on these criteria, I could not explain how Itthi could have been elected to be the chairperson of the council. When I asked a PAO staff member about this, she was slightly amused by my naiveté. "He is good at entertaining his fellow councilors," was her answer. Indeed, being generous with paying for one's "friends" and in taking fellow local politicians on vacation in Thailand and abroad goes a long way in gaining "political" support.

⁹⁷ It is with great regret that I report that my landlord, Khun Wuthisak Sowana, has since passed away. He received a royally sponsored cremation that was presided over by Wuthipong Chaisaeng, then the minister of science and technology, on November 2, 2008. Since 1991, every time I conducted field research in Chachoengsao, I stayed at his beautifully maintained compound of about 30 rooms-for-rent.

⁹⁸ *Ajarn* Sawat, who was the director of Benjamas 5 School, but also did some rice farming as a sideline, helped me a great deal with my data gathering, taking me along in his car to rallies and providing me with documents. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him very much indeed. In reading this report, it should be kept in mind that I was stationed in Chachoengsao municipality with no personal means of trans-

portation to move around the province. For this reason, activities in Amphoe Mueang are prominent in this report, while what might have happened in other districts remains obscure. For example, I could not visit the offices of Itthi or Somchai because I had no means to travel there. *Ajarn* Sawat provided me with an opportunity to go beyond my limitations, although only on occasions of activities concerning the constituency committee and its director.

⁹⁹ Nelson (2002:328). “Playing politics” is a Thai phrase to denote the insincerity of Thai politicians.

¹⁰⁰ One reason that the 1997 Constitution abolished the “provincial development budget” for individual MPs, which stood at 20 million baht per head at that time and had become known as the “vote buying budget,” was to reduce the undue advantages of sitting MPs against new candidates. Amorn Chantharasombun, one of the promoters of the post-1991 “political reform” process, stated the following in his famous treatise on “constitutionalism: “In the future, ‘Thai people’ can expect that there will be a tendency ... of mostly having ‘politicians’ who originate from former MPs ... because new candidates certainly will have no opportunity to use the national budget (the provincial development budget) for building their popularity with the people in the province.” See อมร จันทรสุมบุณ. Not dated [1994]. *คอนสติติวชันแนลลิสม์ (Constitutionalism): ทางออกของประเทศไทย*. [กรุงเทพฯ]: สถาบันนโยบายศึกษา, p. 69. However, there have long been reports in Thai-language newspapers that this “provincial development budget” had been reintroduced through the back door, partly by cutting the budget allocated to local government organizations. *Matichon* (January 9, 2009) refers to the executive head of a TAO saying that under the premiership of Somchai Wongsawat, every MP was supposed to have received 25 million baht. He hoped that Prime Minister Abhisit would continue with this policy, because it would give MPs a development role besides their role in the House of Representatives. This would enable them to build their *baramee* and voter bases, and thus it would benefit the MPs of all parties.

¹⁰¹ See ศรุตา สมพอง. 2550 [2007], p. 85f.

¹⁰² In March 2008, Chalee competed with Konlayudh Chaisaeng for the position of mayor of Chachoengsao city but lost.

¹⁰³ Neither Chakrawan nor Chalee, and indeed not even the activities of the Democrat party in Chachoengsao, merit any mention in ศรุตา สมพอง. 2550 [2007].

¹⁰⁴ On February 11, 2005, I had asked Chalee how his *than siang* (voter base) was. “I don’t have much of a *than siang* but rely on the policies of the Democrat Party,” he answered.

¹⁰⁵ *Phuchatkan* newspaper (November 1, 2007) had an article looking ahead to the candidate situation in Chachoengsao. With respect to Chalee Charoensuk, the article said “he will still have to wait for a new opportunity [to become an MP] for a long time, because politics in Thailand still depends on energy [money] sent through the pipeline to the roots at the level of local leaders who are people who have owners.” This “old” method of garnering support for MP candidates could be “clearly seen in the recent TAO elections.” Unfortunately, the author made many such statements without providing even one single example. His general evaluation was, “This way, it

is difficult for real democracy to emerge, in which those who get elected are the representatives of the people, and sit in the House as the voice (*paksiang*) [of the people].” In the concluding sentence, the author attacked the ECT, saying that, if it continued to work as it had done, eliminating this old election system from Thai soil would be difficult. In general, one might equate the Democrat candidates’ position as generalized and principled (at least in Chachoengsao), while that of their victorious competitors was particularistic and based on personal relationships. This dichotomy is by no means a specialty of rural areas but rather represents a more general feature of Thai social structure, which can just as easily be found in Bangkok elite circles that normally look down on the “gullible” up-country voters. In the Thai discourse, it is often called the “patronage system.” Some years ago, Borwornsak Uwanno, the then-secretary-general of the 1997 CDA, described its members’ voting behavior concerning the draft constitution by using the “patronage system” as focal point: “You would expect them [well-educated and economically well-off middle-class members of the CDA] to be guided by principles, but they are not. If they are asked as a favor to vote a certain way, they will be guided by their personal relationships. And this is under the full attention of the press. It reflects the understanding that their relationships with those in power stand above all else” (*Bangkok Post*, July 21, 1997). Thus, rural voters in Thailand seem to follow rules that are very similar to those guiding the actions of members of the Bangkok elite.

¹⁰⁶ This seems even to apply to the members of the Democrat party in Chachoengsao themselves. It has been a constant complaint by Chalee how little money the party headquarters allocates for the operation of its provincial branch office.

¹⁰⁷ For the figures, see the PEC-issued results table, ผลรวมคะแนนการเลือกตั้งสมาชิกวุฒิสภา จังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา (no date given).

¹⁰⁸ For the figures, see the PEC-issued results table, ผลการเลือกตั้งสมาชิกวุฒิสภา ประจำปี 2543 จังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา (no date given).

¹⁰⁹ Around the same time, Phinit’s asset declaration showed more debts than assets. Apparently, this did not hinder him playing a major role in national politics. The previously mentioned reporter also referred to Phanee as “rich person.” It is noteworthy that Phinit was among the only three or four politicians that the NSC had appointed to their so-called “National Legislative Assembly.” Furthermore, Phinit’s political party, Phuea Phaendin, was largely believed to have been financed by the military coup group as their political vehicle. Thus, it did not appear too surprising that it was the military officer on the PEC who had proposed a redrawing of the provinces’ constituencies that took away some of Thitima’s voter base, while at the same time providing Phanee with part of Suchart Tancharoen’s stronghold in Thatakiap district. After all, Suchart had joined Phinit as a background leader of Phuea Phaendin. Looking into Chachoengsao’s political history, a close friend told me that she was not surprised that Phanee would use money, supposedly that of her brother, in order to buy *hua khanaen* and votes. Many years ago, when Phinit was still trying to get an electoral foothold in Chachoengsao, he had also approached her father, who was a *khon kwang khwang* in the Chaisaeng camp at that time (he still is in the camp as a municipal councilor). The expression refers to a person who is well known, i.e. somebody who has a wide circle of friends. It also implies that he has some influence on how many of those friends would act, given his example. Thus, it made sense that Phinit approached him in order

to make him leave the Chaisaeng camp and move to his own. As a major incentive to do so, Phinit had offered her father material advantages. Nowadays, one would probably say that Phinit had tried to buy a *hua khanaen*. However, the outcome at that time was not as Phinit might have expected. Instead of accepting his offer, my friend's father got so angry at Phinit's suggestion that he was buyable, that he punched him. The impression that the people involved at that time got from Phinit's actions have still remained vividly in their memories. They were now used to evaluate his sister's electoral success.

¹¹⁰ Assessments such as those in *Matichon* and *Krungthep Thurakit* are normally based on the impressions that their local stringers get through observation of the election campaigns.

¹¹¹ It remains to be seen whether Abhisit's popularity has suffered because of what many observers saw as a serious lack of principled political leadership during the PAD-caused post-election crisis.

¹¹² สารประชาธิปไตย ฉบับพิเศษ. This paper was printed on November 26, 2007, in two million copies.

¹¹³ Both Kraisaak and Somkiat were elected. Somkiat was one of the five core leaders of the PAD, while Kraisaak acted as one of the group's many advisors.

¹¹⁴ To critics at the time of the 2005 election, the ECT under Wassana was part of the "Thaksin regime."

¹¹⁵ "*Rapchai*" is a common reference when politicians want to denote their dedication to their voters.

¹¹⁶ OTOP was the One-Tambon-One-Product marketing program of the Thaksin government, while "SML" stood for "Small, Medium, Large" villages, a Thaksin government program to give between 300,000 and 500,000 baht to villages for development projects.

¹¹⁷ Similar to *rapchai*, this is also a common cliché.

¹¹⁸ At a rally in the campaign for the PAO election in 2004, held at the market of Bang Nam Prioew district, Itthi—who had joined the Chaisaengs against Suchart Tancharoen's candidate—exclaimed, "*Phakphuak* is more important (than *phak kanmueang*)." Such groups are distinct from other groups of the same type at the same level, meaning that there is a segmentary differentiation. However, they might be part of a higher-level group, first of all of a faction, or *mung*. There might be other faction members in the province, but in other *phuak*, or they might be supra provincial. And as members of this faction or clique, they are members of a formalized political party. For more details, see Nelson (2005).

¹¹⁹ I missed both Chuan and the similar event with Panthongthae Shinawatra (for PPP), the latter by a few minutes. Such visits are usually very brief, done on short notice, and are limited to a very small area of the province. Thus, they do not have any significant effect on the voters.

¹²⁰ "Sustainable development" has been a fashionable cliché in the international development discourse for quite some time. Any relationship between this concept and the King's idea of "sufficiency economy" remains unclear. This concept prominently entered the international discourse when the United Nations Development Programme

chose it as its theme for a major report on Thailand's "human development." See United Nations Development Programme. 2007. *Thailand Human Development Report 2007: Sufficiency Economy and Human Development*. Bangkok: UNDP.

¹²¹ On the importance of *udomkan* for the Democrats in Songkhla province, see Askew (2008).

¹²² Chakrawan told me that he was practicing sufficiency economy, and tried to teach it to people in his area.

¹²³ One might wonder what Phanee thought about the influence of electricity and cars on "Thai culture," whatever this construct might refer to. Phanee's remark reproduced a major theme of the Thai public discourse, namely that about globalization and Thainess (for more details, see Kasian Tejapira. 2001. "The Post-Modernization of Thainess." In *House of Glass: Culture, Modernity and the State in Southeast Asia*, ed. by Yao Souchou, pp. 150-170. Singapore: ISEAS, and Michael H. Nelson. 2004. "World Society in Thailand: Globalization Confronts Thainess." In *Thai Politics: Local and Global Perspectives. KPI Yearbook No. 2 (2002/03)*, ed. by Michael H. Nelson, pp. 159-282. Bangkok: King Prajadhipok's Institute.).

¹²⁴ For the verdict, see กองบรรณาธิการ มติชน. 2550 [2007]. *ล้างบางทรท. คำวินิจฉัยยุบพรรค ฉบับสมบูรณ์*. กรุงเทพฯ: มติชน. The list of the 111 disqualified former board members of TRT is on page. 135.

¹²⁵ "Organic Law on Political Parties, B.E. 2541 (1998)." MS, Office of the Council of State.

¹²⁶ This legal construction was first used in the amendment of the election law in 2000 in order to enable the ECT to issue "red cards" to election candidates, after the Constitution Court had ruled that the ECT had no power of disqualification (Nelson 2002: 299f.). In the unofficial translation of the party law prepared by IFES, the phrase mentioned in the text is incorrectly and misleadingly rendered as "repeal ... [the] right to stand for election" (Organic Act on Political Parties B.E. 2550).

¹²⁷ Picture 6 above shows Chaturon joining his father, Wuthipong, and Thitima on a picture on registration day. This act then was actually prohibited by the ECT, only that its opinion became known afterwards.

¹²⁸ See (*Matichon*, November 19, 2007). Beyond the electoral sphere, however, there are no legal penalties concerning violations of the "political ban." Consequently, former TRT heavyweights have been substantially involved in PPP and governmental politics. Moreover, the formation of the coalition government led by the Democrats' Abhisit Vejjajiva in December 2008 was possible only with the decisive help of one disqualified core faction leader of TRT and PPP, Newin Chidchob. Abhisit went as far as visiting Newin with a bunch of red roses to thank him for his effort. All Thai papers printed pictures of Abhisit and Newin embracing each other. As a result, the senator whose complaint had brought down Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej, Ruengkrui Likitwathana, submitted another complaint to the Prosecutor General arguing that the Abhisit government had come to power unconstitutionally, that is, violated section 68 by relying on the help of politicians who had been disqualified by the Constitution Court. This participation did not only concern Newin Chidchob, but also Banharn Silapa-archa and Suwat Liptapanlop. The senator suggested that the Prosecu-

tor General investigate the case and then send it to the Constitution Court with the aim of dissolving the Democrat party (*Matichon*, January 6, 2009).

¹²⁹ In the election of the executive chairperson of the provincial administrative organization in 2004, which was a tightly fought contest between the Chaisaengs' and Suchart Tancharoen's candidates, the Chaisaengs had managed to place this *kamnan* and some other associated civil servants from the Amphoe Mueang district office as members of the decisive vote-counting committee of this district. In the end, their candidate prevailed by a few hundred votes. The vote counting was a rather disorganized event. Knowing how tight the race was, for a few hours Anand and Chaturon Chaisaeng and their entourage were at the venue and repeatedly circled it. Two provincial election commissioners expressed some surprise at the presence of this *kamnan*, although they had part in appointing him. Nevertheless, the PEC rejected a well-justified complaint calling for a recount of the votes.

¹³⁰ Back in 1992, I waited for Anand Chaisaeng at the group's *sapha kafe* (a shop selling coffee in the morning, where men from the group would discuss politics) to accompany him on a trip to outlying districts to open branch offices of the New Aspiration party. When a provincial councilor, who I had accompanied on his last day of campaigning for the provincial council in 1990, saw me, he exclaimed in a loud voice, "Hey, I did not know you belonged to our *phuak*!"

¹³¹ Pongpol mentioned two more rights, which, for reasons I cannot remember, are not in my field notes.

¹³² Chaturon is a smooth but more academic speaker, not a rousing orator like Adisorn Piangket. Unfortunately, both of my tape-recorders, or perhaps the microphones, failed to work while I collected data in Chachoengsao. Therefore, I have to rely on notes taken while the speeches were given. However, taking notes at political rallies (and other live events, especially as a non-native speaker of Thai) has its limitations, compared with being able to use transcripts, as I did on previous occasions.

¹³³ Two ECT members, including its chairperson, a friend of coup-leader Sonthi Boonyaratglin, seemed to have argued that the military's project against PPP was covered by the NSC's responsibility to protect national security.

¹³⁴ จากใจ..... "จตุรนต์" ถึงคนจะเชิงเทรา (no publication details given). A different version of the leaflet had the subtitle, "I cannot go to vote on December 23. So, please, *pho mae phi nong*, vote on my behalf instead."

¹³⁵ Tilly remarked, "as often happens in public rituals, the capacity of a candidate to bring out orderly, committed crowds in his support confirmed or denied his standing within the community and thereby affected his subsequent credibility as patron or broker even when it had little influence over an election's outcome" (Charles Tilly. 1998. "Political Identities." In *Challenging Authority: The Historical Study of Contentious Politics*, eds. Michael P. Hanagan, Leslie Page Moch, and Wayne te Brake, pp. 3-16 (8). Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press. Obviously, the Chaisaeng's gathering could not have any significant impact on the election outcomes. Too small was the proportion of people attending this event to the total number of voters. Most other voters outside of the municipal area had probably not even heard that there was such a campaign rally. However, being held right at the center of provincial power, and under the noses of the PEC, it could not but demonstrate beyond any doubt that the preceding political processes at the national level, including

the dissolution of TRT and the disqualification of Chaturon from politics, had not affected the family's political clout in Chachoengsao.

¹³⁶ Even the coup-appointed CDA paid 100 baht “travel allowance” to the participants of its public hearings about the draft constitution. See Michael H. Nelson. 2007. “Public Hearings on Thailand’s Draft Constitution: Impressions from Chachoengsao Province.” *KPI Thai Politics Up-date*. No. 3 (August 14, 2007), p. 3. If an election candidate is caught doing this by the PEC and ECT, this is considered vote buying, and he or she will be “red-carded.” This later indeed happened to a candidate.

¹³⁷ Obviously, this take on the “war on drugs” of the year 2003, in which more than 2,000 supposed drug dealers were killed, most probably by the police in “extrajudicial killings,” was much different from the discourse of the critical Bangkok public, which emphasized that the policy had substantially and inexcusably violated human rights.

¹³⁸ For the Senate election, this was changed. Right at the entrance voters could consult a board telling them where the unit with their province was located. Optimistically expecting an equally high turnout as in the House election, the format had been kept, and voters did not have to register again for the advance voting. As a result, there were many officials at the advance-voting place in the Senate election, but few voters.

¹³⁹ Officials provided tiny forms on which the voters could note down these pieces of information.

¹⁴⁰ For identifying the constituency numbers and the group of provinces, the assistants had the ECT-published manual เอกสารข้อมูลการแบ่งเขตเลือกตั้ง สมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎรแบบแบ่งเขตและแบบสัดส่วน ในการเลือกตั้ง สมาชิกสภาผู้แทนราษฎร (ส.ส.) ปี 2550. กรุงเทพฯ: สำนักงานคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง, ๒๕๕๐.

¹⁴¹ This should have led to a strengthening of national political preferences. Unfortunately, this logical measure collided with the view, held by the same people on the CDA, that the party list had unduly increased Thaksin Shinawatra’s electoral legitimacy. Faced with this dilemma, the CDA preferred the condemned and despised constituency politicians, reduced the number of party-list MPs from 100 to 80, and changed the national party lists into eight regional lists—as if this would make any difference concerning the degree of legitimacy to be derived from this element of the electoral system. Of course, the proposed proportional election system also fell through; see Michael H. Nelson. 2007. “A Proportional Election System for Thailand?” *KPI Thai Politics Up-date* No. 2 (June 6, 2007) (a slightly corrected version was printed in 2008 in *การเมืองการปกครองไทย 2550: Thai Politics Forum 2007*, pp. 21-43. นนทบุรี: สถาบันพระปกเกล้า.), and Ploy Suebvises. 2008. “Constitutional Policymaking in Thailand: Deciding About the Election System.” Bangkok: Faculty of Public Administration, National Institute of Development Administration (draft paper).

¹⁴² For this figure, see ข่าวสำนักงานคณะกรรมการการเลือกตั้ง ประเด็นแถลงข่าว วันที่ 25 ธันวาคม 2550 เวลา 13.30 น. กรุงเทพฯ: สำนักประชาสัมพันธ์.

¹⁴³ This form was titled แบบบันทึกถ้อยคำการใช้สิทธิลงคะแนนเลือกตั้งล่วงหน้า ณ ที่เลือกตั้งกลางในเขตเลือกตั้ง and was addressed to the committee of the central polling station.

¹⁴⁴ The voter shown in this picture was a local stringer for TiTV, The Nation, and others. He also used to be a deputy executive chairperson of a *tambon* administrative organization and *hua khanaen* (vote canvasser) for a number of MP and Senate candidates. Some weeks earlier, he had told me that he had resigned from his local government position, and stopped his canvassing activities, because he wanted to keep on reporting on events, and thus had to avoid making candidates suspicious of his neutrality. In my book on Chachoengsao (Nelson 1998), he can be seen on plate 21, standing in the center checking the results of the election of March 1992. I met him in the polling station by accident. I had just arrived to have a look and was standing near the files with the voter rolls, then for some reason turned around to find him grinning at me. During my fieldwork, he had done a brief feature of me, videotaping me at the PEC and at home sitting in front of my laptop. This was broadcast on TiTV. When I had once started to check my email at my regular small local Internet shop, its female owner came and looked at me insistently, finally asking, “Were you the guy on TV?” And when I visited the PEC office one day, a staff member said, “Oh, you were really looking serious at work on TV!”

¹⁴⁵ Since I do not have all village-level election results, I cannot assert that this did not occasionally happen.

¹⁴⁶ The Thai-language headlines of these leaflets are ผลคะแนนเลือกตั้ง ส.ส. จังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา and ผลคะแนนเลือกตั้ง ส.ส. แบบสัดส่วน กลุ่มที่ 5.

¹⁴⁷ Some time before the election, I had joined Chalee at a lunch table of a PEC-organized seminar. It turned out that the others sitting at the table were officials from Bang Khla municipality, with whom Chalee appeared to be on good terms. Thus, I assumed that he might have some voter base in that area.

¹⁴⁸ It is difficult to get a clear picture here, because many voters who voted for Phichet could also have voted for Itthi or Somchai. Alternatively, people who had voted for Itthi, but did not want to vote for Somchai, might have given their second votes to Phichet, thus pushing up his result beyond what he could have expected, even unexpectedly surpassing Itthi. If Itthi benefited from Phichet, his party-list result might still be good. However, if Phichet benefited from the weakness of Somchai, then Itthi had lost many party-list votes. It would be good to have a sample of polling station results showing the combination of votes.

¹⁴⁹ This is somewhat too simple. However, even adding up Chalee and Phatcharakriengchai’s results would only yield 52,486 votes.

¹⁵⁰ The Thai-language headlines of these leaflets are ผลคะแนนเลือกตั้ง ส.ส. จังหวัดฉะเชิงเทรา and ผลคะแนนเลือกตั้ง ส.ส. แบบสัดส่วน กลุ่มที่ 5.

¹⁵¹ We see this sort of result in constituencies all over the country. This also applies to Matchimathipattai, Chart Thai, and Ruam Jai Chart Pattana parties. All these parties might have had the occasional strong local candidate, but their party labels aroused little interest.

¹⁵² Allen Hicken. 2006. “Party Fabrication: Constitutional Reform and the Rise of Thai Rak Thai.” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 6, no. 3.

¹⁵³ Michael H. Nelson. 2007. “Institutional Incentives and Informal Local Political Groups (*Phuak*) in Thailand: Comments on Allen Hicken and Paul Chambers.” *Jour-*

nal of East Asian Studies 7 (1):125-147. A particularly vivid example is constituency 2 of Sukhothai province, where all five main candidates chose this approach, as can be seen from the voting result: Chart Thai (71,910/2,763); Matchimathipattai (61,620/2,413); People's Power (43,891/8,552); Democrats (33,105/5,287); and Ruam Chai Thai Chart Pattana (23,694/413).

¹⁵⁴ Tilly (fn. 135), p. 10.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Gary W. Cox. 1986. "The Development of a Party-Oriented Electorate in England, 1832-1918." *British Journal of Political Science* 16: 187-216. A standard remark by observers of the contemporary electoral scene in Thailand is that Thais, by and large, vote for men and not for parties.

¹⁵⁷ Gerhard A. Ritter. 1997. "Einleitung." In *Wahlen und Wahlkämpfe in Deutschland: Von den Anfängen im 19. Jahrhundert bis zur Bundesrepublik*, ed. By Gerhard A. Ritter, pp. 7-16 (9f.). Düsseldorf: Droste.

¹⁵⁸ Karl Rohe. 1992. *Wahlen und Wählertraditionen in Deutschland: Kulturelle Grundlagen deutscher Parteien und Parteiensysteme im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, p. 33.

¹⁵⁹ Daniele Caramani. 2004. *The Nationalization of Politics: The Formation of National Electorates and Party Systems in Western Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 1-2 (italics in the original).

¹⁶⁰ See, for example, Klaus von Beyme. 2000. *Parteien im Wandel: Von den Volksparteien zu den professionalisierten Wählerparteien*. Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag (second printing 2002), Russel J. Dalton and Martin P. Wattenberg, eds. 2000. *Parties without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, and Peter Mair, Wolfgang C. Müller, and Fritz Plasser, eds. 2004. *Political Parties and Electoral Change: Party Responses to Electoral Markets*. London: Sage. While the second title treats the phenomenon in a general way, the third one provides studies of eight European countries.

¹⁶¹ On Thai political parties, see Murashima Eiji, Nakharin Mektrairat, and Somkiat Wanthana. 1991. *The Making of Modern Thai Political Parties*. Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies. (Joint Research Programme Series No. 86), Kramol Tongdhammachart. 1982. *Toward a Political Party Theory in Thai Perspective*. Singapore: Maruzen Asia, Daniel Evan King. 1996. "New Political Parties in Thailand: A Case Study of the Palang Dharma Party and the New Aspiration Party." Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Wisconsin-Madison, Duncan McCargo. 1997. "Thailand's Political Parties: Real, Authentic and Actual." In *Political Change in Thailand: Democracy and Participation*, ed. by Kevin Hewison, pp. 114-131. London and New York: Routledge, Allan D. Hicken. 2002. "From Phitsanulok to Parliament: Multiple Parties in Pre-1997 Thailand." In *Thailand's New Politics: KPI Yearbook 2001*, ed. Michael H. Nelson, pp. 145-176. Nonthaburi and Bangkok: King Prajadhipok's Institute and White Lotus Press, James Ockey. 2003. "Change and Continuity in the Thai Political Party System." *Asian Survey* 43 (4):663-680, James Ockey. 2005. "Societal Cleavages and Party Orientations Through Multiple Transitions in Thailand." *Party Politics* 11 (6):728-747, Paul Chambers. 2003. "Factions, Parties, Coalition Change, and Cabinet Durability in Thailand: 1979-2001." Ph.D. dissertation, Northern Illinois University, Duncan McCargo, and Ukrist Pathamanand. 2005. *The*

Thaksinization of Thailand. Copenhagen: NIAS Press (chapter 3), Siripan Nogsuan Sawasdee. 2006. *Thai Political Parties in the Age of Reform*. Bangkok, Thailand: Institute of Public Policy Studies, and Marc Askew (2008, see fn. 80). For some Thai-language sources, see กนก วงษ์ตระหง่าน. 2536. *พรรคการเมืองไทย*. กรุงเทพฯ: สำนักพิมพ์จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย, เซวณะ ไตรมาศ. 2540. *พรรคการเมือง: ภูมิหลังทางโครงสร้าง - หน้าที่และพัฒนากการทางสถาบัน*. กรุงเทพฯ: สถาบันนโยบายศึกษา สนับสนุนโดยมูลนิธิคอนราด อเดนาวร์, and บุญธรรม เลิศสุชีเกษม. 2531. “ความแตกแยกภายในพรรคการเมืองไทย: ศึกษาเปรียบเทียบพรรคประชาธิปัตย์ พรรคกิจสังคมและพรรคชาติ.” (Factionalism in Thai political parties : a comparative study of Democrat, Social Action and Chart Thai parties.) [กรุงเทพฯ]: ภาควิชาการปกครอง บัณฑิตวิทยาลัย จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย. วิทยานิพนธ์ รัฐศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต.

¹⁶² It is outside the scope of this paper to offer reasons for this situation.

¹⁶³ Such “party identification” (this concept is not to be confused with short-term party preferences or the electoral decision for a specific party or its candidates) has played a major role in explaining voting behavior in western democracies ever since the Michigan school introduced its socio-psychological approach in the 1950s. Controversies include questions about the transferability of the concept from the US to other countries, whether voters derive their party identification from class membership, and whether party identification really is an independent variable, or in turn is influenced by politics, policy, and political leadership. This latter position doubts the dominance of primarily *affective* identifications with political parties, and posits that party identification is instead a variable that depends on constant performance evaluations by the voters concerning the actions of government and opposition. The concept of party identification thus takes on a more *cognitive* character as a learning process. For overviews, see Jürgen W. Falter, and Harald Schoen, eds. 2005. *Handbuch Wahlforschung*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, and Franz Urban Pappi, and Susumu Shikano. 2007. *Wahl- und Wählerforschung*. Baden-Baden: Nomos. It is not surprising when academics observe a low degree of party identification in countries that have a low degree of political party institutionalization (Emile C. J. Sheng. 2007. “Partisanship in East Asia.” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 7 (2)). However, Napisa has tried to adapt the concept of party identification to the (pre-party list) Thai context, combined with the issue of the cost voters incur when searching for electorally relevant information (Napisa Waitoolkiat. 2005. “Information Costs and Voting in Thailand: Explaining Party- and Candidate-Centered Patterns.” Ph. D. thesis, Northern Illinois University). Dalton and Weldon seem to be at a loss about how the lack of a party system can be resolved, but still express optimism when they conclude, “This presents a bit of a chicken and the egg problem: partisanship will strengthen in new democracies when there are stable democratic party systems, but stable democratic party systems are partially built on widespread partisanship. Still, we see this as an optimistic potential for new democracies. If elites can build a functioning democratic party system, then partisanship should follow” (Russell J. Dalton and Steven Weldon. 2005. “Partisanship and Party System Institutionalization.” Paper prepared for the conference on Political Parties and Political Development, National Democratic Institute, Washington, DC. August 31, 2005, p. 16 (printed version in *Party Politics* 13 (2):179-196). Regarding Thailand, who, among all the country’s political actors, qualifies as the “elite” that, for whatever reasons, will start building a stable political party system?

¹⁶⁴ For this reason, the use of the main western instrument of voting research, countrywide representative surveys, has been difficult. They make little sense in political contexts that lack the structural basis of such research, which is the existence of nationwide stable political party systems and corresponding voter attitudes. As one Thai researcher put it, “Unlike countries like United States where one can readily identify oneself as a democrat, a republican, or independent, any measure of political ideology in Thailand is difficult, since there [are] no clearly differentiated political ideologies and parties in Thailand to start with” (Suntaree Komin. 1991. *Psychology of the Thai People: Values and Behavioral Patterns*. Bangkok, Thailand: Research Center, National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), p. 97). However, this does not mean that identifiably different value groups did not exist altogether. Suntaree distinguished between conservatives, in-betweens, and liberal categories by asking questions about the value of dictatorship, political participation, and the attitude towards demonstrations and protests. Yet, for the given reasons, these categories could not be related to voter choice. Similarly, one might well conduct surveys about attitudes towards democracy without relating the outcomes to the choice of different political parties in elections (Robert B. Albritton and Thawilwadee Bureekul. 2003. *Support for Democracy in Thailand*. Nonthaburi: King Prajadhipok’s Institute). At present, a rather strong attitudinal opposition might be found between PAD, monarchists, elite (Bangkok/urban), and the Democrat party on the one side, and People’s Power party, lower-class (rural), Democratic Alliance Against Dictatorship, and people critical of the political role of the monarchy on the other side. Since both positions include major political parties, this attitudinal divide might well play an important part in determining the voters’ choices in the next general election. However, it remains to be seen how strong the vote-determining power of these attitudes will be, how big the proportions of voters are who have adopted these attitudes, and how durable they will be over time.

¹⁶⁵ In general terms, the individual voter freely making his or her electoral choice is little more than fiction. Rather, such choices are influenced by constraints (election system, available candidates and parties), and conditions (social context, geographical setting, the mass media). However, the concrete shape of these constraints and conditions differ, depending on the socio-political structures of any given country. Regarding Thailand, the absence of a stable system of programmatically distinguishable political parties places a strong constraint on the voters’ choices. In Chachoengsao, as described in the text above, for over two decades voters have had very little electoral choice indeed. For an overview, see William L. Miller, and Richard G. Niemi. 2002. “Voting: Choice, Conditioning, and Constraint.” In *Comparing Democracies 2: New Challenges in the Study of Elections and Voting*, ed. by Lawrence LeDuc, Richard G. Niemi, and Pippa Norris, pp. 169-188. London: Sage.

¹⁶⁶ For Suphanburi, see Nishizaki (fn. 80). He argues at length why people in this province have good reasons for their positive attitudes towards Banharn, mainly based on his extensive patronage activities over the past few decades. Fifteen years before Nishizaki’s academic treatment, a report in *The Nation* (March 3, 1991) aptly summarized the same issue in a journalistic way, “Many structures in the provincial town were named after him [Banharn] and his wife, Jamsai, indicating the couple has sponsored or somehow helped support their construction. In the heart of the town stands the ‘Banharn-Jamsai’ clock tower. Nearby there are the ‘Banharn-Jamsai’ secondary and vocational schools. Ailing locals go to the ‘Banharn-Jamsai’ hospital. Policemen

rest in a ‘Banharn-Jamsai’ police booth. Devout Buddhists make merit at the ‘Banharn-Jamsai’ Temple in Danchang district. On their way to the temple, some travel along ‘Banharn-Jamsai’ road or pass the ‘Banharn-Jamsai’ intersection. Families can soon visit the ‘Banharn-Jamsai’ park, presently being created. A sign in the town reads: ‘Suphan Buri people are grateful for the contributions of Your Excellency Banharn Silapaarcha.’” As electoral statistics from this province tell us, the attitudes created by all this patronage perfectly translate into wide-margin election victories for all of Banharn’s candidates. It remains to be seen what effect the dissolution of Chart Thai party by the Constitutional Court on December 2, 2008, will have on Banharn’s political grip. He was disqualified from politics for five years, along with daughter Kanchana and son Wowawut.

¹⁶⁷ It is a conceptual and empirical question whether there are any village-level *phuak*, factions, or relatively stable electoral groupings in any given village, how strong these are, and how many villagers such groups cover. One work that points to the existence of such groups is Soparh Pongquan. 1988. *Participatory Development in Villages of Central Thailand*. Bangkok, Thailand: Division of Human Settlements Development, Asian Institute of Technology. Earlier, Potter noted for a village in Chiang Mai that it was divided, “into factions, centered around wealthy and powerful families, which oppose each other on most important issues, jockey for power, and engage in quarrels and disputes” (Jack Potter. 1978. *Thai Peasant Social Structure*. Chicago: University of Chicago, p. 147). Recently, Walker seems to have challenged this view by stating for a village in Chiang Mai that, “There is no ready-made social basis for political mobilization into clearly defined electoral entourages,” instead emphasizing fluid and overlapping interpersonal relationships (Andrew Walker. 2008. “The Rural Constitution and the Everyday Politics of Elections in Northern Thailand.” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 38 (1): 84-105; p. 102). Given the electoral data over the past two decades, I doubt whether the same claim could be made for villages in Chachoengsao. In a more general sense, I wonder whether all village voters really are to be seen as individuals who, on the occasion of an approaching election, undertake a complete reevaluation of the political landscape, and thus each time start their decision-making process from scratch. Rather, one would expect that the electoral history of villages displays certain regularities of group- or network-related voting behavior. Walker mentions that, “some of the most influential opinion leaders (including the headman) were keen supporters” of the non-TRT MP candidate in the 2005 general election. It is not said what made them keen supporters of that particular candidate, whether these leaders had supported the same candidate in his previous (probably around four) election contests, and whether the other opinion leaders supported the TRT candidate. Thus, this is about supra-village political relationships that affect the villagers’ voting behavior. After the election was over, did the process and the outcome contribute to any group-related identity, did this identity contribute to the narrow win of a non-TRT candidate in the 2006 mayoral elections (described on pp. 91-95), and did this outcome confirm group-related interactional references? Supra-village political relationships might also be found at the sub-district (*tambon*) level. See Daniel Arghiros (fn. 80), p. 10f., and Katherine A. Bowie. 2008. “Vote Buying and Village Outrage in an Election in Northern Thailand: Recent Legal Reforms in Historical Context.” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 67 (2): 469-511 (pp. 490ff.). A critical local government politician in Kalasin province, Bamrung Kayotha, recently remarked that *tambon*-level elections had become dominated by the mobilization of the candidates’ kinship networks and *phuak*. This contradicted democracy since it had resulted in “*phuak*-

style elections,” in which people vote for the candidates of their respective *phuak*, without considering whether they were politically qualified for administering their *tambon* administrative organizations (TAO). Moreover, even if members of the TAO council ran for different *phuak* in the election, afterwards they would often join the winning *phuak* in order to be given TAO budget for their villages. This way, according to Bamrung, transparency and accountability disappeared (*Krungthep Thurakit*, November 24, 2008). For the provincial level, see fn. 80.

¹⁶⁸ From the perspective of *hua khanaen*, Anyarat Chattharakul (2007. “Thailand’s Old-style Networks of *huakhanaen*: Informal Power and Money Politics.” Paper presented at the 5th EUROSEAS Conference, Naples, 11-15 September 2007, p. 13) distinguishes between dyadic and horizontal relations between an MP candidate and his core vote canvassers, and his non-dyadic, “shallow,” and probably vertical relations with “outer-layer *huakhanaen*,” who had been recruited by the core canvassers.

¹⁶⁹ Even in small urbanized areas (previously called sanitary districts, or *sukhaphiban*), references to the importance of *khrua yat* (network of relatives) are frequent; friends also often come into play. For a recent article, see Niti Pawakapan. 2003. “Traders, Kinsmen and Trading Counterparts: The Rise of Local Politicians in North-western Thailand.” *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 14 (3):365-382.

¹⁷⁰ Anyarat Chattharakul (see fn. 168) provides us with a picture of local electoral politics that differs much from that painted by Walker (fn. 167). Though Walker admits that *hua khanaen* exist, he does not consider their impact on the voters’ electoral decisions. Anyarat, on the other hand, mentions voters only in passing, while the electoral outcome mainly seems to depend on the *hua khanaen*. She also produced a Ph.D. thesis on the same subject: Anyarat Chattharakul. 2007. “Networks of Vote-canvassers in Thai Elections: Informal Power and Money Politics.” Ph.D. thesis, University of Leeds, School of Politics and International Studies. However, for undisclosed reasons, the academic community is not permitted access to this thesis before February 1, 2011. Earlier works on this group of electoral personnel include พิชัย แก้วสำราญ สมเจตน์ นาคเรี และ วรวิทย์ บารุ. [1987]. *การเลือกตั้งปัดตานี ปี 2529: ศึกษาเฉพาะกรณีกระบวนการหาเสียง และระบบห้วคพะแนน*. กรุงเทพฯ: มูลนิธิ เพื่อการศึกษา ประชาธิปไตย และการพัฒนา, and เพิ่มพงษ์ เชาวลิตร และ ศรีสมภพ จิตรภิมมย์ศรี. 2531. *ห้วคพะแนนอย่างไรให้ได้เป็น ส.ส.* กรุงเทพฯ: สำนักพิมพ์พันธมิตรธรรม. From a more positive angle, one might see *hua khanaen* and other social contacts as “information shortcuts.” As Popkin explains, “When a voter is unsure how to evaluate information, or doesn’t have information, relying on a trusted person for validation is, in essence, a strategy for economizing on information and resolving uncertainty” (Samuel L. Popkin. 1991. *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, p. 47). Similarly, Lau and Redlawsk list “five common heuristics or cognitive shortcuts that people utilize in making vote choice.” The second is about “*Endorsements*. Follow the recommendations of close acquaintances, trusted political elites, or social groups with whom you identify. In other words, let someone else do the hard work of figuring out how to vote” (Richard A. Lau and David P. Redlawsk. 2006. *How Voters Decide: Information Processing During Election Campaigns*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 28; italics in the original, embedded references omitted).

¹⁷¹ In more general social science terms, “Absent pure dominance of one member of a dyad over another, the logic that implies that A influences B also maintains that B affects A, and so on for each of the additional dyads in the household [network]. We must, therefore, specify the relative strength and causal flows for each relationship.” (Alan S. Zuckerman, Josip Dasović, and Jennifer Fitzgerald. 2005. “How Family Networks Affect the Political Choices of Boundedly Rational Persons: Turnout and Vote Choice in Recent British Elections.” Paper prepared for delivery at the 2005 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, September 1-4, 2005, p. 3). The authors belong to a group of scholars critical of the view of voters as atomized rational individuals. Rather, they argue for the return to a specifically social concept of the voter. Their programmatic statement is *The Social Logic of Politics*, ed. by Alan S. Zuckerman. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005. The reference to “relative strength” points to the fact that, though Thai villagers certainly communicate in overlapping networks, it does not imply that the electoral impact of the various others on ego as a voter will be the same. As Zuckerman, Dasović, and Fitzgerald (p. 8) note, “Individuals are especially likely to follow those persons from whom they take other cues, those on whom they depend, whom they trust, with whom they regularly interact, and whom they perceive as being like themselves.” Feelings of accountability towards another person will increase ego’s willingness to act on cues (if this includes the possibility of punishment for “wrong” voting, one might speak of “perverse accountability;” see Susan C. Stokes. 2005. “Perverse Accountability: A Formal Model of Machine Politics with Evidence from Argentina.” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 99, No. 3, pp. 315-325). It needs to be recognized that a voter’s “individual location is important primarily because it influences information flow and hence the political information and interpretations to which an individual is exposed. The key is communication—communication that is shaped and structured by individual surroundings” (Robert Huckfeldt and John Sprague. 1995. *Citizens, Politics, and Social Communication: Information and Influence in an Election Campaign*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 283). Taking a cue from these two sources, one might try to analyze voting behavior in a Thai village by investigating the location and social environments of voters, the groups and networks voters communicate in. We would then not expect a voting pattern (for example in Baan Tiam) of equally distributed votes for all candidates according to their proportional share of the total vote over the entire village territory. Rather, we would expect to find a number of relatively homogenous vote clusters. This approach might also be applied to differential voter turnout throughout the village, because a voter’s decision to go to the polls (as distinct from the decision of who to vote for) can also relate to the influence of groups. However, as seen from the rational individual, this implies that a person’s acquisition of political knowledge and going to vote will be repaid in the form of approval and social standing by an individual’s social network (Samuel Abrams, Torben Iversen, and David Soskice. [2007]. “Rational Voting with Socially Embedded Individuals.” Originally prepared for presentation at the 2005 Comparative Economy Workshop at the Center for European Studies, Harvard University). Generally speaking, without party-related cues or “social stimulants,” turnout might be low (Popkin, p. 227; see fn. 170). Regarding Thailand, we must keep in mind that voting is compulsory. Nevertheless, there has been a significant proportion of voters who did not go to the polls (30.1 percent in 2001, 27.4 percent in 2005, and 25.5 percent in 2007). It would thus be worthwhile to know what motivates abstentions. Regarding Walker’s Baan Tiam, it might have been as difficult for voters to vote against the dominant

electoral preference formed in their main reference group as it was to visibly abstain from voting. This option might have been more open to voters with a degree of social isolation. Thus, one could check the polling station voter roles, identify those who abstained, and inquire into their geographic and social location within the village.

¹⁷² For the example of a village in Chiang Mai province, see Andrew Walker (fn. 167). The author is careful to reject the idea that such culture directly determines voter choices saying that it does “not provide a ready template for political decision making. Rather, they [the local values] provide a broad framework in which local political evaluation can take place” (p. 102; similar p. 89f.). The power of a specifically local political culture as an explanatory variable of voter choice is further weakened by the inclusion of an element that Walker himself sees as embodying “general principles,” and as a “clear challenge to localist values” (p. 94), namely modernist and nationally oriented ideas of good governance, transparency, and capable management. In the 2005 election, the voters in Walker’s research site seem to have evaluated Thaksin positively (both retrospectively and prospectively), because he had come across as a strong and decisive leader, who gets things done as promised (though there had been some criticism concerning his perceived corruption). The same village voters also, on balance, evaluated Thaksin’s policies and their implementation positively—and they expected more in the future. However, from the examples of evaluations given, which were supposedly based on local *values* (p. 97ff.), it seems more plausible to classify them as expressions of economic and other *interests*. Similarly, the substantial decrease in votes of the TRT candidate in 2006, reported on p. 95, points to the voters’ observation of national politics as the decisive determining factor, rather than to local political culture. These readings actually support the author’s intention to make rural voters look less particularistic, while the emphasis on local values rather serves the views he wants to counter. This purpose would also have been served by an inclusion of the party-list vote into his consideration; after all, TRT probably received many more votes on the list than its candidate received for himself. Naturally, candidate characteristics play the decisive role in the constituency vote, while the party list vote is largely about the national presentation of the party, its leader, and government performance. This lack of attention also limits the usefulness of a consideration of the impact of policy performance on the results of *constituency* candidates provided by Somchai Phatharathananunth. 2008. “The Thai Rak Thai Party and Elections in North-eastern Thailand.” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 38 (1): 106-123 (p. 119ff.). Moreover, an orientation towards interests and policy could open up points for comparison. The two main objects of voter evaluation mentioned by Walker, policy issues and political leadership, are touched upon in the following (value free, so to speak) quote about voting behavior in Britain, “We argue that voters have been concerned consistently and primarily with valence—the ability of governments to perform in those policy areas that people care about most. Central to this argument is the idea that perceptions of party leaders crystallize people’s thoughts about the likely performance of political parties in office” (Harold D. Clarke, David Sanders, Marianne C. Stewart, and Paul Whiteley. 2004. *Political Choice in Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 315). From this perspective, as much as the victories of the Conservatives in 1987 and 1992, and the victories of Labor in 1997 and 2001, were due to a combination of these two evaluative criteria (Clarke et al. 2004, p. 317), the losses of the Thai Democrats in 2001 and 2005 to Thaksin and his TRT are equally easily explained. The Democrats did not offer any credible policy and leadership alternative in either election, and their retrospective evaluation by the voters in 2001 could only

benefit Thaksin/TRT. At the same time, Thaksin Shinawatra did an excellent job to “crystallize people’s thoughts about the likely performance of political parties in office,” and TRT’s party-list results reflected this very well, and with devastating effects on the Democrats, conservatives, and critics. However, besides the issue of political particularism, Walker’s argument also aims at refuting elitist claims that provincial voters do not have enough knowledge about the Thai political system and lack adequate information about issues and candidates in elections. This view (together with the issues of vote buying and *hua khanaen*) is the ideological core why Bangkok-based members of the Thai socio-political elite feel empowered to ignore the collective will of the people as expressed in elections. This highly normative and idealistic construct of the ideal democratic voter might be put into perspective by reference to real voters in the democratic West. Lau and Redlawsk note that, “five decades of behavioral research in political science have left no doubt that only a tiny minority of the citizens in any democracy actually live up to these ideals. Interest in politics is generally weak, discussion is rare, political knowledge on the average pitifully low, and few people actively participate in politics beyond voting” (Lau and Redlawsk, p. 72; see fn. 170). The authors, however, rather than doubting that Western democracies are truly democratic, or adjusting downwards the prescriptions of normative democracy theory, argue that, “Such standards are unrealistically high and ... not necessary for the average citizen” (p. 73). Lau and Redlawsk conceptualize voters, based on cognitive psychology (and thus without significant reference to social processes of opinion formation), as “limited information processors” (ibid.). They ask, “What if people can make reasonably good decisions, most of the time, without all the motivation and attention and knowledge that is required by classic theory?” (ibid.). They introduce the concept of “correct voting,” and demonstrate that most voters, despite their limitations, still reach electoral decisions that reflect their interests and that would not change even if they had had more information about issues and candidates (also see their earlier statement “Voting Correctly.” *American Political Science Review* 91: 585-598, 1997). And who could reasonably claim that the Thai voters in 2001 and 2005 would have voted Democrat if they only had more information? This is where the rearguard argument comes into play according to which the interests of the voters were wrong, or that voters should not have voted according to their interests but out of consideration for an abstract “national” interest, as defined by the elite. This line of thinking represents a paternalistic worldview, not a democratic one. In fact, Lau and Redlawsk are in the tradition of works that have taken the voters’ limitations seriously, after the Columbia and Michigan studies in the 1940s and 1950 had shown that American voters were “all-too-often ... disinterested, inconsistent in their opinions, and poorly informed,” while the democratic system nevertheless worked well (Robert Huckfeldt and John Sprague, fn. 171, p. 289). Obviously, Thai “democracy” does not work well. Notwithstanding the constant elite-reminder to the voters to cast their ballots for “good and capable candidates,” the voters can only make choices from the options presented to them. Are these options all bad, according to what criteria? It might well be a good idea to turn attention away from the voters, whose decision-making by and large seems to be good enough (except where coercive *hua khanaen* and purely economic vote buying dominate), and turn it to the mechanisms that create the electoral options—the political party system. A recent suggestion in this direction, on the occasion of PAD’s “new politics,” was made by Pasuk Phongpaichit in *Matichon* (October 8, 2008, p. 6).

¹⁷³ Askew (fn. 80), p. 325.

¹⁷⁴ The technical terms are retrospective and prospective voting.

¹⁷⁵ Normally, Bangkok voters would not vote for prime ministers whose parties were up-country outfits. Thus, Chartchai Choonhavan, Suchinda Kraprayoon, Banharn Silapa-archa, and Chavalit Yongchaiyudh had to govern in unfriendly Bangkok environments. As Phichai (now one of PAD's ideologues) pointed out earlier, since Bangkok voters were scared by the prospect of having a government based on parties mainly comprising up-country influential businesspeople, they would rather vote for the competition (พิชาย รัตนดิลล ญ ภูเก็ต. 2541. *ชนชั้นกับการเลือกตั้ง: ความรุ่งเรืองและความตกต่ำของสาม พรรคการเมืองในกรุงเทพมหานคร*. กรุงเทพฯ: ศูนย์วิจัยและผลิตตำรา มหาวิทยาลัยเกริก, p. 150).

Only Thaksin united the Bangkok and the up-country electorates. As for the Democrat party, in the elections of 1957, 1969, 1975, and 1976, they won all or almost all seats in Bangkok (see Supanee Chalothorn. 1986. *Greater Bangkok: An Analysis in Electoral Geography, 1957-1976*. Bangkok: Public Policy Study Program, The Social Science Association of Thailand, with the support of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, p. 33f.), Thai version สุพรรณิ ชะโลธร. 2541. “ภูมิศาสตร์การเลือกตั้ง (Electoral Geography)”

ใน *คลังสมองสามสิบสองสิ่งห้า*, เกียรติชัย พงษ์พาณิชย์ บรรณาธิการ, pp. 546-615. กรุงเทพฯ: สมาคมนิสิตเก่ารัฐศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย). This publication is based on her Ph.D. thesis, Supanee Chalothorn. 1982. “Greater Bangkok: An Analysis in Electoral Geography.” Ph. D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Concerning a recent statement by Pasuk and Baker, one wonders whether it is accurate to assume that it was mainly the “rural migrants in the capital,” who supported Thaksin in Bangkok and gave him a party-list advantage of 57.6 percent over the 33.6 percent for the Democrats in the city in the 2005 election, while the “Bangkok middle class” voted against Thaksin, and then soon afterwards started its protests. The great majority of rural migrants in Bangkok does not even have the right to vote in Bangkok but must return to their provinces of origin to do so. The assumption mentioned here seems to be implied in Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker. 2008. “Thaksin's Populism.” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 38 (1): 62-83 (quotes p. 62f.).

¹⁷⁶ Regarding the Democrats, there might then be three distinct geographical regions (South, Bangkok, other provinces) with equally distinct reasons for the voters' party preferences at election time, and not just merely one nationally relatively homogenous electorate holding similar motivations leading to the party's election result. Similarly, the Democrat party in the South might have a very regionalist outlook (see Marc Askew; fn. 80), while at its Bangkok center it might have retained much of the royalist conservatism that brought the party into existence. This, together with political opportunism and weak leadership, might have led the Democrats to move in with the royally inspired PAD, instead of defending electoral-democratic, liberal, and parliamentary principles. Seats that the party gained outside of the South and Bangkok are probably largely based on the local logic described above. However, as the result in Chachoengsao indicates, there might also be a pro-Democrat stock of “free” voters. On the other hand, they may be less in favor of the Democrats, and more against the established provincial or constituency oligarchy. Alternatively, votes cast in Chachoengsao for the Democrats might reflect positive attitudes towards the candidates individually. Thus, those votes might have been pro-candidate, and not necessarily pro-Democrat. They only looked like the latter because the candidates ran under the Democrat party label. Obviously, besides this diversity, the Democrats are either hardly known, viewed critically, or even despised, in most provinces of the North and

the Northeast. As mentioned at the end of fn. 164, a further strongly ideological reason for voting Democrat might be in the making.

¹⁷⁷ Sonthi's publishing house arranged for a book celebrating ASTV's political importance. See สุวิชา เพียรราษฎร์ บรรณาธิการ-เรียบเรียง. 2551 [2008]. *ASTV ขบถสื่อโทรทัศน์ไทย: สื่อที่ไม่ยอมยืมนองความตกต่ำของสังคมแบบเมินเฉย*. กรุงเทพฯ: สำนักพิมพ์บ้านพระอาทิตย์. ASTV's self-perception is expressed in the title: "ASTV – Thai television rebellion." It describes itself as a media outlet that does not agree with deliberately overlooking the deterioration of Thai society.

¹⁷⁸ The Democrat party, which has become akin to the parliamentary branch of Sondhi's PAD, seems to think that the time is ripe, judging from its constant calls for the prime minister to dissolve parliament and clear the way for new elections. The party's closeness to the PAD might not be accidental, given that it was founded in 1946 as a royalist-aristocratic counter-force against the citizen-oriented democratic ideas of the "People's Party," especially those of its civilian leader, Pridi Banomyong, that had overthrown the absolute monarchy in 1932. This long-standing opposition between a royalist-elitist conception of democracy and a people-politician conception cannot be overlooked in the current confrontation between PAD/Democrats and DAAD (UDD)/PPP. However, as far as the Democrats are concerned, there is certainly a good deal of electoral opportunism involved.

¹⁷⁹ During the coup-appointed Surayud government, this group had tried to establish its own satellite-based TV station as a counterweight to PAD, called PTV, or People's TV. The government blocked this attempt. *Matichon* (November 8, 2008, p. 11) reported that a new attempt is under way. "D-Station" ("D" standing for "Democracy") started broadcasting in January 2009.

¹⁸⁰ This was made more serious by how Thaksin had handled the party-lists votes. As Charan Phakdithanakun said, it "makes some people too power crazy. They think that they had received 19 million votes and therefore cannot do any wrong. This thinking is totally wrong" (*Matichon*, January 31, 2007; web site version). Moreover, the party list, to conservatives such as Charan, interfered with the parliamentary system (notwithstanding the fact that, for example, Germany has a parliamentary system but also a purely proportional—though mixed-member—election system), and especially with the position of the monarch. Since the party list votes could, rightfully, be interpreted as having been cast for a particular party leader, it "severely contradicts the parliamentary democratic regime of government that has the king as head of state" (*Matichon*, February 5, 2007). Nevertheless, the Democrat party, severely beaten especially on the party list in 2001 and 2005, derived much encouragement from their party list result in 2007, which was almost equal to that of the PPP.

¹⁸¹ Fifteen years ago, Russell J. Dalton and Martin P. Wattenberg published an overview of voting studies with the apt headline, "The Not So Simple Act of Voting" (in *Political Science: The State of the Discipline II*, ed. by Ada W. Finifter. Washington, D.C.: The American Political Science Association, 1993, pp. 193-218).

¹⁸² While the election data for constituency 2 are complete, those for constituency 1 are highly incomplete, and Sanam Chai Khet is missing altogether. The basic Amphoe Mueang data and those for Khlong Khuean district are also not on the CD, but were provided as hardcopies. There might have been some problems concerning the man-

agement of the election data by the constituency committee in constituency 2. This will require some follow-up with the PEC.