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Global Citizenship and History Education For Peace and Co-existence in the Context of Thailand

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Abstract

Citizenship refers to men as political animals having rights and freedom to join in political affairs of a community and the state. Born in Greece over 2,000 years ago, it then had to wait till the Renaissance era and capitalist society when economy grew and citizens' roles expanded. In Thailand, unfortunately authoritarianism has ruled for a long time making weak political parties and also weak local self-rule. Strong citizenship is thus much needed both by educational and political reform.

Keywords Strong Citizenship, People's Active Participation in Political Affairs, Think Global-act Local, Global Concerns-local Concerns.

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1. Introduction

Citizenship offers many interesting dimensions. First of all, it is a term which, when well executed, should benefit both individuals and community as a whole. It implies the role of an active individual when he has rights to pursue his dream and is empowered to have a hand shaping governmental institutions. Second, citizenship offers a dynamic identity: the dignity of an individual is recognized, an active citizen can move on and succeed, and has a capability to self - governance. Third, the term therefore has an almost universal appeal, considering the related terms such as freedom and egalitarianism to find a better world in the future once one has a goal to achieve: no hierarchy, no domination, no class, no race nor gender nor identity (Faulks, 2000, pp. 1-13). It was as if one were listening to the famous song entitled, "Imagine" by John Lennon.

This article intends to discuss the role of citizenship, global citizenship, education, history, conflicts, peace, and co-existence and explore how the last two can be achieved when the other words are rightly put together. It pays special attention to these concepts when and how they appeared and have been implemented in the context of Thai society.

2. Citizenship in a Historical Perspective

Citizenship was first created and developed in ancient Greece, notably in the city-state of Athens from the fifth century to the fourth century B.C. The major characteristics of citizenship and the social context during the time are as follows: 1) The basic culture is that man is not only a social animal but also a political one, indicating a close relationship between the individuals and the community; 2) As a political animal, he has rights to take part in administering his community; 3) The political activities of a community are freedom of the citizens to elect some to go into the deliberative and judicial offices; 4) Freedom of the citizens to speak about and discuss various problems within the community; 5) In Aristotle's words, "Citizens are all who share in the civic life of ruling and being ruled in turn." (Aristotle & Baker, 1946 pp. 95, 134). In this regard, a citizen is expected to have at least some knowledge and capacity necessary for the ruling and being ruled. 6) Participation by citizens in the administration affairs is therefore an important role of all citizens and "he could reach the full potential of his life and personality only by participation in the affairs of a polis (city-state) (Heater, 1900, p. 3).

In 1992, Riesenberg divided the historical development of the term citizenship into 2 stages: first stage – from ancient Greece to the onset of modernity (the French Revolution in 1789) and afterwards the second stage (Riesenberg, 1992). That division was seen to be too broad and conflated diverse views of citizenship in a long period of that first stage. For example, whereas the citizenship orientation in Roman Empire building era was legalistic, Machiavelli's

republican citizenship in medieval Florence was “a method for asserting citizen’s interests, Aristotle in Athens saw citizenship to be much more significant particularly in terms of humanist development (Faulks, 2000, p. 14).

A study has disclosed that little evidence of a notion of citizenship has been developed in other parts of the world in early times, “except perhaps in Judiac and Babylonian history.” According to Max Weber, “the notion of citizens of the state is unknown to the world of Islam, and to India and China (Heater, 1900, p. 2, Weber, 1927, p. 316)”. However, there is one question that has not yet been discussed: why this notion has not been developed in most areas of the world and why principally in old Greece.

In my view, several factors contributed to the development of this notion. Greece had several geographical factors that made a great contribution: many small islands which allowed a city-state especially Athens to prosper: being located near the Arab world which is very strong in philosophy and rich imagination; being the front gate, in the Mediterranean Sea, of importing goods from China, India, and Southeast Asia and then send them forward to Italy, Spain and Portugal on the West and to Prussia and Austria in the Northwest, making Greece an important port with capable traders and accumulated wealth. The weather down by the sea is not so cold all year round and little snow thus making the travel by sea operational all year. Last, a great number of population from mainland Europe north of Greece were hired or bought to become slaves and servants to work for growing trade in the Sea of Aegean area, linking Europe and Asia.

Thus, the growth of a strong citizenship in making the democratic city-state is a result of the growth of trade and other types of economy which produced a number of well-to-do traders and improved quality of life with abundant service work from laborers plus the rich philosophy from the Arab World.

That political development pattern has repeated one more time along the growth of Renaissance era during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. With growing trade with the Non-European world and being tired of the closed Medieval society, curiosity to search for knowledge and wisdom grew to revive the reading of Plato’s and Aristotle’s works started in the twelfth century, then a number of universities were born in Italy and spread to France and England, the Reformation in the thirteenth century and colonial expansion found the new world and etc., leading to the Industrial Revolution and finally the Democratic Revolution in the eighteenth century. It was the Capitalist Revolution that made members of society; the capitalists and the workers become politically active and thus active citizens.

According to Alexis de Tocqueville in 1830, the Englishmen who became protestants had to flee from their home country due to religious intolerance and political tyranny. They finally ended up in migrating to the New World and were able to start a new community and new life by local self-government in the Bay of Massachusetts Colony in 1620. From that the Bloodless Revolution in England in 1688, then the American Revolution in 1776, to be followed by the French Revolution in 1789. In this respect, active citizens were reborn, took part in and led the construction of a New World in which democracy was established and then spread to other parts of the world (Charoenmuang, 2008).

3. Global Citizenship

Several explanations concerning the notion of global citizenship have drawn much attention especially in the seminars and training on citizenship. For example, in a writing of UNICEF, a global citizen is the one who knows how to link the local impacts with the international systems and various issues; can analyze those linkages and the impacts; has good relations with fellows in other countries; can adjust himself to the changes elsewhere; and is ready to learn from others and to work as a team with others because public interests require unity and cooperation.

A global citizen should understand the past and link it with the present and can foresee the future. He should also know himself, his strengths and weaknesses and should be able to compare the differences he sees and thinks in order to analyze what is going on in the country and around the world.

In the views of H. Keid (See Nirundhawee, 2003), Global citizens 1) should be able to see and solve their own problems in a globalized world; 2) should be responsible for their work and can work with others; 3) should understand and accept the cultural differences; 4) Should have a critical thinking and a systematic thinking; 5) Intent to solve problems in a peaceful way; 6) Intent to change a way of life and consumption habits to help the environmental conservations; 7) Should be able to know and defend human rights, women's rights and rights of the minority groups everywhere; 8) Intent to and can engage in a political participation at a community level, national and also international levels;

A global citizen should possess the same qualities with a good citizen of a country. Willard Kniep in 1986 proposed that a global citizen should have 4 following characteristics:

(1) To know history, to know oneself, family, community, and country. He should not only know the problems but also causes of the problems and how to solve them;

(2) Ability to link the problems and causes of each problem; he should be able to solve problems in everyday lives; and also ability to seek knowledge in

order to apply them in work and living and also in communicating with friends organization and society.

(3) To recognize the value of interdependence, implant democratic values, helping others and environment. Also to instill ethics: justice, peace, freedom, equality, honesty, human dignity, and pride in being a human;

(4) Social participation. Not just to learn, to know, to understand the problems, but also one must start to act and to participate with ethics and ideals for a better and peaceful world.

4. Citizenship in Thailand

As Weber wrote, "the notion of citizens of the state is unknown to the world of …India and China," so the region of Southeast Asia sandwiched by the two giants aforementioned. Historically, there was no free man in the kingdom of Thailand until 1905 when the slavery system was legally abolished. Before that there were serfs and slaves who for six months a year provided physical labour or sought valuable items in forest areas, such as elephant tusks, forest honey, rare orchids and rare herbs, for the ruler. The end of state trade monopoly in 1855 which saw rice production increase due to foreign demands encouraged both slaves and serfs to flee from forced labour and bondage without pay to do farming for personal income. That was how the state began to abolish various forms of forced labor, slavery and serfdom, and began a tax system on freed men. Although a number of Chinese immigrants came to work as hired labour since the Ayudhya period and grew as the demand for rice imports increased since the reigns of Kings Rama III & IV, those migrants were merely hired labours without any political role in a democratic sense.

What is important to be noted here is that whereas all surrounding states fell victims of colonialism by Western powers, the rulers of Siam in 1855 agreed to sign the Bowring Treaty with England and 13 more Western counties in Europe in the following decade. According to the Bowring Treaty, Siam's state trade monopoly was ended and replaced by free trade; all import and export tariff rates were low; sale of opium was allowed in some areas; extra-territorial rights were in effect; whereas revision and abolition of the Treaty can be done only by both sides, obviously all the them easily benefited the Western signing states. The Siamese leaders knew well what was happening to their neighbors. In order to escape from colonialism, signing a trade treaty was the best option. As a result, Siam from 1855 became a semi-colonial state of those Western countries. It became obvious that with clear economic and legal privileges bestowed upon all Western powers by Siam and also Siam not being located right on the strategic coastline between India and China, such a position of Siam and economic benefits received by the Western powers were adequate. However, the consequences of Thailand were quite costly compared with other colonial neighbors.

To survive and prosper among colonial powers and colonies, King Rama V had to strengthen his position by setting up the Absolute Monarchy system and the major bureaucratic reform in 1892. The semi-colonial status of the Kingdom since 1855 not only made the country establish a good relationship with Western states, but also prevented any open political conflicts or even problems between the foreign powers and the Thai state and people to occur. There was neither citizenship nor any political learning or activities on democratic principles existing in this country. With all school textbooks were controlled by the government and all the Buddhist temples and also other religious faiths were under centralized control by the state, the social and cultural control was equally as strong as political and economic control by the State. Slaves in Thailand did not stage a resistance against the state rule, but a desire for income made those slaves and serfs run away from forced labour for freedom (Wyatt, 2003). More importantly, without direct confrontation with a colonial rule, neither the Thai populace had experienced little open conflict with colonial powers nor they had any political activities such as demonstration or any other political mobilization forms to enhance citizenship activities. In fact, there was little room for nationalism education either in public sphere or in schools. As all other neighboring countries had proudly presented their own nationalist leaders during this era, Siam had none.

With the old ruling regime in firm control of the state, whereas her neighbors were ruled by Western powers and the old regimes annihilated, two major political events, the 1911 Democratic Revolution in China and the 1917 Socialist Revolution in Rusia stunned the Thai ruling class and played a vital role in leading the Thai elites to set up a strongly centralized system. It is interesting to note here that as American missionaries came to set up schools to spread Christianity, in the end however, all the textbooks and teachings in those schools were dictated to follow the State directives. The democratic political culture which was dominant in the American society was not introduced to Thai students at all as the missionaries did their best to get permission to continue their religious work. The letters submitted to the Palace, by low-ranked soldiers, calling for a Constitutional Monarchy, followed by an attempted coup by “democratic” soldiers also in 1911 in Bangkok, must have played an important role in pushing the absolutist regime to strengthen a bureaucratic control and anti-democratic rule in Thailand as a small group of revolutionaries for the 1932 Democratic Revolution in Bangkok worked very quietly and public political learning and political participation were never allowed. Whereas the notions of democracy and citizenship were openly discussed in the neighboring colonies, a semi-colonial regime in Thailand tolerated little of that, if not none.

The notions of democracy, an elected government, political freedom and rights, elections, and citizenship openly and officially emerged in Thailand in the

successful Democratic Revolution in 1932. Since then, those notions and their execution have quickly surged forward. Three concrete evidences have been established step by step: first, the political institutions such as the constitution, general elections, the national parliament where its members are every four year elected by the people, etc.; second, local government called municipality where the municipal council is established and elected by local people and the mayor is elected by the council majority to administer each municipality; and third, Thammasat University founded by the democratic government to foster education on social sciences and humanities with emphasis on the notions of democratic ideals and viewpoints and citizenship. However, the political conflicts between the 'ancien regime' and the democratic regime did not end but flared up amidst six years of World War II (1939-1945) and the growing power of the socialist victories and movements from Eastern Europe to East and Southeast Asia from 1942 to 1947.

Those victories led the 'ancien regime' and the military forces with American support to finally halt the progress of the democratic forces by a military coup in 1947. From then on until the present 2023, for 76 years, Thailand has been ruled by three different regimes: authoritarian regime, Western-style democracy, and semi-authoritarian regimes. During the first 35 years from 1947 to 1982, when the struggle for socialism in China and Indo-China was peaking and later the guerrilla war waged by the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) within the country, most governments were authoritarian and, after those ideological conflicts had subsided, authoritarian governments have mostly been in political control. Elected governments came to power and most were finally ousted by a military coup. Semi-authoritarian regimes came to power at times. Obviously different types of leaders had played an important role in shaping the government, but it seems an authoritarian culture has dominated the government system and democratic education system and a democratic civil society need to be much strengthened so that a strong and stable democratic can be erected in this country (Fuwongcharoen, n.d.).

The latest example is after the latest military coup was staged in 2014, the "revolutionary" council had a new constitution passed with the 250 senators appointed by the chairman of the revolutionary council. The general elections were then held and empowered the appointed 250 senators in the upper house to vote for a prime minister. In return, the 250 appointed voted the leader of the 2014 coup d'etat to become the new prime minister, who now has led this country for eight years now from 2014. The election in May 2023 allowed him to be a candidate for premiership again according to the latest 2017 Constitution and he did not have to run a campaign. He hoped that a number of the political parties which earlier supported him would nominate him again for 4 more years. Those parties did not have a successful campaign, however. Citizenship culture began to

play a role in enabling 8 democracy-oriented political parties to win, unite as the majority side gaining 312 votes out of 500 Members of lower house, and to form the democratic coalition in forming a new government. Unfortunately, the democratic forces could not form a new government since they need a minimum of 376 votes including the support of 250 appointed senators from the Senate. The democracy side won the May 2023 election but was shocked to see their opportunity slip away as most 250 senators supported the authoritarian parties and "democratic" parties to form the new "right of center" coalition government.

With regard to democracy at local levels, because of continued political instability in which there have not been national consensus on the type of the national political system in the past 6 decades, but mainly dominated by the authoritarian regime which supports the centralized bureaucratic system, and has been in administrative control all over the country local government units, totaling 8,000, with limits in budgets, authorities, personnel, and development projects but under strong control by the regional administrative agencies, the notions of local self-governance and people's political participation have been poorly implemented. As a political analysis pointed out, a semi-colonial state status has resulted in three major structural consequences: 3-late development, namely late structural reform, late democratization, and late decentralization. With regard to Thailand since the semi-colonial state status began 1855, the three lates have remained around until now (Charoenmuang, 2006, pp. 235-243).

The notion of 'citizen' for example is an outstanding case. In Thai language, "ราษฎร" *(raat-sa-don)* is a Sanskrit word meaning people under government, doing duties and paying taxes. The word has been around for a century. The word "พลเมือง" *(pol-la-mueang)* however has not been interpreted differently from the previous word. The duties to serve the state and obey the government regulations and orders have been emphasized over and over in most school textbooks. Few have stated a close connection between the word 'citizen' and 'democracy' that the two were together when a democratic system was created in Greece two thousand years ago. In a country where centralization system has been stable and authoritarian and democratic regimes have taken turns to come around like in this country, the word "พลเมือง" *(pol-la-mueang)* or citizen in Thai is the term in any political regime, which simply means people of the country, obeying all the laws, and serving any government in power and possessing no political power (Charoenmuang, 2006).

5. From Citizenship to Global Citizenship: A Discussion

As the world has been developing into two major types of political system: a democratic regime and an authoritarian one. The former is regularly the government elected by people on 4 to 6 years having 2 to 4 main political parties competing for election victories, whereas the latter can be a government chosen by the one-party system or a military rule or a mixture of elected and appointed executive systems. The notion of citizenship is defined differently in those two types. Whereas freedom of opinion and political participation of the people are allowed in the first type, the state and the ruling institutions in the second type play a major role in political and administrative matters and suppression of viewpoints against the government and the state is conducted. Over the past half century, the notion of citizenship has been well recognized in any country regardless of types of political regimes. However, citizens in a democratic state can be politically free and active while citizens in the other type of state are seen to be "well behaved" members of society and the state and furthermore win praises in the professional dimensions.

From the definitions of global citizenship above, one can see that all of them pay no attention to the type of a political regime. Such an avoidance is an important tactic because as long as there are active citizens who play an active role in civic engagement, the final outcomes will be the same: an open, transparent, responsive, and accountable system of governance. In the meantime, when there are citizens who are concerned about their communities, quality of life, environment, and the administrative and political system and raise their hands to voice their opinion and take further actions, more and more members of the society will listen, learn and become aware. So will the press, social media, responsible agencies, surrounding organizations including schools and their children who will grow up to be future citizens.

6. History Education for Peace and Co-existence

All writings above on global citizenship suggested that one study history, learn his community's history, and especially his own family story and himself. However, in fact the famous work by Marx and Engels in 1848 entitled, The Communist Manifesto, concluded that history of humanity is the history of class struggle, a war between classes. Paul Strathern in 2019 studied "Rise and Fall in the History of Ten Empires," and found that war was a major factor in destroying those empires (Strathern, 2019). Then in 2021, Simon Winchester wrote a book *"Land: How the Hunger for Ownership Shaped the Modern World"* (Winchester, 2021). Conflicts and wars have characterized a long development of global history. This is due to the conflicts among classes and states over resources.

There are three observations concerning history education and the goals of peaceful co-existence. First, although most studies in the past have found conflicts and wars as main factors in historical development, there should be more studies on peace and how conflicts have been solved in a peaceful way and have contributed to world development. Second, a democratic system in which the legislative assembly, the press, and people's political participation have played a good role in the decision making of the executive concerning foreign affairs, particularly war decisions. However, we need to remember foreign news and information services should be attended by more organizations so that the public can learn more from different angles. One can wonder from how the news is regularly reported to the audience in Russia in the times of war between Russia and Ukraine that has continued for six months now and how the war can be terminated. Third, the following information are interesting: a 2016 survey by the Annenberg Public Policy Center reported that only 26 percent of Americans can name all three branches of government; public trust in government is at only 18 percent; and voter participation reached its lowest point since 1996; and only 23 percent of eight-graders performed at or above the proficient level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) civics exam. According to the recommendations of the study, the state should focus more on civics education and civic engagement. The point is that those studies were conducted to support civic education for young students with regard to civic education and civic engagement on local and national issues excluding foreign issues. Therefore, history education with more of peace issues both in the country and global history and international peace issues can also be added (Shapiro & Brown, 2018).

7. Conclusion

The term 'citizen' was created in a democratic state in Greece and it was meant to be an active member in political engagement and public affairs. Since there were other types of government system which endorsed the roles of "citizens," during the time, the term with a positive meaning has been adopted and used to mean a good member of the state especially in the Roman Empire era. As democracy has an appeal to more people in modern states and a study of history has become important, the terms citizen and citizenship have been increasingly relevant in the 17th and 18th centuries. In an education system which has been centralized and controlled by an authoritarian regime, a lack of local control over history education not only obstructs people's knowledge and understanding of a just and free society but also perpetuates people's weak participation in civic affairs, letting the government to power abuse.

As conflicts and wars continue to be a threat to many parts of the world, the education of people's civic engagement, democratic rule, and peace and co-existence become much more urgent. As Derek Heater put it (1990), citizenship

education should have a major goal for the development of certain values and attitudes (Heater, 1900, pp. 337-338). The more people's civic engagement grows, the more careful decisions will be made and that means conflicts should be solved by tolerance. And as Ken Faulks put it (2000), advocates of global citizenship should not be abstract utopians, they should seek to build upon actual social changes (Faulks, 2000, pp. 160-161). In my concluding remark, history education should be further promoted and people's civic engagement further strengthened.

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