

International workshop

***The Oct 6 massacre and aftermath
–violence and democracy***

30th June 2018



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—violence and democracy

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Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa,
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

Organized by Core Project (Anthropology)
“The Potential Value of Indigenous Knowledge in Managing Hazards
in Asia and Africa: The Anthropological Explorations into
the Linkage of Micro-Macro Perspectives 2”

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The Oct 6 massacre and aftermath—violence and democracy

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“The Potential Value of Indigenous Knowledge in Managing Hazards in Asia and Africa:

The Anthropological Explorations into the Linkage of Micro-Macro Perspectives 2”

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Introduction

Ryoko Nishii

(ILCAA)

Thank you very much for coming all the way to the ILCAA far away from the center of Tokyo. It is such good weather, but I was thinking of an opening phrase in such a big weather, but actually today, it is very hot, so maybe it is dangerous to stay outside all the time. It is better to stay in an air-conditioned room. Now I would like to explain my intention around organizing today's workshop and give some context for today's presentation by Professor Puangthong.

It is fair to say that Thailand's democracy has been in crisis since the 19th coup held on May 22 in 2014 resulted in the military resuming control of the government. Given the circumstances, I wonder what Thai people who wish democracy for their fair and hopeful society could do to further its cause. Thai society has been afflicted with divisions and conflict between so-called red-shirts and yellow-shirts since an earlier coup in September 19, 2006. The red-shirts began as supporters of deposed former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra (He just came to Japan. I did not know, about it, Ajahn Shintani gave me a photo of Thaksin, maybe, in Tokyo) who was ousted by a military coup in September 2006. The yellow-shirts represent those opposed to Thaksin and were the force behind the street protests that led to the 2006 coup.

Last year, at the 13th International Conference on Thai Studies at Chiang Mai, I attended a panel discussion chaired by Ajahn Phuagthong titled, 'The Forgetting: A Talk on Public Memory of the 6th October'. This led to me getting to know of a movement promoting democracy in present-day Thailand, and resisting the anti-democratic tide.



My interest in the October 6th massacre comes from conversations I had in 2009 with the husband of a friend who was present, and shot, at Thammasat University on October 6th, 1976. With luck, he survived, and was able to join communists in the jungles. Around the time I had this conversation in 2009, I was trying to process the shocking fact that ordinary citizens, including taxi drivers and farmers, were openly criticizing the royal family, and calling for their removal. In my 30-plus years of fieldwork, mainly in southern Thailand, I had not heard such negative sentiments of Rama IX. I had to unfortunately admit that new divisions had opened up in Thai society, not only between areas (red in the North-Northeast, versus yellow in the South maybe around Bangkok), but also within friendly and familial groups, between husbands and wives, parents and children, young and old. Divisions have appeared even among the *sahai* people (*sahai* in Thai, the name they are called of in the jungle) who had entered after the massacre in the jungle and shared democratic ideals, as well as experiences of harsh jungle life.

I am hoping we can find a better way today. In late September 2016, Ajahn Puangthong and Ajahn Thongchai began documenting the atrocities that happened at Thammasat University over 40 years ago. What has been uncovered is striking, making a strong case that to face repressed and traumatic memories of that place and point in time should be the first step in rethinking Thai society, and indeed the rest of our world. I now refer to three women interviewees' experiences of the Thammasat University Massacre. Two of the interviews were conducted on August 4 in 2009.

The name, Nai, she was born in 1955. She is Muslim. Born in Bangkok, Nai was the third child among seven brothers and sisters. Her father was a member of parliament for the Democratic Party elected to represent the Songkhla region in southern Thailand. However, at the time of the massacre on Oct 6, he was refused access to Thammasat, where Nai was being held, by claims the government's collapse had canceled his status as an MP. Nai noted that her captors kept claiming that the captives were Vietnamese, not Thai. The male captives were stripped to the waist, and

women were only permitted to wear underwear. Just as she was taking off her clothes, her name was called and she was allowed to meet her father at the gates of Thammasat University. She wonders to this day why she was alleged to be Vietnamese even though she had clearly been born in Thailand, like her parents and grandparents.

The next interviewee is Tim. Nai and Tim are now living together in Chiang Mai. They are friends. Tim was born in 1955 also. She is a Buddhist. Tim was also born in Bangkok but her parents came from Pathumthani. She was the first child among six brothers and sisters. Her father was a soldier and her mother sold food at the local market. Because her parents were too busy to take care of her, she stayed with the family of Chit Phumisak. Chit Phumisak is a very famous author, philologist, historian, poet, and communist. Chit Phumisak was arrested and shot dead in 1966, and Tim remembers Phumisak's mother telling her why.

On October 6th 1976, Tim fled Thammasat for the river, leaving behind friends who had been shot, with blood all over their clothes. Tim recalls telling herself at the time that she could not help them, and that she should run as fast as she could to survive. She ran away with a friend who could not swim, and threw a garbage box into the river to make a float so that her friend could cross the river with her. She described vividly how she escaped the soldiers who were at the time shooting students indiscriminately. Both Nai and Tim entered the jungle after the massacre; Nai in Songkhla, and Tim, in the upper Northeast.

The third person who I interviewed is Suchada Chakpisuth (whom Ajahn Puangthong and Ajahn Thongchai know) after the 13th International Conference on Thai Studies last year. She actually acted in the drama performance at Thammasat University which was utilized to justify the violent attack in 1976. Her father had migrated from China and ran a small shoe shop. Their family was poor but loving. Frequently witnessing police extorting poor shop owners like her father, Suchada began acting in dramas protesting for social justice during high school, before entering Thammasat

University in 1976.

As Ajahn Punagthong detailed in her presentation, on October 5, as thousands of first-grade students were due to take examinations, performances were held protesting against the return of former military dictator Thanom Kittikachorn to Thailand from Singapore. The examination hall somehow remained locked, and so about 2000 students unwittingly attended the performance. Returning home after performing, Suchada noticed police officers following her, so she took the back streets. Upon hearing reports over the house radio of performances that were considered insulting to the crown prince, she rushed back to Thammasat still wearing her uniform. Suchada was at Thammasat until the night of Oct 6, and like Tim, managed to escape by crossing the river even though she could not swim. Some male students helped her by sending her to a safe-house where girls disguised themselves as laborers, changing from school uniforms to shirts and *phatung* (a cloth worn around the waist). Suchada said of that time, “The police and soldiers treated us as if we were not human. We had no mothers, no fathers, no relatives.” Then, she entered the jungle, being sent as far as Cambodia, and only returning to Thailand in 1979. Over 40 years later, Suchada still remembers the voice of student leader Ajahn Thongchai calling repeatedly during the attack, “Soldiers, police officers, please do not shoot us. We have no weapons!” Although her story continues, I will stop here today. I just wanted to convey the general atmosphere of violence at Thammasat on that day, October 6th, 1976.

I would like to quote the following words from *Presentiments of Violence-Ifa Fuyu and Okinawa's Crisis* by Ichiro Toyama: “The matter I would like to consider through ‘historiography of memory’ is the possibility of resisting military violence. The possibility of struggling against military violence in a world where everyday lives are displaced into battle fields... We should articulate this possibility from the perspective of everyday life.” Toyama refers to Takahashi Kazumi’s short essay *In the Sight of the Dead*, which is an introductory chapter of a book

describing people killed by police in the 1960s and 1970s in Japan. “From the position of the corpse of someone killed by police power, the corpse cannot speak but the last image of the person beside them remains on their eyes. The corpse with this image exists.” He suggests that we, who live alongside the corpse, should proceed as if we were the last person the victim saw, when considering that we may one day resist violence. I hope we can find possibilities for quelling imminent violence today by preserving and analyzing precious memories of the October 6th massacre. Thank you very much.

Now I would like to introduce Ajahn Puangthong. I met her last year at the International Conference of Thai Studies at Chiang Mai as I have already mentioned. She organized the panel on the Oct. 6th Masacre. I was very impressed by the panel. So, I decided to invite her to talk today using the chace of Aj Puangthong’s visiting at Kyoto University. Today’s topic is ‘Challenges of Documenting the October 6th Massacre in the Amnesic Thai Society’. Please start, Aj Phuangthong.

Challenges of Documenting the Oct 6th Massacre

Puangthong Pawakapan

(Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University,
Visiting Scholar, CSEAS, Kyoto University)

Thank you so much, Ajahn Ryoko, for inviting me to give a talk today and thank to everyone for coming to the talk today.

[“#” indicates slide number]

#2

Actually, I am not an expert on the October massacre at all. I never researched on this topic and I am not the Octobrist generation. I was in grade 7 when the massacre took place. But these last two years I have been involved in the project of documentation of the October massacre in the form of the online archives. Ajahn Thongchai, me, and a couple of colleagues decided to set up the archives.

I have myself been interested in the documentation affairs before. In 2010, there was a government’s crack down of the red shirt protestors in Bangkok which led to 92 people killed. My colleague in several institutes and I set up an ad hoc fact-finding team. We produced the 1,200-page report, which challenges the government-sponsored commission.

#3

I am involved in the Oct 6 online archives because in October 2015 Ajahn Thongchai told me



that he believed that there were more than one person being hanged on Oct 6, 1976 but he was not sure how many. For almost 40 years, we thought there was only one person being hanged. It was a shock to me. How come this basic information has been neglected by people, including myself, who claimed to care about this issue. After almost 40 years, we still were unable to grasp the basic fact even though we use the pictures of the hanged victims constantly. You can find the picture on the website, in the print, and the books. The hanging picture becomes the emblem of the massacre. Since then, I got involved with the October 6th online archives.

#4

I understand that some people here may not be familiar with the history of the October massacre, so I will give a brief account of the massacre and also explain the status of October 6th history in Thai society. I will explain the objectives and activities of the archives and the challenges. Then, I will try to explain why all these facts about the massacre has been neglected for a long time. I use the term 'disremembering' among the people. The last note will discuss, if it is possible for the traumatic history of October 6th to have a place in Thai society, which is deeply divided in these last 10 years.

#5

Let us look at the brief history of the massacre. In October 1973, a popular uprising overthrew the military government of General Thanom and General Prapas. After the topple of the regime, Thai society witnessed a series of demonstrations by farmers, workers and students. They were demanding equality and justice. The students also became increasingly radicalized. They intensified the fear of communism among the conservative elites. Meanwhile, the communist movements in the neighboring countries were getting stronger and stronger too. In 1975, all the

three countries were won by the communists.

Therefore, the fear led to the massacre in order to end the radical student movement. Besides, a couple years before the massacre, the right wing elites and the media were trying to dehumanize the students by labelling them as ‘scum of the earth’, the enemy of the three pillars of the nation, and lackeys of communist aliens. It happened on the daily basis. That is why we saw such hatred so clearly on that morning at Thammasat University and Sanam Luang.

#6

A month before the massacre, the rightist elites brought General Thanom, who was then ordained as a novice, back to Thailand with the aim to stir up student protest, which certainly took place at Thammasat University. Students planned to do it in early October. Then, on September 24th, two activists who were workers for the Electricity Generation of Thailand and lived in Nakhon Pathom province, a two-hour drive from Bangkok. They put up anti-Thanom posters in Nakhon Pathom, and in that early morning they were found being hanged in a public area, so it became a big news nationwide. Five police were arrested, but after the massacre, the case just went quietly, and nobody was held accountable for these two guys. No one held accountable for the massacre either.

#7

Anyway, the hanging of the two electricians led the students to stage the mock hanging as part of the protest against the return of Thanom. One of the performers allegedly resembled the crown prince Vajiralongkorn, who is now the king of Thailand. The right-wing media and the military radio hosts accused students of insulting and defaming the crown prince. They urged and mobilized the right-wing thugs to come to Thammasat to attack students. There 40 students and

people were killed. Many were tortured, lynched, and sexually assaulted. In that morning five police and the thugs died too. Over 3000 students were arrested, and later about 3000 students fled to join the Communist Party of Thailand in the hills. In the late afternoon of that October 6th, the military coup took place, and the extreme rightist government was set up by the coup d'état.

#8

Later, the people, both the state forces and the right-wing thugs involved in the massacre were granted amnesty from the military set up parliament. No one was held accountable for the massacre. 3000 student activists fled to the jungle, but a couple of years later, they left the CPT because of internal conflict. The military government pardoned them and allowed them to return and resume their formal lives. Ajahn Thongchai, who was imprisoned for two years, was then freed. Therefore, the October massacres became a historical chapter that, according to Ajahn Thongchai, is not forgettable, but it is difficult for the Thai society to recognize it. I think this captures the status of the massacre until today. It is difficult to recognize it, and incorporate it in a national history. It has no place in historical textbooks. October 6th is the disturbing Chapter of the Thai nation, and the trauma for the victims, but it remained unresolved. Though people seem to know who and which institutions were behind the massacre either directly or indirectly, they cannot discuss the issue openly and straightforwardly for fear of political repercussions. Because people believe that the institutions, which were complicit in oppression remain powerful in present day. The lack of accountability is the proof in itself. Even the survivors themselves, the Octobrists, consciously limit discussion of the massacre.

The first 20 years after the massacre was a silenced period. Even though there were annual commemorations at Thammasat, it was small and quiet until the 20th year after the massacre. Ajahn Thongchai urged the Octobrists to break their silence. He urged that it was time to give the

victims a full recognition they deserved. It is time for Thai society to come to term with its past. Also, because Thai politics became more open, and the Octobrists were quite successful in many professions. Many became well-known academics, businessmen, and politicians. Their status in society was respected. A big commemoration was held in 1996. Since then, people talked and learned more about the massacre, although it circulated among small circles of the Octobrists, and the universities (the students and the lecturers). Majority of the Thai population do not know or have heard about the massacre though.

Anyway, the terms state crime, massacre, dehumanization, hate crime became commonly used to describe October 6th. Video clips and pictures of October 6th were distributed and reproduced widely online. However, this created a paradox. On the one hand, the issue of who were behind the massacre remained sensitive. There is a ceiling of discussion about this matter. You cannot discuss much about the role of the monarchy either. Therefore, the massacre seemed to reach the unwritten consensus that we cannot discuss the matter further than this.

#9

On the other hand, the increasing public recognition of the massacre gives people an illusion that we have known enough about the massacre. Though we cannot discuss the issue of who and what institutions were behind it, it seems that we knew enough who was who in the massacre and about the dead victims. In fact, after forty years there are very few researches on the massacre. One of them is by Ajahn Thongchai. One of them was about conflict among the elites only.

After we realized there were some missing pieces about the massacre, Aj Thongchai and I agreed to create the online archives called 'Documentation of 6th October' (www.doct6.com) and links it with the Facebook account. It began with Aj Thongchai's donation. I wrote several articles about our findings and put it on Facebook because people use Facebook more than the website.



The objective of this online archive is for people to be able to access the primary sources easily. We put up all primary resources, such as autopsy reports and newspapers. All newspapers that were published in the September and October 1976. So that people can have access to all the press at that time. People always mentioned *Dao Siam* as if it was the only ultra-rightist press. In my opinion there were more than *Dao Siam*. In addition, the project had interviewed several family members of the dead victims and friends. The other objective of our archive is to honor and rehumanize the victims.

Another objective of the archive is to honor and rehumanize the dead victims. As I told you about the not knowing exactly about how many people being hanged on October 6th, I then asked myself what else I did not know.

#10

I told myself that I had known very little about the identities of the victims and the impacts on their families. I did not know the faces of the victims. During the commemorations, we did not even have the pictures of all the victims. We only have a few. So, I asked my junior colleague Ms. Pattaraporn Phoothong to help me do a documentary film, entitled *Respectfully Yours*. I want the film to tell people about the individuality of the victims, and the impacts on their families, to make the public hear their voices. During the production process, Pattaraporn and I looked at the pictures and video clips of the massacre. We, then, came to the conclusion that there were at least five people being hanged on that morning. The evidences we used were not secret. It is on the prints, the websites, and in the video clips on the YouTube. But no one had cared to look at them carefully.

I decided to organize a public seminar at Chulalongkorn University on September 30, 2016. Pattaraporn showed the audience about the findings. But on that day we could identify one

victim only. That was Wichitchai Amornkul, the sophomore at Chulalongkorn University. People knew since 1976 that Wichitchai was hanged but thought that he was the only hanged victim. So, people wrongly identified all the pictures of hanged victims as Wichitchai even though they were not him. Anyway, what is astonishing is that at the end of the seminar, someone, an Octobrist, walked to me and said she and her friends knew one of the hanged victim. His name was Kamol Kaewkrithai. They had known since 1976 that Kamol was hanged on October 6 but they never discussed about him in public. Even though they knew Ajarn Thongchai and knew that he had been working on the topic for a long time, they never told him about Kamol.

Then, a week later, on October 6th, 2016, at the commemoration at Thammasat University, two people came to tell Pattaraporn that they knew one of the hanged victim, whose name was Mr. Preecha Sae-ia. We learned that Preecha was a member of the editorial board of the leftist political magazine. Several years ago someone sent ten pictures of Preecha to an Octobrist academic. The pictures showed Preecha was dragged from a white car by the mob, beaten and dragged on the ground unconsciously, and hanged at Sanamluang. His pictures were put up on YouTube. For several years nobody knew, nor cared to find out who he was. But just a week after the public seminar, we could establish identities of two more victims.

Sadly, as of now we did not know identities of the last two hanged victims, even though their pictures were used more widely and possibly gained highest number of viewers. Because their pictures were shot by the Associate Press photographer, Neil Ulevich and one of the pictures was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1977.

#11

Furthermore, four people were burned to ashes and bones on that morning. We did not know their identities either. According to the autopsy report, the doctor cannot identify their genders,

but a picture we found tells us that one of them was a woman. Where were their families? We did not know. Whether they were still looking for their children, we did not know. I asked people, and Ajahn Thongchai, whether any parents came to Thammasat to look for their children after the massacre. I believe that as a parent, one may keep searching and waiting for children for 10 or 20 years. But nobody seemed to hear of such thing.

In addition, a woman was sexually assaulted. She lied on the ground naked. Her picture was shared on the print and internet. No one tried to find out who she was until recently (May 2018), I was able to establish her identity by comparing her picture with the one in the autopsy report. She was a third-year student of Ramkhamhaeng University. But we could not locate her family yet.

#12

This is the film I mentioned about, *Respectfully Yours* or in Thai ด้วยความนับถือ. You can search for it on YouTube. Last year, we made another documentary film about the two electricians in Nakhon Pathom. The film is name *The Two Brothers* or สองพี่น้อง. Pattaraporn successfully found their families and interviewed them.

#14

During the course of searching for the identities of the dead victims, Pattharaporn and I saw the reactions of the family members. Many parents of the victims passed away, so we did not have a chance to talk to them, but we interviewed the siblings. The pain among the siblings I think was much lesser than the parents, but still some were crying during the interview. Some of the victim families are still living in fear. In one case, the older sister was happy to give an interview. She said that after 40 years, nobody came to interview or tried to find her family and ask what happened to them. But two days later, she called Pattaraporn and asked not to put her real name

and her face in the film. We then used only her voice in the film. Some families declined to interview at all and said what would they get if they give us an interview. There will be no justice for them, only trouble. They told us not to disturb them anymore. They sounded angry. So we respect that wishes. Some people were really happy that we started to recognize their loved ones, and questioned why the victims of the massacre were not recognized as heroes, unlike those who were killed in the popular uprising in 1973. Ajahn Thongchai may explain to you the differences between histories of October 1973 and 1976.

There was another case I wanted to interview so much. In the last 40 years, they never gave any interview to anyone at all and I could locate the family easily. So, I thought maybe 40 years had passed, they might be willing to give an interview to us. First, Pattaraporn contacted the friend of the family but he told her not to disturb the family. Anyway, we got in touch with the niece in law, who also knew me personally. So, she told her husband, who was a nephew of the victim. At the time, her husband was a primary school student. He still remembered the effect on the family. He told his wife that even though he was so very young, his family had to send him to live in another province because of the pressure in the neighborhood. The family was accused of raising a communist, and her husband told her to tell us not to disturb the family.

I tried to understand why they do not want to talk. So, I read the autopsy report and looked at all the pictures of this victim carefully again. He was the one who was tortured and lynched so severely that his father could not recognize his body when he tried to claim the body. Later, a friend accompanied the father to the hospital and recognized his shoes. So, I realized that the trauma was too painful for the family to talk about it. The pain of losing the loved one depends on how they were lost. In one case, the mother was always enthusiastic in giving an interview. She talked candidly and was not afraid of anything. She once said “At least my boy did not suffer. He died suddenly because the bullet pierced into his heart. It looked like he was asleep.”

#13

Therefore, how do we understand why this basic information about the victims were neglected even though we commemorated the massacre for almost 40 years and claimed to care so much about the victims? I call it ‘disremembering’. ‘Disremembering’ means a process of culturing mental images and sounds related to the past painful event, but the past was altered in certain aspects. Disremembering is not the same as not remembering. Disremembering happens when incidents were unfathomable personally, or too threatening emotionally. The survivors did not want to revisit the pain, so it is a survival strategy for them. Some traumatic memories are disremembered. They are discontinued recollections, constructed by forgetting and altered by fragments of fantasy or beliefs. They did not forget or not remember the trauma but the past was altered. They remembered with a difference, some scenes may be deleted or avoided. It happened when the reality was too painful. It is known that many Octobrists avoided looking at the pictures and video clips of the massacres because they reminded them of the extreme brutality and their lost friends. This led to the disinterest in finding out about the victims. Some did not want to talk about it at all. Therefore, the Octobrists seem to mix up the pictures of one victim with another. They did not see the victims’ faces, even though they saw the pictures and the video clips, they did not see the faces of the victims. The trauma seems to blur their vision and block their ability to ask simple questions about the victims.

#15

However, negligence and superficiality among Thai people is another factor. The survivors of the massacre claimed a status of victimhood as well as an advocate for keeping and honoring the memory of the massacre, but they talked and claimed a lot, but overlooked the deaths and their families. Apart from Ajahn Thongchai, whose research deeply engaged the memory of the

massacre, the deaths were treated as a sum of number.

We talked a lot about how they were dehumanized. The way they were killed showed clearly how the right-wing thugs saw the victims as less than human. If we want to honor the victims, I think we must first learn about their identities, who was who at the massacre, what happened to their families afterwards? The negligence about the victims indicates that the concept of individuality is very unimportant among the Thai people. This is part of the reasons why human rights cannot prosper in Thai society. When we talk about individuality, we talk about the value of an individual to the people surrounding them and to the society. They have a family and opportunity in life. What could they become if they were not dead? I believe talking about these things can make people feel and respect human life. People in the society should feel the pain of the loss of others, but this aspect is so weak and unimportant to the Thai people. Therefore, for us who are involved in the online archives, this is a way to rehumanize the victims and to make Thai society value lives of individuals.

My last note, if we believe in the documentation work, and we think that it is an important part of writing a different chapter of history and a cornerstone of a learned society, that it would constitute the memory of the nations and of societies, as well as shaping the identity of the nation. The October 6th massacre can tell a great deal about Thai society and nation-building. It can tell the identity of the Thai society contrary to the mainstream belief that Thai society is a true Buddhist society. It can tell that Thailand did not always have harmony. A history of the October 6th also tells how the Thai state handled its crimes, and how a crime against the innocent people and impunity were its important elements. It can tell the people that Thai society has its dark side, that it has the potential to commit a heinous crime against the people, and this heinous crime was not done by state forces only. It was done by the people against the people.

More importantly, the marginalized status of October 6th and the lack of interest in

documentation of the past violence also inform us about the future of other violent incidents in Thai society: a decade of violence in the three southernmost provinces, the crackdown the Red Shirt in 2010, and the ongoing oppression by the ruling military junta. We should have an archive focusing on the state's violation of human rights. I wish to see an archive of human rights in Thailand, but it seems not so easy to have such archive because Thai society has been deeply divided on all the violent cases I mentioned above. Besides, if we think that documentation is about seeking truth, and truth may lead to accountability, and the end of a culture of impunity, but several chapters of the bloodshed histories seems too threatening for the establishment, which would not allow them a place in the history books. Thank you.

(Nishii) Thank you very much, Ajahn Puangthong. It is a very heavy question, and we have to think from here. I am sorry. I forgot to introduce the affiliation of Ajahn Puangthong before talking. Ajahn Puangthong is now a visitor at...

(Puangthong) I am a lecturer at the faculty of political science, Chulalongkorn University.

(Nishii) From Chulalongkorn University, and for the moment, staying at Kyoto University...

(Puangthong) Yes, Center of Southeast Asian Studies.

(Nishii) ...and Center of Southeast Asian Studies, yes.

(Puangthong) Until next month.

(Nishii) Until next month, six months here.

(Puangthong) Yes.

(Nishii) Okay, thank you very much. Now, later we will discuss but if you have some questions, two or three, just small questions, we can ask. Do you have any questions? Okay, so we will discuss later. Now we have 10 minutes' rest, and after that ask comments. The first commentator is Ajahn Thongchai, and the second is Takahashi-san. Okay, so please take it. We have some

drinks and some snacks over there, so please take them, please.

(Puangthong) Thank you.

— Break —

(Nishii) Now, I would like to invite Ajahn Thongchai to give a comment. He is a well known historian and he was at Thammasat University on the spot of Oct. 6th massacre as a student leader.

Comments

Discussant 1

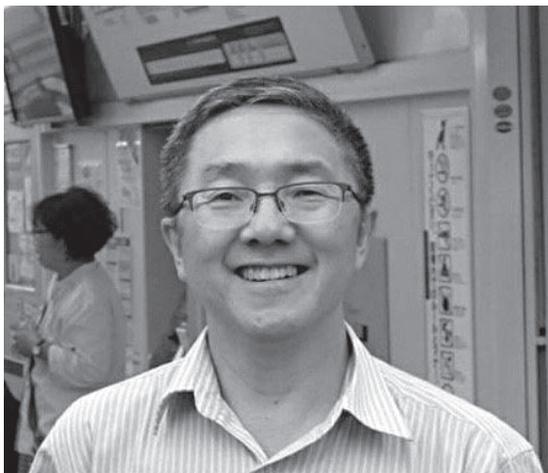
Thongchai Winichakul

(IDE-JETRO)

Thank you very much. I think the basic information about the massacre has been out there. We can find it in many libraries, so I am not going to talk more than that. I have been living with this issue all my life because I was there on October 6th. But after that, I moved on to become an academic, a historian. For me, the academic historical study is fun. Dealing with the October 6th is not fun, but this is my life's mission. My fun stuff is the late 19th century early 20th century Thai history, mostly 1880s to 1930s, the change I called colonial modernity, i.e. how Siam, like Japan, turned to modernity in different ways from modern Europe. But in spirit, my interest in history is always about October 6th.

In recent years, there were times I hoped people would recognize and revisit the October 6th massacre. By now, I lost the hope that the October 6th would be accountable. At the end of my life, I do not think I will see it. Okay, that is the way it is. It is not surprising. It is usual for Thailand. Many cases in the world are also like this. I can live with this fact that there will not be any investigations anytime soon, perhaps forever.

One of the key conditions to make the October 6th investigation possible, there must be a fundamental regime change in Thailand. I do not see a regime change in Thailand possible. Regime change does not mean just military. I mean the monarchy, because the monarchy involved,



King Bhumibol, the beloved king, involved in the massacre. So, no way for an investigation because, even after he died, his sacredness remains. I don't see any possibility of the regime change yet. The only thing we can do is to leave the memory of the October 6th.

As Ajahn Puangthong said, we can leave the memory in many forms. One of them — I finished a book about October 6th. Thanks to IDE and to Japan, first I had time to rethink the whole project when I went to Kyoto three years ago. Then one year at IDE, I finished the book. The book is not about what happened on that day. It is about memory. What happened to the memory of the massacre over 40 years? What happened in the first few month, in two years, 20 years, and after 20 years? This is the main story of the book. Only one chapter is about what happened on that day. The rest of the book is about the changing memory, and changing perception of the massacre.

Another thing we can do is the “Documentation of October 6th”, an online archives. Archive in Thailand is treated like treasure. An archive is for prestige and for security. An online archive, like the Documentation on October 6th, is to store information. We do not have money to store real materials. Whenever we find materials, we ask the archives of Thammasat University to keep them. Even so, we just learned a few months ago Thammasat University was afraid that they might get in trouble, so they would not let people used these materials. Unbelievable! At least all of the materials are safe.

Documentation on October 6th is a website. How much impact? Not sure. But it is far better than not having it. However, do we have hope that it will lead to the accountability of the wrongdoing? No. But it helps keep the memory much longer.

I have three points to say in relation to this archive project. The first one ...why do we do this? The second one is about memory and forgetting. The third one is how to make the dead speak?

The first one, why do we do this? In some countries, events like the October 6th would be a

subject for investigation quickly and thoroughly. Imagine if it had taken place in Japan, would it be hidden from the public? Would it stay silent for years or decades? Could people pretend that nothing happened? Every country has this kind of ugly past. How do different countries deal with it? How do they deal with not only what happened, but also long afterward? This is the question. Investigation or not? Stay silent or not? How long? Should we create an archive, allowing people to use the materials, and some forms of institutions for memory? Or should we be afraid of trouble?

In Taiwan, the event called 2.28, February 28, 1947, it took them a long time until the decline of Kuomintang's power that they create a museum. It is simple, not grand, not huge, but wonderful. They recorded the voice recording of hundreds of victims. They did it quietly and once the opportunity arrived, they are ready to make an archive. It does not need a grand sculpture. It does not need a grand building. It looks simple, but inside, it is wonderful. A few months ago, a museum of lynching of the black people in the US opened. This kind of thing tells us not just in terms of what happened and how they recognize, but it tells about the larger society. How Japanese society, Taiwanese society, Thai society are. How they deal with the past atrocity, the past wrongdoing, tells us about the society too.

Why have we in Thailand neglected about the dead for so long? For many years, we have fought the attempt to forget; and not to recognize October 6th. But ultimately, we have not done enough — who the dead were, have we informed the families of those who died, and so on? It is embarrassing that, almost 40 years, some of the families of the deaths were not informed. It is embarrassing that we have not known how many people were hanged. Not just an embarrassment. It is wrong.

These neglects raise the questions — what kind of people we are? What kind of culture we live with? What kind of people and culture we have been grown up with that the negligence on this

kind of information has become a normal thing? If an atrocity like the October 6th taken place in UK, in France, in Europe, in the US, do you think they would neglect for 30-40 years before realizing that, uh-oh, we do not even know the name of the dead?

Many people often blame politics. Those people in power do not want people know about their crimes in the past. The state has suppressed and censored information, has distorted the past. These arguments are correct. They become common assumption. But these arguments are too easy. In fact, there is more than politics. Ideology too. Culture too. Altogether, there are many factors result in the ways Thailand have dealt with the past wrongdoing in the wrong ways.

The second point I want to raise is about memory and forgetting: Scholars who have been studying memory often fall into the dichotomy of either remember or forget, memory vs. forgetting. We often think silence means forgetting. I don't think so. There is something in-between the dichotomy. I call it in the book, the 'unforgetting'. It is a kind of a limbo position in between remembering and forgetting. What is it? For me, the unforgetting is a state of remembering, but unable to articulate the memory to other people in comprehensible ways. That is to say, you remember it, but you cannot say it out loud in a sensible sentence. People remember, but people do not know how to express, how to articulate into a sensible, into a comprehensible sentence or story. This is what I mean by 'unforgetting'.

In the October 6th case, I believe that there are many ways people tried to articulate, but not able to do as they want to. They cannot find a voice. And it is not just because of politics. Any traumatic event, even personal trauma, sometimes we just lost words. That is it – the unforgetting. Losing words does not mean people forget. They do not forget, but they lost words, could not express. For the October 6th, people do not forget, but people could not find their voices. Therefore, in the book I explain many forms and many conditions of the inability to articulate, to express in the way they want.



The third point I would like to discuss, I think the dead can speak. For the project Documentation of October 6th, we tried to collect information as much as possible. But for the first few years, apart from collecting materials, another main agenda has been the research on families of the victims. So far, some people in Thailand criticized us that since we cannot talk much about the politics of it, about who and who, the knowledge about the October 6th is mostly about death, death, and death. Nothing else interesting. I understand. But I disagree. On the one hand, the death is important in reminding people that their death has not been accountable yet. On the other hand, I would like to go beyond just talking about how ugly the incident was. Therefore, what we, people in the Documentation October 6th, have tried to do, is to ask the right questions to the dead that allow the dead to reveal to us something interesting. For example, the question about number of people who were hanged. With the right questions, the dead still can speak.

To give you an example of the right questions — many people thought that those people died because of torture. We found out that only a few died because of hanging and torture. One was hanged to death. But four others died before they got hanged. Hanging was a form of desecration of the corpses, and there are many other forms of corpse desecration on that day. Corpse desecration has never been an issue that anybody pays attention to. It is illegal in most countries for good reasons. But in the Buddhist Thailand, it happened in public.

(Puangthong) In front of the authorities.

(Thongchai) And in public. The authorities involved and allowed it to happen. What does this tell us? Why did they do this? Why? We thought that a female student was sexually assaulted, stripped her clothes off, with a piece of wood near her private part. In fact, she was dead already. The whole thing was staged to look like she was sexually assaulted. Why? Six dead bodies were lined up on the ground, and a man nailed a piece of wood in the chests. Why? A young boy

urinated on a body on the ground Why? Two bodies were dragged on the ground. We thought that they died because they were dragged. We found out that they already died. If so, why were they dragged after death?

We do not have an answer. This is just an example of asking the right questions to let the dead bodies speak. In this case, we want to know, even hypothetically, why? Not in terms of the intention of the people, but what does it mean? What does this phenomenon tell us about Thai society?

We hope that in the next few months we have some answer. Maybe there are more questions we can ask, to learn more, to understand more about Thai society, or to understand more about human beings. Thanks.

(Nishii) Thank you very much, Professor Thongchai. As the second commentator, Takahashi-san. Sorry, I forgot to introduce Takahashi-san. He is a political scientist, and I met him for the first time maybe more than 30 years ago when I was a visiting researcher at Thammasat University. Today, we met since then maybe more than 30 years ago, but I think Takahashi-san has not changed, looks like 30 years ago. Okay, thank you very much. Please.

(Takahashi) Thank you very much for the introduction. As Professor Nishii introduced, when I was a doctorate student, I stayed at Thammasat University, and I met Ajahn Thongchai. Still, you worked at there, teaching at Thammasat University, maybe. October 6th shocked me too, and it was one reason why I was interested in Thai politics.

Today's topic is October 6th, but the October 14, I enjoyed the annual ceremony of the October 14 held at the Thammasat University every year. I do not know nowadays, recently, it is still held or not.

(Puangthong) Yes, we have it.

Discussant 2

Masaki Takahashi
(Musashino University)

Okay, because at that festival or ceremony, *karawan* song, and everybody was excited and enjoyed, or they did not forget. They remember October 14, but today's topic is October 6th. I am interested in the October 6th massacre, but I have no knowledge or information so much about October 6th, and particularly, I have no idea about this documenting project. Therefore, it is not easy for me to offer some comment. Today, I read Professor Puangthong's interviews and articles from the Prachatai website. I also used the articles from Prachatai website.

#2

First of all, I will talk about the importance of collecting primary sources. The objectives of this project are, first of all, collecting and disseminating primary sources about the October 6th massacre. Fact finding is a very important or inevitable first step of research, whether it is history or social science. Any knowledge must be based on facts and evidences, I think.

#3

This project is very important in order to study or know the Thai political history, but there are many difficulties, as Professor Puangthong explained. The difficulties of documenting the October 6th massacre are, first, fear, and, second, culture of impunity. Therefore, I want to ask the professor the first question: Have you experienced something dangerous or harassment from the police or someone in the process of documenting the October 6th? Second, have you compared



with the other cases of collecting documents of a massacre like the Holocaust of Nazi or other cases? The difficulties come from, according to Professor Puangthong, fear and the culture of impunity. According to the professor, the changeless or lasting ruling class makes fear for the victims and their families, and the narrow ruling class makes the culture of impunity.

#4

For example, the professor said, “Ordinary people can think that the massacre was somehow connected to the ruling power... they can feel that there is a connection and this is fear.”

#5

The current military rule makes the families hesitate to open their faces and names, or talk about the victims. According to the interview with Prachatai, in the interviews with the families of victims, “we barely talked about present-day politics. We wanted to let them talk about the personality of the person who died and how they were connected to others in the family. Relatives and siblings of those who were killed were willing to grant interviews. But then they called several days later and said that they were afraid because we are currently living under a military government. They asked if their names could be changed and their faces not shown. Simultaneously, many other families did not want to talk about massacre.”

#6

Second, the culture of impunity, this was said by the professor today, but I also mention again the culture of impunity. Ajahn Puangthong said, “Those who were involved with the violence of 6th October have never had to fear that they will be punished. This is the clear culture of impunity in Thai society.” Ajahn Puangthong said, “The ruling class in Thai society is very narrow.”

The number is limited and they all know each other. The ruling class is marked by friendship, continuity, and the experience of having helped and supported one other. These connections eclipse taking a stand to restore justice.”

#7

These are the third questions. If your final objectives are to honor/re-humanize the victims, why do you think that collecting and disseminating the sources of the victims can achieve the objectives? Ajahn Puangthong asked a good question in today’s PowerPoint on page nine. The page may be different from today’s PowerPoint page. “Why do we need to honor and re-humanize the dead victims after 40 years has passed?” What is your answer? You might answer today, but please answer again. I think, to honor/re-humanize the victims, we may have to give the meaning of their death for the victims. If they died for democracy, they need political meaning beyond personal tragedy or personal humanity, I think.

#8

However, Ajahn Puangthong recognizes, I think, Ajarn Puangthong concedes, however, that October 6 will be taboo in Thai society due to its sensitivity. “Most media do not want to talk about since they know it is sensitive. They merely say that it was state violence and just that, but who was the state? Who were involved in state power at that time? We cannot discuss further than that. It is the limit of talking about 6th October.” I think, of course, Ajahn recognizes the importance of the political level perspective, but under the current political situation, there are something Ajahn or other persons cannot speak out, so if you have hidden objectives of this project, could you tell something about that?

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#9

These are the articles which today I used besides the PowerPoint contents. Thank you very much.

(Nishii) Thank you very much. First I just invite Ajahn Puangthong to reply something to commentators.

(Puangthong) The first question, did I experience something dangerous, harassment, from the police, or somebody in the process of documenting the October 6th? No, not from October 6th at all. Several people asked me whether I was afraid of doing this. I said, no. It is within my capacity of an academic to do it. Even though I may get harassment from someone, I can handle it. It is not life-threatening, and it would not threaten my career either. I also told people I think people were overly worried and overly scared about issue. It is still a sensitive issue but as long as we don't involve the monarchy, there are still a lot we could do. There are many aspects of the massacre we can discuss and use it to promote the value of human rights and to prevent state crimes.

Actually, the ruling junta now is more concerned about the fact-finding report of its involvement in the violent crack down of the Red Shirt in 2010 and I have told you that I was involved in the project. The report accused the military and the Democrat-led government of using excessive forces against unarmed civilians. They violated the rule of engagement with the demonstrators. After the coup in 2014, the junta summoned me for “the attitude adjustment” session. During the interrogation, this was the first issue they raised and threatened me. So, they are more concerned about their own safety rather than the past.

(Thongchai) The question is about the difficulty of this project. Yes, people are still afraid to speak. Even the reporters and many people ask whether you fear or not. It means that people

realize there is something there telling us that “Do not cross the line.” We are the ones who say, “do not worry too much.” But we cannot blame people who worry too much. We cannot guarantee for them that there will be no consequence. That is why many families and relatives of the dead did not want to speak to us.

(Puangthong) It depends on the status.

(Thongchai) Yes, it means that there is something there for concern.

(Puangthong) Yes, it is depended on your status in the society. As an academic, I have a kind of protection, but for ordinary people, the family members of the victims, they have no protection at all, so they are afraid to show their faces and real names.

(Thongchai) It also depends on one’s tolerance to risk too. I think people are afraid more than necessary. In a way, we are troublemakers. We like to push the line. We test the line. For ordinary people who live without intention to test the line, their level of risk tolerance is lower than those who want to test the line.

(Puangthong) When I told a reporter that people were overly worried, I in fact aimed at academics and the media. I believe they could do more. I did not demand ordinary folks to undertake this project. I know that even some well-known academics, who advocate on the issue of peace, non-violence and human rights do not want to touch on the October massacre. For example, Pattaraporn, before she helped me doing the film *Respectfully Yours*, she had done a documentary film entitled ‘*Silence-Memory*’. She interviewed the parents of two victims. She told me she wanted to show it at Thammasat University. She asked an academic there to help organize it for her, but he refused to do it because, he said, “It is not time to talk about the October massacre yet”. As for politicians, several years ago, I approached a few Octobrist politicians, affiliated with the Pheu Thai government, about the creation of the human rights archive of Thailand. They did not want to do it. They were worried about October 6th. They said that it was

too sensitive.

(Thongchai) Just one more example — a source of documents about the massacre is the documents and materials that police collect after the killing. Seventy three boxes, including the autopsy reports, are at the Attorney General Museum. Most are bureaucratic paperwork such as recording when you are arrested, recording when you are released. I looked at the testimonies of the right wing witnesses whom later became the prosecutor witnesses in the October 6 trial. (Eighteen people were charged after the massacre, and the police and prosecutor had to prepare their witnesses.) There are 224 people who give testimonies to the police. After the trial, all the documents were transferred to be stored there.

Should we leave those materials at the Attorney General Museum or should we make copies? I made copies of a few testimonies. Then I was greedy. I want many. I asked a senior professor to make a request to the Attorney General to microfilm the whole thing. This is under Thaksin government. The Attorney General made it clear in writing, no, because it is a matter of national security. Even under Thaksin, the Attorney General at the time, knew that these materials are sensitive.

(Puangthong) Yes, it is a sensitive issue. I think different people can do different things. Have I compared my project with the documentation of Nazi and other cases? Yes, I did. Actually, I am interested in the state violence. I teach a course on violence in the modern world and use several cases such as the Nazi, the dirty war in Argentina, genocides in Rwanda, Cambodia, former Yugoslavia, etc. I read a lot about these cases and the testimonies and memoirs. That is why when Ajahn Thongchai told me about the unknown number of the hangings struck me hard. I realized I knew a lot more about cases in other countries than the October massacre, which is closest to me.

There is one doc film about the victims of the Nazi that I like very much. It read the last pages of diaries of several children before they were killed by the Nazi. They show what the children

thought and felt or feared on the last days of their lives? It is very powerful. So, since we have the Documentation of Oct 6 online archive, I wrote several short articles and posted them on Facebook and website. Most of them about the victims, how they were killed, what they were like from the points of views of their friends, the effect on the families, etc. In a way, they were sentimental because I want people to feel the pain of the victims, to feel the pain of injustice.

Though I do not believe that we will be able to bring those perpetrators of the Oct 6 to justice. Other cases may be possible. But I undertake this project because I am fighting a culture of impunity. The lack of accountability in Thai society is not just about the state, it is supported by the culture of impunity too. People do not see the imperative of societal justice. Many see those who fight for justice as trouble maker and an obstacle of stable society.

(Thongchai) Why they nailed a piece of board into the chest? Such action, according to Christianity, was to kill Satan, right? Or they are a vampire that was supposed to get killed that way? But for sure, those who did these to the dead bodies thought that the dead were not human. That's why they deserved this desecration. Dragging a body like an animal. Hanging as people did to a witch or a horrible criminal. Urinating on the body is not how a human treats another human. Staging a sexual assault was the worst action to humiliate or to destroy femininity.

Therefore, to counter the extreme de-humanization is to re-humanize them. Start from who they are, what their names are, where they lived, where their family are, what they did for a living, how many siblings they have, etc. These simple things can re-humanize them. A few years ago at Thammasat, at a commemoration of October 6th, I sent a message to the organizer, "Could you please add into the program of the commemoration to read aloud the names of the dead, every one of them, one by one?" They did not understand why doing this is important to restore their humanity.

(Puangthong) They did it in a pity way.

(Thongchai) They do not understand why we need to do this. It is a simple action to re-humanize the victims. I think re-humanization of these dead is a huge issue. We do not have to honor them as democracy fighters at the expense of their basic humanity, i.e. their individuality. I think we should honor them in both ways. What is missing in Thai society is that people do not realize the value of individuality.

(Puangthong) Let me add this. I always wish one day we could eliminate the culture of impunity in Thailand that the rulers who violated people's rights must be accountable for their crimes. Therefore, by working on the Documentation project, first, I could make people aware that the hatred propaganda could turn ordinary people into a violent tools of the state and thus commit a heinous crime against their fellow citizen. Such happened at the October massacre.

Second, I want to emphasize to the public that although the government has power and command over state forces, it has no right nor legitimacy to kill unarmed civilians. And we must not allow them to get away with it. We need to build up this popular consensus to end a culture of impunity for the future generations.

I also want the online archive to be an example for people who are interested in and working on the state violence in other cases, like the three southernmost Muslim provinces, the crackdown on the Red Shirt, and there is number of groups.

(Nishii) Okay, thank you very much. Now I would like to invite any questions or comments from the floor.

Discussion

(Q1) I am a little bit confused by “unforgettable” as Ajahn Puangthong uses the words ‘remembering’, or ‘unforgetting’, or ‘disremembering’. Also, Ajahn Thongchai uses the word ‘unforgetting’, and also ‘forgetting’. Could you explain it again these four or five phrases?

(Puangthong) Disremembering?

(Q1) Yes, and unforgetting.

(Puangthong) It is the same.

(Q1) I am not sure.

(Puangthong) Yes, as he is saying the term ‘unforgetting’, but they are pretty much the same. For me, disremembering means you do not forget it. You still remember the atrocity, but with the fragment, the memory is distorted. The distortion happened because maybe the memory is too painful for you, or you do not want to remember it. You do not want to hear it but you want to delete it.

For many years, people thought there was only one hanging, even though some Octobrists know that their friends were hung on that day too, but they still say, “One hanging.” When they saw the pictures of different people, they still said this was Wichitchai.” They do not try to match the pictures they saw with the memories they had. They avoided the serious thinking about the massacre. Besides, they avoided watching the pictures and the video clips which are so accessible nowadays because these are too painful for them. And even when they watched them, they did not see the faces of the victims. This is the effect of disremembering.

(Q2) One more question, can I ask it? Maybe at that time, maybe many peasants leaders in



rural areas also have been killed in rural areas, especially after 1975, so could you tell me the assassinations in rural areas at the time? Also, are there any documentation projects about assassination at that time?

(Thongchai) The peasants' assassinations before October 6th – there were about 50 of them. Is there any documentation project on them? As far as I know, no. Most of them become news before October 6th. Do we know anything beyond just who they are, anything beyond the news in the newspaper? I doubt. There are so many issues to work on.

(Puangthong) Yes, and maybe we get this project, people ask whether we want to include those who died in the jungle, those who joined the CPT.

(Thongchai) We want to, but we cannot, right? We want to include everybody, but...

(Q2) The government has some document, or...?

(Puangthong) Mainly because we do not have the resources (money and people). It is hard to find people who have commitment to work on documentation. For the funding, as of now, we gained from private donation from a few people. We have had a little over Baht 3 million. That is not much at all. So, we are careful with money. We pay people on a project by project basis. Many of us are volunteers. I am a volunteer as well.

However, as I said, I want these archives to be an example for people who are interested in other issues to think seriously about documentation. Otherwise, if you let the time pass, a lot of documents, materials and memories could disappear.

We don't have a plan to include the case of the Red Barrels yet. This incident took place in a village in Phatthalung province. The military reportedly tortured villagers, put them in the oil red-painted barrels, burned them til death and kicked the barrels down a hill. About 3000 people were killed. Nor for the students and activists being killed before 1976 and those died in the jungle.

(Nishii) Any questions? Last year when I interviewed Suchada who wa in the center of the

masacre, she told me she was very shocked by the people laughing on the scene. The most she was shocked was people laughing while they were hitting the head of the dead. Therefore, I would like to ask Ajahn Thongchai. Ajahn Thongchai said the massacre is 'unforgettable', meaning people remember, but they have no voice. This project is giving people who have no voice for speak out, maybe give them some chance to speak out. On the other hance, I would like to ask the audience in those days at the scene, how they feel now. They also have their own family, but in the scene, they took the human being like non-human. So, I would like to ask Ajahn Puangthong and Ajahn Thongchai, when you are trying to give some voice to the people, can you find out how the other side of Thai people think, what kind of people are they? Maybe Ajahn also said that memories have changed, so some people who are there, and now, 40 years later, do you ever interview who was laughing at the scene, or this side, or person?

(Thongchai) Do we know the boy who enjoyed the hanging? We tried to search, but we did not find him. We asked of it on Facebook, who knows the person who holds the chair? We still cannot find it. The victim of that picture, we still do not know. In the picture that becomes emblematic for the massacre, we do not know the guy who beat the dead body with a chair, the victim of the beating, and those among the audience. None of them. We think about making a very straightforward project, make a big announcement in newspapers, "Who are these guys? Please come forward." Then we decided not to do that for a number of reasons, including that it might cause trouble since we do not know what to expect or repercussions. So we do it small scale, putting it on Facebook. Nobody comes forward.

Do we know about the right wing? Yes, this is one chapter of my book: how the memories among the right wings also changed. I tracked down, I met about 20 of them, such as a few leaders of the Red Gaurs, and a few of those in the paramilitary who were the killers on that day. They are the ones who still brag about what they did. They still believe they did the right thing. I

have interviewed them, most in 2001 and 2006. All of them are still proud, or justify what they did. They still bragged partly because Thai society never makes them uncomfortable. There is no social mechanism to shame these people. When the victims express the voice that the October 6th is wrong, when Thai society agrees that it is wrong, these people simply stayed silent.

The group of killers that I met had no fixed names in 1976, they changed names all the time, the group organized by a commander from the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC). I met the commander who was an instructor at ISOC. The Red Gaurs has become a generic name of the perpetrators of the massacre. It looked like, in fact, they did not do much that morning. Of course, the main force is police.

Regarding the guy who held the chair, none of right wings I met knew him. He appeared in many pictures of those desecration acts. He might be super hysterical, or he must be a provocateur. We do not know. If I met him today, I just want to know who he is, what he thinks about the past.

(Puangthong) On Facebook, when people read our articles about the massacre, a lot of people say that those people who were involving in the lynching and the torture must feel guilty now. In fact, there was no evidence of such thing. Let me tell you this. Pattaraporn and I used to try to find the man who appeared in the Pulitzer Prize-awarded photo. He was beating a hanged man with a chair. So, we call him a chair man. The idea of looking for a chair man came from Ajahn Thongchai.

(Puangthong) When I began to get involved in this project, I remembered that when my son was at grade nine, he told me that one of the teacher bragged proudly to the students in the class about his heroic involvement in the massacre. My son said that the teacher was very rude and violent, and always used physical punishment. I did not pay attention to this story because, after one semester, I took him out this school. When I was involved in this project, I asked him whether

he remembered the teacher's name because I wanted to interview him. He remembered the name. Unfortunately, the teacher died about a year before the search started, but I got the picture of him. The face of his shape was similar to the chair man but I was not sure because of the age difference.

I told Pattaraporn that we should search for his identity from the school. Luckily, Pattaraporn's friend was working for the school's history project and thus had access to the school's documents. At the end, we concluded that he was not the chair man but we also learned something from the search. I phoned and talked to his wife, who told me that the teacher also told her and their son about his past involvement in the massacre. Pattaraporn's friend also said that she and her junior and senior friends heard about the same bragging from the teacher. This is a good example of the perpetrator's never feel guilty.

(Thongchai) Among the victims of the hanging, we found three. The one that they did not find is the one in the most well known picture.

(Nishii) Thank you very much. Are there any other questions?

(Q3) Professor Thongchai mentioned the village scouts. I saw the TV program four or five years ago. They held a four-night-five-day training still now, so could you explain that? If there are some differences, could you explain the difference between the ลูกเสือชาวบ้าน (village scouts) training, and the training in recent military government? Are there any differences between village scouts movement in the 1970s, and village scouts in this phase?

(Thongchai) No, I did not follow much about that.

(Puangthong) The Internal Security Operations Command, which is dominated by the army, has been trying to mobilize the right-wing mass organizations to support the ruling military junta's political agenda. The Village Scouts have been reactivated as well but they are not the biggest group.

There are some trying to mobilize it. There is an activity. There is an activity around it.



(Thongchai) I am not sure, but it operates under the supervision of the Border Patrol Police.

(Puangthong) ISOC has been empowered to command and coordinate all the state-sponsored mass organizations, even though some of them are officially under the Ministries of Interior, Education and the Public Health. ลูกเสือชาวบ้าน (village scouts) is not so strong nowadays because they could not draw the annual budget from the government, unlike อาสาสมัครรักษาดินแดน (Volunteer Defense Corps), ไทยอาสาป้องกันชาติ (the National Defense Volunteers), etc.

(Nishii) Thank you very much. Maybe the time is up, but if there is someone who would like to ask? I remember just now. A documentary which challenges former Indonesian death-squad leaders to reenact their mass-killings. I am sorry, I forgot the name of the movie. I was shocked to know even at the present they are proud of their act. They do not think they are guilty. Do you know?

(Thongchai) Yes, which one?

(Nishii) Those who killed the Chinese people, interviewed those who killed, and...

(Thongchai) *The Act of Killing*?

(Phuangthong) *The Act of Killing*.

(Thongchai) *The Act of Killing*.

(Nishii) Yes, *The Act of Killing*, and their interviewee, they told the whole story very vividly, like how to kill, how to behave on the killing. In the massacre in Thai society, those who killed are kind of proud? Today, how they feel? Maybe they have no imagination. In those days, they thought they killed their enemy, they had justice to kill them. But after that, why they could not understand?

(Thongchai) Maybe. Maybe I did not meet the right person who may say, "I am sorry". So far, I have not found one. I am not saying that there is nobody who does not regret. I just do not know.

Those people who I met, did not regret. The society never shamed them, never made it clear what is right and what is wrong. In fact the society may have done the opposite – celebrating and honoring the wrongdoer.

For example, the person who drove a bus, slamming into the gate of Thammasat University to open up the way for the police to storm in to Thammasat — the police did not do it — this guy did. Then he was shot dead. He died as a national hero. He was honored. His funeral was attended by Princess Sirindhorn and Princess Chulabhorn. His dead body was blessed by the two princesses. These people have been humanized and honored. Among the 40 dead victims, how many of them had a funeral that is publicly honored? Zero. Their families had to do the funerals as quiet as possible. A few were cremated as the corpse without relatives. How many of them are still not known even today? Three unidentified Thai males and four burnt bodies beyond recognition. We still do not know who they are.

I can say that, even the boy who enjoyed the hanging, I know that he is human too. I did not want to dehumanize them, and they have not been dehumanized. The victims were. I have my priority. Those who were dehumanized are my higher priority. The boy who laughed is the one who dehumanized those victims, even though he was maybe 12, 13 years old. I do not blame him. But I care about him less than the victims. It is intriguing to know about the right wings. It sounds more exciting. But my priority is not by excitement. I would like to know the chair guy. I want to know them, but do I have commitment strong enough to know him? Well, my first commitment is to the victims and their families. If somebody else comes in to do it, please do it. Yes, I would like to know too. I never said I oppose people who try to know it. That is why the chair guy has been in my mind all the time. The only new thing can do in my way, when I interview those 20 people, I asked every one of them, and it looked like they do not know them, so I do not know how to go further. I do not know what else I can do.

Nobody ever dehumanized these right wings. But I cannot care more about them than those who were victims of dehumanization. If you really want to know the boys' name, then please help us search for him, please. I want to ask him what he thinks. Search and interview him, please. If you want the project "Documentation of October 6th to reset our priority, to give higher priority to the right-wing perpetrators than the victims, please give me a good reason. I support it, but doing it more than searching for the families of victims, I would disagree. If we finish searching for the victims' families, then if somebody wants to suggest the next step, do the right wing, it is possible. But right now, I think the first priority is still the victims who have been dehumanized.

(Nishii) Thank you very much. Would you like to say something...?

(Puangthong) I feel that the injustice the families faced did not end on October 6th. It has continued long after that. How long they suffered right after the massacre, we did not know. Imagine if we were the parents of those unidentified victims, are they still waiting for the return of their children? One of the victims was identified by Ajahn Thongchai several years ago. It was his friends who were dragged by a cord along the Thammasat football ground. He did not receive proper cremation. His family did not know that he was killed until 20 years later. Another one is one of the hanged victims, Kamol, 17 years old. He did not receive a proper cremation from his family either. His older sister did not go to a hospital to claim his body because she was too afraid that the police would go after her.

(Thongchai) In the police practice, if they cannot identify the dead, the body would be cremated with all other unidentified dead bodies including the ones of drug traffickers, criminals, whatever. His father did not know because his name was not among the dead, because he was unidentified. Anyway, for 20 years after the massacre, his parents still had hope that he might still be alive. Twenty years until some people told him. His father then asked a small group of friends to find the body of him because he does not want to believe until we found his son's body. I searched

for years until I have the answer. I did not find the body, but I know what happened to the body. I delivered the news to the parents, telling them the whole story because I think they deserved to know. Was this news good? I am not sure because the parents had kept their hope alive as long as the body was not found. I shattered their hope with truth.

How many other bodies? This is a valid question. We need committed people who do these one by one, perhaps. I cannot commit to do this for the rest. When I delivered the truth to my friend's parents, I told myself, "No, I am not going to do it anymore".

(Nishii) Thank you very much. Now we have to close. Today, we all understand, the project to find the name of the victims should give us hope, though it is very small. But to recover the relationships between human and human is a very difficult task. To get back the justice and composure to the society, it is long way. But at least there are people like Ajahn Puangthong and Ajahn Thongchai, who are still struggling for it, so we have some hope, I think. Thank you very much.



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