

Abstract

During the regime of Field Marshal Phibun of 1938 - 1944, the body of Thai citizens became the subject of discipline and regulation. To achieve an image of a civilized nation through the body of her citizens, the government issued a series of directives enforced through state mechanisms to regulate the physical and cultural aspects of the body. The dissertation surveys contemporary documents and proposed that state control can be seen as consisting of four main areas.

Firstly, with reference to the principle of eugenics and the use of statistics, the state encouraged the construction of a new generation of population from children of healthy parents.

Secondly, the state was concerned with producing healthy citizens. Campaigns were introduced to make Thai citizens conscious of nutritional values of food, proteinism, and encourage them to take up sport and body exercises. Attempts were made to construct the standard size of children, men, and women.

Thirdly, the state was concerned with discipline in daily life practices. Emphasis was placed on child psychology and child development as an important step in the making of a healthy and orderly citizen. School curriculum and routines play an important part in instituting order. Everyday practices that were considered uncivilized such as tattooing were discouraged. Forms of deviance – problem children, the homeless – were dealt with by placing them in correctional institutions.

Fourthly, the body was seen as a marker of civilization. Considerable efforts were made to modernize and civilize bodily expressions in the form of clothing and social manners.