

2475 *Graphic Novel* and the Representation of the 1932 Siamese Revolution in Contemporary Thai Society

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Abstract

This article aims to study the graphic novel “2475 Graphic Novel” (“2475: Ghost Writer of Siam” in Thai) by Thanis Wirasakdiwong and Podcharakrit To-im, as a creative work that represents the 1932 Siamese Revolution in contemporary Thai society and connects it with the political activities of the new generation. The study found that the phenomenon of reviving and destroying memories of the People’s Party (Khana Ratsadon in Thai), especially after the 2014 coup, as well as the youth movement calling for democracy throughout 2020, has brought the story of the People’s Party back to life again through a variety of media presentations to respond to the visual culture in line with the political movements of the new generation. The book “2475 Graphic Novel” presents the stories of common people who participated in the Siamese Revolution together with the People’s Party. The authors interpreted the People’s Party in a new way and presented the image of the Siamese Revolution in a way that is in line with the contemporary era, starting from the roles of women in the Siamese Revolution, the problems of inequality in Thai society before the 1932 Revolution, and the perspectives of the People’s Party and the ruling class of the old regime. In addition, the book aims to fill readers with hope and encourage new generations who want to change Thai society for the better.

Keywords: the People’s Party, the 1932 Siamese Revolution, *2475 Graphic Novel*, Memory, Contemporary Thai Politics

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Introduction

Currently, the issue of the People's Party (Khana Ratsadon in Thai) and the Siamese Revolution of 1932 is a significant ideological battleground for contesting collective political memory in society, as well as understanding the status and role of the monarchy in modern Thai politics. The politics of memory regarding the People's Party and the Siamese Revolution can be clearly divided into two opposing currents: the supporters of the Siamese Revolution and the opponents of the Siamese Revolution.¹ The first school of thought explains that the Siamese Revolution occurred amidst political conditions and economic problems during the absolute monarchy, prompting the People's Party to change the governance system and establish a new regime where sovereign power belonged to the people and the king's power was limited by the constitution. The second current argues that the Thai monarchy laid the foundation for democracy since the absolute monarchy period. It views the political change in 1932 as merely a coup at a time when the populace was not yet ready, leading to issues of curtailing the king's power and the emergence of the oligarchic regime of the People's Party (Silpawattanatham, 2024; Chonticha Intachai, 2024).

The two currents of collective memory regarding Thai political history are clearly reflected in academic works, documentaries, novels, and television dramas, as well as in online media such as video clips, infographics, and various memes. Furthermore, in the context of the youth-led calls for democracy and the reform of the monarchy since 2020, it can be said that the memory of the Siamese Revolution and the People's Party has gained increased significance, with the memory being used to support the movements of various political groups within Thai society.

The book "2475 Graphic Novel" ("2475 นักเขียนผีแห่งสยาม" in Thai script), a creative work by Thanis Wirasakdiwong (artist and co-writer) and Podcharakrit To-im (co-writer and editor), aims to highlight the significance and contributions of the People's Party and the Siamese Revolution, making them memorable to contemporary audiences. This work presents the story in the form of a graphic novel to communicate with the younger generation, helping them understand the narratives, thoughts, ideologies, and atmosphere of the 1932 Siamese Revolution. Therefore, this article focuses on studying the book "2475 Graphic Novel" and its portrayal of the 1932 Siamese Revolution in contemporary Thai society. It connects the politics of memory regarding the People's Party with the political activities of the new generation. The content of this article is divided as follows: It begins by discussing the phenomenon of reviving and destroying the memory of the People's Party in the contemporary context. Next, it addresses how the People's Party's story is presented through imagery related to the visual culture of the new generation. Subsequently, it considers the origins and appeal of the book "2475 Graphic Novel" as a medium for conveying political stories through a graphic novel, before finally discussing the representation of the Siamese Revolution and the book's connection to the contemporary political context.

¹ In addition to views supporting and opposing the Siamese Revolution, Somsak Jeamteerasakul (2006) has suggested that there were two other views. The Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) gave an alternative view of the Siamese Revolution by criticizing both the People's Party and the royalists. This view emerged after the revolution and lost influence with the collapse of the CPT in the mid-1980s. Another view considered the 1932 Siamese Revolution by supporting both the People's Party and the royalists. This view has been influential in Thai society, especially in academic works, since the mid-1980s, and has gradually declined after the coup in 2006.

The Phenomenon of the People's Party in the Contemporary Context

The People's Party, or the group responsible for transforming the government from an absolute monarchy to a democracy on June 24, 1932, remains a significant figure in the public's interest in political history. Furthermore, the memory of the People's Party is closely intertwined with the political context of Thailand at various times. Specifically, the People's Party played a crucial role in Thai politics from 1932 to 1947. However, after the People's Party lost power following the coup of 1947, their story was gradually diminished and erased from Thai society through the writings of conservative factions over about three decades (Nakharin Mektrairat, 2003, pp. 18-25; Nattapol Chaiching, 2013, pp. 54-61; Rachod Nusen, 2023). It wasn't until Thai politics began to open up and become more democratic from the late 1980s onwards that the revival of the memory of the People's Party and the 1932 revolution began to occur continuously.

According to a study by Chatri Prakitnonthakan (2020), it is evident that following the coup on September 19, 2006, there was a major revival of interest in the People's Party through the movements of political groups opposing the coup, including students, activists, and academics. These movements brought the memory of the People's Party back into the public consciousness on a wide scale. This was achieved through activities commemorating the People's Party, the revival of important dates and monuments related to the People's Party, the use of their names or symbols in the struggle against royalist ideologies that dominate Thai society, and the expansion of new academic knowledge regarding the People's Party (Chatri Prakitnonthakan, 2020, pp. 314-339). It can be said that the People's Party, which had once faded from historical memory, was revived and re-emerged for a second time in the political context following the 2006 coup.

However, when the military group staged a coup d'état in 2014, it brought Thailand back into a dictatorial regime once again, under the support of conservative forces. Following the ascension of King Maha Vajiralongkorn in 2016, there was a significant effort to erase the memory of the People's Party from Thai society. This phenomenon can be seen as a reaction by conservative forces to the revival of interest in the People's Party in the previous decade. State officials began by closely monitoring and surrounding areas related to the memory of the People's Party, such as the Democracy Monument, the Khana Ratsadon Plaque (The People's Party Plaque), and the Constitutional Defender Monument. Furthermore, state officials arrested and prosecuted students who held commemorative activities on the anniversary of the Siamese Revolution on June 24, 2016 (Sarunyou Thepsongkraow, 2019, pp. 280-281; Chatri Prakitnonthakan, 2020, pp. 346-347).

Moreover, the phenomenon of erasing the memory of the People's Party was also manifested in the form of dismantling and destroying monuments related to the People's Party in various public areas. This began with the dismantling of the Constitution Monument in Buriram Province in November 2014 (Sarunyou Thepsongkraow, 2019, p. 75), followed by the removal of the Khana Ratsadon Plaque in Bangkok in April 2017, and the dismantling of the Constitutional Defender Monument in Bangkok in December 2018. For these latter two events, the state and the involved officials have not been able to provide clear reasons to the public. Subsequently, at the beginning of 2020, there were incidents involving the relocation of monuments of significant figures of the People's Party in military government locations. These included the Monument of Phraya Phahonphonphayahasena at the Artillery Center in Lopburi, the Monument of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram at both the Artillery Center in Lopburi and the National Defence College in Bangkok, as well as the renaming of several government places associated with the People's Party. For example, "Phahonyothin Camp"

and "Phibunsongkhram Camp" in Lopburi Province were renamed "Bhumibol Camp" and "Sirikit Camp," respectively. Additionally, the "Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram House Museum" at the 37th Military Circle in Chiang Rai Province was renamed the "Historical Learning Center" (Prachatai, 2020). These acts of erasing memory appear to be part of a political policy by the state, aimed at concealing the existence of physical evidence or monuments that convey the stories of the People's Party or the Siamese Revolution to the public, without regard for public criticism.

Although the destruction of memories related to the People's Party was openly carried out in public spaces after the 2014 coup, a study by Chatri Prakitnonthakan (2020) found that attempts to erase these memories completely failed. This was due to a movement among the people to recreate memorials related to the People's Party, including the Khana Ratsadon plaque and the Constitutional Defender Monument online, as well as reproducing them through objects that could be further developed into cultural products in various forms such as keychains, pins, poster models, T-shirts, and watches. It could be said that this was the "3rd rebirth of the People's Party," which helped to widely spread awareness of the existence and importance of the People's Party in Thai society (Thanapol Eawsakul, 2017).

Until the anti-coup government movement shifted from online spaces to public movements following the dissolution of the Future Forward Party in February 2020, a new generation of youth became a key force in government protests. It began in educational institutions, both high schools and universities. Many rallies brought symbols related to the People's Party as protest equipment, especially the lost Khana Ratsadon plaque. Moreover, when youth group rallies developed into street protests, protesters used the area around the Democracy Monument, which is a memorial commemorating the Siamese Revolution of the People's Party, as a rally site to demand that the government stop harassing the people, dissolve the parliament, and draft a new constitution (Anusorn Unno, Somchai Srisan, Saowanee Treerat, Asama Mungkornchai, and Chaiyaphong Samniang, 2023, pp. 114-120).

The memories of the People's Party have become widespread among the new generation fighting for democracy, especially since the second half of 2020, a time when political protests have been highly popular. The protesters have revived political ideologies and extensively used symbols related to the People's Party in organizing activities. Starting in August 2020, groups of young people called for reform of the Thai monarchy, inspired by the limitations on the royal powers imposed during the People's Party era. These included giving the House of Representatives the power to impeach the king, placing the royal assets under the control of the Ministry of Finance, and abolishing the position of Privy Councilor (Prachatai, 2020).

In September 2020, a large protest took place with various political activities at Sanam Luang. One of these activities was the ceremonial installation of the "Khana Ratsadon Plaque 2020." This plaque was designed with a symbol of the three-finger salute, representing the contemporary call for the highest power in the country to belong to the people. It was seen as a continuation of the legacy of the original Khana Ratsadon Plaque from 1932, which had gone missing, and as an extension of the People's Party's ideology by the new generation. Although the Khana Ratsadon Plaque 2020 was later removed by state authorities, it was widely reproduced online and even made into memorabilia for the protests (BBC News Thai, 2020).

In the early part of the following month, youth and activists came together to form the "People's Party 2020" group in preparation for a major demonstration on October 14, 2020. The group's statement clearly expressed their view of the original People's Party of 1932, asserting that the People's Party had not disappeared but remained in the hearts of all democracy-loving citizens. The emergence of this new activist group, bearing the same name as the group that initiated the 1932 revolution, reflects the close connection between the new generation and the original People's Party. Moreover, the new generation sees themselves as the heirs of the People's Party and strives to carry forward and complete the mission of leading Thailand to become a true constitutional monarchy where the king is under the constitution (Hataikarn Trisuwan, 2020; Somchai Preechasilpakul, 2020).

The People's Party in Visual Culture

Amid the political movements of the new generation since the beginning of 2020, the People's Party and the Siamese Revolution of 1932 have been presented as part of political campaigns through the use of images, aligning with the visual culture of the new generation. For them, visual perception plays a crucial role in seeking knowledge and accumulating social experiences in daily life. Consequently, images related to the People's Party have appeared widely in various forms to cater to the visual culture of today's society. These include posters, T-shirts, artworks, cartoons, calendars, and stickers. Furthermore, given the close connection between the lifestyle of the new generation and modern media, people can create and share content without boundaries through social media, particularly in the form of videos, infographics, digital art, and memes. These visual media help convey emotions, memories, thoughts, as well as the ideas and ideologies of the era. It can be said that these images play a significant role in enhancing awareness of the People's Party and in making the memory of it more prominent among the new generation (Pandit Chanrochanakit, 2022, pp. 241-245).

The Free Arts group is a collective of artists who have come together to advocate for democracy through various forms of art since 2020. Their works include live performances, graffiti, and visual content on online platforms. During the MobFest political art festival at the Democracy Monument in November 2020, Free Arts presented paintings depicting the history of Thai democracy, symbols of political struggle, and prominent figures in political history (The Standard, 2020). They also created memorabilia that reflected the image of the People's Party through the eyes of the new generation, such as brightly colored stickers featuring various Constitution Monuments from the People's Party era and the "Talisman of the People." This talisman was a cloth with the 2020 Khana Ratsadon Plaque at the center, surrounded by images of key figures, locations, and events in Thai political history from 1932 to 2020 (FreeArts, 2020). In the top left corner was a depiction of Pridi Banomyong alongside the original Khana Ratsadon Plaque, symbolizing his role in laying the foundations of Thai democracy. In the top right corner was a depiction of Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram alongside the Constitutional Defender Monument, representing the military figure's role in defending the revolution.

The political awakening and conflicts in Thai society since 2020 have inspired a new wave of cartoonists to produce diverse works supporting the youth movement for democracy. One notable example is The Art District 86, or Chalernpol Janrayab, a comic artist who has incorporated social issues and political events in Thailand into his creations making references to various American comics. His works have been widely shared on social media. This artist collaborated with the Puey Ungphakorn Project and the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation to produce a calendar for 2022 titled "The 2475 Vanguard," commemorating the 90th anniversary of the Siamese Revolution. The calendar features the stories and achievements of

12 members of the People's Party, depicting them as heroes through American comic-style illustrations. The work represents Pop Culture art, aiming to communicate the story of the People's Party directly and effectively to contemporary audiences (The Momentum, 2021).



Figure 1 - A 2023 Calendar “Honoring the Constitution” by The Art District 86 or Chalermopol Janrayab
(Naris Charaschanyawong, 2022)

The following year, a new calendar was created under the title "Honoring the Constitution," continuing with the American comic style. This calendar depicted significant events from each month of 1933, a year in which the People's Party faced numerous challenges from their opponents, particularly during the Boworadet Rebellion. Despite these obstacles, the People's Party ultimately succeeded in safeguarding the new regime, leading to the stabilization of the constitutional system (Naris Charaschanyawong, 2022).

The second example is the creation of a comic titled "Samanyapatiwat" (Commoner's Revolution) by LINER, also known as Kesanakorn Pojanavarapong. This work is a biographical documentary comic about Thawat Ritthidet, a labor leader who played a significant role during the 1932 Revolution. The comic was part of the creator's undergraduate thesis in journalism and was published online in 2022 on the Webtoon platform. The comic became highly popular, receiving over 33,000 views from more than 2,900 readers and earning a high rating of 9.78 out of 10 stars

Figure 2 – the creation of a comic titled "Samanyapatiwat" (Commoner's Revolution) by LINER or Kesanakorn Pojanavarapong (LINER, 2022)



The comic "Samanyapatiwat" is considered a pioneering work in political-themed webcomics, aimed at conveying complex political narratives in a more accessible way through visual storytelling. It seeks to engage the younger generation, who are avid readers of webcomics, by drawing their interest to the 1932 Siamese Revolution (LINER, 2022; Prachatai Live, 2022). This work emphasizes the role of the labor movement and the broader atmosphere of the 1932 Revolution, highlighting that it was not only the elites or the People's Party who played crucial roles but also ordinary citizens. The author portrays Thawat Ritthidet's journey starting as a journalist who depicted the social conditions of Siam before the revolution, then becoming a labor leader advocating for the rights of the lower classes both before and after the revolution. Thawat is also depicted as a commoner who filed a defamation lawsuit against the king on behalf of the people, and as a participant in defending the new regime during the Boworadet Rebellion. This approach helps readers better understand the Siamese Revolution's connection to the broader population.

"2475: Ghost Writer of Siam" : The Art of Conveying Political Stories Through Illustrations

Amid the heightened political awareness and activism among the Thai public since 2020—especially with the political protests in Bangkok and other provinces—there has been a significant push to challenge and free Thai society from longstanding issues such as social inequality, cultural authoritarianism, patriarchy, societal violence, double standards, and injustice. This environment has also led to a breaking of political taboos, with open critiques and calls for reform of the monarchy. In this context, a group of young people collaborated to create a graphic novel project titled "2475 Graphic Novel." This project aimed to portray the history of the 1932 Siamese Revolution through characters who embody emotions, fears, love,

hopes, and dreams of building an ideal society—parallels to the current struggles and aspirations of contemporary Thai society.

Graphic novels originated in the 1960s from the efforts of writers who sought to create comic books with more mature content for adults. They present a wide range of stories, including documentaries, memoirs, historical fiction, satire, and Japanese manga. Graphic novels can be created by individual writers or by teams consisting of writers and illustrators (O'English, Matthews, and Blakesley, 2006, pp. 2-3). The term "Graphic novel" was used for marketing purposes. Charles Hartfield states this term originally promised to be a way to promote serious comics to the general book trade and general readership at bookstores, not comic shops (Hatfield, 2005, p. 29). Today, graphic novels are recognized as a form of creative art, similar to novels, that uses visual storytelling to convey narratives.

Although graphic novels share similarities with comic books in their use of sequential images, text, and basic elements like panels, line drawings, and dialogue, they differ significantly in their format and narrative complexity. Graphic novels are presented in book form and often feature more intricate storylines and thematic depth (Chommanaad Boonaree, 2013, p. 122). Additionally, Viktoriia Oliinyk (2021) highlights that graphic novels often convey ideological content through symbolic images or text. They are connected to literary storytelling techniques, visual arts techniques, and action diagrams alongside narrative sequencing, and also alongside other forms of narrative sequencing such as film storyboards (Oliinyk, 2021, pp. 945-947).

The "2475 Graphic Novel" project represents an effort to present the story of the People's Party and the Siamese Revolution in a format that resonates with younger generations familiar with visual culture and pop culture. The project was initiated by the Society of Young Social Innovators (SYSI), a non-profit organization focused on social development, which aimed to create an accessible book about the People's Party. SYSI invited "Sa-ard," or Tanis Werasakwong, a professional cartoonist known for addressing contemporary social and political issues, to create the graphic novel. Podcharakrit To-im, a journalist and advocate for social issues, served as the editor and writer for the content (Way Magazine, 2022).

The realization of the graphic novel project about the Siamese Revolution took a substantial journey of 3.5 years, beginning in mid-2020. It began with two years of research and script development, before moving onto fundraising from June 24 to August 31, 2022, with a total of 1,550 copies pre-sold. The scriptwriting and storyboard process was completed by February 2023, followed by approximately 9 months of illustration work. Ultimately, the graphic novel was published as a 472-page book titled "2475: The Ghost Writer of Siam" and was delivered to readers in January 2024 (2475 Graphic Novel, 2024).



Figure 3 – The Poster Used to Promote the Fundraising Efforts for the “2475 Graphic Novel” (Fig.3 - Left) in 2022 (2475 Graphic Novel, 2022) and the Cover of the book “2475: Ghost Writer of Siam” (Fig.3 - Right), published in 2024 (Kai3 Studio, 2024)

The “2475 graphic novel” (“2475: The Ghost Writer of Siam” in Thai) is rooted in the historical context of the late absolute monarchy and is narrated through the perspective of a fictional character named Nipha, a female writer involved in the Siamese Revolution led by the People's Party. The book draws on extensive research about the People's Party and the revolution, including academic works produced since the late 1980s that have revived memories of the People's Party. It also utilizes primary sources such as official documents, decrees, old films, and contemporary publications as material for its storytelling.

In addition to depicting historical figures such as King Prajadhipok, Prince Nakhonsawan, Phraya Phahon Phonphayuhasena, Phraya Songsuradet, Luang Praditmanudham, and Luang Phibulsongkram as key characters, the “2475 Graphic Novel” also faces the challenge of accurately portraying historical events and the atmosphere of the era. The team had to research and recreate scenes such as the economic downturn in Bangkok, the working environment in a newspaper editorial office, and the celebrations of the city's 150th anniversary. Moreover, the design of the characters' personalities was crafted to be historically plausible while also relatable to contemporary readers (Common School, 2024; Prachatai Podcast, 2024).

A Representation of the Siamese Revolution in the Contemporary Political Context

The “2475 Graphic Novel” serves as a contemporary representation of the Siamese Revolution within the current political context. The creators aimed to connect readers, especially younger generations with political experiences from 2020, with the spirit of those who sought social change during the 1932 revolution and in the present day alike. The novel interprets the Siamese Revolution positively, aligning with the perspectives of today's youth. It highlights issues such as economic downturns, social inequality, and the political limitations of the absolute monarchy that led the People's Party to seek governance reform for the prosperity of Siam.

Women in the Siamese Revolution

Using a female character, Nipha, as the protagonist in a narrative is considered a challenge and a reinterpretation by the authors in depicting women's participation in the revolutionary movement in Siam. It is difficult to imagine women having a political role in the 1930s given the male-dominated political landscape of that era. Giving women a central role in the story adds depth and perspectives that resonate with modern readers, who view women as having the freedom to participate in politics. However, the novelist has attempted to emphasize realism by portraying Nipha as a female typist and the 'ghost editor' of the Bangkok Kanmuang newspaper. This portrayal is plausible when considering the historical context. By the late 1920s, Siam's society began to see the emergence of professional groups, writers, and educated commoner women in the world of literature through roles as writers, translators, and journalists. Notable female writers of that era include Buppha Kunchorn (Dokmai Sot), Nongyaow Prapatsatit (N. Prapatsatit), Kanha Khengsiri (K. Surangkana), and Prom Saretsaoprasong (Kulab Kao) (Suchat Sawatsri, 2010, pp. 599-600).

Nipha is considered a representative figure of the new-generation intellectuals who are educated and skilled in foreign languages. Nipha has aspired since childhood to become a writer who can help improve the lives of others, much like Nelie Bly, a pioneering American female journalist. Nipha's background includes a father who was a member of the failed R.S. 130 group, a government official group that faced defeat during a revolution in 1912. Despite this, Nipha's father instilled inspiration in her, and she attempted to pursue her dream of becoming a writer as a final gift before being arrested on charges of rebellion. Although Nipha had writing abilities since childhood, she was hindered due to being the daughter of a rebel. Ultimately, Nipha found work at the Bangkok Kanmuang newspaper, where she was able to showcase her writing abilities and narrate various stories of Siamese society, spanning across different social classes. She also became involved with the rebels through her younger brother, who was a disciple of Luang Praditmanutham, a prominent figure in the revolutionary group.

Due to the collaboration of artist and co-writer who studies in the field of journalism, this book vividly portrays the life and work of newspaper editors and writers through the character of Nipha, in a manner that aligns with historical context. For example, it depicts the portrayal of newspapers with freedom in reporting news due to the protection granted by foreign extraterritorial rights, while the government of Siam attempted to control the media by providing funding or sending official news to certain newspapers to limit criticism. Furthermore, this novel presents the role of newspapers during the end of the old regime, serving as a voice for the revolutionaries and helping shape political consciousness within society. This contributed to creating a wave of demands for changes in governance.

In Nipha's role as a writer, the authors proposed the idea of bringing together a new generation of writers and changing the direction of writing from Thai traditional tales to stories reflecting society, in line with historical and literary truths before the Siamese revolution. The creator imagined Nipha as one of the young writers in the group for the magazine "Sang Aksorn," which advertises itself as a progressive magazine promoting knowledge, freedom, and equality. The magazine features a fictional character named Prince Woraprapan, a nobleman who is intimate with the old regime, serving as an editor and owner of the magazine.

The Atmosphere of the Era

The authors of this book have conveyed the atmosphere of pre-revolutionary Siam through images and storytelling, depicting the impoverished lives of the people, reflecting the image of economic and social oppression in the old regime from the perspective of commoners. For example, the book opens with the presentation of the hardships of commoners through newspaper articles, including stories of the struggles of farmers during economic downturns, salary reductions, and unjust dismissals of government officials by the old regime, as well as stories of commoners' grievances about oppressive tax collection practices, forced labor, and enforcement of those who do not pay taxes to work on public projects. These stories are all based on actual news and regulations from the 1920s and 1930s, as well as various academic works studying the Siamese revolution.

When considering the atmosphere of the country under the absolute monarchy as portrayed throughout the book, it is apparent that the authors deliberately represented Bangkok society as divided between the elites and the commoners. The characteristics of the elites were expressed through the image of the "Sang Aksorn Palace," which was constructed in the clear, civilized style of Western architecture and filled with servants and different extravagant revelries each week. This extends to the stunning image of the celebration of the capital city's 150th anniversary at Phra Phutthayotfa Bridge and Sanam Luang. These images are a stark contrast to that of the commoners, which the authors represent through images of commercial buildings, shops, printing houses, restaurants, and derelict communities hidden in unhygienic corners. Furthermore, the authors also attempt to point out the image of the people who must live amid the uncountable issues that come with city life. These include homeless vagrants, prostitutes, opium addicts, and gamblers, as well as other types of crime and corruption by state officials that commoners must contend with every day (Kidyang, 2024).

The People's Party and the Commoner's Revolution of Siam

The characters of the People's Party in this book are a group of young people who have experiences studying abroad and have been influenced by global revolutionary movements, such as in Russia (1917), the German Empire (1918-1919), Finland (1918), Hungary (1918-1920), Ireland (1919-1921), Egypt (1919), and Iraq (1920). The authors emphasize the importance of Luang Praditmanutham and Luang Pibulsongkram, key members of the People's Party, using dialogues to explain the reasons for the attempt to change the governance system, which is related to personal experiences and injustices under the old regime. Additionally, the authors present the diverse ideologies and perspectives of the members at the People's Party meetings, which lead to conflicts among the members, but everyone continues to work together to successfully accomplish the mission of the Siamese revolution.

The portrayal of Nipha in relation to the Siamese Revolution is presented as an ally of the People's Party. Nipha is tasked with gathering secret information about the old government from the "Sang Aksorn" palace. As a result, she faces internal conflict due to her dual role: on ordinary days, she is a ghost writer criticizing the government in the newspaper, while on weekends, she is an insincere writer who praises the royal family in the "Sang Aksorn" magazine. This reflects the life of the People's Party members, who publicly serve the king's government while secretly working underground to overthrow the absolute monarchy of Siam.

A key turning point that leads Nipha to fully commit to the People's Party's cause is when she discovers that the elite class is indifferent to the sufferings of common people as

presented in petitions and is behind the assault on newspaper editors who criticize the government. This revelation intensifies Nipha's questioning and criticism of social injustices, leading to her dismissal from the "Sang Aksorn" magazine. Despite this, Nipha remains steadfast in her commitment to truth and journalistic integrity, always writing news based on facts and refusing to produce unfounded attacks against the government.

The Elites of the Old Regime and Their Attempts to Resist Change

In the novel, the character representing the old regime's antagonist is Prince Woraprapan, who embodies the traditional royalist class. Although he initially appears modern and open to the ideas of the younger generation, he ultimately clings to conservative customs, prioritizes the interests of the elite, and resists political change. In contrast, the historical figure of Prince Nakhonsawan, the Minister of the Interior, is depicted as stern and always seated at his desk, with officials bowing and waiting for his orders. This portrayal highlights his status as a high-ranking figure within the old regime, holding significant power and authority.

In the novel, the authors also present a stark contrast between the old regime's elites and the People's Party, particularly in their perspectives on the world. The old regime seeks to maintain the status quo and prevent any changes, while the People's Party believes that "the old must decay and make way for the new as a matter of inevitability." The characters representing the old regime employ various methods to halt progress. These include using secret police to investigate dissenters, employing extralegal means to intimidate and harm critics, closing down newspapers, seizing and destroying critical publications, and covertly funding progressive journals to monitor and control new writers' ideas. Additionally, the authors portray the old regime's high-ranking officials as being deeply paranoid and distrustful of each other, with their movements also being monitored for anti-government activities.

"A Letter to the Future": A Conversation Between Nipha and Contemporary Thai Society

The final chapter of "2475: Ghost Writer of Siam," titled "Letter to the Future," reflects on the aftermath of the Siamese Revolution and connects it with contemporary contexts. The chapter begins by showcasing the success of the People's Party's revolution on the morning of June 24, 1932, with the enthronement of King Prajadhipok as a constitutional monarch and the widespread proclamation that "this country belongs to the people." It then transitions into a fictional dialogue between Nipha, who is imprisoned for the Peace Rebellion in the 1950s, and her deceased father, who never witnessed the changes in Siam.

Although Nipha acknowledges that Siam has progressed after the revolution—having abolished extraterritoriality, achieved full sovereignty, improved education and public health, and eliminated exploitative taxes on farmers, thereby enhancing the lives of the people—she questions her participation in the revolution. She feels that Thai society has not achieved true freedom and continues to have political prisoners, echoing the fate of those from the old regime.

The dialogue in this final chapter invites readers to reflect on the contemporary political context since 2020, where the younger generations have mobilized to bring about societal change, akin to the Siamese revolution of 1932. Despite the significant and prolonged protests by youth groups over the past three years, which expanded political demands in Thai society, there has been no responsive action from the state. On the contrary, protestors have

faced severe and brutal crackdowns by the state, including violent suppression of demonstrations and legal action against activists and political dissenters in the form of judicial repression. This has created an atmosphere of fear and despair in Thai society (Thai Lawyers for Human Rights, 2021). Even though Thailand has moved towards a more democratic atmosphere following the general election in 2023, many protest leaders, activists, and political dissenters remain imprisoned or in exile abroad due to political charges. This situation mirrors the depiction in the graphic novel, where Nipha is imprisoned following the Peace Rebellion of the 1950s.

The dialogue between Nipha and her father also addresses the transmission of dreams and inspiration for improving Thailand from one generation to another. This is reflected in the movement of young soldiers and intellectuals in 1912, which inspired the 1932 revolution of the People's Party. Nipha's father's social justice efforts are passed on to his two children, and Nipha's own writings inspire children in her community who dream of becoming writers. Additionally, the final part of their conversation emphasizes living with hope despite facing hardships and striving to achieve one's dreams. This segment highlights the authors' attempt to connect with the younger generation who are grappling with political despair in the present era. It underscores the importance and value of political movements as sources of inspiration for future generations. The dialogue serves to offer encouragement and hope for societal change in Thailand's future.

Conclusion

The book "2475 Graphic Novel" is a product of the revival of memories about the People's Party and the 1932 Siamese Revolution within the context of contemporary political discourse. In particular, it engages with the current wave of demands for democracy and monarchy reform by the younger generation since 2020. This graphic novel presents the story of ordinary people who joined the Siamese Revolution with the People's Party. The authors aim to depict the 1932 revolution in a manner that resonates with modern times, using the graphic novel format to align with visual culture and popular trends prevalent among today's youth.

In presenting the Siamese Revolution, the authors have chosen a progressive female writer as the main character. This choice reflects the representation of the younger generation participating in the People's Party's revolution. The graphic novel depicts the atmosphere of Siam before the revolution through images and narratives that illustrate the economic disparities and class divisions between the upper classes and common people. The authors also presented the story's protagonists from both the People's Party and the central character, Nipha, who is involved in the revolution with a vision to advance Siam and create a more equitable society. Conversely, the antagonists are portrayed as the old regime's elite, who cling to traditional customs, prioritize personal gain, and resist political change. At the end of the graphic novel, the authors aim to communicate with readers, particularly younger generations, about the value and importance of political activism. This narrative encourages readers to appreciate the ongoing struggle for societal improvement and seeks to inspire future generations to continue striving for a better society with hope and determination.

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