

The Applied Political Philosophy of King Norodom Sihanouk

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Abstract

The research article on the applied political philosophy of King Norodom Sihanouk has the objective s: (1) to study the concept of the applied political philosophy of King Norodom Sihanouk (2) to find out the practice of the concept of politics of King Norodom Sihanouk (3) to analyze the concept and practice of King Norodom Sihanouk's political philosophy in the Cambodian societal context during his leadership in the period of 50s and 70s. This study was conducted by documentary research.

The research results were as follows:

1) Knowing about the concept of the applied political philosophy of the leadership of King Norodom Sihanouk, in which his leadership is based on the concept of the political philosophy of Buddhism, and follows up in accordance with the ten virtues of a leader, and four sublime states. Furthermore, it is not only ten virtues that, the study has found that King Norodom Sihanouk uses two basic concepts of philosophy: a) according to the principles of Buddhism. b) it is combined with the Brahmanism concept, including the ancient Khmer belief system such as Totemic belief, and supernatural forces as well as to support the way of the leadership of His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk.

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2) This study reveals how King Norodom Sihanouk applied his political philosophy in the practical leadership approach and found that His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk performed well until his common people praised him as a great King or so-called him the Righteous King or Dharmic Raja, which reflects that the practice of the ten duties of leader and the four sublime states, and this leading style can attractive of loving from the massive strongly support of the bottom of felt hearted people around the nation.

3) This study gained new knowledge from the applied political philosophy of King Norodom Sihanouk in the current social context, especially how to apply and reconcile in order for national harmony. Although respecting the neutral policy and non-aligned movement of King Norodom Sihanouk, if look at the practical knowledge from King Norodom Sihanouk, that is, flexibility in the geopolitical situation of the region and the globe is very significant mechanism to avoid the Kingdom of Cambodia from the geopolitical challenges, so the Buddhist thought was a central concept of his applied political philosophy.

Keywords: The Applied Political Philosophy; Buddhist Concepts

Introduction

The late King Norodom Sihanouk was a great King of Cambodia he has greatly done for the sake of the Kingdom of Cambodia, especially his wise royal patronage which led to the country being more prosperous, including economic growth, international relations, and cultural perspective of unity during his reign. Julio A. Jeldres sees the King as a smart strategist to resolve the national issue, so he asserted that the former Cambodian monarch and head of state, a strategist of weak-state diplomacy unequalled in contemporary international politics, had astutely managed Cambodia's relations with China and Communist North Vietnam in the 1960s, keeping his country in peace, while the war-ravaged in neighboring Vietnam and parts of Laos during his leadership. Moreover, the King Norodom Sihanouk has applied both theories of Western and Easter's political philosophy to integrate into Khmerization under the shadow of Buddhist concepts and Brahmanism concepts as well.

In this regarding to these concepts, the other scholars found different views, like academician Ros Chantrabot, in his dissertation in French wrote in chapter 5 that the feature of Cambodian political life, especially the King Father always use of the word "compromise" should be kept in mind, there is not a political stance but it is facilitation manner, and not on consensus, an economic, social, educational, agricultural or health sectors.

In contrast, the word “compromise” in the Cambodian political context refers to the balance of power divisions between the various factions that are involved in government. King Norodom Sihanouk has a very high art of coordinating, organizing, and defining in detail the composition of the members who have to serve in the government, but those members of the government have never had the same political aspirations and ideals. Such a political perspective could give the impression that Cambodia is a Democrat because the leaders of each current are present at the peak of their power. All Cambodian politicians are also involved in indebted King Norodom Sihanouk, For instance, in arranging the match, “Lon Nol's National Salvation Government” on August 14, 1969, both King Norodom Sihanouk and his civil servants, as well as Prince Sisowath Sirikmatak's group, were noticed.

Having no one dared to protest against King Norodom Sihanouk's actions, the implementation of the compromise principle did not make much sense, and activities have become a habit that was practiced and quietly accepted.

To an awareness of the eminent role of the late King Norodom Sihanouk in his leadership and his main concept of political philosophy, this research article will show how the late King Norodom Sihanouk conducted the past time for national unity and reconciliation which in turn led to further substantive learning from him as well.

Getting back to the problem of research, I found the previous one that no scholar researched this topic in terms of His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk was the most powerful monarch and charismatic leadership style not only among his own grassroots people but also for his foreign friends around the world such as De Gaulle, Nehru, Sukarno, Chou Enlai, Nasser, Mao Tse-Tung, Tito, Haile Selassie, Enver Hodja, Sekou Toure, Nikita Khrushchev, Boumediene, Nicolae Ceausescu. The legacy of King Father Norodom Sihanouk remains until nowadays is divided into two parts:

1) **Physical legacy** refers to infrastructural physical such as old buildings, the senate building along the road Norodom Blvd, Chaktomuk Theater Hall in front of the Royal Palace, and so on.

2) **Mental legacy** refers to common Cambodian people always commemorating their late King Father in terms of King Father Norodom Sihanouk as be great King in this age for all people around the country. Moreover, the King Father regarded him as the symbol of the national spirit unique. In doing so, he led the national reconciliation moving forward to national unity, including independence from France in 1953 and other significant achievements that he has well done for his nation. Therefore, people kept him in their minds forever.

His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk, the charismatic Cambodian leader whose remarkable skills of political adaptation personified the world the tiny, troubled kingdom where he was a towering figure for six decades, unfortunately, His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk died peacefully early Monday in Beijing, China in 2012, and then he was 89.

It has also been noticed that King Norodom Sihanouk was born in Phnom Penh, the Cambodian capital, on Oct. 31, 1922. A prince of the Norodom clan of the royal family, he was never considered a serious candidate to gain the throne. Instead, he was seen as a sensitive, if lonely, prince with a serious gift for music and, later, a passion for film.

He received a first-rate French education, initially at a primary school in Phnom Penh and then at the Lycee Chasseloup-Laubat in Saigon, the best in colonial Indochina. He was only 18 when King Monivong died in 1941 and the French colonial powers tapped him as the unlikely successor.

Regarding the main idea of King Norodom Sihanouk involving the political concept, Andrew Wickersham has written in his article related to King Sihanouk's political ideology that King Norodom Sihanouk could not be grasped apart from an understanding of Cambodian monarchic history. From its origins during the Classical Angkor Period (AD 802-1431), the Khmer kingship was an office infused with religious symbolism and its occupant was a divine figure. In 802, C.E. Jayavarman II became the first king of the Khmer Empire. Upon his coronation at the Mountain of Indra, King of the Gods, Jayavarman took the title "The God who is King." Fitting with his divine status, the kings of the Khmer

Empire constructed enormous public works projects, including palaces and enormous temples, such as the iconic Angkor Wat. These Wats were representations of the Mountain of Indra. In addition, the king was expected to distribute patronage in a pre-modern form of social welfare to the Khmer people, understood by the monarch to be his children.

There was no indication that Sihanouk understood the function and duties of the institution of kingship any differently than his predecessors. His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk, by all accounts, was a workaholic. He attended the opening of numerous hospitals, factories, and irrigation systems in Cambodia. In undertaking these projects, King Norodom Sihanouk ensured his legitimacy by carrying out one of the primary duties of kingship. There was no indication either that Sihanouk viewed the people any differently than the ancient kings of Angkor. He routinely referred to them in his addresses as "my children." He also showed no reticence in promoting a cult of personality about himself. He hated being isolated from his people, and early in his reign, the peasantry responded with the traditional displays of adoration characteristic of earlier times.

Thus, the researcher sees the essence of the study of the concept of the applied political philosophy of His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk. Therefore, the researcher is more interested in the topic "The concept of the Political Philosophy of King Norodom Sihanouk".

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the concept of the applied political philosophy of King Norodom Sihanouk.
2. To find out the practice of the concept of politics of King Norodom Sihanouk.
3. To analyze the concept and practice of King Norodom Sihanouk's political philosophy in the Cambodian societal context during his leadership in the 50s and 70s.

Scope of the Study

This research article aims to study the concept of the applied political philosophy of King Norodom Sihanouk divided into two scopes of study as follows

1. Scope of Text:

a) Primary source: Khmer Constitution, Western political philosophy, Norodom Sihanouk & Zhou Enlai, Reconciliation Process in Cambodia: 1997-2007 before the Khmer Rouge Tribunal.

b) Secondary sources: dissertations, thesis, Books, texts, and academic papers as well as websites.

2. Scope of subject-matter/Contents:

a) Studying the concept of the applied political philosophy of King Norodom Sihanouk

b) Figured out the practice of the concept of politics of King Norodom Sihanouk.

c) Analyzing the concept and practice of King Norodom Sihanouk's political philosophy in the Cambodian societal context during his leadership in the 50s and 70 s, due to since 1955-1970 he become a key role model in the politics, including the Kingship, and the Prime Minister before he was deposed by Lon Nol during 70s.

Research Methodology

This research is documentary research, which emphasizes documents. Its research methodology can be divided into three stages as the following:

1. Collecting the materials from primary sources, Khmer Tipitaka, Cambodian Constitution, Khmer Republic, Royal Government of Cambodia, texts/books, research, thesis, papers, and other sources, in which all the information and data concerned with the main concept of the political philosophy of King Norodom Sihanouk in terms of politic philosophy and Khmer Philosophy.

2. Analyzing the raw materials as well as systematizing them to give a clear scope and descriptive analysis of the topic in the concept of political philosophy.

3. Giving conclusions and suggestions for a further research study on the applied political philosophy, which can be beneficial for anyone interested in the academic field.

Research Result

In terms of practical results, His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk applied his political philosophy, especially the basics of Buddhism and the concepts from his French school while he studied there as well. It was this feature that dared to advocate both on the international stage and at the regional level for the benefit of future generations forever, and that was known as the demand for full independence from France and the declaration of independence in officially on November 9, 1953.

In the political philosophy aspect, His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk fully adopted the concepts from the philosophy of Buddhism and Brahmanism. These two important inputs were incorporated into the implementation of nationalist policies during his reign, especially in 1955-1970.

To achieve applied political leadership concepts in the state's affairs, His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk, focused on two principles that combine the theories of religious philosophy, including Buddhism, Brahmanism, and the ancient Khmer philosophy concept, such as Totemic belief into one force of the applied political thought in the management of state affairs both internal and external perspectives.

What is the common idea that he took from these two major religions to merge is that Brahmanism has a philosophy focused on monotheism, which means that only Brahma can save people. Buddhism, on the other hand, came to Cambodia after Brahmanism, a religion that focused on the ten virtues of the King, and those ten virtues are namely: generosity, high moral character, self-sacrifice, integrity, kindness, gentleness, self-control, non-fury, non-oppress, tolerance, and also non-opposition.

Based on the History of Cambodia, it is also revealed that Jayavarman VII is the royal model in conformity to the leadership style. During his reign was strong and able to expand its considerable territory in terms of Jayavarman VII integrated philosophical concepts from these two religions, leading it will become to the strongest country at that time in this Asian region.

As a result, His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk gained great popularity among the grassroots people of Cambodia. On the other hand, His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk was a high ordination as a Bhikkhu for three months in 1947. So, it shows that

King Norodom Sihanouk is a profound Buddha's teaching practitioner in the Royal Kingdom of Cambodia.

The King Norodom Sihanouk has applied his concepts as follows:

1) The formula of national reconciliation, in which he played an important role in political reconciliation was favor, waiver, and tolerance under the conditions of a single Khmer nation. His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk used images as a good example for his people, such as giving alms, keeping morals, and how to resolve internal conflicts or civil war in a peaceful manner in accordance with the fundamental principle of Buddhism and the Ancient Khmer philosophical thought, such as Totemic belief, supernatural force as well. Furthermore, in regard to the national reconciliation process after internal conflict among Khmer politicians, His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk met with Mr. Hun Sen privately on 4 June 1991 to find out the national reconciliation process in the name of the same Khmer nationality.

2) The international relations, His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk shows the maturity of relations with the heads of state and governments in the world, most of them tend to side with the communist countries, but he always tried to maintain neutrality and not take any side in the political system, and that the time the King Norodom Sihanouk always uses the Dharma (Righteous) into real society and also integration of the Dharma state of Buddhism with Brahmanism in his leadership approach, and including the ancient Khmer philosophical concepts, so-called Totemic belief for the sake of balance thoughts of integration between among of those theories as mentioned above. His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk's neutral stance led to the Cambodian country living in a peaceful manner during his leadership from 1955 to 1970.

3) The national economy, he took a combination of planning economy and liberalism, which fed the economy during his reign as a rich country until the export of agricultural products and creation. The motto is that Cambodia is an important rice barn in the world.

4) The national religion, His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk adhered to Buddhism as the state religion, promoting Buddhism to the point of naming a Buddhist university

as Preah Sihanouk Raja Buddhist University, the oldest school in the Asia region as well. On the Other hand, Cambodia has never experienced sectarian conflict like other countries in the world.

5) National education, during his reign, His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk established many prestige universities left to the present day, For instance, including the Royal University of Phnom Penh, and the Royal University of Law and Economics, which also trained many Cambodians to become intellectuals at the national level and competition to other countries in the South East Asia Nations, so-called (ASEAN) at that time.

The finding reveals as follows:

a) The concept of the Dharma of Buddhism was implemented by King Norodom Sihanouk in the political ideas led by the Cambodian society, thus making this society an island of peace between 1955 to 1970, was under the wise leadership of King Norodom Sihanouk, the economic, culture, international politics, and religion flourished to the point of establishing the Preah Sihanouk Raja Buddhist University (PSBU) to train the resources of monks and morality to the people of Cambodia.

b) The integration of Buddhism and Hinduism has made the Cambodian nation prosperous since the time of Jayavarman VII, a formula that was continued by King Norodom Sihanouk until he said that “all of us have not created anything new, we just follow in the footsteps of our ancestors in the glorious Angkorian era when our nation was so strong that no one dares to look down on us”.

c) The applied political philosophical thought based on these principles of King Norodom Sihanouk, So, politicians can take those concepts into account by learning from the above concepts, In fact, Samdech Akka Maha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia also learned a good leadership style and followed up what King Norodom Sihanouk had done in the past time. On the basis of the political point of view and national reconciliation, the point of complete peace also starts from the seeds of the political philosophy of Buddhism, and Hinduism, and also the concepts of the ancient Khmer belief based, the so-called Totemic approach.

d) The influence of Buddhism has rooted into the state of Cambodian society, His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk began to formulate a national policy to respond to the Buddhist country in the basis of people needs.

e) His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk, who retired in 2010, has been quiet about politics, what stands out is that he remains active in humanitarian and philanthropic work with his own poor Cambodian people living in rural areas around the country, and continues to maintain the sacrament regularly. This proves that no matter how old he was, he still fulfilled the royal tradition of Buddhism, an important part of his political policy, guiding the practical aspects of Cambodian society.

Suggestions

In general political philosophy, it can be observed that from ancient times up to the present times, the concept of philosophers in the world past to present are still important and can be applied in daily life, especially, in leadership for each national and country institution that requires a clear philosophical thought to orient towards success. As for the applied political philosophy of His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk, found that King used the applied political philosophy extracted from Buddhist and Brahman theories to integrate into one. His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk always practiced the ten duties of the King, are consist of Generosity, High moral character, Self-sacrifice, Integrity, Kindness and Gentleness, Self-Control, Non- fury, Non-oppress, Tolerance, and Non-Opposition to get more popular among the people who are living under his patronage until regarding as Dhimmica Raja, referring to the King with Dharma in practical.

Some questions should be further researched for next-generation scholars as follows:

a) There should be further research on how and why His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk fell down from his reign during the 70s.

b) During His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk's pose as the Head of State, he always raised “Neutralism” instead of “Neutrality”, but in a practical manner on politics showing his government in favor of the communist side rather than the democratic side

and look seems to be put far away from neutralism theory in accordance with his declaration in the political platform.

c) Concerning the treatment of other opponents in domestic politics during his leadership, His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk applied to silence them, especially politicians who opposed his applied political thought. In this way, King Norodom Sihanouk regarded the same binary distinction between “Sihanouk loyalists” and “foreign traitors” to any opposition politician in Cambodia at that time. So, next researchers could find out to reveal more details about what is behind his applied political philosophy concepts.

The small research has just found one aspect of the implementation of King Norodom Sihanouk's policy. So, in order to get more detailed data from the comprehensive research of His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk's applied political philosophy idea, let the next generation of researchers continue to research other aspects of King Norodom Sihanouk's thoughts, including how he reconciled Cambodia, diplomacy, and economy. Hopefully, the next generation of researchers can find further scientific data on the Applied Political Philosophy Concept of His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk for the sake of the benefit of future scholars.

New Knowledge

After researching the applied political philosophy of His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk, received new knowledge from his applied political thought, especially how to deal with the real political situation, for instance, the Royal Kingdom of Cambodia.

In summary, the new knowledge is received two approaches in practical way the both in politics and personal connectivity as follows:

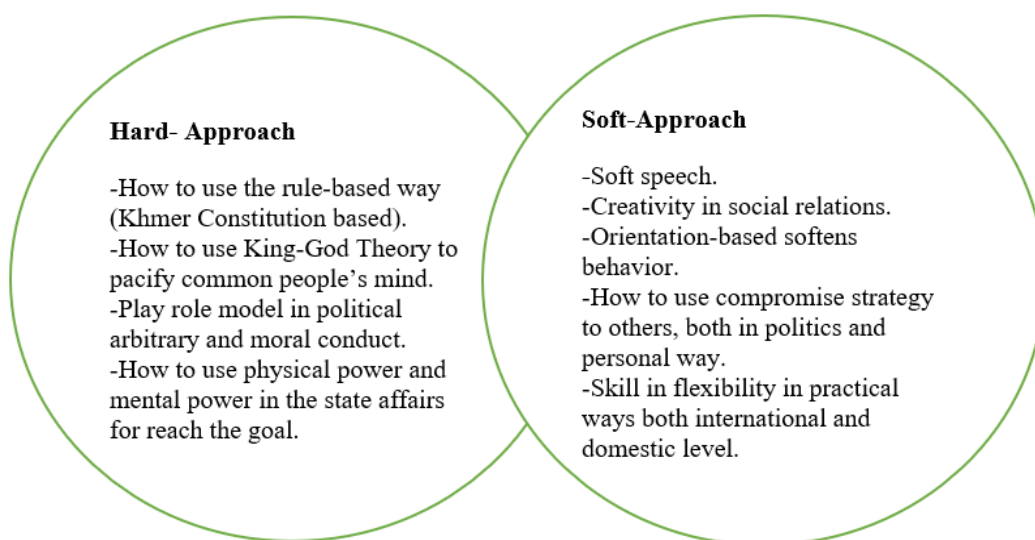


Figure 1 Picture 1 New knowledge

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