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PORNTIP DESOMCHOK : THOUGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT CONCERNING AUTONOMY OF THAI UNIVERSITIES : A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS THESIS ADVISOR : PRO. WICHIT SRISA-ARN, Ph.D. AND ASSO. PROF. PAITON S'INLARAT, Ph.D. 792 pp. ISBN 974-631-085-2

The purpose of this research is to study the principle, driving force and attempt to push forward the concept and the development of the autonomy of Thai universities, including the study of the various ways to develop the universities to accomplish the goal of autonomy. The method of research will be historical, based on the collection and analysis of available documents and oral history.

From the research, it is found that the concept on the autonomy of Thai universities originated and has continued from the founding of Thailand's first university, Chulalongkorn University, where the western concepts of academic freedom and autonomy of institutions of higher learning were applied and adapted to develop the university in Thailand. In the past, there have been attempts to develop two concepts with in the university administration framework, the university which is a government agency and the university, which is not a government agency. During the period before the democratic revolution in B.E. 2475, H.R.H. Prince Songkla originated and developed the concept of the university which is supervised by a king, in contrast to the concept of the university which is a government agency originated and developed by H.R.H. Prince Chainat and H.H. Prince Dhani. However, the period from B.E. 2475 to B.E. 2500, when Thammasat University of Moral and Political Sciences was established originally under the concept of the university which is not a government agency led by Mr. Pridi Bhanomyonk, but was finally incorporated into the civil service system. For the third period, from B.E. 2500 to B.E. 2515, there was developed a concept of the university under government supervision, which failed to gain wide acceptance. The concept of the university under government supervision was resurrected by its leading author, Mr. Wichit Srisa-arn, and the concept was submitted to and pressed upon to the government of General Chatchai Choonhavan until its acceptance the concept and directed that the concept be implemented in the Fifteen-Year Higher Education Master Plan (B.E.2533-B.E.2547). The most visible example of the concept is the establishment of Suranaree University of Technology, which is supervised by the government university. The Anand Panyarachun government continued this concept by using Suranaree University of Technology as a model for the enactment of the Walailak University Royal Bill B.E.2535 to implement and the severance of the universities from the civil service system, the attempt, however, was not successful. The concepts of the autonomy of the university may be appropriate in many countries, but to implement such concepts of autonomy in the university which is a government agency is likely to encounter many problems.

The driving force leading to the concept of the autonomy of Thai universities includes the conditions of the universities, the support of the government and the socio-economic factors. There are both success and failure in pushing forward the above-mentioned concept from the concept propagators, the university community, the government in power and resistance from the Legislature.