

Abstract

Since the Surname Act BE 2456, during King Rama the VI, Thai people has been using Surname as “last name” according to European tradition, like people from France or England. In a transition period from traditional state to the modern state with absolute monarchy. Surname functioned as effective individuals identifier and also a cultural construction that promoted nationalism and highlighted male identities.

King Rama VI implemented surname as a measure to categorize people from their backgrounds, including docility, occupation, qualifications, ancestors, etc. Moreover, surnames are categorized by royal granted ones and commoner’s surnames, signifying hierarchal social strata in the modern state along with marks of bearers’ ethnicities. The attempt to control surnames to represent familial relationship and kinship instilled the concept of origins (*chaat kam nerd*), with it implication of nationalism, that had been recently constructed at the same period, when literally “nation” (*chaat*) was equated with “birth” (*kam nerd*). Establishment of surname was a process to identify “familial relationship” and “ethnicity/race” of the citizens. Most of surnames were named through ancestral connection or “genre,” thus the surname is a signifier of patrilineage, a status of “a child of a father” to emphasize the lineage from the male origins, rather than neutrally signifying the family. Surnames also excluded women from familial relationship and kinship.