Good Governance Attitudes in a Clientelistic Polity: Thailand as a Case Study[*]

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Abstract

Behavioral norms in clientelist political systems such as Thailand may run counter to the good governance paradigm which assumes the existence of a democratic, egalitarian, pluralistic, and participatory society. This article presents survey findings on citizen attitudes toward four dimensions of governance: rule of law, accountability, transparency, and participation. The findings are based on a probability sample of 3,033 respondents drawn from 19 provinces in the north, northeast, central and south regions of Thailand (excluding Greater Bangkok). The findings indicate that while Thai citizens are on the whole supportive of the notion of good governance, support varies for the different dimensions. The transparency dimension received the greatest support, followed in successive order by rule of law, accountability, and participation. Significant regional variation exists. The northeast region ranks last on the composite governance scale as well as on many governance dimensions. Implications for dissemination of information and initiatives to raise public awareness are suggested.

Keywords: Good Governance, Attitudes, Clientelistic Polity, Thailand

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ธรรมาภิบาลในสังคมระบบอุปถัมภ์:
การสำรวจทัศนคติของประชาชนในประเทศไทย*

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บทคัดย่อ

ลักษณะทางพฤติกรรมในสังคมที่มีระบบการเมืองแบบอุปถัมภ์เช่นกรณีประเทศไทยนั้น อาจมีลักษณะที่ตรงข้ามกับหลักการธรรมาภิบาล ที่มีแนวคิดสนับสนุนต่อหลักการประชาธิปไตย หลักความเสมอภาค หลักเสียงข้างมาก และหลักการมีส่วนร่วม ซึ่งบทความฉบับนี้ได้นำเสนอผล การสำรวจทัศนคติของประชาชนต่อหลักธรรมาภิบาลใน 4 มิติ ประกอบด้วย หลักนิติธรรม หลักความโปร่งใส หลักความรับผิดชอบ และหลักการมีส่วนร่วม ศึกษาโดยวิธีสำรวจด้วยกลุ่ม ตัวอย่าง 3,033 คน จาก 19 จังหวัดในภาคเหนือ ภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือ ภาคกลาง (ไม่รวม กรุงเทพมหานครและปริมณฑล) และภาคใต้ ผลการศึกษาพบว่า กลุ่มตัวอย่างมีทัศนคติสนับสนุน ต่อหลักการธรรมาภิบาลโดยรวม ทั้งนี้ เมื่อจำแนกรายมิติพบว่า มีความแตกต่างกัน กล่าวคือ กลุ่ม ตัวอย่างมีทัศนคติสนับสนุนต่อหลักความโปร่งใสมากที่สุด รองลงมาได้แก่ หลักนิติธรรม หลักความ รับผิดชอบ และหลักการมีส่วนร่วม ตามลำดับ นอกจากนี้กลุ่มตัวอย่างที่อาศัยอยู่ในแต่ละภาคยังมี ระดับทัศนคติที่แตกต่างกัน กล่าวคือ กลุ่มตัวอย่างในภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือจะมีทัศนคติที่ สนับสนุนต่อหลักการธรรมาภิบาลโดยรวมและจำแนกรายมิติทั้ง 4 มิติ ในระดับต่ำที่สุดเมื่อ เปรียบเทียบกับภาคอื่น ๆ จากผลการศึกษาดังกล่าวจึงนำมาสู่ข้อเสนอแนะใน 2 ประเด็นที่สำคัญ ได้แก่ การเพิ่มความสำคัญของการเผยแพร่ข้อมูลข่าวสารแก่ประชาชน และการสร้างความตระหนัก ของสังคมโดยรวมต่อธรรมาภิบาลให้เพิ่มมากขึ้น

คำสำคัญ: ทัศนคติต่อหลักธรรมาภิบาล ระบบการเมืองแบบอุปถัมภ์

Introduction

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Scholars in the field of public administration have recognized since the early 1990s that globalization together with forces such as devolution and hyperpluralism has necessitated paradigm shifts in administrative theories and practice (Barzelay 1992; Osborne & Gaebler 1993; Frederickson 1997).   In this paradigmatic shift, "governance" has become a key organizing concept (Kettl 2002; Frederickson & Smith 2003).

In development administration, the concept of *good governance*, first proposed by the World Bank and other donor agencies in the 1990s, has become firmly established.   It is one of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Good governance is viewed as a necessary condition for providing an enabling environment for sustainable development (Schneider 1999: 7).

The principles of good governance were incorporated into Thailand's Constitution of 1997. In fact, the subsequent dissemination of information regarding the Constitution's key articles is viewed by some scholars as having played a major role in propagating and informing Thai citizens about the concept of good governance. With respect to administrative reform, but also as a direct consequence of loan conditionality imposed by the International Monetary Fund and Asian Development Bank in the aftermath of the financial crisis of 1997, Thai governments too have formally espoused principles of good governance. Furthermore, in compliance with loan conditionality, a key feature of Thai administrative reform since 1997 has been the implementation of a Results Based Management System (RBM) within the framework of good governance.

Examination of the literature on good governance reveals two important features (Punyaratabandhu 2008). First, good governance requires mutually supportive and cooperative relationships among three groups of stakeholders: government, civil society, and the private sector. Second, good governance is a normative and value-laden construct. The values it embodies are the values originally formulated by international donor institutions, most notably the World Bank, in their efforts to ensure effective and efficient utilization of development aid in the management of the development process in recipient countries. The values that underlie the concept of good governance are Western values. In this regard, Doornbos has accurately remarked, "If donor conceptualized standards of good governance were more fully elaborated…it would almost certainly imply an insistence that Western-derived standards of conduct be adopted in non-Western politico-cultural contexts" (2003:8).

Doornbos' so-called "Western-derived standards" of good governance require mutually supportive and cooperative relationships among stakeholders. The assumption is that a civil society where citizens' preferences and cognitive outlooks are supportive of good governance is a necessary condition for its creation. Where there is cultural dissonance, however, when the traditions and values of a civil society are at vatiance with externally imposed norms, desired outcomes may fail to materialize. In Kettl's words, "the first governance problem is *adaptation*: fitting traditional vertical systems to the new challenge of globalization and devolution and integrating new horizontal systems into traditional vertical ones" (2002: 147).

Critics of public sector reform policies in Thailand have argued that Thai reforms too often have their basis in foreign reform experiences. The latter experiences are rooted in specific institutions, development trajectories, administrative traditions, and political dynamics. As a result, they may not be directly capable of adaptation to

the Thai context (Bowornwathana 2000). For example, civil society in Thailand may not be strong enough to performs implemented in other countries. Or, the traditional hierarchical culture and value orientations of the citizenry may not be supportive of the "horizontal" democratic norms embedded in governance concepts.

The good governance paradigm of accountability, transparency, voice/participation, rule of law/predictability assumes "the existence of a democratic, egalitarian, pluralistic, and participatory society" (Punyaratabandhu & Unger 2009: 282). Thai traditional culture, by contrast, emphasizes hierarchical relationships and patron-client ties. Hierarchy in social relations means that those higher up in the hierarchy are ascribed certain authoritative powers and wisdom, and are deferred to by those lower down in the scale. Patron-client linkages imply an exchange relationship: a patron has the duty to protect and promote the welfare of his clients; a client returns the favor by obeying and carrying out the wishes of his patron (Samakarn 2004).

Thailand has long been identified as a clientelist system. Neher & Bowornwathana's contention that Thai "politics … is still based on nearly the same clientelist rules as have prevailed in traditional Thai society" is probably as true today as it was two decades ago (1986: 17). Many features of the traditional society remain solidly entrenched, especially in rural areas and among low income, less educated urban groups. Indeed, the political economist Anek Laothammathas (1995) proposed a framework of "Two Thailands" (*"song nakara")* for analysis of Thai politics and society.[1] The first Thailand is predominantly rural and agricultural. Its ways are the traditional ways, and its politics is based on clientelism. The second Thailand is primarily urban and middle class, with a tendency to espouse Western standards and norms, although still reflecting traditional hierarchical norms. In clientelist political

systems, citizens sell their votes or trade them for particular goods and services. Politicians not only target benefits on particular groups, but make the delivery of those goods contingent on citizens keeping their side of the deal (Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007: 1-2, 10). In clientelist contexts, politicians have incentives to maximize their discretion in how they target policies, with few specific rules guiding the distribution of benefits (Kitschelt & Wilkinson 2007: 12). The result is that politicians need not fear being judged at the polls on the basis of their stewardship of the national economy, their implementation of administrative reform, or any other collective goods (Lyne 2008: 167).

In the Thai case, clientelism flourished in the context of what Baker and Phongpaichit have identified as a tradition of a "strong, absolutist state" (2005: 263). Baker and Phongpaichit contend that, furthermore, "At the start of the twenty-first century, Thaksin Shinawatra…again revived the formula…(justifying) the need for a strong, authoritarian state" (2005: 264). In this authoritarian state, the polity was expected to remain both passive and obedient—a role surely at variance with the voice/participatory behaviors required by good governance models.

Given the tradition of a clientelist political system within an authoritarian state, it should occasion no surprise that governance reforms in Thailand have been supply side, by and large. Scant attention has been paid to the demand side. What kind of governance do Thai citizens expect or wish to see? Quite as values and attitudes conducive to, and supportive of, the exercise of good governance? We shall address some of these questions, drawing upon survey data obtained from a national sample of respondents.

This article has two key objectives: first, to present survey findings on citizen attitudes toward four dimensions of governance: rule of law, accountability, transparency, and participation; and second, to investigate regional differences in citizen attitudes.

Data and Method

The Data Set and Data Collection. The sample of 3,033 respondents is taken from a larger survey conducted by this researcher in 18 provinces in the north, northeast, central and south regions of Thailand in late 2005 – 2007.[2] The sample was drawn from the larger data set with probability proportional to size with respect to region and place of residence, and may be considered a national sample, with the exclusion of Bangkok, the capital city. The sample sizes for the north, northeast, central, and south regions consist of 631, 1135, 810, and 457 respondents, respectively. With respect to place of residence, 2362 respondents lived in rural villages, 372 respondents resided in *tambon* municipalities, and 299 respondents lived in town municipalities.

Table 1: The Sample, with Breakdown by Region and by Place of Residence

Place of Residence	Region				Total
	North	Northeast	Central	South	
Village	508	960	545	349	2,362
Tambon Municipality	76	110	141	45	372
Town Municipality	47	65	124	63	299
Total	631	1,135	810	457	3,033

Place of residence is a surrogate for degree of urbanization. Nearly four out of five respondents (77.9 percent) resided in villages, outside of municipal areas. Another 12.3 percent lived in semi-urbanized *tambon* municipalities, and 9.9 percent lived in municipal towns and cities. In terms of regional differences, the northeast and north regions had the most respondents living in villages (84.6 and 80.5 percent, respectively), as opposed to 67.3 and 76.4 percent, respectively, in the central and south regions. The greatest degree of urbanization was in the central region, followed by the south, north, and northeast regions, respectively.

Interviews with heads of households or their spouses were conducted in the home of the respondent. If both head of household and spouse were unavailable, the interview was conducted with a son or daughter or immediate relative residing in the household, between the ages of 18-70. The data collection instrument was a questionnaire consisting of some 70 items. An extensive description of the questionnaire and survey design can be found in Punyaratabandhu (2006, 2007) and Punyaratabandhu and Unger (2008).

Scale Construction. Attitudes toward good governance is a composite of four sub-scales: accountability, participation, rule of law, and transparency.[3] Questionnaire items, designed to measure the four dimensions, included items intended to tap traditional values (such as social hierarchy and patron-client ties) assumed to run counter to governance norms. For scale construction, factor analysis employing a varimax rotation was performed to check whether the Likert-scale ("agree," "somewhat agree," "somewhat disagree," "disagree") items loaded on hypothesized dimensions of governance. Items with factor loadings equal to or greater than .35 were retained for scale construction. A total of 19 items was retained

as a result of this procedure. A description of the four sub-scales and the composite good governance scale follows.

Sub-Scale 1: Accountability. Accountability implies that public officials are answerable for their behavior, which includes the corollary that the actions of public officials should be open to scrutiny by the public. Respondents were asked whether they thought the actions of politicians they approved of should be subjected to scrutiny. The basis of approval varies – for instance, approval could be based on the feeling that the politician is a good person, or that he has done a good job, or that he is supported by a majority of the public, or that he has personally helped the respondent in some way. Responses were therefore sought to the following questions: "Should the following persons be subject to scrutiny….

- Politicians who you're certain are good persons?
- Politicians whose performance you approve of?
- Politicians who are supported by the majority of the people?
- Politicians who have personally helped you or with whom you'r friendly?"

The Cronbach's alpha for the four-item scale was 0.923.

Sub-Scale 2: Participation. Participation may be considered a key element of governance on the principle that people are the ultimate beneficiaries of public policies. The rationale for participation is that participatory approaches foster a sense of ownership amongst stakeholders, leading to increased cooperation and enhancing performance and sustainability of public programs. Initially, an attempt was made to identify participation attitudes relating to local government and to development projects and plans. Pretests revealed, however, that unlike their rural counterparts,

most urban respondents had never thought about participating in such activities. Upon reflection, this appears to be a reality of urban life in Thailand. The survey therefore focuses on *political participation*, because this construct is capable of measurement at all levels of urbanization. Responses were sought to the following four-point Likert-scale items:

- Government leaders are like the head of family. We should accept and obey their decisions in all matters. (*Reversed score)*

- Government officials know their duties. The people don't need to advise them on how to do their work. (*Reversed score)*

- Politics is for politicians. Ordinary people shouldn't interfere. (*Reversed score)*

- Farmers and poor people shouldn't be involved in protest activities. (*Reversed score)*

- People who are more educated have more opportunity to express their political views than people with little education. (*Reversed score)*

- Voting isn't a duty. Whether one votes depends on whether it's convenient to do so. (*Reversed score)*

The Cronbach's alpha for the six-item scale was 0.701. (Note: the items reflect *nonparticipatary* attitudes. Thus, a low score was assigned to agreement with any item, and a high score was assigned to responses indicating disagreement.)

Sub-Scale 3: Rule of law. Rule of law refers to the provision of legal and regulatory frameworks that are fair and are implemented impartially. Impartial enforcement of laws and regulations requires noncorrupt public officials. The items on the rule of law scale tap the dimensions of equality before the law and tolerance for

corrupt practices. Responses were sought to the following four-point Likert-scale items:

- It's all right to use connections to put one's children in school or to find them jobs. (*Reversed score*)

- It's all right for rich people to be above the law. (*Reversed score*)

- It's all right to sometimes bribe government officials, in order to receive better and more efficient service from them. (*Reversed score*)

- It's all right for government officials to accept "envelopes" to turn a blind eye on small violations of the law. (*Reversed score*)

- It's wrong for government officials to accept "envelopes" for speeding up services.

The Cronbach's alpha for the five-item scale was 0.596.

Sub-Scale 4: Transparency. Transparency refers to the "availability of information to the general public and clarity about government rules. Regulations, and decisions" (http://www.adb.org). Availability of information assists citizens to make informed decisions and to assess government performance. Clarity about government rules and procedures. Communicated in easily understandable forms and language, reduces uncertainty and may inhibit abuses of authority among public officials. Questionnaire items on the transparency dimension were designed to probe respondents' attitudes on whether the government should make certain kinds of information available to the public and whether they were aware of citizen rights under the Thai constitution, such as the right to remove poorly performing politicians. Responses were sought to the following four-point Likert-scale items:

- The public must be kept informed about government decisions.

- The government must inform the public how it spends its budget.

- The public must be informed what their local government does with its budget.
- The people can remove politicians who don't perform well.

The Cronbach's alpha for the four-item scale was 0.855.

The Composite Good Governance Scale. A reliability coefficient was computed for the combined 19 items in the four dimensions of governance described above. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.770. Since each dimension consisted of a different number of items, varying between four and six, combining the items to form a composite scale would have resulted in weighting the dimensions unequally in the new scale. Thus, in order to create a composite governance scale based on four components weighted equally, rather than combining individual items, the governance scale was constructed using the mean of the accountability, participation, rule of law and transparency sub-scales.

Findings

Characteristics of the Sample. Table 2 presents characteristics of the sample, by region. The proportion of women is somewhat greater than men (51.8 and 48.2 percent, respectively). Slightly over half the respondents were between 36 to 55 years of age. The mean age was 44.6 years. Respondents in the north and northeast regions tended to be somewhat older than respondents in the central and south regions.

In terms of educational attainment, 48.2 percent of the sample had less than a sixth grade education. About 19 percent had a sixth grade education; 11.3 percent had a ninth grade education; 11.2 percent had completed high school; and

10.7 percent had two or more years of college. Regional differences exist. Respondents in the south tended to have the most education, followed by respondents in the central region, the north, and the northeast, respectively. For example, 36.5 percent and 40.1 percent of respondents in the south and central regions had less than a sixth grade education, in contrast to 51.4 percent and 56.8 percent of respondents in the north and northeast, respectively.

The overwhelming majority of respondents (96.2 percent) were Buddhist. Muslims accounted for 3.6 percent of the sample, and Christians 0.2 percent. A breakdown by region reveals a significant Muslim minority in the south region (20.9 percent Muslim, 78.9 percent Buddhist).

Nearly 30 percent of the sample were engaged in agriculture, including fisheries and animal husbandry; 27.4 percent were shopkeepers, ran small businesses or were self-employed; 20.4 percent were laborers and wage earners (non-company employees). Public sector employees (government and state enterprise) accounted for 8.5 percent of the sample. The remaining occupations consisted of company employees (3.5 percent), students (2.6 percent), and housewives (8.1 percent).

Table 2: Characteristics of the Sample, by Region (Percent)

Variables	Region				Total (n=3,033)
	North (n=631)	Northeast (n=1,135)	Central (n=810)	South (n=457)	
Gender					
Male	48.5	47.9	49.4	46.4	48.2
Female	51.5	52.1	50.6	53.6	51.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Age					
66 or older	7.1	5.5	2.1	5.7	4.9
56 – 65	16.5	19.0	11.2	13.8	15.6
46 – 55	29.2	26.7	24.3	18.2	25.3
36 – 45	26.9	27.2	34.4	31.1	29.7
26 - 35	15.8	17.4	20.6	19.9	18.3
Under 25	4.4	4.2	7.3	11.4	6.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
mean	46.45	46.00	42.26	42.65	44.59
Educational Attainment					
B.A. and Higher	10.3	5.7	4.3	10.6	7.0
Diploma or Higher Occupational Certificate	2.9	2.4	3.7	8.2	3.7
12th Grade or Occupational Certificate	9.7	8.2	14.9	14.2	11.2
9th Grade	9.2	6.2	17.3	16.6	11.3
6th Grade	16.5	20.7	19.6	13.9	18.5
Less than 6th Grade	51.4	56.8	40.1	36.5	48.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Occupation					
Agriculture/ Fishing/ Animal husbandry	38.7	58.7	7.9	38.3	37.9
Merchant/ Self-employed	17.4	14.9	27.3	24.5	20.2
Employee	23.1	12.3	34.9	13.8	20.8
Company employee	1.4	0.9	10.0	4.4	4.0
Government service/ State enterprise	5.7	3.4	2.5	4.4	3.8
Student	2.4	1.6	1.7	4.8	2.3
Retired	2.5	0.7	1.2	1.1	1.3
Housewife	8.1	6.7	11.5	7.2	8.3
Other	0.6	0.8	3.0	1.5	1.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Religion					
Buddhism	99.7	99.8	98.1	78.9	96.2
Islam	0.0	0.1	1.5	20.9	3.6
Christianity	0.3	0.1	0.4	0.2	0.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Good Governance: Accountability Dimension. The accountability sub-scale is a composite of four items. For the purposes of this research, being subjected to scrutiny is equated with being held accountable. Respondents were asked whether they thought the actions of politicians they approved of should be subjected to scrutiny. The basis of approval varies – for instance, approval could be based on the feeling that the politician is a good person, or that he has done a good job, or that he is supported by a majority of the public, or that he has personally helped the respondent in some way. Responses were therefore sought to the following questions: "Should the following persons be subject to scrutiny….

- Politicians whom you're certain are good persons?

- Politicians whose performance you approve of?

- Politicians who are supported by the majority of the people?

- Politicians who have personally helped you or with whom you're friendly?"

Table 3 presents the percentage of responses to the above questions. About two-thirds (67.2 percent) of respondents answered in the affirmative on all four items.   That is, these respondents thought that all politicians, even those they approved of, should be subjected to scrutiny (i.e. held accountable).   It should be noted, however, that a significant number (16.3 percent) said that no politicians should be subjected to scrutiny.

Regional differences emerge. Respondents from the northeast were less likely to hold politicians accountable than respondents in other regions: only 56.2 percent of respondents in the northeast answered "yes" to all four items, in contrast to 71.3 and 72.9 percent   of respondents in the north and central regions, and

(an impressive) 78.6 percent of respondents in the south. Conversely, the percentage of respondents who said that no scrutiny was needed was highest in the northeast region: 23.9 percent as opposed to 15.4 percent, 10.1 percent, and 8.6 percent of respondents in the central, south, and north regions, respectively.

On a scale of 1.00-4.00, the mean score for accountability attitudes for the national sample was 3.23. The mean score by region was highest in the south (3.51) and lowest in the northeast (2.96). Mean scores for the north and central regions were 3.39 and 3.33, respectively.

Table 3: Accountability Attitudes, by Region (Percent)

Accountability	Region				Total (n=3,033)
	North (n=631)	Northeast (n=1,135)	Central (n=810)	South (n=457)	
"Should the following persons be subject to scrutiny?"					
"Yes" to all 4 items	71.3	56.2	72.9	78.6	67.2
"Yes" to 3 items	5.1	7.6	2.4	4.4	5.2
"Yes" to 1-2 items	15.1	12.3	9.4	7.0	11.3
"No" to all 4 items	8.6	23.9	15.4	10.1	16.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	Mean = 3.39	Mean = 2.96	Mean = 3.33	Mean = 3.51	Mean = 3.23
	s.d. = 1.027	s.d. = 1.281	s.d. =1.154	s.d. = 0.998	s.d. = 1.177

$$\chi^2=172.33, \text{d.f.}=12, p=.00$$

Good Governance: Participation Dimension.   The six-item participation sub-scale focuses on attitudes toward political participation. As shown in Table 4, respondents were generally agreed that government should not be left to its own devices, and that citizens should participate. The general consensus was that citizens need not accept and obey government decisions in all matters, that politics should not be left to the politicians, that voting was a duty, that farmers and poor people should not be restricted from involvement in protest activities, that citizens could advise government officials on how to do their work, and that lack of education was not a barrier to expression of political views.

Over one-third of the sample (35.5 percent) expressed strong agreement with participation attitudes; a further 40.7 percent expressed agreement. About one-fifth (18.6 percent) of the sample were neutral; only 5.2 percent said they disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Table 4: Participation Attitudes, by Region

Participation	Region				Total (n=3,033)
	North (n=631)	Northeast (n=1,135)	Central (n=810)	South (n=457)	
Strongly agree (3.41– 4.00)	31.0	36.9	37.4	34.6	35.5
Agree (2.81– 3.40)	46.5	33.6	48.1	37.4	40.7
Neutral (2.21– 2.80)	18.3	21.8	13.7	19.9	18.6
Disagree (1.61– 2.20)	3.7	5.6	0.7	4.6	3.8
Strongly disagree (1.00 - 1.60)	0.6	2.0	0.0	3.5	1.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	Mean = 3.12 s.d. = 0.500	Mean = 3.08 s.d. = 0.592	Mean = 3.26 s.d. = 0.439	Mean = 3.05 s.d.= 0.596	Mean = 3.13 s.d. = 0.542

$$\chi^2=115.69, \text{d.f.}=12 , \text{p}=.00$$

Some regional variation exists, although less pronounced than in the case of accountability attitudes. Table 4 shows that a greater percentage of respondents in the central region tend to express agreement or strong agreement with participation attitudes than respondents in the three other regions (85.5 percent as opposed to 77.5 percent, 72.0 percent and 70.5 percent for north, south and northeast region respondents, respectively).

Expressed somewhat differently, on a scale of 1.00-4.00, the mean score for participation attitudes for the national sample was 3.13. The mean score by region was highest for the central region (3.26), followed by the north, the northeast and south (3.12, 3.08 and 3.05, respectively).

Good Governance: Rule of Law Dimension. Rule of law refers to the provision of legal and regulatory frameworks that are fair and are implemented impartially. This implies an absence of corruption. The five items on the rule of law scale tap attitudes toward equality before the law and tolerance for corrupt practices.

About 80 percent of the sample expressed attitudes favorable to the rule of law (Table 5). There was general agreement that it was wrong to offer bribes to public officials, or for public officials to accept bribes. There was also general consensus that there should be equality before the law, regardless of socio-economic status or whether one had connections. At the other end of the spectrum, only 6.7 percent of respondents expressed disagreement or strong disagreement with the rule of law.

Table 5: Attitudes toward Rule of Law, by Region

Rule of law	Region				Total (n=3,033)
	North (n=631)	Northeast (n=1,135)	Central (n=810)	South (n=457)	
Strongly agree (3.41– 4.00)	49.4	40.2	48.0	36.8	43.7
Agree (2.81– 3.40)	31.3	37.8	36.5	48.6	37.7
Neutral (2.21– 2.80)	13.4	14.5	9.0	8.5	11.9
Disagree (1.61– 2.20)	5.4	6.4	5.8	4.6	5.8
Strongly disagree (1.00 - 1.60)	0.5	1.1	0.7	1.5	0.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	Mean = 3.36	Mean = 3.28	Mean = 3.42	Mean = 3.31	Mean = 3.34
	s.d. = 0.571	s.d. = 0.584	s.d. = 0.547	s.d. = 0.520	s.d. = 0.565

$$\chi^2=61.10, d.f.=12 , p=.00$$

In terms of regional variation, although differences are statistically significant, the data show less variation than attitudes toward accountability and participation (Table 6). The percentage of respondents expressing agreement or strong agreement with rule of law attitudes is somewhat greater in the south and central regions than in the north and northeast regions (85.4 and 84.5 percent versus 80.7 and 78.0 percent, respectively). Conversely, however, the percentage of respondents expressing disagreement or strong disagreement with rule of law is greatest in the northeast, followed by the central, south, and north regions (7.5, 6.5, 6.1 and 5.9 percent, respectively).

On a scale of 1.00-4.00, the mean score for rule of law attitudes for the whole sample was 3.34. The mean score by region was highest in the central region

(3.42) and lowest in the northeast (3.28). Mean scores for the north and south regions were 3.36 and 3.31, respectively.

Good Governance: Transparency Dimension. Transparency refers to the availability of information and clarity about government rules, regulations, and decisions. Items on the transparency scale were designed to elicit respondents' attitudes in regard to whether the government should make certain kinds of information available to the public.

An overwhelming majority of the sample expressed attitudes in favor of transparency (Table 6). In terms of percentage breakdown, 52.9 percent of the sample showed strong agreement with transparency; 36.8 percent expressed agreement; 7.7 percent of the sample were neutral; and only 2.6 percent expressed disagreement or strong disagreement.

With respect to regional variation, respondents in the south and north regions expressed attitudes more favorable to transparency than respondents in the northeast and central regions. The percentage of respondents expressing strong agreement was 65.1 and 61.9 in the north and south regions, respectively, in contrast to 54.7 and 35.6 percent in the northeast and central regions. On a scale of 1.00-4.00, the mean score for transparency attitudes for the whole sample was 3.41. The mean score by region was highest in the south and north regions (3.52 and 3.51, respectively) and lowest in the central region (3.30). The mean score for the northeast region was 3.39.

Table 6: Transparency Attitudes, by Region

Transparency	Region				Total (n=3,033)
	North (n=631)	Northeast (n=1,135)	Central (n=810)	South (n=457)	
Strongly agree (3.41– 4.00)	65.1	54.7	35.6	61.9	52.9
Agree (2.81– 3.40)	25.6	31.9	55.7	30.9	36.8
Neutral (2.21– 2.80)	6.9	8.3	7.9	7.2	7.7
Disagree (1.61– 2.20)	1.8	3.8	0.6	0.0	2.0
Strongly disagree (1.00 - 1.60)	0.6	1.3	0.1	0.0	0.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	Mean = 3.51 s.d. = 0.563	Mean = 3.39 s.d. = 0.620	Mean = 3.30 s.d. = 0.482	Mean = 3.52 s.d. = 0.471	Mean = 3.41 s.d. = 0.558
	χ^2=229.64, d.f.=12 , p=.00				

Good Governance (Composite Scale). Good governance is a composite of the four governance subscales: accountability, participation, rule of law, and transparency. A very large majority (84.1 percent) of respondents expressed attitudes in favor of good governance: 62.4 percent expressed strong agreement with good governance; 38.8 percent expressed agreement; 14.0 percent were neutral; only 1.7 percent expressed disagreement; and only 0.1 percent expressed strong disagreement (Table 7).

Respondents in the north, south, and central regions expressed attitudes more favorable to good governance than respondents in the northeast region. The percentage of respondents expressing strong agreement was 50.5, 48.9, and 46.7 in the north, south, and central regions, respectively, in contrast with 40.1 percent in the northeast region.

On a scale of 1.00-4.00, the mean score for good governance attitudes for the whole sample was 3.28. The mean score by region was higher for the south, north, and central regions (3.35, 3.34, and 3.32, respectively) than for the northeast region (3.17).

Table 7: Good Governance Attitudes, by Region

Good Governance Attitudes	Region				Total (n=3,033)
	North (n=631)	Northeast (n=1,135)	Central (n=810)	South (n=457)	
Strongly agree (3.41– 4.00)	50.5	40.1	46.7	48.9	45.3
Agree (2.81 – 3.40)	37.7	35.6	42.9	40.9	38.8
Neutral (2.21 – 2.80)	10.7	21.1	9.2	10.0	14.0
Disagree (1.61 – 2.20)	1.1	3.0	1.2	0.2	1.7
Strongly disagree (1.00 - 1.60)	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	Mean = 3.34	Mean = 3.17	Mean = 3.32	Mean = 3.35	Mean = 3.28
	s.d. = 0.410	s.d. = 0.499	s.d. = 0.385	s.d. = 0.379	s.d. = 0.442

$$\chi^2=105.292, d.f.=12 , p=.00$$

With respect to the dimensions of governance, Thais are most supportive of the transparency dimension, followed in successive order by rule of law, accountability, and participation. Regional differences exist, however, as is evident from Table 8 which displays rankings by region. Of the four regions, respondents in the south and north rank highest on good governance attitudes, followed by the central region, and lastly, by the northeast. In fact, the northeast region ranks last both on the composite governance scale, as well as on almost all sub-dimensions.

Table 8: Mean Scores and Rank on Good Governance Attitudes, by Region

Dimension	Mean Score Total Sample (n=3,033)	Rank, by Region			
		North (n=631)	Northeast (n=1,135)	C Central (n=810)	South (n=457)
Good Governance (Composite Scale)	3.28	2	4	3	1
Accountability	3.23	2	4	3	1
Participation	3.13	2	3	1	4
Rule of law	3.34	2	4	1	3
Transparency	3.41	2	3	4	1

Dimensions of Governance: Intercorrelations. Good governance is generally treated as if it were a single construct. The question is, Is it? To what extent are its dimensions correlated? To answer these questions, we examined intercorrelations among accountability, participation, rule of law, and transparency. As shown in Table 9, the four dimensions of good governance are significantly correlated. It should be noted, however, that they are for the most part only *weakly* correlated. Transparency is weakly related to accountability, participation, and rule of law (r = .04, .13, and .09, respectively). Accountability is weakly related to participation and rule of law (r = .17 and .13, respectively). Participation and rule of law are moderately related (r = .32). We shall discuss the implications of this finding in the concluding section.

Table 9: Good Governance Dimensions: Pearson Product Moment Correlations

	Good Governance	Accountability	Participation	Rule of Law
Accountability	.66**			
Participation	.64**	.17**	.	
Rule of Law	.61**	.13**	.32**	.
Transparency	.49**	.04*	.13**	.09**

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level   ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Regional Differences: Analysis of Variance Results. To identify regional differences with respect to governance attitudes, a one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted. In this section, we present findings for the composite governance scale, followed by findings on each of the dimensions of governance.

a) Good Governance (Composite Scale). The results show a statistically significant difference among regions at the $p = .01$ level (Table 10). It should be noted that despite reaching statistical significance, the actual differences in mean scores between the regions was quite small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .032. Post-hoc comparisons using the Scheffe test indicated that the northeast region, with the lowest mean score (3.17), was significantly different from the other

three regions. The north, central, and south regions, with mean scores of 3.34, 3.32, and 3.35, respectively, did not differ significantly from one another (Table 11).

Table 10: One-Way Analysis of Variance (Good Governance by Region)

	df	SS	MS	F
Between Groups	3	19.141	6.380	33.680*
Within Groups	3029	573.825	.189	
Total	3032	592.966		

 * Significant at the .001 level. Eta squared = .032

Table 11: Good Governance (Multiple Comparisons, Scheffe Test)

Region	Mean Score	North	Northeast	Central
North	3.34	-		
Northeast	3.17	-.172**	-	
Central	3.32	-.022	.150**	-
South	3.35	.004	.175**	.025

** The mean difference is significant at the .01 level.

        b) Accountability.   There is a statistically significant difference among regions at the p = .01 level (Table 12).   As in the case of the composite governance

scale, it should be noted that despite reaching statistical significance, the actual differences in mean scores between the regions was quite small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .034. Post-hoc comparisons using the Scheffe test indicated that the northeast region, with the lowest mean score (2.96), was significantly different from the other three regions. The north, central, and south regions with mean scores of 3.39, 3.33, and 3.51, respectively, did not differ significantly from one another (Table 13).

Table 12: One-Way Analysis of Variance (Accountability by Region)

	df	SS	MS	F
Between Groups	3	142.957	47.652	35.583*
Within Groups	3026	4052.401	1.339	
Total	3029	4195.358		

* Significant at the .001 level. Eta squared = .034

Table 13: Accountability (Multiple Comparisons, Scheffe Test)

Region	Mean Score	North	Northeast	Central
North	3.39	-		
Northeast	2.96	-.430**	-	
Central	3.33	-.064	.366**	-
South	3.51	.123	.553**	.187

** The mean difference is significant at the .01 level.

c) Participation. There is a statistically significant difference among regions at the p = .01 level (Table 14), but again, it should be noted that despite reaching statistical significance, the actual differences in mean scores between the regions was quite small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .021. Post-hoc comparisons using the Scheffe test indicated that the central region, with the highest mean score (3.26), was significantly different from the other three regions. The north, northeast, and south regions with mean scores of 3.12, 3.08, and 3.05, respectively, did not differ significantly from one another (Table 15).

Table 14: One-Way Analysis of Variance (Participation by Region)

	df	SS	MS	F
Between Groups	3	18.829	6.276	21.790*
Within Groups	3021	870.197	.288	
Total	3024	889.027		

 * Significant at the .001 level. Eta squared = .021

Table 15: Participation (Multiple Comparisons, Scheffe Test)

Region	Mean Score	North	Northeast	Central
North	3.12	-		
Northeast	3.08	-.037	-	
Central	3.26	.139**	.176**	-
South	3.05	-.070	-.033	-.209**

** The mean difference is significant at the .01 level.

d) Rule of Law. There is a statistically significant difference among regions at the $p = .01$ level (Table 16). Again, however, despite reaching statistical significance, the actual differences in mean scores between the regions was very small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .009. Post-hoc comparisons using the Scheffe test indicated that the northeast region, with the lowest mean score (3.28), was significantly different from the north and central regions (with mean scores of 3.36 and 3.42, respectively). The south region differed significantly from the central region (mean scores of 3.31 and 3.42, respectively). The south region did not differ significantly from the north and northeast regions; nor was there any significant difference between the central and north regions (Table 17).

Table 16: One-Way Analysis of Variance (Rule of Law by Region)

	df	SS	MS	F
Between Groups	3	9.404	3.135	9.915*
Within Groups	3023	955.713	.316	
Total	3026	965.117		

 * Significant at the .001 level. Eta squared = .009

Table 17: Rule of Law (Multiple Comparisons, Scheffe Test)

Region	Mean Score	North	Northeast	Central
North	3.36	-		
Northeast	3.28	-.082*	-	
Central	3.42	.0540	.136**	-
South	3.31	-.050	.033	-.104*

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.   ** The mean difference is significant at the .01 level.

e)   Transparency. There is a statistically significant difference among regions at the p = .01 level (Table 18), although as in the case of the composite governance scale, despite reaching statistical significance, the actual differences in mean scores between the regions was quite small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .024. Post-hoc comparisons using the Scheffe test revealed significant differences among the regions, with the sole exception of the north and south regions, whose mean scores were not significantly different from each other. The central region showed the lowest mean score (3.30), one that was significantly different from the other three regions. The north and south regions with the highest mean scores (3.51 and 3.52, respectively) were significantly different from the northeast and central regions.   The northeast region, with a mean score of 3.39, was also significantly different from the remaining three regions (Table 19).

Table 18: One-Way Analysis of Variance (Transparency by Region)

	df	SS	MS	F
Between Groups	3	21.994	7.331	24.054*
Within Groups	2968	904.600	.305	
Total	2971	926.595		

 * Significant at the .001 level. Eta squared = .024

Table 19: Transparency (Multiple Comparisons, Scheffe Test)

Region	Mean Score	North	Northeast	Central
North	3.51	-		
Northeast	3.39	-.118**	-	
Central	3.30	-.213**	-.095**	-
South	3.52	.007	.125**	.220**

** The mean difference is significant at the .01 level.

In sum, regional differences exist with respect to good governance attitudes and the various dimensions of good governance, but the differences, although statistically significant, are not very large. The northeast region has the lowest mean scores on *good governance* (composite scale) and on *accountability*, and is significantly different from the other three regions. The north, south, and central regions do not differ significantly from one another. The northeast region also has the lowest mean score on *rule of law*, and differs significantly from the north and central regions (although not from the south).

The central region has the highest mean score on *participation*, differing significantly from the other three regions. The north, northeast, and south regions do not differ significantly from one another. With respect to *transparency*, however, the central region has the lowest mean score, and differs significantly from the other three regions. The north and south regions have the highest mean scores, and differ significantly from the remaining two regions. The northeast, with a mean score halfway between the north and south regions on the one hand, and the central region on the other, is also significantly different from those regions.

Discussion and Conclusion

The two key objectives of this article were to present survey findings on citizen attitudes toward good governance, and to investigate regional differences. Based on the survey findings, we conclude that Thai citizens by and large are supportive of good governance. A word of caution, however: it is likely -- or at least possible-- that the responses favorable to good governance are to some extent inflated, insofar as respondents may have given answers they thought they were expected to give, or were taught to give. For instance, many leadership training programs conducted by Thai government agencies contain content designed to instill concepts and precepts of good governance. Participants in such programs are expected to retain and disseminate this information when they return to their local communities. Be that as it may, allowing for some degree of inflation, the findings indicate receptivity to the concept of good governance.

What is evident is that support varies for the different dimensions of governance. Of the four dimensions investigated, the transparency dimension received the greatest support, followed in successive order by rule of law, accountability, and participation. We note that both the transparency and rule of law scales used in this study were based on items that were not immediately connected to respondents' daily lives (e.g. "The government must inform the public how it spends its budget," "It's all right to sometimes bribe government officials, in order to receive better and more efficient service from them"), whereas respondents could probably relate more closely (in terms of everyday experience) to items on the participation and accountability scales (e.g. "Politics is for politicians. Ordinary people shouldn't interfere," "Politicians whose performance you approve of shouldn't be subjected to scrutiny"). One inference

one may draw from this is that although respondents favor good governance *in principle*, they tend to give less favorable responses to good governance items which may directly affect them and where they may have a vested interest. It is also possible that some responses may reflect respondents' assessment of the reality of their lives and the relationship to government.

Regional differences exist: respondents in the north and south score highest on good governance attitudes, followed by the central region, and lastly, by the northeast. The northeast region, the poorest region in Thailand, ranks last both on the composite governance scale, as well as on many sub-dimensions.

Successful implementation of governance reforms requires mutually supportive and cooperative relationships among stakeholders. Implicit here is the assumption that citizen stakeholders are in fact supportive of good governance. What our findings indicate is that in the four regions surveyed, while there is general support for good governance, the northeast region lags behind the other regions. Programs and initiatives to raise public awareness and dissemination of information and educational materials should therefore focus on this region.

A more salient question raised by the findings is whether good governance should be treated as a unitary construct, or whether separate consideration should be accorded to each of its constituent components. Transparency, rule of law, accountability, and participation are only weakly correlated (although the correlations are statistically significant). The central region, for example, has the highest mean score on participation attitudes, but the lowest mean score on transparency of all the regions. The northeast and south regions have the lowest mean scores on rule of law. The northeast also has the lowest mean score on accountability attitudes. One

implication that may be drawn is that programs and initiatives to promote good governance attitudes should differentiate among the components of good governance, and should vary their emphasis according to regional needs. Thus, for example, programs targeting central region citizens should place emphasis on the transparency component, whereas programs targeting south region citizens should emphasize rule of law and participation. Programs targeting north region citizens should emphasize participation, while programs targeting northeast region citizens should emphasize all four components of governance.

End Notes

1. In a more recent study (2009, unpublished), Anek has apparently revised his earlier analysis of Thai society. At the time of this publication, the author had not gained access to the report.

2. The provinces in the sample: north region – Chiengmai, Lampang, Pitsanuloke, Uttaradit; northeast region – Nakhon Ratchasima, Nong Khai, Ubon Ratchathani, Udon Thani; central region – Ayudhya, Cholburi, Nakhon Patom, Ratchaburi, Samut Prakarn; south region – Chumpon, Nakhon Sri Thammarat, Satun, Songkhla, Surat Thani, Trang. A multistage stratified sampling design was used. The author is grateful to the National Statistical Office of Thailand for providing generous assistance in drawing the sample and supplying area maps.

3. The construct good governance is multidimensional and lacks a standard definition. Some definitions stipulate four dimensions of governance, others six, yet others eight (http://www.worldbank.org, http://www.adb.org,

http://www.escap.org). Good governance has been defined as consisting of all or some combination of the following dimensions: accountability, transparency, participation/voice, rule of law/predictability, regulatory quality, political stability, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity and inclusiveness. Elimination of corruption and its variants (e.g. "efficiency") are sometimes treated as a separate dimension, although corruption is generally subsumed under rule of law. The dimensions complement each other, and there is overlap among them: mutually reinforcing, they are also conceptually intertwined.

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