

Hazing is not just a practise used during initiation rites

Sunday 21 June 2009, by [ROJANAPHRUK Pravrit](#) (Date first published: 19 June 2009).

Stories about violent hazing and initiation rites should hardly come as a surprise to people, because similar things seem to be happening in other realms of Thai society as well. If anything, people should be more concerned about certain practices and questionable laws in Thailand.

College initiation rites are about control, power and the need to bond with younger students.

On the other hand, forcing people to accept or follow something without question is a mark of dictatorship - something that is not acceptable at any level.

Still, unlike college initiation rites, people still seem to be accepting certain rules and practises.

For instance, several groups of coup makers have violently torn up one constitution after another, yet not many people question this or doubt their "legitimacy".

Still, these very people find reports about hazing "unacceptable" and "shocking".

Similarly, the lese majeste law goes questioned and any debate about its merit is stifled in Thai mainstream media through legal and social coercion.

Likewise, people who choose not to stand up when the national anthem is being played also face potentially violent and coercive reactions.

This writer experienced it first hand while he was sitting at the Santi Chai Prakarn Park in old Bangkok.

It was suddenly 6pm and the national anthem started blaring out of the large speakers, disturbing the peace and people relaxing in the park.

Seeing me sitting down, one black-clad volunteer guard of the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) approached and asked in Thai if I was indeed a citizen of this country.

The PAD headquarters are located right next to the park, and the guard was probably trying to ensure that everyone in the vicinity was patriotic.

So, when he asked why I was not standing up, I said that having the anthem blaring was a fascist act and that there were other ways one could contribute to society or express one's patriotism without having to stand up straight at 8am and 6pm every day.

This reaction caught the man off guard, and he went off to bring reinforcements so he could add extra coercive pressure.

After a few minutes of verbal exchange, this writer told them about how the well-known royalist Sumet Jumsai had written publicly that he refused to stand up for the anthem because it did not

have the word King in it.

After all, it was composed at a time when the monarchy was a lot less powerful.

This reasoning baffled the volunteer guards, but they kept trying to enforce the practice of standing up even though they could not explain it. Unfortunately, the writer had to leave because he felt unsafe.

The two men obviously thought that Thais who unfailingly stand up for the national anthem automatically become more patriotic and better citizens.

So, my point is, hazing doesn't stop at school gates.

P.S.

From The Nation.

Posted by Prachatai.

<http://www.prachatai.com/english/node/1259>